



Religious Discourse in Modern Japan

Religion, State, and Shintō

BY

Isomae Jun'ichi

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Religious Discourse in Modern Japan

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Isomae Jun'ichi

Translated by

Galen Amstutz and Lynne E. Riggs

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Cover illustration: Detail of a photograph displaying collapsed ruins of Tsukadajima Shrine (Ishinomaki city, Miyagi prefecture) following the 2011 tsunami—a metaphor for the fractured identity of Japanese Shintō. Photograph by Isomae Reiko. Reproduced with kind permission.

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To my parents, Isomae Kōzō and Midori



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Religious Discourse in Modern Japan is a work that takes Japanese religion as a case study: its readers should not be confined to researchers on Japan, for it is logically

structured to be open to everyone who has an interest in how modernization developed in the clash between Western and non-Western cultures. I earnestly hope that through translation into the international language of English, this book will reach interested readers throughout the world. Reaching out beyond the image of Japan as a particularistic society, I hope it will contribute to a universal scholarly domain for articulating the process of modernity.

Preface

Religion, Shintō, and the Emperor System

For a long time, right up to the present, outsiders have often stated that Japanese are not religious. As a result, today even the Japanese consider themselves “not religious.” Certainly it is the case that many Japanese do not follow one specific religion and are not members of any particular religious organization. However, various practices can be called religious, such as going to a shrine before a school examination in order to pray for a passing grade or tending the offerings on a household *kamidana* shelf. In this sense, even though belief in specific anthropomorphic deities or gods may be absent, and even though the person may not be conscious of it, belief—or desire to believe—in the operation of things that may be referred to as invisible, overriding powers is widespread in Japan.

The English word “religion,” transmitted to Japan after the opening of the country in the middle of the nineteenth century, was translated into Japanese using the word *shūkyō* 宗教, and has acquired its particular meaning today because of how the word was adopted. Many Japanese are hesitant to say, for example, “*Watashi wa shūkyō o shinjite iru*” (I believe in a religion), because *shūkyō* was a word coined with its core referring to Christianity and does not match the way they practice religion, which involves going to temples or shrines and performing various rituals in the home. “Religion” in the Western sense of the word had the connotation of belonging to a church, that is, to a community of followers gathered together by personal convictions, or believing in a sacred text with a written doctrine providing the nucleus of certain teachings.

Thus there is a discrepancy between the concept of “*shūkyō*” imported from the West and Japan’s indigenous forms of religious activity. From the standpoint of the Christian concept of religion, to even call Japanese religiosity by the term “*shūkyō*” may seem incongruous. Nevertheless, Japanese do believe in the workings of unseen presences. If that belief is called “religion,” then Japanese society has its own way of being religious, though it might differ from the Western way. So, because Japanese are uncomfortable in using the word “religion,” with its connotations connected with Christianity, they often want to assert that they do not believe in “a religion,” and end up expressing the difference by saying “Japanese are not religious.” By referring to “religion” in this negative manner Japanese can assert their own, non-Western, religiosity.

Even though Japanese may be “non-religious” from a Western perspective, the term *shūkyō* is still included among the concepts referred to in contemplating their own existence, and it is part of the language that articulates their understanding of the world. It is on the basis of that language that the observer becomes aware of Japan’s

particular approach to religiosity, which does not fit into the Christian concept of religion, but occupies a kind of marginal space. Yet this does not mean that Japanese religiosity should be fixed as ahistorical and somehow uniquely Japanese. Indeed, the concept of religion has layered implications, including both Western meanings and non-Western connotations. Like the Western concept of religion, too, Japanese religion is a metaphor, empty of essential content, which becomes articulated only in the contingent, discursive formations that come to surround the concept.

In what time period did this Japanese word *shūkyō*, standing for “religion” and becoming a part of the everyday modern Japanese language, acquire the meanings so familiar to us? And why is it that even though they use the word so frequently, Japanese came to be thought of as possessing a worldview that has been non-religious in the Western sense? First I would like to clarify the relationship between Japanese and the word *shūkyō*.

The Modern West and the Concept of Religion

Shūkyō 宗教 as a term can be found since early times in Japan’s Chinese-character Buddhist dictionaries. In the Edo period (1615–1868), it normally conveyed the meaning of “the true teaching, which is Buddhism.” In the society of that time Buddhism was recognized by the government through the temple membership system (*danka seido*) requiring that every individual be registered with a Buddhist temple, and the word *shūkyō* was not used in the context of other aspects of religious life, especially in the word’s modern sense referring to a larger truth that transcends any one specific tradition of belief. At the end of the Edo period, with the signing of the Japan-United States Treaty of Amity and Commerce (also known as Treaty of Friendship and Trade, or Harris Treaty) in 1858, Japanese society was opened up to the Western world. Christianity flowed in and a new situation arose in which three different religions existed side by side: Buddhism, Christianity, and the practice of indigenous traditions, which eventually emerged as something called Shintō as those traditions were separated from their syncretic relationship with Buddhism in the late nineteenth century and reconstituted.

The Harris Treaty was not concerned with individual religious freedom, and at first the old prohibitions on Christianity in Japan were not dissolved. Under the terms of the treaty, the Tokugawa shogunate agreed not to interfere in the practice of Christianity among Americans and the American government agreed not to meddle with the shogunate’s policy prohibiting Christianity. In 1873, however, the government notice boards that had proclaimed the official prohibition since the seventeenth century were removed, signaling tacit approval of the Christian faith among Japanese. When that moment came, for the first time Japanese needed to be able to compare

the multiple religions of Buddhism, Christianity, and Shintō (indigenous belief). The word *shūkyō* was used as the concept under which they could be viewed as commensurate and on an equal plane. The meaning attached to the term was not, however, that found in the old Buddhist dictionaries; it was re coined as a translation for the Western word “religion.”

From this point in time *shūkyō*—religion—expanded its meaning from that of Buddhist teachings to mean “teachings about common truths that exist beyond the frameworks of specific religions.” Such religions had become accessible to Japanese after contact with the modern Western world. But this was not a change in people’s epistemological thinking that occurred without cause; it was a change triggered by the shifts in social systems that took place in the modern context of competition among several religions that accompanied the opening of the country.

A new language of gods and buddhas as “religion” was born, with Buddhism and Shintō intertwined around the axis of Christianity.¹ In the sense that “religion” took as its premise an individualism in which personal interiority was considered supreme—the universal concept of “freedom of individual belief” of the modern West—it was something extremely Protestant, having absorbed especially the influence of the American brand of Christianity brought by the Protestant vanguard of missionaries coming to Japan. In contrast to Catholicism, which was deeply tied to this-worldly benefits and the folk beliefs of the masses, Protestantism aimed to build communities of faith on the basis of individual interiority alone. Its faith belonged to the private realm and was not to be brought into the public space of politics. Since the public space of society consisted of people from differing religious institutions and traditions, it ought to be a neutral, secular arena not biased towards any particular religious interest.

Catholicism did not separate public and private in the same way as did Protestantism; rather, in the fashion of Islam or large parts of premodern Buddhism, religion permeated the public sphere. Because Catholicism was adapted to indigenous patterns of belief and practice, by spreading into the public space the Catholic tradition became firmly rooted in the everyday life of the general population.

From the standpoint of comparative religious studies, Protestantism’s confinement of religion to private space and understanding of it as separated from secularized public space are rather rare in world history; these features can even be considered peculiar to Protestantism. However, as the westernization of Japan progressed, Japanese society happened to come under the influence of Protestantism as it had evolved in the United States, and out of that influence emerged an understanding of religion premised on separation from the secular sphere.

That understanding of the new word *shūkyō* for religion was of course a trend mainly among intellectuals who came into contact with the West. Among ordinary

1 Ketelaar 1990, chapters 4 and 5.

people who had little connection with the outside world, *shūkyō* remained an unfamiliar word right up through the end of the World War II. The term for religiosity in familiar parlance that went back to the Edo period was the character compound 信仰, not pronounced *shinkō* as in current Japanese but *shingyō*. But the establishment of the word *shūkyō* as a matter of the inner life of the individual was not to be limited purely to a trend among intellectuals. In 1889, as was apparent in the words of Article 28 of the new Meiji Constitution, *shūkyō* was adopted in the legal system as the object of free choice (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由) founded on the will of the individual.²

Thus although the general public may not have had a clear idea of the concept of religion in the Western sense, their speech and behavior regarding the term *shūkyō* in the Constitution was surrounded by the new legal system and strictly censored under the authority of the state. Even though the new word for religion did not enter directly into the everyday conversations of ordinary people, their very existence was incorporated as a kind of “uncivilized” dimension of the intellectual and legal hegemony in which intellectuals and the state authority occupied the uppermost levels.

Moreover, the notion of religious freedom the Meiji leaders had in mind did not arise from the aspiration to protect the human rights of the people; it was a concept developed to prove, as demanded in the conditions for implementing revisions to the unequal treaties that the Western great powers had coerced the Japanese state into signing, that Japan was a “civilized country” according to the Western definition. In reality, therefore, “freedom of religion” was no more than a means employed by the Western world to implant Christianity, which saw itself as the religion of universal civilization, in Japanese society.³

In short, religion—*shūkyō*—was not familiar in Japanese society before the twentieth century and was not the expression of something spontaneous rising out of the lives of ordinary people. The concept arose from contact with the West and the external pressure of demands from the Western Great Powers for freedom on behalf of Christianity. “Religion” that revolved around Christianity was brought in from the outside, and Japanese felt a discrepancy between that concept and what they had thought of as the realm of the religious.⁴

Many Japanese intellectuals, except for those who converted to Christianity, felt estranged and discomfited by the new notion of *shūkyō*, and they responded to those feelings in two ways. One was to modify their own religious beliefs in accordance with the Western concept of religion. Typical of this response were developments in

2 Article 28: “Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief” (as translated in the *Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 2).

3 Paramore 2009, chapter 6.

4 Asad 1993, chapter 1.

Buddhism. Under the temple registration system of the Edo period, Buddhism had offered little more than ritual—mainly funeral—services. After the Meiji Restoration (1868), the various schools of Buddhism tried to reform themselves, shifting towards teachings about relief from individual suffering and equipping themselves with the trappings of “modern” religions so as to be a match for Christianity with its churches, texts, and founder. The same was true for the popular new religions Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō.⁵ These religions responded by sending their children and principal members to study at the Western-style religious studies departments of the imperial universities, and then proceeded to transform themselves from being mainly providers of physical healing into authorities on doctrine, emphasizing the inward conversion experiences of individuals.

Then Buddhist intellectuals, based on the ideas about evolution of Herbert Spencer being introduced to Japan around 1877–1886, began to emphasize that their religion had been rationalized and evolved into a philosophy using the term *tetsugaku* 哲学. These forays illustrate the attempt by Buddhist intellectuals to develop a polemic asserting that Christianity was just one of many religions but that Buddhism was instead a rational philosophical tradition on a higher plane. Here the reform of Buddhism was not being modeled after a concept of religion based on traditional Christianity; rather, it involved mobilizing the latest theoretical frameworks from the West to overturn the existing hegemony of the Western notion of “religion.” Yet the way that overthrow was eventually achieved not through Buddhism, but through the modernization of the Shintō religion, which was the second form of intellectual response to the emergence of “religion.”

At the time the concept of “religion” was first introduced to Japan, the “way of the kami” was called *shinkyō* (“kami teaching” 神教), among other terms, in an attempt to liken it to the Western concept of religion. However, because it became embroiled in the competition for membership with Christianity and Buddhism—the other two main “religions”—the Meiji government became concerned that the indigenous religious tradition might lose out in the process. So in the early 1880s, the government stipulated that the term Shintō (lit., *kami* way 神道) be adopted. From that point it was emphasized in public declarations by the government and Shintō institutions that Shintō was not to be considered in the category of religion. This naming, changing the second character of the compound to *tō* (way), sought to set it apart from the “religions,” which were denoted by the character *kyō*.

Another term used contrastingly vis-à-vis religion was *dōtoku* 道德 (morality). *Dōtoku* shared the character 道 with Shintō but was also completely distinct from the new word *shūkyō*. The new government terminology thus sought, through the choice of characters, to set apart for “Shintō” a semantic and social field completely separate from the concept of “religion.”

5 Shimazono 2004, part 3.

By the early 1880s, the word *shūkyō* had become established for the purposes of the individual, private realm of belief and for referring to the legal-rights question of religious freedom; the word *dōtoku* (morality) was now invoked in the public realm of Japanese people or nation and came to be understood as relating to the public duty of subjects of the state. From that time, the terms *shūkyō* and *dōtoku* would be treated as dichotomous, dividing human activity into the private and the public spheres. The older terms *kyō* (teaching) or *taikyō* (great teaching), which had been inherited from the Edo period and had not previously distinguished between public and private, also remained in use in the early years (1870s–1890s) of the Meiji era (1868–1912). The dichotomy between public and private, which accompanied the word *shūkyō* from the West and which was tied to the inner realm and the dichotomous conception of the religious and the secular, was thus formed in the face of the threat of colonization by a Western country. This was part of a trend in Japan to establish, over and above affairs of the private realm, the priority of outer behavior in the public realm.

The premise of such a dichotomy of the religious and the secular was the establishment of a public realm that was secular and separate from religion, which was considered to be a private realm. It was because of this idea of separation of church and state—as represented particularly by Protestantism—in which the non-religious character of the public realm had been established, that the idea existed that religious activity in the individual private sphere—at least to the extent that it did not obstruct the public good—could be guaranteed. Modern Shintō, premised on this Western idea of the separation of the religious and secular, was placed not in the private realm of religion, but made instead to overlap with the public realm of the secular. By this means, Shintō succeeded in prescribing its acts of religiosity as the public duty of all the people of the state regardless of what beliefs they might hold as private individuals. Even though Shintō belonged in the category of religion in the sense that it held festivals for *kami*, its observances were officially defined as a non-religious public moral obligation. Thus Shintō activities could be required as a duty of any subject of the state. Under these circumstances, Shintō was redefined more as a rational form of *dōtoku* than a religion, giving it a position of precedence. This was the path of modernization taken by Shintō.

Shintō and the Emperor System

Shintō, which had emerged in such a way as to avoid the competition for followers in the realm of religion with Christianity and Buddhism, had no doctrine of personal salvation, no founder, and no sacred texts. It conspicuously lacked the character of a religion that offered solutions for problems faced in the inner life of the individual.

Furthermore, its traditional ritual events were rooted in the everyday life of rural local communities and were intimately tied to people's activities in the public arena. Even today, in the carrying of *mikoshi* portable shrines at summer festivals one recognizes a dynamic, physical experience tied to the local community. For that reason it was quite understandable that Meiji-era politicians and bureaucrats thought that the most appropriate way to regulate Shintō was to link it to moral behavior in the public sphere. However, since Shintō was originally the ritual celebration of *kami*, they could not say that it was completely disconnected from religion. The problem was that, in the process of defining Shintō as a code of public morality, the public realm itself might be infused with religious character. Here arose the issue of what exactly would be the nature of the *kami* that Shintō would celebrate.

The majority of the *kami* celebrated in Shintō festivals can be traced back to the family lineage of the emperors. At the same time, Shintō today is composed of diverse elements: shrines, royal family rituals, Shintō-derived popular religions such as Tenrikyō, and popular folk beliefs. Some shrines, like Yasukuni Shrine are closely associated with the rituals of the modern state, and others that are guardian or tutelary shrines (*ubusunagami*) rooted in local communities. Imperial court rituals are generally related to ancient ceremonies for worshipping the gods of the emperor's ancestors, especially the emperor's performance of rituals for the deities of heaven and earth (*tenchi no kamigami* 天地の神々). Shintō-derived popular religions like Tenrikyō or Konkōkyō have doctrinal and ritual structures that incorporate veneration of the emperors along with the mythology of the *Kojiki*, *Nihonshoki*, and other ancient records. Until the end of World War II these latter groups were in a legal category called "Sect Shintō" or "Denominational Shintō." Unlike the rest of Shintō, although similar to Christianity in the sense of being formed out of a community of belief based on their own doctrines, these groups alone were treated as "religions." "Shintō" also refers to popular folk beliefs enmeshed in the fabric of everyday life, such as kitchen gods (*kamadogami* 竈神) and celebrity gods (*hayarigami* 流行神) that fall rapidly in and out of popular favor. Unlike the mainstream of modern Christianity, the practice of this form of Shintō is quite magical in character.

At the time Buddhism was introduced from China and began to spread in Japanese society in the ancient period, Shintō was consciously regarded as a native religiosity distinct from Buddhism. However, Shintō was unlike Buddhism and Christianity, in which congregations of the faithful gathered around a clearly existing doctrinal structure or founder; from the start Shintō possessed no unitary religious tradition at all. It consisted only of the miscellaneous collection of indigenous folk practices overlaid with the mythology of the emperor's lineage, so from the outset it had a syncretic character. Nevertheless, despite awareness that Buddhism was so different, indigenous religiosity became an effective receptacle for Buddhist teachings, and Shintō came to be treated as another part of the discourse that supported Buddhism.

The self-conscious designation of this kind of native religiosity using the term “Shintō” only began around the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. In that era the imperial house lost its political authority and the mythologies of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, liberated from earlier political constraints to upper class, filtered down among the general populace as popularized traditions that, in the words borrowed by Benedict Anderson from Walter Benjamin, began to create the consciousness of “homogenous empty time”—opening the way for later modern nationalism.⁶ And as Shintō increased its syncretism with Buddhism, the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* myths were further incorporated into Shintō, serving to articulate its own special doctrine, albeit through fusion with Buddhist teachings. The new interpretations of the myths included material that deviated widely from the original written texts of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, for example, a large number of Buddhist *setsuwa* (tales). The impact of these tales may explain why, compared to ancient times, many more people came to believe that their own historical origins were connected to the family lineage of the emperors.⁷

Toward the late Edo period (first half of the nineteenth century) intellectual movements like National Learning (Kokugaku) appeared in the search for purely Japanese traditions that propelled the trend toward separation of Shintō from Buddhism and strengthened the connection of ritual Shintō practice solely with the court. With the onset of the modern age, this nativist movement was institutionalized through the campaign launched by the government in the early years of the Meiji era to wholly separate Buddhism and Shintō (*shinbutsu bunri*). Shintō then went on to develop its own independent doctrinal and ritual structures, and its connection to the emperor system, which had been restored to the apex of the political structure, was reinforced through the palace rituals and established shrines. In this process the Buddhist elements that had seeped into medieval-period *Kojiki-Nihonshoki* mythology were completely removed. Resurrecting the Daijōsai and Niinamesai rituals and official pilgrimages to Ise Shrine, the Meiji government increasingly promoted Shintō’s return to what it had determined were the ritual practices of ancient times.

What the Meiji government allegedly revived as ancient Shintō was not, however, ancient tradition itself, but something demanded by the politics of a modern, extremely Western-style nation-state. Ever since the country was opened up by the Western powers, Japanese politicians and intellectuals had constantly felt the danger of Japan becoming subject to colonization by the great powers of the West. This feeling of threat from the outside was what fueled the *sonnō jōi* (revere the Emperor, expel the barbarian foreigners) movement and aroused a new self-consciousness that regarded the Japanese nation as revolving around the imperial lineage going back to antiquity and held the Japanese nation as sacred. Yet the institution of the emperor “restored” in

6 Anderson 1991.

7 Isomae 2010, chapter 1.

the late nineteenth century as a cultural and political symbol could not fulfill its role by simply extolling a return to the ancient past; at the core of the institution was the drive to form a modern nation-state that would be accepted on a par with the great Western powers. In this sense the modern institution of the emperor was essentially “invented tradition.”

The structure of the modern nation-state is such that each individual is expected to have a clear awareness of being a subject of the nation and support the nation even at the risk of his or her life. Citizens ideally are not just passive guests of the state; rather, the state constitutes the core of the identity and *raison d'être* of each person, and the inner life of the individual is supposed to be directly linked to the state. In order for the modern state, which seeks to expand its imperial dominion by means of warfare, to carry out such warfare effectively, some device is necessary to promote the transition to an identity through which subjects would offer their lives on behalf of the state. In Japan, this device was served by Yasukuni Shrine, where the war dead were enshrined. In the background, of course, as a symbol of the nation-state was the emperor, who existed as the physical manifestation of the *kokutai* (lit., “national body”; polity).⁸

As other sites where the people would be transformed into subjects bound to the emperor system, the government made use of the Shintō shrines, which enshrined the ancestral deities of the imperial house, and the schools, by placing in them portraits of the Emperor Meiji and issuing the Imperial Rescript on Education to guide the teaching curriculum. These became objects of national reverence. The Meiji government made the head priests of shrines into officials of the state and sought to uniformly control their training via government-certified vocational schools and universities. The use of the shrines was intended to implant the ideology surrounding the emperor deeply into the inner consciousnesses of subjects. Control of the people was sought not only through the organizations of regional and local government; the state also had to be able to control the private inner realm of the individual, which was intimately connected to religious life.

Government policy over whether to regulate that private realm through education or through religious belief differed according to time period. However, after around 1905, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, the Meiji government realized that the moral education taught in the school system was insufficient by itself to cultivate a passionate loyalty to the state, and thereafter the policy of indoctrination of subjects was substantially shifted towards the shrines. This policy reached its extreme with the establishment of the Institute of Divinities (Jingūin 神祇院; 1940–1946) in the midst of World War II. From there, we can easily see how the wartime government made use of prewar Shintō to nurture a sense of the “communality of death” converging on the state.

8 Isomae 2007b, pp. 228–74.

On one hand modern Shintō thus organized subjects on a local geographical basis, but in its further aim to control each individual's inner life—along with the effort to shape an external perspective via public morality—it is clear that an extremely Western, modern concept of religion had been adopted for the logic of its modernist reconstruction. However, two problems arose.

One of these was that Shintō, as already mentioned, was originally just the ritual practices of local communities. It could not completely transform into a logic supporting a nation-state that took as its foundation the modern Western notion of individualism. This situation forced the nation-state that had selected Shintō as the starting point for its indoctrination to shift to a strategy focused on the local community as the basic unit rather than the individual. Moreover, since Shintō had been defined as public morality in order to avoid competition with Christianity, the modern Western aspect of religion grounded in individual interiority tended to be ceded to the Sect Shintō groups, and any chance of nurturing the deeper religiosity of the individual was made unavailable to the shrines which were supposed to be the bases of national indoctrination.

A second problem was the change in the nature of the public realm. Defining Shintō as morality in the public sphere could be said to have somehow changed public space itself into a kind of religious realm. Of course, the interiority of the individual was not a fixed entity and people were not swearing loyalty to any *kami* associated with the emperor. Further, as far as modern Japanese society also maintained a public stance of separation of the religious and the secular,⁹ it had become a society that recognized freedom of religion. However, because of the way the “living *kami*” emperor had been placed at the pinnacle of the state, the secular realm was nevertheless overarched by the shadow of something religious, even though the religiosity in this context was actually something that could not really be captured within the frame of modern Western Protestantism. So even though what *shūkyō* denoted for Japanese retained a certain Christian association and a non-Japanese flavor, on the other hand we can observe that in a non-Western sense religiosity permeated Japanese society.

To sum it up more precisely, the spokesmen of Shintō and the emperor system refused to fully accept the modern Western concept of religion, but they still fashioned Shintō as a public morality in order to provide the basis for the modern nation-state as demanded by the Western powers. In this process the only thing they actually tried to learn from the Western concept of religion was a logic of personal/individual interiority applied narrowly for the purposes of indoctrinating citizens in the emperor ideology. As “religion” was transformed and incorporated into public morality it penetrated into the public realm and conspicuously backed away from any emphasis on a Protestant-like private space, shifting instead heavily in the direction of a public

9 Asad 2003, chapter 1.

religion and its connotations. In that respect, Shintō and the emperor system relativized the modern dichotomy of the religious and the secular and acquired a character that deviated from that framework.

It is clear that the formation of the Japanese identity in the modern age was promoted with the emperor system as its authority and Shintō as its channel. Through the specific, historically manifest person of the emperor, people could seek the foundations for their own identity. Yet for other purposes, especially for nurturing in the individual the ideas of freedom backed by a sense of responsibility and human rights, that mode of identity suffered a serious handicap. Nevertheless, since it formed the basis of the emperor system for a Japanese public lacking any notion of Christian monotheism, as a historical fact this kind of subjectification dissolved their existential anxieties, consolidated power around the nation-state, and propelled modernization. There is at the same time no doubt that this subjectification ended up inflicting a great deal of suffering on other peoples in Asia who came under the control of the Japanese empire.

Hence, the reception of the concept of religion in modern Japan has not been only a matter of religion in the private realm observed in the inner life of the individual. When this is recognized, additional problems now also come into view. How did the institution of the emperor, which adopted Shintō as its support, manage such a dislocation of the Protestant concept of religion? What kind of changes took place in Japanese society as a result? This is perhaps the key to understanding Japanese modern society, which has arrived at a concept of religion that both diverges from and appropriates that of the modern West.

The main text of this book consists of three parts, each with three chapters. Together with the preface, the introduction, and epilogue, this makes twelve sections in total.

The introduction (“The Development of the Concept of Religion and the Discipline of Religious Studies”) examines research from the 1960s up to the present.

Part I deals with “The Formation of the Concept of ‘Religion’ and Modern Academic Discourse;” Part II treats “The Establishment and Development of Religious Studies;” and Part III presents “The Establishment of Shintō Studies and the State Shintō System.”

The first part begins with a discussion of the process of establishment of the new concept of religion (see chapter 1 on the process of formation of the concept of “religion” in the modern period). This is followed by a study of the philosophical discourse on religion in the middle of the Meiji era, which requires examining the works of Tokyo University professor Inoue Tetsujirō (see chapter 2 on the religious and philosophical debate of the 1880s), and a broad overview of the establishment and development of the concept of Buddhism from Meiji up to World War II (see chapter 3 on the shift of Buddhism from the tradition of the Edo period to the Westernized category of the modern period). This part clarifies the emergence of the discourse on Shintō, philosophy, and Buddhism revolving around the concept of religion.

The second part analyzes problems in the religious studies discourse that unfolded in the wake of the Aum poison gas incident (see chapter 4 on phases of religious studies discourse). The argument focuses on the process of development of the thought of Tokyo University professor Anesaki Masaharu, the father of religious studies in Japan (see chapter 5 on the experience of the West and nationalism), and discusses how the characteristic quality of religious studies discourse, from the Meiji era through World War II and up to the present, reflects the problematic nature of religious studies as a whole (see chapter 6 on the development of religious studies). Here, taking Anesaki's founding of religious studies (*shūkyōgaku*) at Tokyo University as the pivot, we look at the structure of the discipline of religious studies in Japan in the context of the changing social conditions of each time period.

The third part, informed by the histories of the concept of religion and of religious studies in the first two parts, discusses how Shintō studies and the history of Shintō were established and developed. First, the process of the development of contemporary Shintō studies is explained through its founder, Tokyo University professor Tanaka Yoshito (see chapter 7 on the establishment of modern Shintō studies). Next, the problems of State Shintō and the emperor system are described in relation to the nature of the concept of religion in Japan (see chapter 8 on State Shintō and the Emperor System). Finally, this part explains how the discourse of religious studies developed not only in connection with Shintō and Buddhist studies, but with the secular discourses on literature and history; it emphasizes especially how the discourse called history of Japanese religion evolved in an oppositional relationship to Marxism between 1930 and 1940 (see chapter 9 on the establishment of the history of Japanese religion). Finally, tying together these themes, the epilogue asks readers how the study of religion, as contrasted with academic religious studies, can intervene critically into everyday life.

The Development of the Concept of Religion and the Discipline of Religious Studies

Contemporary debates on the concept of “religion,” as well as the establishment of religion as an academic discipline, have unfolded as attempts—largely centered in the United States—at a self-critique of Western religious studies. The roots of the debates go back to Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s pioneering *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962) regarding the concept of religion, and Eric Sharpe’s groundbreaking *Comparative Religion: A History* (1975). According to Smith, the concept of “religion” arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during the European Enlightenment.¹ He concluded that the word referred to the outward or formal features of organized religion—what he called the “cumulative tradition”—and ultimately he found the term inappropriate for the analysis of religious phenomena of non-Western societies. Instead, Smith proposed the term “faith,” used to refer to the inner beliefs of individuals.

Sharpe provided a survey of the history of the study of religion ranging from ancient Greece to the present day. Comparative religion was a turning point, he said, the starting point of modern religious studies (the academic study of religion). Sharpe’s view was that religious studies reflected the Western attempt to harmonize several disparate interests: scientific rationality linking the Enlightenment and the theory of evolution; Romanticism imbued with personal religious experience; and the awareness that was gained through colonialism of the religious experience of the non-West. Sharpe also took into account the additional factor of secularization, that is, the permeation of religion into civil society. This fundamental understanding involving the foundation of religious studies remains valid today.

Later debates on the concept of religion and the emergence of the discipline of religious studies were grounded in the work of these two scholars. After Smith and Sharpe, publications on the history of the concept of religion include Michel Despland’s *La religion en Occident: évolution des idées et du*

1 Vallée 1992, pp. 4–5. In that volume, Ernst Feil, in contrast to W. C. Smith, traces the establishment of the concept of religion back to fourteenth-century humanism, while Despland follows it back to the appearance of the philosophy of religion around the year 1800. Smith’s contributions have been invaluable, but it can also be said that full investigation of the establishment of the concept of religion has only just begun.

vécu (1979) in France, and Ernst Feil's *Religio: die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs vom Frühchristentum bis zur Reformation* (1986) in Germany. Winston L. King, too, pointed out the Eurocentric nature of the concept of religion in his entry on the subject in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade (1987).

“Religion” in the West

By around the beginning of the 1990s the debate surrounding the concept of religion had begun to come to real grips with the issues. Byrne's *Natural Religion and the Essence of Religion: The Legacy of Deism* (1989) and Peter Harrison's *“Religion” and the Religious Thought of the English Enlightenment* (1990) were at the forefront of the developments. Using the methodologies of intellectual history, they endeavored to grasp the processes by which the concept of religion had become established, especially by focusing on “natural religion” during the period of European Enlightenment thought. Following the seminal work of Byrne and Harrison, other scholars, particularly Talal Asad, in his article on “Religion, the Democratic State, and Populism” (1999), for example, and Arie Molendijk in his introduction to *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (1998), have continued to point out the close connections between the development of the concept of religion and the emergence of European Enlightenment thought that also provided for the idea of the separation of church and state.

The peak of such studies came in the early 1990s with the publication of *The Notion of “Religion” in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVI IAHR Congress* (1994), edited by Ugo Bianchi, and *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (1992), edited by Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée. The Bianchi volume was a record of the 1990 conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, the last panel of which, “Religious Studies: Rethinking the Past and Imagining the Future,” grappled with the discipline itself, looking critically at discourse on the concept of religion as it had been employed by scholars in the field,² and attracting significant attention. The American Academy of Religion's annual meeting in 1997, for instance, featured the theme “The Appearance of ‘Religion’ in Enlightenment Thought and Poststructuralism.” *Religion in History* is an international collection of essays

2 The term discourse used in this book is based on Michel Foucault's concept in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: the power-reflecting framework of epistemological rules operating at any given time in the individual subjects of a society.

representing European research about the concept of religion by such scholars as Despland and Feil, but it also built on the achievements of American scholars such as W. C. Smith. Both of these publications presented critical assessments of the concept of religion and of the formation of the discipline of religious studies in ways already going beyond the areas of the authors' individual concerns. While the contributors to these volumes focused on scholarship in the United States, their concern also extended to the academic study of religion in the West as a whole and even to the global academic arena.

Why did the joint problems of the concept of religion and the establishment of the study of religion come to be so seriously considered in religious studies in the West? Certainly recent critiques of modernity and Eurocentricism, along with the infusion of poststructuralism, have had an impact on the field. The critique of modernity can be traced back, of course, to the prewar period, and critiques of Enlightenment reason can be seen in Western society from the Romantic Age onwards. Such developments grew out of skepticism towards Eurocentricism—the notion that European civilization represented the pinnacle of evolutionary development. After the successful introduction of so-called poststructuralism to American university literature departments in the 1970s and thereafter,³ as shown in the popularity of Dominick LaCapra and Steve L. Kaplan's *Modern European Intellectual History* (1982),⁴ this movement found wide-ranging acceptance in the area of intellectual history as well as other fields. Although generally scholars of religious studies are said to be conservative in character throughout the world, those in the United States showed acute interest in such new modes of thought.

It was cultural anthropology that played the catalytic role in the introduction of poststructuralism to the debates about the origins of religion in academia and about the concept of religion. Anthropologists had been quick to accept these intellectual trends and were accordingly soon engaged in a reappraisal of the notion of field anthropologists as supposedly neutral observers, as well as in a critique of the concept of "culture."⁵ Their critical examination of religion was ongoing when in 1993 Talal Asad published *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* and Benson Saler published *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories*. Asad rigorously critiqued the links between the concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies on the

3 See Berman 1988.

4 LaCapra and Kaplan 1982.

5 A collection of works representing this reorientation may be found in Clifford and Marcus 1986.

one hand and Western modernity and imperialism on the other. He perceived that, “there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes.”⁶ To overcome the Eurocentrism at the heart of the concept of religion, Saler proposed borrowing the Wittgensteinian concept of “family resemblance.”⁷

Poststructuralism views perceptions and thought not as independently apprehended, but as the products of linguistic structure and historical/social conditioning. When we understand things in this way, the configuration of the objects of our perception are no longer the same: we become aware that what enters into our consciousness is only the product of historically and contextually shaped modes of perception. The common use of the word “discourse” today is evidence of the “linguistic turn,” the new awareness of the historicity of modes of perception. When we adopt this kind of perspective vis-à-vis religion, the very concept of “religion” is no longer self-evident; it becomes nothing more than the result of a historically situated mode of perception that arose in the modern West. Thus, the process whereby the concept of religion came into being in the context of the modern West became an issue in the form of historical criticism. That being the case, we must question the appropriateness⁸ of this Western concept when it comes to analyses of non-Western societies. Those engaged in the on-site analyses of actual religious phenomena have called for a careful examination of the suitability of the earlier concepts of religion and for attempts to redefine the term.

Such trends to some extent predated the linguistic turn in American religious studies. In particular, W. C. Smith’s *The Meaning and End of Religion* anticipated the issues under consideration here in his discussion of the origins of the concept of religion and the term’s inapplicability to non-Western societies. Not only did Smith argue that the concept of religion’s establishment could only be understood as something intimately bound up with the particular rationalism of the West; he also asserts that when applied as a self-evident standard to the religious phenomena of other regions, use of the concept produced distorted judgments. One reason why even today Smith’s classic is regarded as the starting point for any discussion of the concept of religion,

6 Asad 1993, p. 29.

7 “Family resemblance” refers to the non-essentialist understanding of concepts in terms of similarities and polythetic classifications. Wittgenstein 1953, pp. 66–67.

8 The term appropriation derives from cultural studies, especially the work of Stuart Hall, and refers to the colonized’s strategy of subversion towards the colonizer’s political and cultural intention to rule the colonized. See Hall 1985.

including that in Japan, is that he takes a critical stance vis-à-vis the intellectual history of the West.

If the concept of religion is indeed the product of historical conditions, then there are always distinctive circumstances that give rise to discourse about it. "Religion" and concepts like it are not, of course, the kind of thing that any individual or particular group can devise; they are in that sense not the intentional products of human agency. Their creation depends instead upon the unplanned activity of whole societies over the historical span of entire epochs. However, as specific concepts take on concrete form in the process of crystallization within actual societies, certain groups will play central roles as immediate facilitators of that process. In the case of the definition of the Western concept of religion, pioneering efforts were made by such groups as the Deists and the Neo-Platonists; the Romantics also made the concept a major concern. Thus, until relatively recently, scholars who have made the study of religion their lifework have merely been contributing to processes that were begun much earlier. In a 1995 article, "The Category 'Religion' in Recent Publications: A Critical Survey," Russell T. McCutcheon addresses the questions of who it was that defined, constructed and/or theorized about "religion."⁹ Scholars of religion, as those responsible for the ongoing discourse on the concept of religion, he suggests, must reexamine the methods and criteria for evaluation that they employ.

Complementing W. C. Smith, Sharpe's *Comparative Religion* also represented a head start on the problem of the development of the discipline of religious studies that predated poststructuralism. At the time that Sharpe wrote his book the concept of religion was thought to be a separate issue. The first direct connection between the two was made in 1982 when Jonathan Z. Smith stated in his *Imagining Religion* that "Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy."¹⁰ After that, and with the coming of the linguistic turn, studies on the history of religion have actively come to address the institutional problem of discourse surrounding so-called religion.

As is observable in such developments, the history of the emergence of religious studies as a discipline involves more than simply study of the content of thought. Attention to the history of the university has also become necessary in order to understand the extent to which discourse on religious studies came to be accepted in society, as well as to clarify the relationship between

9 McCutcheon 1995.

10 J. Smith 1982, p. xi.

secular and sacred power. Again, this project began with Sharpe, but more recently the essays included by Molendijk and Pels in *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (1998) discuss the particular circumstances surrounding the establishment of the scholarly study of religion in Holland, England, and France. The essays focus on the fundamental relationship between religious studies and the university as institution.¹¹

McCutcheon pursued another line of argument in his *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (1997). A main topic of this book is the founding of religious studies departments in North America. The author points out that the initial establishment of religious studies within universities necessarily involved presuppositions about the normative value of *sui generis* religion. (*Sui generis* religion means the concept of religion itself as the independent, unique, and homogenous category that includes the categories of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Shintō and so on as its components.) McCutcheon first, and then Timothy Fitzgerald and Tim Murphy, have critiqued the idea of *sui generis* religion as something that has supported an essentialist academic identity in the discipline of religious studies. In cases of the discipline's analyses of phenomena that are actually historical in character, the *sui generis* approach has promoted the rejection of interpretations that give proper attention to cultural elements other than de-historicized "religion." This work was a critique of religious phenomenologists such as Eliade and in effect was a call for a dissolution of the academic identity of religious studies.¹² Also noteworthy is Tomoko Masuzawa's 2005 book *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, in which she explores, amid the

11 While in Japan the term used to describe the academic study of religion within universities is more or less unified under the rubric of *shūkyōgaku*, in the West, as Molendijk and Pels point out, there is no fixed term, with the Science of Religion, the History of Religion, Comparative Religion, and Religious Studies being the most commonly used. By examining the course of events that led to the adoption of such terms, the diverse character of religious studies can be clarified. Miyakawa Eiko has initiated concrete work on this issue in "The Location of Religious Studies within the Study of Religion: Escaping from the Dilemma" (2002). She refers to the differences between European languages in the matter of names used to refer to the study of religion. In so doing she attempts to establish a foothold for understanding the relationships among them and comprehend the contradictory inclinations that tend to coexist, despite the dilemmas they pose within religious studies, towards essentialism on the one hand and empirical objectivity on the other. See Molendijk and Pels 1998.

12 Representative discussions of reductionism and essentialism include Idinopulos and Yonan 1994 and Segal 1989.

dualities contained in pluralism, the limitations and possibilities of the concept of “world religions” that has sustained the concept of “religion.”¹³

Yet the reason that Sharpe and Smith undertook the reexamination of religious studies and the concept of religion was not so much to take up the historical character of these ideas in a truly critical manner as to survey the history of scholarship or intellectual history in a way that actually perpetuated the false conception of a transcendental objectivity in scholarship. In that endeavor they continued to labor under the tacit assumption that the framework of religious studies and their ways of perceiving it existed outside of specific contexts. There was no indication that they intended to try to fundamentally reevaluate the basis of their own perceptions. For example, while W. C. Smith did point out the inappropriateness of the word religion with respect to the phenomena that the word purportedly expressed, we can still see clearly the difference between Smith and later scholars who were influenced by poststructuralism.¹⁴ For example, Asad criticizes Smith for failing to go beyond the earlier Protestant concept of religion, representing it “as an inner state and not as a relationship created through, maintained by, and expressed in practice.”¹⁵ Thus, even though the subject under discussion might be the same, there were radical differences in approach before the linguistic turn and after it. Asad, amid reconceptualizations of religion in connection with the concept of the “secular,” dismissed Smith’s understanding of religion as occupying interior mental space as an attempt to universalize a peculiarly Protestant perspective. Together with Hent de Vries and José Casanova, he has been looking instead at religion’s mode of existence in the public realm.¹⁶

W. C. Smith thought that through the use of the concept of “faith” instead of “religion” it would be possible to neutrally perceive and account for the essence of religious phenomena globally and in any context. However, some of today’s scholars believe that our conceptual grasp cannot do more than perceive very limited aspects of extremely complex phenomena that are best thought of as text-like in nature. Such scholars believe that it is impossible to generalize

13 Masuzawa 2005. However, because Masuzawa’s argument ends with a reaffirmation of West-centric universalism, we must maintain some critical distance from this study as remaining a classical example of the yearning for universalism inherent in religious studies.

14 Fitzgerald 2000, chapter 2. Much recent scholarship has referred to the work of W. C. Smith and Sharpe. Those who automatically critique them for having an essentialist quality, however, often seem overly hasty.

15 Asad 2001, p. 134.

16 See Vries and Sullivan 2006, Casanova 1994, and Asad 2003.

from case to case. Work strongly demonstrating tendencies along these lines is included in McCutcheon's *Manufacturing Religion* and Tim Murphy's "Essence and Phenomena in the History of Religious Studies Research: The Poststructuralist Point of View" (1994), as well as Timothy Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. However, since 1990 the debate on the concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies has also given rise to various middle positions. These occupy spaces somewhere between W. C. Smith's essentialism on the one hand and poststructuralist views regarding the purely text-like nature of reality on the other, so the debate continues over the two antagonistic modes of scholarship.

Nevertheless, insofar as we are engaged in cognitive activity, it is impossible to entirely rid ourselves of some acts of conceptualization. If it is the case that the concept of religion has a tarnished past because of the European Enlightenment, then perhaps what is called for is, after all, an alternative concept along the lines of what Smith has offered. Works such as those included in the volume *What is Religion: Origins, Definitions, and Explanations* (1998) edited by T. A. Idinopulos and B. C. Wilson represent attempts to arrive at such a redefinition. In that volume, Wilson's "From the Lexicological to the Pantheological: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion" offers a typological approach to the concept of religion that utilizes the family resemblance concept, sharing this approach with Saler's previously mentioned *Conceptualizing Religion*.¹⁷

The "family resemblance" approach resists simplistic definitions of religion. Instead, Wilson envisaged a comprehensive definition reflecting the inclusivist scholarship of recent years in order to avoid definitions that overemphasize the value of the monotheistic traditions. Such sweeping attempts invite ambiguity, and some have asserted that since all definitions must fundamentally involve drawing lines, any attempt at all-inclusiveness is absurd. A critique along these lines was introduced to the debate at the 1995 Seventh International Religious Studies Academic Conference "Book Review Symposium Panel on Benson Saler's *Conceptualizing Religion*."¹⁸ Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies* featured a similar critique of the all-inclusive definition.

Since definition by its nature approaches phenomena from a one-sided or subjective perspective, it cannot ensure universal or eternal objectivity. Ultimately it produces no more than provisional concepts that are applicable to peculiar conditions of a given society at a particular time. If the *raison*

17 Of course, attempts to use the idea of family resemblance to define religion have existed for quite some time before. A very early effort along these lines could be found in William P. Aston's entry "Religion" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 7, pp. 282–93.

18 Lease et al. 2000.

d'être of concepts is that they remain valid "even when lifted from the realm of everyday life and that they transcend daily life,"¹⁹ new concepts replacing previous ones will reflect the contemporary atmosphere while constantly carving themselves out, fluidly and consciously according to the realities that may challenge them.

The significance of such acts of conceptualization was addressed by Jeppe S. Jensen in his article "Is a Religious Phenomenology Possible: Regarding the Notion of Religious Studies as Humanities/Social Science" (1993)²⁰ and in the book *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion* (1999) edited by Jean G. Plavoet and Arie Molendijk.²¹ In the current state of the discussion, however, far from there being any agreement over a desirable replacement for earlier conceptualizations, controversy over the role of the formerly presupposed, self-evident concept of religion has become all the more entrenched. As discussed in *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (2008) edited by Hent de Vries, insofar as religion was understood to be a concept, it originally included the potential to deconstruct its own distinct homogeneity; the activity of conclusively criticizing the concept provided the richest intellectual suggestivity. However, de Vries has also seemed to state that the concept of religion is an exception among concepts in that it can go beyond being a concept. Here, I would rather emphasize the former claim, how religion can deconstruct its own concept, indeed how fundamentally any concept has no other choice but to go beyond the concept itself, but deconstructively. The concept of religion is not an exceptional case but one of the exemplary cases in which a concept functions to deconstruct itself. Here we must draw a clear line, as de Vries and Masuzawa have noted, against the contemporary scholarly trend called the "return to religion" (a recovered conservative standpoint according to which religion is something that can be universal), which has the dangerous desire to appeal to transcending the deconstructive criticism of the concept of religion.²²

As discussed above, poststructuralism and other critiques of the modern West introduced the perspective that the concept of religion and religious studies were part of discourse and they aroused the self-criticism that the discourse itself is the product of Western modernity as it evolved since the

19 See "Nihon Kyōsantō ron 1950–51" in Takeuchi 1934, p. 159.

20 Jensen 1993.

21 Plavoet and Molendijk 1999.

22 For recent discussions on essentialism, see Butler et al. 2000. Scholars of religion similarly talk about the phenomenon of a "return to religion," but the works of Jacques Derrida, Slavoj Žižek, and Jean-Luc Nancy on Christianity must be distinguished in that they do not superimpose on religiosity a desire for universalism.

Enlightenment and that Westerners had unconsciously tried to universalize concepts that involved those historical limitations. The debates surrounding the concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies have assumed a radically critical stance with respect to previously held views about the universally valid character of concepts about religion that had their origin in the modern West. Such debates are fundamentally part of trends in other areas of academia, for example the debate on theory of scripture that arose and spread widely after the 1980s, or the debate on formalism that greatly influenced anthropology, or the general critique of empiricism that is intimately connected with the linguistic turn.²³

Of course, it still makes sense to maintain a duly critical stance vis-à-vis those who unquestioningly sing the praises of all aspects of these new approaches in academia. Meanwhile, however, without quite excusing religious studies scholars from bearing responsibility for the conceptual problems in question,²⁴ it is desirable that we continue to engage in open, fruitful debate regarding problems that arise from the structures imposed by the patterns of thought that have been perpetuated by religious studies.²⁵

“Religion” in the Non-West

Critical examination of the Western concept of religion and the establishment of the discipline of religious studies within Western religious studies has simultaneously opened up a process of self-reevaluation in the non-West: this especially pertains to the epistemological violence involved in imposition of Western concepts upon non-Western societies. We are brought back to a reconsideration of the groundbreaking achievements of W. C. Smith and Eric Sharpe. For Smith, the phenomena indicated by the terms Hinduism and Islam were delineated at the moment when they became objects of investigation by Westerners. They were categories that represented diverse realities that did not always take on a unified form in the consciousness of those associated with the traditions in question. For Sharpe the foundations of the discipline of religious studies rose out of experiences in the colonies under Western rule, and he accordingly noted how the clear tendency in early religious studies was to place Christianity at the peak of the supposed evolutionary process while

23 On this point see Biderman 1995, Bell 1997, Proudfoot 1985, and Isomae 2010.

24 Strenski 1998.

25 Russell T. McCutcheon provides a brief introduction to an opposing point of view in a review article, McCutcheon 1999, p. 76.

considering religious phenomena of other regions as representing earlier stages of development.

The problem was that the perceiving, subjective consciousness of Westerners treated the perceived consciousnesses of the inhabitants of non-Western societies as nothing more than the stuff of objectified analysis. There is in this one-sided delineation of the object of analysis an element of what could even be called “violence.” How such one-dimensional perceptions forestalled the possibilities of meaningful interaction was the subject of Edward Said’s 1978 book *Orientalism*. Said asserted that the concept of the Orient was imposed by the West upon the rest of the world, and that the engine of its successful imposition was the study of the so-called “Orient.” In terms of discourse Orientalism represented a process whereby the West projected images that both fulfilled and supplemented the way the Western self regarded the rest of the world.

Of course, the West alone is not to blame for the one-sided imposition of Orientalism on the rest of the world. Non-Western societies themselves, after all, internalized the gaze of the West and in many ways sought to assimilate with or identify themselves with the West. The tendency to identify with the West has been remarkably visible among native elites who developed, as a complementary opposite, a kind of “Occidentalism.”²⁶ Recently, in confronting the workings of Orientalism on the one hand and Occidentalism on the other in the space between the West and the non-West, religious studies scholars have begun to reconsider the concept of religion and its development as an academic discipline in terms of the issues of cultural identity arising in political contexts.

As early as the International Religious Studies Academic Conference panel in 1990 on “Religious Studies: Retrospective and Prospects” (see the Bianchi volume mentioned above) the Korean scholar Kim Seong-nae had referred to the inappropriateness of the Western concept of religion when applied to non-Western societies. Publications treating this issue in later years include the volume *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia* (1994),²⁷ edited by Charles Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre; *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (1996) by David Chidester;²⁸ *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘The Mystic East’* (1999) by Richard King;²⁹ and the volume

26 Chen 1995.

27 Keyes, Kendall, and Hardacre 1994.

28 Chidester 1996.

29 R. King 1999.

Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia (1999) edited by Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann.

In the introduction to *Asian Visions of Authority*, the editors pointed out that there is no native concept in Asia and Southeast Asia that corresponds to the Western definition of religion grounded in Protestant experience. They note that when the concept of religion was being publicly propagated in these regions as a part of the modernization process, pre-existing local religious phenomena were derided as not authentically religious. The work of the various scholars in the book, while focusing on their own specific areas of research, shared a common awareness of the oppressive relationship between the West and the non-West vis-à-vis religion.

Chidester's *Savage Systems* described how the Western concept of religion and the sub-discipline of comparative religions had a particular utility in the imperialist policy of invasion in South Africa. Judgments regarding whether a native people possessed or did not possess a religion were grounded in comparative religion and used to solve the political problem of whether these people's political and/or human rights should be recognized. Chidester's work has been invaluable in clearly demonstrating the intimate connection between the field of comparative religion on the one hand and colonialism on the other. At the same time, however, Chidester argued from the perspective of the people defeated in a process of exploitation; he did not account for the other influences the process had on the indigenous people, so there was little discussion of the issue of the formation of identity on the part of the colonized people.

As a result of such discussions of Orientalism and Occidentalism, as well as the examination in postcolonial theory of the problem of cultural hegemony, we have begun to recognize that the problem of the imposition of the concept of religion on the non-West is not a simple question of coercion through political power. Our analyses must go beyond such unilateral thinking to reach the point where we can also examine how the Western discourse on religion and related concepts has been involved in the subject-formation of native elites. Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* and the essays featured in *Nation and Religion* have begun to pose questions along these lines. King, in attempting to build a postcolonial theory like that associated with Gayatri Spivak, examined the movement by which the non-West—the object referred to in the Orientalist discourse—became the site of a subjective identity-formation on the part of native elites. He argued that even when religionists in India sought to make an appeal for their own religious traditions, they did so by imitating European modes of subjectivity.

Veer and Lehmann's *Nation and Religion* addressed how the colonization of the extra-European world occurred in an environment where nationalism and

religion were bound together. The essays in that volume took as their starting points Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism and Talal Asad's theory of the concept of religion. For example, Susan Bayly's "Race in Britain and India" is a compelling attempt to comprehend how the structural internalization of the British view of race among Indian native elites occurred through the processes of colonial rule. Another study that deals with religion in colonial India is S. N. Balagangadhara's *The Heathen in His Blindness* . . . : *Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion*³⁰ (1994). Balagangadhara focused on the power relationship between the West and non-West from the perspective of native elites. Also, Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* (1998)³¹ demonstrated how English imperial authority over India, desiring to avoid tensions among all the various religions of the subcontinent, aimed at a conversion of the people by means of secularized education focusing on the study of English literature.

Winston King provided an important conceptual key to our understanding of the processes involved in the imposition of the concept of religion on the non-West in his article on "Religion" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* when he pointed out the often-visible gap between religious belief and religious practice.³² The modern West centering on Protestantism has placed primary emphasis on belief taking the form of clearly defined doctrine, and has regarded as secondary the non-verbal ritual activity that in actuality has typically constituted practice. The gaze of Westerners in their understanding of religious phenomena of the non-West thus employed the same criteria, and as a result, with the exception of Islam and Buddhism, such phenomena were regarded as being relatively low in their level of sophistication. Those in the non-West who were the object of this outside gaze likewise came to view their own religious traditions as inferior, leading to frequent compensatory attempts to furnish indigenous religion with a systematic, Western type of doctrinal language. Here we can see how the gap between belief and practice was used as leverage in the process of establishing cultural hegemony. Viswanathan's *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (1998)³³ was a work born from a critique against this emphasis on belief defining religiosity in terms

30 Balagangadhara 1994.

31 Viswanathan 1998a.

32 This usage of the concepts of belief and practice comes from Talal Asad. Belief refers to the linguistic and conceptual aspect of religious acts, while practice is the non-linguistic and bodily aspect of them. However, these should not be comprehended as always inherently dichotomous categories. Rather, in any given case the difference of belief and practice depends upon how religious subjects perceive their own religious acts. For details, see Asad 1993, chapter 2.

33 Viswanathan 1998b.

of internalized creeds; it discussed the process of conversion that went on in the give-and-take relationship between the colonies and the British empire. Meanwhile, as Asad noted, "How did the idea of teaching the body to develop 'virtues' through material means come to be displaced by the idea of separating internal feelings and thoughts called 'emotions' from social forms/ formulas/ formalities?"³⁴ I believe that human beings do not necessarily choose clearly between belief and practice; perhaps the desirable formation of identity comes, in fact, through the tension between the two.

Thus debate surrounding the formation of the discipline of religious studies and the concept of religion has begun to take into account the perspectives furnished by the work of scholars such as Said and Spivak dealing with the cultural identities of Third World intellectuals. From a debate that began in a primarily intellectual dimension and derived from poststructuralist influences, the discussion has gone on to be more materially focused on problems of colonialism and class with deeply historical and social features. The shift from the problems of self-reflection within Western society to the issues of relations between Western and non-Western societies in a globalized world has expanded the scope of the debate on religion and the concept of religion.³⁵

However, the establishment of cultural hegemony is not something limited only to the relationship between the West and non-West. On the contrary, power relations grounded in cultural hegemony are everywhere, including internally within the Western nation-states or among the various countries of the non-West. Indeed, the non-West came to a kind of self-recognition when it became the object of the Orientalist gaze. The Occidental movement took place in reaction, but it merely accelerated a process whereby classes within non-Western countries that identified with the West were differentiated from classes that became fixed as non-Western. We cannot, therefore, be satisfied to be caught up in the dichotomy between the West and the non-West; we must pay attention as well to the internal fissures produced within non-Western societies by the twin discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism. As contemporary subaltern studies have pointed out, native elites and non-elites among non-Western populations cannot be bundled together as a homogeneous people or ethnicity, and the relationship between such groups cannot be neatly characterized simply by something advertised as mutual good will.³⁶ On all these points, the debates surrounding the transmission of the

34 Asad 1993, p. 72.

35 Regarding the relationship between Marxist historical interpretation and poststructuralism see Hall 1996.

36 Spivak 1999 and Chow 1993.

concept of religion and the formation of religious studies in the non-West have ramifications not restricted to the phenomena of religion. It is my hope that an investigation of such matters will also entail the possibility of greater self-understanding. The study of the concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies can finally be seen as the study of processes of modernization that have produced social structures intimately bound up with who we are as creatures of the modern era.

Modern Japan in the Debate

Let me close this introduction with an overview of previous scholarship on religious phenomena in modern Japan, which is the area of my own research. There were some studies even in the West of the concept of religion and the formation of religious studies as a discipline that focused briefly on Japan. Michael Pye's "An Asian Starting Point for the Study of Religion" (in Despland and Vallée 1992) was an early example. Pye attempted to show the similarity between Western and Asian trends in the study of religion. He made the case that the late-nineteenth-century scholar Tominaga Nakamoto's textual criticism of Buddhist scriptures was an imitation of deism in the West. More recently as well, essays that originated as conference papers at a 1996 international conference on indigenous religions, traditions, and modernity,³⁷ along with Timothy Fitzgerald's "Critique of 'Religion' as a Transitional Category" (1997),³⁸ "The Problem of the Category of 'Religion' in Japan" (2000),³⁹ and Ivan Strenski's "Religion, Authority, and Final Foucault" (1998),⁴⁰ all made some reference to the example of Japan.

These Western religious studies scholars tended to mention Japan, however, only as a means to reconsider the Western concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies in their own milieu. Such references were made as part of the self-criticism of Western society, not examinations of Japan for its own sake.

More specifically concerned with Japan was James Edward Ketelaar's study of modern Japanese Buddhism: *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan* (1990).⁴¹ Although it focused neither on the concept of religion in general nor the

37 Olupona 2004.

38 Fitzgerald 1997.

39 Fitzgerald 2000.

40 Strenski 1998.

41 Ketelaar 1990.

process whereby religious studies was established, it did offer an analysis of the processes whereby a modern concept of Buddhism as a unified entity was fostered by transforming an earlier situation in which only various sects had existed. Ketelaar clarified how this formulation occurred under the hegemonic influence of the Western concept of religion as well as the way that such processes were grounded in the specific context of Japanese society at the time. Along similar lines, Robert H. Sharf's "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" (1993)⁴² took up the topic of Daisetz T. Suzuki, pointing out how Suzuki's understanding of Buddhism imitated Western subjectivity and arguing that the reason that Suzuki was so well received in the West was that his work was a reflection of the West's own self-image.

Within Japan as well, of course, religious studies began very early on, and developed independently from what was being done in the West. The first observation of such efforts was Shinoda Kazuto's study of developments in academic research on religion in post-Meiji Japan,⁴³ published in 1965. Shinoda explained how the discipline of religious studies had emerged in Japan a few decades after its appearance in Europe and the United States, some time around 1900, and he noted the importance of considering the historical context of social thought at the time. The scope of Shinoda's work, however, was limited to offering an analytic point of view and presenting some resources for consideration. It was not until the mid-1970s that more substantial scholarship appeared with such publications as *Meiji shisōka no shūkyōkan*, an anthology of essays concerning Meiji ideologues' and thinkers' views of religion compiled by the Research Association for the History of Comparative Thought (1975),⁴⁴ Suzuki Norihisa's study of trends in Meiji thought on religion which examined the beginnings of religious studies in Japan (1979),⁴⁵ and Yasumaru Yoshio's look at the fate of the gods and buddhas under the policies of separating the Shintō and Buddhist divinities and the anti-Buddhism movement following the Meiji Restoration (1979).⁴⁶

At the risk of offering an overly schematic commentary, several comparisons with the scholarship of the West can be offered. *Meiji shisōka no shūkyōkan* dealt with the question of Buddhist and Christian adherents and their relationship to the Meiji Enlightenment thinkers in a manner similar to W. C. Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962) insofar as Smith had pointed out the

42 Sharf 1993.

43 Shinoda 1965a.

44 Hikaku Shisōshi Kenkyūkai 1975.

45 Suzuki Norihisa 1979.

46 Yasumaru 1979.

modernity of the concept of religion. The Suzuki work was similar to Sharpe's *Comparative Religious Studies* (1975) in the way he addressed the topic of the formation of religious studies as a discipline and dealt with the academic history of the field. Lastly, Yasumaru's approach was similar to Chidester's *The Savage System* in his delineation of the process whereby folk religion and native practices were repressed through the introduction of Western civilizational models, shedding light on the oppressive relationship between the West and the non-West.

However, as distinct from the pattern in the West where scholars embarked on such work from within the discipline of religious studies, for the most part scholars in Japan have operated from the separate fields of intellectual history, religious studies, and history, and have approached each of the religious phenomena of the Meiji era as objects of inquiry autonomously, with each investigator employing methodologies of and being motivated by scholarly concerns proper to his or her own separate field. This fragmentation may help explain why, with the exception of studies of Daisetz T. Suzuki as a religious studies scholar, the discipline of religious studies and the concept of religion until recently escaped scholarly interest. *Meiji shisōka no shūkyōkan* was an intellectual history focused on well-known individuals, while the Yasumaru book was grounded in a focus on the state's repression of the masses from the perspective of Marxist historiography. In the 1980s, Fujii Takeshi⁴⁷ published a work of institutional history that clarified the process by which the Tokyo University Department of Religious Studies was formed, but as a whole his argument lacked clear direction.

By the mid-1990s, however, in the wake of the "linguistic turn" originating in the West, the trend concerned with the critical discourse on religion reached Japan. Now Japanese scholars began to make the concept of religion and the discipline of religious studies matters of historical investigation, since these subjects were elements of the tide of modernization that had swept nineteenth-century Japan. Subsequent publications introducing the academic methodologies and concerns of the contemporary West have included various articles of my own that became chapters of this book. Others include Yamaguchi Teruomi's study of religious narrative (1996)⁴⁸ and his study of the Meiji state and religion (1999),⁴⁹ Seki Kazutoshi's study on Japanese modernity and religion (1997),⁵⁰ and Shimazono Susumu's essays on the formation

47 Fujii Takeshi 1982.

48 Yamaguchi 1996b.

49 Yamaguchi 1999.

50 Seki Kazutoshi 1997.

of the concept of “religion” in Japan (1998)⁵¹ and his probe of the distinction between *shūkyō* and religion (2001).⁵² The scheduling of a methodology panel on “Japanese Religious Studies: Reexamining Its Place in Society” at the 1999 meeting of the Japanese Religious Studies Association itself testifies to the fact (aside from the success or failure of that particular panel in terms of content) that the concept of religion and issues relating to the formation of religious studies as a discipline are becoming common concerns in the world of religious studies in Japan. My own work on the subject published in 2003 (on which chapter 1 of the present work is based) and the specially written collection *Kindai Nihon to shūkyōgaku: Gakuchi o meguru naratoroji*⁵³ showed that the debate had moved beyond the framework of religious studies and begun to influence the fields of Japanese history and Japanese intellectual history as well. Also contributing to this work has been the publication since 2002 of reproductions of primary sources by seminal scholars such as Anesaki Masaharu, Inoue Tetsujirō, and Katō Genchi in the Kuresu Shuppan press series, *Shirūzu Nihon no shūkyōgaku (Japanese Religious Studies)*.⁵⁴

Distinctive features of this recent scholarship have been examination of the relationship between Japan as a thoroughly Westernized—yet non-Western—entity and investigation of the way the discipline of religious studies and the concept of religion relate to emperor-centered State Shintō.

As a particular contribution in regard to Japanese modernity’s relationship with Western civilization, Seki’s *Nihon kindai to shūkyō* entered the debate on the appropriateness of continuing to use the word *shūkyō* since it was coined as a translation of the English word “religion.”⁵⁵ Basing his arguments on findings in cultural anthropology, Seki pointed out that the concept of *shūkyō*, just like the concept of religion in the West, had an oppressive function vis-à-vis folk religion and the beliefs of common people because of the notion implicit in the concept of religion that belief was superior to practice. This point of view shared much with Ama Toshimaro’s *Nihonjin wa naze mushūkyō nano ka (Why Are Japanese Non-Religious? 2005)*.⁵⁶ Ama was not concerned with the

51 Shimazono 1998.

52 Shimazono 2001c.

53 Hayashi and Isomae 2008.

54 *Shirūzu Nihon no shūkyōgaku*, published by Kuresu Shuppan.

55 Scholars had already begun studies of the word *shūkyō* by the 1930s. Some of the first publications on this topic included Inoue Tetsujirō’s congratulatory address in the first issue of the *Shūkyōgaku kiyō* (Bulletin of Religious Studies) in 1930, Katō Genchi 1936, Aihara 1938 on the establishment of *shūkyō* as a translation word, and Kawada Kumatarō 1957.

56 Ama 2005.

concept of religion or the discipline of religious studies, but rather attempted to address from a Japanese, non-Western perspective what W. C. Smith had argued in *The Meaning and End of Religion* from a Western perspective. Both authors agreed that the Western concept of religion was not suited to the analysis of non-Western religious phenomena.

In considering State Shintō, what comes to mind is that the relationships between Shintō and the concept of religion on the one hand and studies of Shintō and the discipline of religious studies on the other were both manifestations of peculiarly Japanese problems. A fascinating aspect of the discourse on State Shintō was that, if the Western concept of religion or other Western features such as morality and ethics were considered, State Shintō was rather successful in escaping the hegemony of Christian definitions of religion. Several works taking such issues into account have included Haga Shōji's groundbreaking study of religion, history, and "Shintō" (1994);⁵⁷ Yamaguchi's abovementioned 1996 work on the Meiji state and religion; Shimazono's work on State Shintō and the structure of religions in modern Japan (2000);⁵⁸ and some of my own work, both on the formation of modern Shintō studies (1996 and originally published in my 2003 book; see chapter 7) and the conceptual formation of the category of "religion" in modern Japan (Isomae 2002 and also chapter 4).⁵⁹ All these have emphasized the continuity of modern Shintō studies with Edo period National Learning (Kokugaku) thought, in contrast to the idea that Shintō and Shintō studies were influenced by the modern concept of religion. In that way they illustrate most interestingly one response among current Shintō studies. In contrast, Inoue Hiroshi's *Nihon no jinja to "Shintō"* on Japanese shrines and Shintō argued⁶⁰ that precisely at the moment when modern Shintō studies was emphasizing its own traditionality it was actually demonstrating that the historical concept of "Shrine Shintō" on which it had been established was born out of the interdependent relationship with the Western concept of religion. It might be added, however, that debates about the modernity of Shintō studies and the concept of Shintō are not questions of whether the constitutive elements are continuous or discontinuous; what should rather be reinforced is that the main issue is changes in the organization of the discourse itself.

The works introduced above are concerned with the religious institutions of the state in the modern history of Japan, and reflect the necessity to take into

57 Haga 1994.

58 Shimazono 2000.

59 Isomae 2002 and chapter 4 of this volume.

60 Inoue Hiroshi 2006.

consideration the emperor system and other aspects of the political context when discussing the concept of religion and religious studies in Japan. The debate concerning State Shintō from the perspectives of history and Shintō studies is of particular importance, and scholars will need to assimilate the results of conceptual analysis regarding the notions of Shintō as non-religion and shrines as non-religious as found in studies such as that by Sasaki Kiyoshi (1985).⁶¹ I myself contributed to the discussion of religion in the process of the emergence of modern Japan with an article published in 2000,⁶² the text on which this introduction is based. Other studies include Shimazono Susumu's *Gendai shisō* article on State Shintō, the idea of *kokutai* (national body; polity), and emperor worship (2007)⁶³ and Azegami Naoki's book on village gods (*chinju*) in prewar Japan (2009).⁶⁴ By discussing the relationship between State Shintō and local shrines, Azegami has provided a unique perspective on the connection between State Shintō theory and *kokutai* theory. Other works that have touched on the concept of religion while treating the relationship between State Shintō and Buddhism include Hayashi Makoto's essay on modern Buddhism and State Shintō (2006)⁶⁵ and Tanigawa Yutaka's 2008 book on education, propaganda, and Buddhism in the early Meiji era.⁶⁶

The present book offers another discussion of the intersection of two axes—the relationship of religion with Western civilization and the relationship of religion to State Shintō—and how the Western concept of religion was transplanted into Japan's particular social context. Other attempts to grapple with how society was organized as a result of the division and arrangement of discursive space in this context of transplantation have included Yamaguchi's *Shūkyō no katarikata*, Ketelaar's *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan*, and my own study of Marxist historiography and religion and “interiority” in modern Japan, which looks at the relationship of literature and history to the discourse on religion.⁶⁷ A panel on “Discussing Postwar Japanese Religion” at the American Asian Studies Conference⁶⁸ also advanced this discussion, and

61 Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985.

62 Isomae 2000a.

63 Shimazono 2007; in English, Shimazono 2005.

64 Azegami 2009.

65 Hayashi Makoto 2006a.

66 Tanigawa 2008.

67 See the chapter “Marukusu-shugi shigaku to shūkyō: Kindai Nihon ni okeru naimenteki no mono” in Isomae 2007a and b.

68 Kisala et al. 1998.

my own publication on the “paradoxical modernity” of Shintō studies (1998)⁶⁹ resulting from that panel has formed part of the debate.

In other words, research in Japan on the concept of religion and the establishment of religious studies has been conducted primarily by the handful of scholars directly connected to religious studies (plus a few exceptions like historians Yamaguchi and Ketelaar). In that development, Japanese religious studies have also given consideration to general trends in scholarship from poststructuralism onward. Most recently, however, not everything can be explained by the influence of poststructuralism alone. One has to imagine also that a succession of problems with cults, especially beginning with the Aum Shinrikyō incident, has resulted in the perception that religion in modern Japan should be closely reexamined. A tendency has persisted until now for discussion of the concept of religion and religious studies to be confined to the dimension of the native elites, who as intellectuals and as religious studies scholars were the bearers of a conceptual discourse that was under the direct influence of Western society. Yet, comprehending the larger relationship between non-Western Japanese society and Western society is not only a matter of grasping the so-called cultural gap between Japan and the Western world. One is also obliged to consider the dynamics of power internal to Japan that have involved the cultural hegemony of native elites, who are oriented towards the conceptual world of the West, over the general populace who remained outside the bounds of that world.

Valuable studies that have focused on such issues and brought needed perspectives to the debate on the discourse of religion have come from the school of so-called people’s history (*minshūshi* 民衆史), a movement that was influenced by Yasumaru Yoshio’s 1970s publication *Kamigami no Meiji Ishin* mentioned above. Particularly notable is Tsurumaki Takao’s essay treating the Enlightenment thinkers (*keimōka* 啓蒙家), “civilization and enlightenment,” and the metamorphosis of folk culture (1996).⁷⁰ Tsurumaki demonstrated the oppressiveness of the state and Western-civilization-oriented native elites vis-à-vis popular and folk beliefs. Similarly important is Katsurajima Nobuhiro’s essay on the establishment of Sect Shintō and Konkōkyō (1997).⁷¹ Katsurajima showed how popular religion was reorganized in accordance with Western modes of subjectivity. Similar studies include Hatakama Kazuhiro on Tenrikyō and society in the Meiji era (1996);⁷² Kozawa Hiroshi on

69 Isomae 1998a.

70 Tsurumaki 1996.

71 Katsurajima 1997.

72 Hatakama 1996.

the history of the idea of “living deities” (*ikigami*), modernity in Japan, and folk belief (1988);⁷³ and Kawamura Kunimitsu on the illusion of modernity, superstition, sickness, confinement, and historical memory (1997).⁷⁴

Studies such as these have added to our understanding of the relationship between the West and the non-West in terms of cultural hegemony. They have brought into the debate analyses of Japan’s particular emperor system and its relationship with political power on the one hand, and, on the other, analyses of the relationship between native elites as bearers of conceptual discourse and ordinary people who have remained outside that discourse. In contrast to treatments that have tended to go no further than description of relations between Western society and the native elites, these works create the possibility of development towards a new phase in the discourse of how religion functions in Japanese society as a whole. However, what is referred to as “the people” is not fixed or uniform. Rather, as reflected in how Hirota Masaki pointed out a multilayered internal structure of the “people” in his study of the three social tiers consisting of the wealthy farmer and merchant class, the lower strata, and people of the desperately marginalized underclass (1980), their religions are not uniform either.⁷⁵

As shown by such inquiries attempting to account for the relationship between the discourse on religion and the society of the general populace, studies of religious discourse in Japan are not simply imitations of similar work in Western religious studies. Some Japanese scholars have moved beyond the simple dichotomies between West and non-West, as presented by Chidester in his *Savage Systems*. They have been enabled to do this because, caught up in the globalization ushered in by the diffusion of Western modernity throughout the world, they are brought face-to-face with the problem of cultural hegemony within Japan evolving out of the gap between a Westernized elite on the one hand and the complexly stratified masses on the other. Confronting the intersection of the modern emperor system and the process by which its system of religions was established, they have been able to reconfigure views of Western civilization as seen from a non-Western society. My own works on the formation of the concept of religion in modernity, including my *Kindai Nihon no shūkyō gensetsu to sono keifū* (2003) and *Sōshitsu to nosutarujia* (2007) have been attempts to reconceptualize Meiji religious history from that point of view. Between the former and latter books, my methodology deepened under the influence of the shift from discourse theory to poststructuralism;

73 Kozawa 1988.

74 Kawamura Kunimitsu 1997.

75 Hirota 1980, p. 93.

that evolution must not be overlooked when considering the problem of conceptual margins.

When deeper motivations and perspectives are lacking, the epistemological reflection that ought to be inherent in discussions of such matters can degenerate into mere appropriation of intellectual fashions from the West by native elites as tools for achieving their place in an academic pecking order. In order to not fall into this trap, anyone trying to deal with this issue has to articulate clear and conscious reasons for adopting particular perspectives and discussing particular problems. To illustrate the principle that has guided me in this book, I would like to cite the critic Karatani Kōjin:

It was not until the period circa 1887–1896 that the implementation of policies of homogenization and centralization led to the establishment of a modern state. Naturally this state was the creation of the already existing power structure. But during the very same period, from among those who opposed this power structure, emerged the formations of the subject and interiority. From the start they were mutually implicated Those devoted to the state and those devoted to interiority complemented each other. It was in the face of the overwhelming dominance of the West that the establishment of both the modern state and interiority in the third decade of Meiji became ineluctable. That these developments took place should not be the focus of our critique. What we can criticize are contemporary modes of thought which accept these products of an inversion as natural. . . . We must seek to expose the historicity of that very “literature,” of literature as a system which ceaselessly reproduces itself.⁷⁶



If Karatani’s word “literature” is replaced with “religion” and “religious studies” here, the central topic of the present volume becomes clear. As in Asad’s criticism of W. C. Smith in a conventional understanding of religion as something solely interior to human beings, a line is drawn that seeks to preserve the purity and objectivity of discourse. In repositioning religious discourse in the everyday world instead, we must address its political nature. Yet it goes without saying that such a political nature is not to be one-sidedly restored, in either social or religious terms; and religion is not to be unilaterally designated as either good or bad. In the historical context of everyday society, to question

⁷⁶ Karatani 1993, pp. 94–95.

the articulation⁷⁷ of this ambiguity in terms of its systems or concepts means to seek a perspective that can ascertain its dynamism. Such a mode of “exteriority”⁷⁸ does not indicate an exterior that is outside an interior; rather, it occurs just when it is understood as referring instead to a margin.

77 The term articulation comes from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe via Stuart Hall. It means to concretize a not-yet-present idea within a specific cultural and political context. See Laclau and Mouffe 1985.

78 “Exteriority” here, following the usage of Gilles Deleuze, means to deconstruct any dichotomously understood boundary between “inside” and “outside.”

PART ONE

*The Formation of the Concept of “Religion”
and Modern Academic Discourse*



The Concept of “Religion”: From the Modern Opening of Japan to the Emergence of Religious Studies

The contemporary word for religion in Japanese, *shūkyō*, was originally a coined word occurring in Chinese Buddhist dictionaries. In the sense we use it today, however, it originates in the Euro-American word “religion.” That is, the original Buddhist *shūkyō* was transformed in the late nineteenth century into a translation for the Western term religion. In its modern meaning, therefore, it did not have a long tradition of usage in Japan: it was a product of a modern modality of consciousness, prompted by the opening of the country as the age of the shoguns came to an end in the mid-nineteenth century. It became fixed in the language as Japan grappled with its encounter with Western civilization. This chapter will examine how the modern term “religion” (that is, *shūkyō*) became embedded in Japan, beginning with a focus on the period from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.

The important thing to recognize is that the problems of words like *shūkyō* are not confined to the surface, to changes simply in the words used to express an idea. In examining the history of the word *shūkyō*, we must look instead at how the cognitive paradigm of the word shifted, that is, the very process by which the epistemology of the word “religion” came about. The appearance of any new word, as Michel Foucault said, involves “long inquiries into the system of emergence of objects, the system of the appearance and distribution of enunciative modes, the system of the placing and dispersion of concepts, [and] the system of the deployment of strategic choices.”¹ All of these reveal the fundamental changes that take place in the mechanism of our consciousness.²

In fact, a critical reconsideration of the concept of religion has been going on in the field of religious studies in the West. Focusing on the Eurocentrism of the term—its links to colonialism and Orientalism—and its viewpoint grounded in modern rationalist values deriving from Protestantism, scholars are debating whether the content of the concept of religion ought to be

1 Foucault 1972, p. 79.

2 Similarly, as attempts treating the modern formation of the words “art” (*bijutsu*) and “pictorial arts” (*kaiga*) see Satō Dōshin 1996; Suzuki Sadami 2006. On the formation of the concept of “religion” see Yamaguchi 1999.

broadly altered, or whether the word itself ought to be scrapped. Discussion has begun about how the impact of the concept of religion, with its origins in the West, has been felt in other regions of the world, such as South Africa and India. And with regard to Japan, too, attempts have been made to treat this issue in the historical context of the country's modernization.³

Recent trends in religious studies in Japan are not simply in imitation of Euro-American research but are intimately related to issues internal to Japanese society. The Aum Shinrikyō incident, for example, had a major impact on these trends. The problems of religion, freedom of faith, and society that were much touted in connection with that incident were not confined to anti-social cults or other religious groups, but were tied up with long-debated earlier questions such as the relation of religion and the state (in connection with Yasukuni Shrine) or whether Japanese are even endowed with what can be called a "religious" spirit. As a result Japanese have been forced to look again at the issue of what religion means to them and what place religion holds in Japanese society.⁴

In this sense, the study of the concept of religion in modern Japan will be an attempt to reinterrogate the epistemological modality of "shūkyō"—to look again at a term that many have until today taken as self-evident. The issue, however, is not one that can be settled just on the level of concepts, but rather has to include in its scope study of the politics and social institutions that have related to religion up to the present. That will call for studies in the field of modern Japanese history, as well as in the history of politics and institutions relating to religion and the state in the fields of the history of Christianity and of Buddhism. Yet at the same time, these efforts should not end with simply copying the trends of Western research; scholars should not allow themselves to become buried in a perspective restricted only to Japanese circumstances. They should pay due attention to the mutual relationships between the Western world and Japanese society with appropriate attention to both the various religious concepts derived from the West, and represented in the term "religion," and Japanese issues resulting from the country's unavoidable participation in the Western world. The questions we should be asking are: How were the religious circumstances of modern Japan incorporated into the worldwide Western structure? How was this received and articulated by Japanese society?

The discussion below divides the process by which the word "religion" was embedded into Japan into four periods: the phase during which the word

3 For an overview of debates about the concept of religion, see Molendijk 1998; McCutcheon 1995.

4 Among works dealing with such problems see Ama 2005.

shūkyō became established as the translation for "religion"; the era during which the word embodied Western civilization; the interlude when the word came to be restricted to the non-rational, private realm; and the time when the concept of religion became truly established, leading to the emergence in academia of "religious studies." I will present a dynamic perspective on the emergence and interrelationships of the various discourses on religion as they unfolded in modern Japanese society.

Translating "Religion" as *Shūkyō*

The development of the concept of "religion" in Japan was a phenomenon that accompanied Japan's incorporation into the capitalist and imperialist world of the West following the opening of the country in the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, a body of international law referred to as the "Law of Nations" declared that national sovereignties were inviolable and mutually respected. But such respect was restricted to Western nations. James Lorimer, a member of the Institut de Droit International, expressed how the world in the European understanding was divided into "civilized nations," "uncivilized nations," and "primitive nations." Among these, sovereignty and political independence was mutually recognized only among the civilized nations, that is to say the nations of the West. Undeveloped countries were deemed "primitive," frontier territories lacking sovereign authority and thus subject to colonization by civilized nations. Between the civilized and the primitive was the category of "uncivilized" areas that were treated as semi-civilized territories whose sovereignty was only conditionally recognized and which were considered to be under the supervision of the civilized nations. There were opinions other than those of Lorimer regarding which countries were uncivilized or primitive, or whether such terms should be used at all, but nineteenth-century understanding on the Western side was generally united in the conclusion that international law need not be recognized as applicable in non-Western regions.⁵

Japan was classified, along with China and Turkey, as an uncivilized nation whose sovereignty was only provisionally recognized. Nations classified as uncivilized were deemed incapable of understanding the capitalist economic system and seen as potential threats to its operation and growth. Even when signing treaties with such countries, the Western nations sought to protect their capitalist commerce through terms providing for extra-territoriality and denying tariff autonomy. The series of commercial treaties Japan signed with

5 Matsui 1974; Iguchi 1994.

Western countries were all unequal in these ways, beginning with the 1858 Japan-United States Treaty of Amity and Commerce (also known as Treaty of Friendship and Trade, or Harris Treaty).

The signing of the unequal treaties entailed more than economic loss; as had been made clear by China's ruin in the Opium War, they held the potential for eventual colonization and loss of national independence.⁶ To avoid that fate, Japan had to prevent its categorization as an uncivilized nation as expeditiously as possible and gain recognition as an equal among the Western nations. The Meiji government, which had inherited these treaties with the demise of the Tokugawa bakufu in 1868, thus sought to reshape Japan into a "civilized nation" with all possible speed. The so-called "civilization and enlightenment" movement symbolized this attempt to attain the status of civilized nation and for the above reasons possessed a political character that went deeper than surface-level importation of culture.

Recognition as a civilized nation entailed above all adoption of a constitution and a Western-style system of laws—a behest of the Western powers to guarantee the safety of their nationals engaged in commerce in the country—but that was not all. Japan was expected to adopt a wide variety of Western cultural forms and value systems, and one of the most important among them was Christianity.⁷ What was considered the real substance of a "civilized country" was bluntly revealed, for example, by the way discussion in the Institut de Droit International—the authority on doctrine concerning the applicability of international law to non-Western regions—replaced the terms "civilized" and "uncivilized" with "Christian" and "non-Christian."⁸ Of course, while the process through which the concept of religion became established in Japan was occasioned by its immediate contact with the Western world and unfolded with Christianity as its chief axis, one must also keep in mind the global political dynamics accompanying the expansion of Western capitalism that operated in the background.⁹

6 Hirose 1972.

7 On connections between state autonomy and religion in imperial policies, see Veer and Lehmann 1999; Keyes, Kendall, and Hardacre 1994. On connections between the concept of religion and the concepts of civilized, uncivilized, and primitive see Chidester 1996.

8 Fujita 1987, p. 159.

9 For an earlier mention of Western political pressure in the religious problem, see Seki Kazutoshi 1997, p. 35. On the diplomatic situation surrounding Japan in the mid-nineteenth century see Shibahara 1977.

The English word “religion” was first translated into Japanese for the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce concluded with the United States. Article VIII of the treaty contained the following provisions for the freedom of religion:¹⁰

Article VIII

Americans in Japan shall be allowed the free exercise of their religion, and for this purpose shall have the right to erect suitable places of worship. No injury shall be done to such buildings, nor any insult be offered to the religious worship of the Americans. American citizens shall not injure any Japanese temple or mia, or offer any insult or injury to Japanese religious ceremonies, or to the objects of their worship.

The Americans and Japanese shall not do anything that may be calculated to excite religious animosity. The Government of Japan has already abolished the practice of trampling on religious emblems.

The Japanese text of the treaty went as follows:

1. 日本に在る亜米利加人自ら其国の宗法を念し礼拝堂を居留場の内に置も障りなし。竝に其建物を破壊し、亜米利加人宗法を自ら念するを妨る事なし。
2. 亜米利加人、日本人の堂宮を毀傷する事なく、又決して日本神仏の礼拝を妨げ神体仏像を毀る事あるへからず。
3. 双方の人民互に宗旨に付ての争論あるへからず...¹¹

Two points will be noted in comparing the Japanese and English versions of Article VIII. First, at this moment in time the translation of “religion” is not yet *shūkyō*; the counterpart of the English term is rendered by such Japanese expressions as *shūhō* (a Buddhist term meaning lineage or *dharma* of a specific sect) or *shūshi* (also a Buddhist term referring to the lineage or principles of a specific sect). Second, the freedom of religion called for in this article is framed in terms of the unit of the nation, not the individual. Even after the treaty was signed in 1858, the ban on Christianity remained in force, but, having agreed to the principle of mutual non-interference, the Western nations did not try to compel the Japanese government to alter its policy. The British legation at the time recognized that Japan had to maintain its own national laws. Even if for

¹⁰ Gaimushō 1965, p. 19; Fujii Sadafumi 1986, pp. 88–89.

¹¹ Wording of both versions is as given in *Treaties and Conventions between the Empire of Japan and Other Powers, Together with Universal Conventions, Regulations and Communications since March 1854*, revised edition. Tokio: Kokubunsha Printing Office, 1884, pp. 736–37.

the time being they might be incompatible with the laws of other countries, they would have to be firmly enforced.¹²

The practical necessity to translate the word “religion” into Japanese, as Aihara Ichirōsuke points out, only occurred in relation to documents relating to treaties and other matters of foreign affairs.¹³ The first renderings of “religion” into Japanese, therefore, were for treaties with Western countries, and they were devised at the periphery of Japanese society and had nothing to do with domestic religious realities or trends.¹⁴ Japanese religious concepts did not come into any close contact with Western ones at this point, so initially the correspondence or non-correspondence of “religion” (with Christianity at its core) to typical Japanese concepts (represented by terms such as *shūshi*) did not become an issue. The translation of “religion” was not understood by Japanese officials and intellectuals of the day as going beyond the vague sense of *shinbutsu no reihai* (lit., worship of gods and buddhas) as expressed in the Japanese version of the 1858 treaty.

In subsequent early diplomatic documents *shūshi* was the generally adopted translation for “religion,” but other renderings can be found among writings of the Meiji Enlightenment intellectuals. Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, used *shūmon* 宗門 (lineage membership) and *shinkyō* 信教 (faith in teaching), or *shūshi hōkyō* 宗旨法教 (lineage principles, *dharma* teaching) in 1866 and 1870; Nakamura Masanao (Keiu; 1832–1891) used *shintō* 神道 (path of god) and *hōkyō* 法教 (*dharma* teaching) in 1871; Nishi Amane (1829–1897) used *kyōhō* 教法 and *shūshi* 宗旨 in 1870; Nijijima Jō (1843–1890) used *seijin no michi* 聖人の道 (path of sages), *seidō* 聖道 (holy path), and *kyōmon* 教門 (teaching) between 1867 and 1871.¹⁵

The translation *shūkyō* was just one of these options. One of the first examples of its use appeared in a document written in 1868 by the American legation staff member protesting the official notices regarding prohibition of Christianity. Then, in 1869 the term appeared in a trade treaty with the Norddeutscher Bund, and in 1872 in the “Memorial Opposed to the Three

12 “Item 658: Uragami mura yasukyōto no kakuhan e no isō ni kansuru ken.” (Document on the Dispersal of Christians from Uragami Village). In Gaimushō, ed. *Nihon gaikō bunsho* 2–3: 543.

13 Aihara 1938, p. 3.

14 Fujii Sadafumi 1986, p. 164.

15 Koizumi Takashi 1975, “Joron” (Introduction), pp. 20–21; Yamazaki 1989, pp. 93–101; *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū*, vol. 1, pp. 349, 521; sections 8.21 and 10.4 of Smiles 1981, pp. 112, 120 (the Japanese version of Smiles’s *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (1859)); *Nishi Amane zenshū*, vol. 3, p. 215; sections 8, 14, 15 of *Nijijima Jō shokanshū*, pp. 38, 67, 71; *Meiroku zasshi* 5–6, in Yamamuro and Nakanome 1999–2009, vol. 1.

Standards of Instruction" (*Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpakusho*) submitted to the government by Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911).¹⁶ At that point, however, *shūkyō* was nothing more than another way of expressing *shūhō* or *shūshi*, and had not yet come to embody the fixed meaning it carries today. However, strictly speaking, among the provisional translations for religion that preceded the eventual consensus around *shūkyō*, it seems that two lines of thought had already begun to form: *shūshi* conveyed a strong sense of practice—that is, nonverbal ritual action—and *kyōhō* was centered on belief, in other words, conceptualized or doctrinalized faith.¹⁷

Shūshi, like *shūmon*, was used in close connection with the temple registration system (檀家制度 *danka seido*) by which the shogunate coopted Buddhist parish organizations as a means to control the populace. *Shūshi* was thus a practice-related term designating individual affiliation with a specific Buddhist tradition such as Sōtō Zen or Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land Buddhism). More specifically, it was the official term used for Buddhist organizations that had been granted the right to conduct funeral rites; Shintō and Confucianism, which in general did not conduct funeral rites, were thus not included in this category. Since the term was only concerned with religious institutions that performed funeral rites, differences regarding doctrine and belief were virtually never the object of debate.

In contrast to *shūshi* and *shūmon*, the terms *kyōhō* or *seidō* indicated a close connection to belief. These words were not tied to premodern religious institutions as were *shūmon* and *shūshi*, but were instead linked to the doctrinal and intellectual truths of Buddhism and Confucianism.¹⁸ Doctrinal debates had taken place among Buddhists, Confucianists, and Kokugaku scholars during the Edo period, but these were limited to intellectuals and occupied a different dimension from that of the practice-oriented Buddhism (*shūshi*) relating to ordinary people.¹⁹ Perhaps for this reason, the terms *kyōhō* (Amane) and *seidō* (Nijima) hardly ever appear in official documents and were instead found mainly in the writings of intellectuals. The term *shūkyō*, which in Buddhist scriptures had originally meant "the ultimate truth that cannot be shown in words and the teachings that communicate it to people," was also understood as falling within the scope of a belief-oriented term.²⁰

16 *Nihon gaikō bunsho* 1-1: item 282. 642; *Nihon gaikō bunsho* 2-1: item 15. 41; Shimaji Mokurai 1872, pp. 239–40; Suzuki Norihisa 1979, pp. 16–17; Aihara 1938.

17 On the concepts of belief and practice, see W. King 1987, p. 283, and Seki Kazutoshi 1997.

18 Nakamura Hajime 1981; Koizumi Takashi 1975, Introduction.

19 Takahashi et al. 1979.

20 Nakamura Hajime 1981, p. 645; Kawada Kumatarō 1957; Nakamura Hajime 1992.

Thus, from the later part of the Edo period through the early Meiji period, translations of “religion” can be divided into two categories: the practice-oriented *shūshi* and *shūmon* and the doctrine-oriented *kyōhō*, *seidō*, and *shūkyō*. During that period, however, the terms that possessed the greatest currency among the general populace belonged to the practice-oriented category that had been associated with Edo-period religious institutions. Use of the latter terms relating to scripture and doctrine, on the other hand, were mainly used by intellectuals. *Shūkyō* was no exception, and Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944) noted that the word *shūkyō* was hardly seen before the Meiji Restoration.²¹ The fact that translations of “religion” came to be unified into *shūkyō* in the end signifies a fundamental reversal, one in which a term that had originally belonged to the minority’s doctrine-oriented category replaced terms belonging to the majority’s practice-oriented category of *shūshi* and *shūmon*.

Shūkyō is thought to have become the standard translation of “religion” from the late 1870s.²² It is included in *Tetsugaku jūi* (Dictionary of Philosophy), a reference work for translation purposes first published in 1881, which suggests that it was by then in general use.²³ The landmark event in the adoption of the term seems to have been the removal in 1873 of the official notice boards prohibiting Christianity.²⁴ Persecution of hidden Christians in Nagasaki’s Urugami village and European protests against that incident, as well as observations by members of the Iwakura Mission on their tour of North America and Europe did provide the specific political occasion for the lifting of the ban on Christianity. Ultimately, however, it would have been the above-mentioned Western distinction between civilized, uncivilized, and primitive nations that most influenced the decision. It was above all a diplomatic move made to protect the country’s sovereignty. As Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), one of the members of the Iwakura Mission, stated in his later recollections: “Foreigners generally saw the posting of notice boards [banning Christianity] as the sign of an uncivilized country that obstructs religious freedom; they liked to see allowance for equal rights. Therefore the official [prohibition] notices were removed.”²⁵

21 See Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 304. On earlier usages, see among others Katō Genchi 1944, “Tōzai ni okeru shūkyō no gōgi” [Meaning of the Word Religion in West and East]; Kawada Kumatarō 1957, p. 54.

22 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, p. 16.

23 Hida 1979. The *Tetsugaku jūi* was revised twice, in 1884 and 1912, but the gloss for the term “religion” remained unmodified.

24 Suzuki Yūko 1977; Yamazaki 1996–1997; Iechika 1988.

25 Shunpo-kō Tsuishōkai 1943, vol. 1, p. 654.

“Shūkyō” as the translation of “religion”—formerly employed only in diplomatic negotiations with foreign nations—came to be adopted in the domestic discussions concerning religious policy as tacit tolerance for Christianity emerged. With that acceptance, for the first time there arose the need for a consistent translation of “religion” for those participating in discussions of the subject.

The main public forum of discussion of religion was the pages of the journal *Meiroku zasshi*, and it was the earliest publication to adopt the translation *shūkyō*. In 1874, the year after the removal of the official notice boards, Mori Arinori (1847–1889) led the way with an article titled “Shūkyō.” Fukuzawa Yukichi also began to use the word in his *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (Outline of a Theory of Civilization) published in 1875.²⁶ Both were intellectuals of the Meiji Enlightenment well versed in conditions of the West and Mori himself was a member of the Christian Unitarian Church. Both men can thus be thought to have been well-informed about Christianity.

The relationship between Christianity and the various religions native to Japan then became a central topic of discussion. Christianity, which formed the core of the Western concept of religion, had a highly developed system of doctrinal beliefs, and Protestantism, the form of Christianity mainly introduced to Japan at this stage of its history, was staunchly belief-centered, rejecting ritual elements.²⁷ The impression of Christianity that formed the backdrop for the introduction of English word “religion” was one that leaned toward the belief-oriented meaning and, lacking emphasis on practice and ritual, did not mesh well with the Edo-period concept of *shūshi*. The choice of *shūkyō* also reflects the shift in understanding of religion among intellectuals in the 1870s, influenced as they were by acceptance of Christianity.

Issues related to “religion,” however, remained confined only to part of the elite of society, namely the government officials and intellectuals interested in enlightened thinking who came into contact with Western culture. Few Japanese at that time had any opportunity to encounter Christianity or knew anything of the word *shūkyō*. Contemporary Buddhism scholar Ōsumi Kazuo observes that for people who lived in farming villages before World War II, *shūkyō* was not a common word. He believes popular parlance would have relied on words like *shūshi* or *shinjin* 信心 (the practice of devotion), or *shingyō* 信仰 (faith), to express what we now call *shūkyō*.²⁸ This situation observed just

26 Koizumi Takashi 1975, Introduction, p. 13; *Meiroku zasshi zenshū* 6, in Yamamuro and Nakanome 1999–2009, vol. 1; *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū*, vol. 4.

27 W. C. Smith 1991, chapter 2 *passim*; Harrison 1990, chapter 2 *passim*; J. Smith 1998.

28 Ōsumi 1984, p. 95.

before World War II was apparently not much different from the way things were at the beginning of the Meiji era. Further, old words like *shingyō* and *shinjin* had originated in Buddhism, and their use in the Edo period was not limited to Buddhism but applied to popular religion and folk belief as well.²⁹ These terms were found side-by-side with *shūshi*, but *shūshi* and *shūmon* were not used formally outside the context of the official temple registration system. Thus *shingyō* and *shinjin* pertained to a broad array of religious activities, while *shūshi* and even *shūkyō* were utilized in more restricted senses. However, the fact that *shingyō* and *shinjin* were never even considered as translations for “religion” is indicative of the way the word *shūkyō* was introduced to Japanese society at a conceptual level entirely separate from folk belief and the lives of the general populace.

From Toleration of Christianity to the Suspension of the Kyōbushō Policy

Along with *shūkyō*, the words *shū* (lineage) and *kyō* (teaching) had long been used in the Buddhist world, Koizumi Takashi notes, but they had never been used with reference to any other religions. *Shūkyō* was a specifically Buddhist term, he confirms.³⁰ In Edo-period Japan the word *shūkyō* had only meant the “teachings of a school of Buddhism,” and had originally lacked even a sense of Buddhism as a unified whole, let alone any connection with other religions.³¹

The adoption of the Japanese term *shūkyō* as the translation for “religion” changed the signification of the word entirely. Its meaning was expanded to subsume all forms of religion. After the Meiji Restoration, because of the government’s policies of silently tolerating Christianity and separating Shintō from Buddhism, Buddhism’s institutional monopoly, which had prevailed throughout the Edo period, crumbled. Buddhism, Shintō, and Christianity ended up competing with one another and contributing to the expanded signification of *shūkyō*.

It was around this time that Buddhism and Shintō, neither of which had theretofore had much awareness of institutional solidarity, began to move

29 Miyata 1993, pp. 48, 52, 66; *Tokugawa kinreikō*. “2571: Fujikō no gi ni tsuke ofure”; and so on.

30 Koizumi Takashi 1975, Introduction, p. 17.

31 Ōsumi 1984, pp. 93–94. See also Katō Genchi 1944, p. 34; Suzuki Shūji 1981, pp. 124–26.

in the new direction of developing a clear identity as coherent units.³² The very term *Bukkyō* (“Buddhism”) emerged in this period as part of the effort to overcome the distinctions among the numerous independent sects that had continued throughout the Edo period.³³ Also, as the direct result of the Meiji government’s policy to establish *Shintō* as the state religion (*kokkyōka* 国教化), indigenous religious practices were disentangled from Buddhism and reintegrated in an unprecedented way to form an autonomous identity supported by the ideology of *kokutai* (national body or polity). In this case too, from the semantic perspective, the previously existing word “*Shintō*” had been formerly simply a convenient term embracing a plurality of meanings derived from a variety of perspectives.³⁴

Within this new domain of *shūkyō*, which now subsumed all the various religions, Christianity with its belief-oriented character involving ethical norms and doctrinal focus on a monotheistic and personal God, occupied a superior position when it came to the sphere of doctrine.³⁵ In the inaugural issue of the Christian-related journal *Rikugō zasshi*, Kozaki Hiromichi noted, “We have long been learning about Christianity and deeply studying its truths . . . it exudes confidence in the spirit of its civilization.”³⁶ Such words expressed the sense of the predominance of Christianity with its link to Western civilization. Moreover, this perception can be observed not only among Christian followers like Kozaki but—setting aside the question of whether religion represents the essence of a civilization or not—was common among Meiji Enlightenment intellectuals like Tsuda Mamichi (1829–1903) and Fukuzawa Yukichi as well as the political figures who participated in the Iwakura Mission.³⁷ The policy to promote *Shintō* as the state religion had been launched at the beginning of the Meiji era, but it had been a one-sided program based only on the idealistic intentions of the government, and despite its official political predominance, the new “*Shintō*” was not endowed with teachings of sufficient depth or sophistication to attract a strong following.³⁸

32 On how Western cultural standards centering on Christianity exerted a controlling influence on the formation of the identities of non-Western religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism see R. King 1999, chapters 5, 7; W. C. Smith 1991, chapter 3.

33 Ketelaar 1990, chapter 5 *passim*.

34 Tsuda Sōkichi 1948, chapter 1; Kuroda 1990.

35 Ketelaar 1990, chapter 4; Lande 1978; Yamaguchi 1996b.

36 Kozaki 1880, pp. 1–2; Matsuzawa 1976, pp. 294–98.

37 Yamazaki 1978; Yamazaki 1980.

38 Fujii Sadafumi 1977; Ogawara 2004.

As Christianity came to be viewed as the embodiment of Western civilization, other religions sought to demonstrate that they were not inferior, had systematic doctrines, and would contribute to the modernization of the country.³⁹ At the same time, traditional features that did not conform to what were considered civilized values were rejected as “immoral rites and evil teachings” (*inshi jakyō* 淫祠邪教). Shimaji Mokurai, a leading intellectual of the Jōdo Shinshū clergy, expressed the comparison between belief-oriented religion and these “evil teachings” as follows:

Shūshi (the lineage or sect’s inner principles) are spiritually oriented. Yet such principles are not something that it is absolutely necessary for human beings to have . . . the reason is that human beings do not necessarily have to know about life and death; they do not have to face those ultimate concerns . . . However, venerating the founder of a tradition, or worshipping the head of a religion, or displaying the honor staunchly given by followers . . . that is also a meaningful purpose of religion, in the *shūkyō* meaning. If the common people of our country did not have that kind of serious faith-orientation—if they were instead just seeing miracles in the morning and looking for auguries in the evening, running around frantically, recognizing shapes and grasping after shadows—then they would end up worshipping trickster foxes and badgers and malevolent snakes and scorpions. It would be a pitiful result.⁴⁰

In other words, as religion came to be understood in terms of the acts of a transcendent power, or the problem of death, or the figure of a founder, popular forms of faith that instead emphasized this-worldly benefits came in for severe criticism. The various sects of Buddhism made efforts to move away from the ritual focus known as “funeral Buddhism.” As a result, doctrines and philosophy developed that emulated patterns found in Christianity and the founders of the various schools such as Shinran and Nichiren came to be heralded as paragons of morality. In contrast, the activities of Shugendō mountain practitioners, whose livelihoods depended on prayer healing, were officially banned in 1872 and magical rites focusing on this-worldly benefits were eliminated from Buddhism.⁴¹

With a follow-up 1874 ban on mediums, diviners, shamans, and exorcists the government sought to bring popular religions and folk beliefs under control as

39 Yasumaru 1988, pp. 544–45; Yamaguchi 1996b, p. 79.

40 Shimaji Mokurai 1982, pp. 239–40; Shimaji Mokurai 1873, p. 247.

41 Ōsumi 1984, pp. 100–102; Kashiwahara 1990, p. 47.

well. These included for example popular religious groups called *nenbutsukō* or *Inarikō*, or ones that carried out sunrise vigils (*himachi*). Records indicate that efforts were made to remove roadside Jizō or Kōshin guardian deity images that had long been part of folk life. Some of the popular new religions such as Konkōkyō or Tenrikyō were criticized as involving "magical" practices and restrictions were placed on their proselytizing activities.⁴² Thus as the concept of "shūkyō" took shape with Christianity as its axis, aspects of the religious lives of ordinary people reflected in the terms *shinjin* and *shingyō* were disparaged as "evil teachings." At this stage the practice-oriented aspect of religion was clearly placed as subordinate to the doctrinal aspect; some of it was branded as uncivilized and banished from society.

While significant external circumstances in the form of pressure from Euro-American nations stood behind these developments regarding the concept of religion, it should be noted that there was also, chiefly among the educated class, the presence of Confucianist elements long since absorbed into Japan that had ethical properties resembling those of Protestant Christianity.⁴³ Indeed, the notion of "evil teachings" had already appeared in Edo-period Confucianism as well.⁴⁴ Originally the distinction between what was religion and what was moral conduct had not been very clear in the Japanese vocabulary. Based on Edo-period traditions of Confucianism and National Learning, the general understanding was that the two categories were effectively combined under the rubric of "kyō" (teaching). Concerning this pattern Tsuda Sōkichi has noted:

Explanations of *kyō* (teaching) can be diverse and conflicting. They may stress moral conduct, or they may emphasize the *kannagara no michi* (way of the gods) that embodies some religious meaning. When it stands at the interface with political requirements, differing intellectual directions have existed among the leadership. This is the reason why various opinions among bureaucrats and policy advisers, whose ideas are diverse, are quite mixed in official documents; it is because fundamentally the concept of *kyō*, whether taken as ritual (*matsuri* 祭) or political (*sei* 政), has never been made clear.⁴⁵

42 Tsurumaki 1996; Seto 1976; Hatakama 2002; Kawamura Kunimitsu 1997, parts 1 and 2.

43 Shinoda 1965b; Miyagawa Tōru 1980.

44 Katsurajima 1999, pp. 25–30.

45 Tsuda Sōkichi 1958, p. 316.

Nishi Amane, for example in distinguishing *kyō* (teaching) from *sei* (politics) defined the former as “what exists inwardly and provides a model for the human heart,” and regarding teaching he did not discriminate between the religious and the moral.⁴⁶ The same was true of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s term “the teaching of virtue” (*tokkyō* 徳教). As Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) also pointed out, “the dividing line between religion and ethics was not clear.” Both were implied in “the teaching of virtue,” whether in Christianity, Shintō, or Buddhism.⁴⁷ Thus, because the word *kyō* was undifferentiated in this manner, according to Nishimura Shigeki (1829–1902), “One of its meanings is worldly, another meaning is other-worldly, i.e., religious. By adding the modifiers ‘worldly’ or ‘other-worldly,’ ‘teaching’ can possess one meaning used to designate ethics, which is concerned about this world, and another for religion, which is concerned about future rewards and punishments and where the spirit goes after death.”⁴⁸

The Meiji government’s 1873 Kyōbushō (Ministry of Teaching) policy was based on this undifferentiated understanding of the concept *kyō*. The Kyōbushō was the institution charged with dissemination of the ideology of the emperor among the people as part of the effort to resist the influence of Christianity. Those appointed to a post called *kyōdōshoku* or “national campaign teacher” were to have a monopoly on both indoctrination of the people and the holding of funeral rites.⁴⁹ The so-called “true teaching” (*honkyō* 本教) or “great teaching” (*taikyō* 大教) taught by the ministry spanned both religion and ethics, as in the case of the Enlightenment thinkers.⁵⁰ For example, there were the so-called “Eleven Topics” within the “teaching,” including “duties owed the divine emperor; the immortality of human spirits; creation by the heavenly gods; duality of the physical and spiritual realms; love of one’s country; worshipping the gods; rites for the repose of spirits of the dead; feudal relations between sovereign and subject; proper relations between father and child; proper relations between husband and wife; and Shintō purification rituals.”⁵¹ Here gods and life after death were treated together with the political order and family morality. The campaign teachers appointed to expound these

46 Nishi 1873, p. 271; Nakajima Michio 1976, p. 25.

47 Fukuzawa 1875, p. 99; Maruyama 1986, vol. 2, p. 195.

48 Nishimura Shigeki 1886, pp. 9–10.

49 The Kyōbushō was suspended in 1877, although the national campaign teachers continued up until 1884. Literature surveying these topics includes Miyachi Masato 1981, chapter 1; Sakamoto Koremaru 1987; Haga 1994, chapters 5, 7; Tanigawa 2008.

50 Haga 1994, pp. 119–20. “Sanjō kyōsoku’ kankei shiryō,” parts 1–14.

51 Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970, p. 108.

ideas, moreover, were not only representatives of specific Shintō, Buddhist, or popular new religious groups, but included professional storytellers (*kōdanshi*) and even *rakugo* storytellers who had no connection to religion. For not only the Kyōbushō policy, but even the *kokkyō* (Shintō as national religion) policy that preceded it, the terms *kyō* and *taikyō* did not have the meaning of *shūkyō* as it is used in Japanese today but instead referred to this undifferentiated corpus of "religious teachings."

Of course, amidst such ambiguities, the fact of whether an appeal to *kami* (God, or gods, or some divinity) was involved or not could often serve to provide an externally perceivable distinction between what was "religious" and what was "ethics." However, in Nakamura Masanao's interpretation even of Christian faith, the distinction between the two was less clearcut because he understood "God," under the influence of Confucianism, as the principle of heaven located within the human heart.⁵² This persistent Confucian perspective, in which *kyō* represented an undifferentiated continuum of both the religious and the ethical, can be seen in the thinking of both Fukuzawa and the other Enlightenment figures who urged the adoption of Western thought as well as the members of the nativist Kokugaku school. In the 1870s and 1880s Edo-period elements based in Confucianism were still very much alive.⁵³ This lingering bivalent meaning of *kyō* can be seen today as well, as the element *kyō* appears in the character compounds for both *shūkyō* (religion) and *kyōiku* (education/training).

By the late 1870s understanding of the concept of *shūkyō* among national ideologues and Enlightenment intellectuals had become part of an Edo-period type discourse on "kyō" that combined the ethical with the religious. Within this discourse, followers of "religion" (believers) saw religion as the true driving force of civilization while non-believers thought the religious should be rationalized into the ethical. However, the real separation of religion and ethics would be part of later developments: the collapse of the Kyōbushō policy, the termination of the Kyōbushō in 1877, the suspension of the work of the campaign teachers [preceptors] in 1884, and Japan's own gradual "separation of church and state" in the decade from the late 1870s to the 1880s.

52 Koizumi Takashi 1975, p. 83; Ogihara 1990.

53 Watanabe Kazuyasu 1985, pp. 190–92; Tsuda Sōkichi 1948, pp. 325–34; Regarding sources on the "central teaching" see Ōkuni Takamasa's *Hongaku kyōyō* and Takeo Masatane's *Daiteikoku ron*, and on "guidance" in the teaching campaign see Katsura 1971. Also both can be found in works on the Hirata school in Tahara et al. 1973, p. 404 and Haga and Matsumoto 1971, pp. 491, 250.

At this time, the question of great concern to bureaucrats, Enlightenment intellectuals, and believers alike was which religion would most aid in bringing the country together as a nation. The Christian minister Kozaki Hiromichi (1856–1938) noted the connections between scholarship, the orderliness of the state and society, and Christianity, observing, “When we look at the situation in Europe and America, the countries with the most flourishing Christianity are the ones that most advance culture, develop technology, establish the rights of nations, harbor the deepest patriotic passions, and have the most intimate relationships between parents and children.”⁵⁴ What played an ambivalent role in this regard was religion’s critical stance towards the temporal world, something represented best by Christianity. When used as a weapon against folk belief and outdated customs, it could be a force to further civilization and enlightenment. On the other hand, should the doctrines of such a religion turn critical of this world and state authority or its symbol the emperor system, it would be excluded from Japan. Religion was thus to be discussed in terms of its contribution to the formation of the modern state and society. Yasumaru Yoshio has observed how deeply, when this process is seen as a whole, the state had entered into the lives and consciousness of the people. He points out how deep was the line of division understood between what was useful and valuable and what was useless and valueless because it was coordinated with the task of the state in modern Japan: “Placed on the other side of the line were things like old customs and vices, superstition, and ignorance—all of them now were cast out as the rejected.”⁵⁵

In this context, Buddhism, which had been subjected to a rejection movement in the early 1870s, quickly altered its other-worldly character and strengthened its connections to nationalism and Western values and norms. In 1875 Ōuchi Seiran (1845–1918), a Buddhist lay follower, published a journal titled *Meikyō shinshi* with the purpose of “combining Buddhist spirituality with progressive ideas on freedom and equality and nationalism.” Another clear example of this movement within Buddhism was the dispatch by the Higashi Honganji branch of Jōdo Shinshū of Nanjō Bun’yū (1849–1927), later to become an important scholar of Buddhism, to Britain in 1877 in order to study with the religion scholar Max Müller (1823–1900).⁵⁶ The popular religions of Konkōkyō and Tenrikyō also attempted to shed the magical aspect of their character and increasingly refrained from opposing the authority of the state.⁵⁷

54 Kozaki 1880, p. 11.

55 Yasumaru 1979, p. 9.

56 Kashiwahara 1990, pp. 60–61, 73; Ketelaar 1990, chapter 5.

57 Katsurajima 1992, p. 216. Hatakama 2002, p. 101; Murakami Shigeyoshi 1963, pp. 183–89.

Among these trends, however, the response of so-called ordinary people is much harder to describe. Following Hirota Masaki, the people of that era could be divided into two classes: the wealthy farmers and merchants, and the lower-class masses.⁵⁸ The wealthy could be divided into various types, but in general they actively realigned their identity by becoming ideologues of the civilization and enlightenment movement promoted by the state. As noted by Tsurumaki Takao, "Intervention into the lives of the common folk became possible through the receptivity of Meiji Enlightenment supporters in the villages themselves. It was their genesis that was one of the most important results of progressivism."⁵⁹ The wealthy class that formed the leadership in local areas actively collaborated with the suppression of folk religion. But as noted by Hirota, for the lower-class masses, "The 'civilization and enlightenment' movement was completely different in character from their own world; it swept over them as a hostile, utterly fearsome other world with overwhelming power."⁶⁰

The "National Morality" Phase

What brought new changes to the concept of *shūkyō*, which had gradually become indistinguishable from that of "religion" in Western civilization, was the clash between science and religion that took place in the early 1880s, followed by the confrontation between the state and religion in the early 1890s. The conflict between science and religion resulted from the introduction of the theory of evolution. In Japan, the introduction began with a lecture by Edward S. Morse in 1878 at Tokyo Imperial University titled "We Should Study the Truth of Things and Not Follow the Teaching of Religion." According to notes recorded by his listeners, Morse criticized Christian teachings about creation that did not agree with scientific facts and questioned people's persistent superstitious belief that human beings were specially created by God. Without studying natural laws and conditions, he was heard as saying, how can we understand the truth of change and evolution from lower forms of animal life

58 Actually, by adding another group which consisted of "people at the very edge of survival" Hirota pointed to the existence of three levels, but concretely speaking the discussion here is confined to the above two. Hirota 1980, p. 93.

59 Tsurumaki 1996, p. 82.

60 Hirota 1980, pp. 72–73. For example, in the oral tale of the "Abura-tori" (Oil-taker) can be read the fearfulness of the common people towards the new military conscription and household registration laws.

to human.⁶¹ Yamaji Aizan (1864–1917), a historian who was a Christian, gives us a sense of how such pronouncements were received:

The ones at that time who made a frontal assault against the Christians in terms of theory were the so-called British empiricists. They had already consolidated their forces at Tokyo Imperial University and then suddenly became active, spouting off their theories of evolution and unknowability, and awakening new passions against the world of religion. The feeling emerged that Christians were becoming the foe. Indeed, from 1880 or 1881 onward the university made two contributions to Japan's spiritual/intellectual world. One was Dr. Morse's evolutionary theory, and another was Katō Hiroyuki's rejection of human rights theory.⁶²

Spencer's theory of social evolution reached Japan at about the same time as Darwin's theory of natural evolution. Yamaji's mention of Katō's rejection of human rights theory is a reference to the social evolution theory. Darwin's theory of evolution in the strict sense, which taught that there was continuity between humans and animals, thus denied the Biblical story that humans were created by God. Social Darwinism then argued that all religions had developed out of ancestor worship and criticized Christianity's claim that as a revealed faith it was distinct from other religions. The human world, just like the natural world, was ruled by the law of the survival-of-the-fittest; there was no such thing as a world in which all men were equal through the mercy of God.⁶³

In any case, in terms of the rational epistemology of empirical science, what these theories were saying was that it was obvious that the revealed doctrines of Christianity were totally wrong. Now scientific rationality was deemed by some to be the signature of civilization and Christianity to be its irrational antithesis.⁶⁴ In the nations of the West where the theory of evolution was gaining acceptance, the status of Christianity was already on the wane,⁶⁵ and in Japan it was ceasing to be the embodiment of Western civilization. "Western civilization" came to be understood, rather, as set apart from religion and grounded in the rationality of natural science. As a result, Christianity and all religions came to be distinguished from ethics in accordance with whether they related to this world or the coming other world. The institution that

61 Morse, as recorded by Ishikawa 1883, p. 323.

62 Yamaji 1906, p. 71.

63 Shimao 1989; Watanabe Masao 1976, chapter 4.

64 Sharpe 1986, p. 28.

65 Ikado 1972.

symbolized the shift was Tokyo Imperial University, where Morse and later Ernest Fenollosa and Katō Hiroyuki taught.

Thus, "There were many connected solely to worldly affairs involving public morality, and many who were preaching solely of other-worldly matters involving religion."⁶⁶ A clear distinction came to be made between religion and morality/ethics, as seen in the following statement: "Some claimed that religion was "completely useless in assuring the advance of society."⁶⁷ Therefore the status of religion as something nonrational, came to be placed beneath that of the rational and the moral.

Of course, Enlightenment thinkers like Fukuzawa Yukichi in the early part of the Meiji period had been of the view that religion would be rationalized in the direction of moral truth; as mentioned above, they did not think of the two as clearly distinguished but as subsumed in the concept of *kyō* (teaching). It was only with the advent of this new phase triggered by introduction of evolutionary theory that religion and ethics came to be understood as clearly distinct.

Two responses to the change can be observed among believers of Christianity.⁶⁸ One was to treat religion rationally in response to the currents of the day and to claim that the essence of religion lay in ethics or philosophical teachings. A model example of this was found in two schools of theology—that of the Unitarian Church and the German Evangelical Church⁶⁹—which emerged in Japanese Christianity from around 1885. Advocates of liberal theology criticized the orthodox view of the Bible and its teachings as inerrant revelations of God and argued instead for a free and rational interpretation of scripture based on "higher criticism." The other response of the evangelical position admitted the nonrational character of religion and argued that it could not be evaluated on rational grounds alone. Kozaki Hiroyuki made this clear in his declaration that "Interpretations that view the Book of Genesis as some kind of scientific book are unacceptable. The Bible can only be viewed as a work of religion, not rational explanation."⁷⁰ Preceding the advent of liberal theology a revival of faith had swept through churches across Japan in 1883, and it can be observed that at this time the romantic perception of Christianity as an inner experience came to challenge previously intellectualized understandings.⁷¹

66 Hiraiwa 1883, p. 130.

67 *Rikugō zasshi* 1883, p. 118.

68 Ōhata and Ikado 1954; Sumiya 1961, pp. 126–27; Suzuki Norihisa 1979, chapter 1.

69 Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein.

70 Kozaki 1886, p. 173; Imanaka 1984, p. 146.

71 Morioka 1970, p. 185. On the understanding of religion as doctrine, see W. C. Smith 1991, p. 45.

Following the clash over the theory of evolution, Japanese Christianity found it difficult to sustain its character as both rational and revealed. It faced the either-or choice of discarding revelation and pursuing the ethical dimension as advocated by liberal theology, or casting aside rationality in order to protect revelation, as did evangelicalism. Given these options, nonbeliever intellectuals like Fukuzawa Yukichi and Katō Hiroyuki supported liberal theology because of its link to the rationality of the era, but their ideas tended to lean heavily towards theory and thus remained in the minority and out of touch with the average believer. The evangelical approach, on the other hand, enjoyed the support of the majority of believers but failed to gain intellectual legitimacy in society.⁷² Thus, although Christianity had originally entered Japan as an intrinsic part of Western civilization, had formed the core of the concept of “religion” itself, and had served to suppress native folk beliefs, once it was separated from Western rationality, it came under attack as “unenlightened.”

The same development can be observed in religions other than Christianity. In the case of Buddhism, for example, Inoue Enryō (1858–1919), who had studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, turned the tables of reason against Christianity, arguing that it was Buddhism, not Christianity, that agreed with Western philosophy such as that of Hegel.⁷³ “Buddhism is a pure intellectual religion,” he argued, while “Christianity is an entirely emotional religion and easily becomes anti-intellectual.”⁷⁴ Although there were movements in religions other than Christianity that also identified with rationality, there were hardly any that sought to define themselves as non-rational along the lines of the evangelicals. In the West, Christianity possessed sufficient tradition and confidence as an integral part of the Western world to confront the modern discourse on rationality. In Japan, by contrast, the religions that had prevailed before the opening of the country possessed no means other than Western logic to either counter Christianity or justify their own relevance in society.

Still, regardless of the chosen perspective, the theory of evolution deeply permeated the discourse on religion.⁷⁵ For believers and non-believers alike the rational understanding of religion assumed an evolutionary progression moving first from cults of nature to civilized religion, and then further from religion to ethics. The evangelical perspective held the revealed faith of Christianity to

72 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, pp. 54–55; Ōhata and Ikado 1954, pp. 378, 385.

73 “Buddhism versus Christianity? Or Religion versus Non-religion?” Anesaki Archives, Document 14-0-7-4.

74 Inoue Enryō 1888, p. 21; Kasahara 1989, pp. 197–98.

75 Ariga 1883; Okita 1984, p. 364; Watanabe Kazuyasu 1979.

be distinct from other religions, and then introduced the concept of natural selection to argue that Christianity was the victor in the competition among religions.⁷⁶ Folk religion, of course, which could not be linked to such values in evolutionary theory, was all the more likely to be suppressed as superstition.

Another site of conflict was the axis of religion and the state. Religion's critical character with regard to temporal affairs had long been a concern that had surfaced in the Uchimura Kanzō *lèse majesté* affair.⁷⁷ The government, having abandoned its policy of national indoctrination under the Kyōbushō, began working through the Constitution of the Empire of Japan promulgated in 1889 and the Imperial Rescript on Education issued the following year. It adopted a policy dividing the earlier undifferentiated realm of *kyō* (teaching) into a private domain left to individual discretion called "religion" (*shūkyō*) and a public domain of duty to the nation called "morality" (*dōtoku*). Article 28 of the imperial constitution read as follows:

日本臣民ハ安寧秩序ヲ妨ケス及臣民タルノ義務ニ背カサル限ニ於テ信
教ノ自由ヲ有ス

Nihon shinmin wa anei chitsujo o samatagezu oyobi shinmin taru no gimu ni somukazaru kagiri ni oite shinkyō no jiyū o yūsu.

Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief.⁷⁸

The separation of ethics and religion, which had resulted from the clash between science and religion, was thus adopted into law, and the two were parceled out to the public and private domains of the social system, respectively. Here we can see how the basic framework of the Japanese separation of

76 Verbeck 1886; Watanabe Masao 1976, pp. 126–27.

77 The incident was sparked in 1891 by Uchimura Kanzō (1861–1930), a part-time teacher at the First Middle School in Tokyo who was a Christian, when he avoided performing a deep bow during a ceremony commemorating the receipt of an autographed copy of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Through the subsequent public criticism of Uchimura, which argued to the effect that Christianity was not compatible with the ideology centered on the emperor, Uchimura had to resign his post and his status in society was virtually destroyed. Ozawa 1961; Suzuki Norihisa 1982.

78 Based on the explanation in the official public commentarial work on the Meiji Constitution which was distributed in 1889 (Itō Hirobumi 1889) the term *shinkyō* for belief was brought in to mean "believing in a religion (*shūkyō*)." (Katō Genchi 1944, p. 43)

religion and secular, under which citizens would later be indoctrinated, came into being. Makihara Norio has described how national consciousness was cultivated during the same period extending from the time of the constitutional celebrations of 1889 to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. Parallel with this partition of the traditional meaning of *kyō*—in which the ethical and the religious had once been in harmony—advanced, Japanese society began to move towards forming a full-fledged Western-style nation-state.⁷⁹

In the modern West the partitioning of the religious domain occurred in close relation to the European Enlightenment and was not something universal that extended worldwide. It occurred in Europe beginning in the late eighteenth century.⁸⁰ In Japan approximately a century later the institutional separation of religion and state took place as an aspect of the country's incorporation into the Western world. According to Molendijk, the independence of the religious domain is one side of the coin of separation of the church and state that accompanies the formation of the modern nation-state, and is consistent with the view of "religion" as a matter of the internal domain of the individual:

The perception of religion as a distinct sphere of human culture is related to major developments in the modern Western world. The revolutions of the late eighteenth century eventually led to the separation of Church and State in most Western countries. The creation of the modern nation of equal and free citizens was only possible when religious difference no longer played a dominant role in the public sphere. From this point of view the disappearance of the old status quo, in which religion and political authority were intimately connected with each other, led in time to some sort of autonomization of religion. . . . One could argue that the creation of the modern nation state brought about—at least to some extent—a transformation of religion from the visible social and hierarchical order to the "inner selves of the members of the moral community of the nation."⁸¹

79 Makihara 1998, chapter 3.

80 However, even in the West it has been hard to actualize strict separations of the religious and the secular. An overview focusing on the circumstances in various European countries of processes of separation of the religious and the secular is provided in Rémond 1999.

81 Molendijk 1998, p. 7. On the relationship between the concept of religion and enlightenment ideology, and the separation of the religious and the secular, see "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in Asad 2003.

The concept of "shūkyō" was also subject to change in the course of these developments. The word *shūkyō* was initially created to provide a domain where the adversarial relations among various religions could be discussed in response to the tacit toleration of Christianity and the forced separation of Buddhism and Shintō. At this stage, however, the concept graduated from being a mere phenomenological description of various different religions and began to turn into a larger abstract concept of *sui generis* religion, which now furnished the idea of a unique religious essence that subsumed the individual religions.⁸² Inoue Enryō's words in his 1893 book *Hikaku shūkyōgaku* (Comparative Religion) clearly reflected this development:

When examined from within, the original spirit of religion, i.e., the religious spirit of the infinite, is unique to humanity. Though among the primitives its form is clearly inferior, when it does finally develop and reach an advanced level, it is only changed in outer form. Viewed from within, the factors for achieving an advanced level are already located within what externally appears primitive.⁸³

As his book title indicates, the viewpoint known as comparative religion was emerging. Already in 1890 Inoue Tetsujirō had begun teaching a course at Tokyo Imperial University called "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy." But at this stage the objective of comparative religion was not to clarify the differences among various religions, but rather to extract their universal common qualities, which together represented the unique domain called religion/*shūkyō*. The theory of evolution played the role of binding agent in this process. The individual religions, in a manner transcending their differences, were conceived as steps in an evolutionary chronology, making it possible to imagine some commonality operative throughout that evolution.⁸⁴

This movement was not only apparent in the secular society of government and academia. In the religious world, too, internationally through participation in the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions and domestically through the staging of the 1896 Religious Friendship Gathering (Shūkyō Kondankai), it appeared in the form of interreligious dialogue taking place outside of individual religious organizations.⁸⁵ The main purpose of these conferences,

82 Ketelaar 1990, pp. 41–44; Yamaguchi 1999, chapter 6. On the emergence of such an essentialist concept of religion, see Murphy 1994.

83 Inoue Enryō 1893, p. 94; Takagi Kiyoko 1989.

84 Sharpe 1986, chapters 2 and 3 *passim*; Byrne 1989, pp. 200–201.

85 Ketelaar 1990, chapter 4; Seager 1995; Suzuki Yūko 1977, chapter 3.

which beginning with Christianity brought together other religions including Buddhism and Shintō, was to counter the philosophical materialism spreading at the time. “Comparative religion” was extolled: “All religions agreed in terms of the most fundamentally important principle, although its outward appearances are varied.” Great emphasis was placed on the universal character of the religious domain.⁸⁶ In this era there was much anticipation of the appearance of a unified religion that would be called the “new religion”; it constituted a movement to encourage reflection about religion’s unique character.⁸⁷

Viewed in terms of social institutions, however, in Japan the status of this religious domain was situated below that of the domain of morality. This reality had been clearly confirmed in the Uchimura Kanzō *lèse majesté* affair, marking the inauguration of the “Imperial Rescript regime” under which the state claimed priority above all else. Moreover, Article 28 of the Imperial Constitution that had purportedly guaranteed freedom of belief was shown to be merely a form of “religious toleration”; what was primarily emphasized was only the “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects” part of the article. “Religious tolerance” was something that had as its premise a common national religion, as in a Catholic country. Under such conditions as those a certain freedom of belief in other religions was permitted (though not encouraged).⁸⁸ In contrast, the doctrine of religious freedom based on natural human rights was fundamentally different.

Any path of criticism of state authority that might occur as one form of religious critique of the temporal world was thus cut off in Japanese society. Already in 1884 a bureaucratic system had been implemented to replace the national campaign teachers, and freedom of public activity by religious groups was subject to permission of the Ministry of Home Affairs. All religious groups were forced to accept the necessity of conforming to state ideology. For example, the new religion Konkōkyō, which was placed in the legal category of Sect Shintō or Denominational Shintō, retreated from its basic beliefs about living *kami* and instead committed itself completely to the *kokutai*

86 Matsuyama Ryokuin 1893, p. 66.

87 Anesaki 1897a.

88 The government was of the opinion that as religious policy for Japan it was desirable to adopt a Catholic type of tolerance rather than religious freedom. This went back to the Iwakura Mission in the early years of the Meiji period and was the main view up to the time of Inoue Kowashi and the drafting of the Meiji Constitution. See Yamazaki 1980; Yamazaki 1996–1997; and Nakajima Michio 1974.

ideology as expressed in the so-called Three Standards of Instruction issued by the Kyōbushō in 1872.⁸⁹

Yasumaru Yoshio sums up this separation of the religious and the secular as follows:

“Freedom of religion” was something whose basic character was the “freedom” of voluntarily internalizing the will of the state. Pessimistic or otherworldly religious faith and folk beliefs of all kinds were supposed to be overcome by this kind of “freedom.”⁹⁰

The notion that Christian otherworldliness was against the interests of the modern state, such as seen in the Uchimura Kanzō affair, had arisen solely on the side of those hostile to Christianity.⁹¹ In general Christians themselves were unaware of their supposedly hidden, uncooperative tendencies to reject the secular world of which they were a part. In contrast, however, the liberal theology that tended to promote the conversion of religion into a system of ethics sought positive connections between real society and religion. Yet it became entangled with nationalistic identity and, as noted by Yokoi Tokio and Ebina Danjō, gave rise to a community that voluntarily lauded the emperor-centered nation-state.⁹² In any case, the finger of blame pointed at Christianity after the Uchimura incident by spokespeople for Buddhism and other religions reflected how almost all were seeking legitimation for themselves through merger with the *kokutai* ideology.

This phenomenon was not confined to Christianity and Buddhism alone. None of the religions at the time had the capacity to treat the existence of state authority with objectivity. Inasmuch as the government sought the basis for the ideology centered on the emperor by embodying the state in the form of a religious entity called a living *kami*, the foundation of the state itself was necessarily in conflict with the idea of freedom of religion. All the religious groups might insist on their own freedom of belief, but they did not reach the point of

89 Kozawa 1988, pp. 49–52. The Three Standards of Instruction (*Sanjō no kyōsoku*) were: to embody veneration of the *kami* and love of the nation; to make clear the principles of heaven and morality of man; and accepting the honor of the sovereignty of the emperor, to revere and protect the imperial court.

90 Yasumaru 1977, p. 40. I would not, as Yasumaru does, refer to this as a “Japanese-type separation of state and religion.” This is elaborated on in chapter 9.

91 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, p. 21.

92 Takeda 1962, p. 114; Shinoda 1960, p. 21.

criticizing the fundamental contradictions inherent in the emperor ideology.⁹³ A civil society had not developed and a democratic community in confrontation with the state was all but unimaginable. People's sense of belonging in society had been completely coopted by the state.⁹⁴

As discussed above, from the late 1880s to the 1890s religion was placed in a position of conflict vis-à-vis science on the one hand and the state on the other. Morality was deemed something to be rationally developed as part of the public sphere and embodied in it through the linkage of science and the state. The identity of ethics and “national character” was spelled out through the study of ethics, national literature, and other subjects undertaken by way of modern Western scholarship at institutions such as Tokyo Imperial University.⁹⁵ Religion was expelled from the public domain and driven into the domain of the private and nonscientific. Where once religiosity and ethics had coexisted within the category of *kyō* (teaching), the two were at this juncture clearly divided, with religion considered inferior to ethics.

Premised upon that line of division, the ideology of the emperor was considered to belong to the realm of secular moral virtue. In addition, Shrine Shintō (*jinja shintō*) involving the worship of the ancestors of the imperial family was taken out of the category of religion and converted into a system of secular moral teachings. Already in 1882 Shintō priests had been prohibited from conducting funerals. Miyachi Masato summarized the trend:

By having Shintō priests withdraw themselves from the issues of individuals' life after death, by claiming that Shintō rituals were customs of the Japanese people, and concentrating on these points, the government sought to deflect the general view that Shintō was actually a religion. The idea that paying respect at shrines was not “religion” but custom became the public interpretation used by the government from then on.⁹⁶

In the period from the year 1882 until 1889 when the Imperial Constitution was promulgated, the basic framework of the State Shintō system was formulated upon the theory that Shintō was non-religious.⁹⁷ In the same period, as if to correspond to this process, the now-familiar terms Shintō, Bukkyō, and

93 Shimazono 1998, p. 69; Takeda 1959, p. 102.

94 Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a, chapter 8.

95 Miyachi Masato 1996, p. 138; Yi 1996.

96 Miyachi Masato 1988, p. 589.

97 Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970; Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985, p. 104; Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988.

Kirisutokyō became established.⁹⁸ Previously, Shintō had been called *shinkyō* (*kami* teachings) and Buddhism was often referred to as *butsudō* (Buddhist path) or *buppō* (Buddhist law)—so the terms had actually been in flux.⁹⁹ Eventually the various terms used for the different religions defined as such, including Christianity and Buddhism, were given the suffix *kyō* (teaching) taken from *shūkyō*. Terms associated with morality were on the other hand given the suffix *dō* (path) taken from the term for morality (*dōtoku*), as seen in the case of Shintō.¹⁰⁰ Such terms—as vividly shown in *dōtoku* (morality) and *kokumin dōtokuron* (national morality doctrine)—also asserted the contrast with Western concepts of ethics and the inherently Japanese nature of the emperor-centered ideology and the Imperial Rescript on Education. The authority cast upon the Japanese public domain by the state was evident in the creation and usage of these terms.

Later the ideology of the *kōdō* (Imperial Way) emerged, another neologism containing the linguistic element *dō*. The *kōdō* ideology held sway over the nation during the 1920s and 1930s when Japan was leaning toward fascism. The term had first appeared in the late Edo period,¹⁰¹ and by the end of the Meiji era in the 1910s, it was commonly interpreted as meaning “the way in which this world is ruled by the emperor.”¹⁰² Because the word Shintō retained a religious connotation that was somehow hard to erase and that was signified by the character *shin* (*kami*; gods/deities), *kōdō* was preferred by the political camp in order to stress the allegedly non-religious nature of the ideology centered on the emperor.¹⁰³

The argument that Shintō was not a religion was constructed in order to protect Shintō, which was closely connected to the institution of the emperor,

98 Takahashi Gorō 1880; Inoue Enryō 1888, p. 13; Ōuchi 1889. However, these technical terms had already been established by Nishi Amane around 1870; see Nishi 1960.

99 Konoe and Senge 1872, p. 3; “Shinkyō hōsen, Kyōbushō setchi ni tsuki sain kengi,” p. 25; Nishimura Shigeki 1886; Kawada Kumatarō 1957, p. 22; Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985, p. 104.

100 The word “Confucianism” (*jugaku*), more than it expressed religion, seems to have been used to imply ‘teaching’ (*kyō*) at a stage where religion and morality were undifferentiated. However, the word “Confucianism” became aligned with Yōmeigaku (study of Wang Yangming) and Shushigaku (study of Zhuxi) in being emphasized as one major line of speculative philosophy.

101 For example, an author’s preface in 1861, in Hasegawa 1915.

102 Kawai 1911, p. 217. For periodicals founded in the Meiji period with Imperial Way in their titles, see among others Misogikyō Aso Hon’in Shingikai, *Kōdō no shiori* (1892); Saibikan, *Kōdō* (1894); Kōdō Kokugokai, *Kokugo kōdō*. (1907); and Kōdōkai, *Kōdō*. (Chronological by founding dates).

103 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932.

from competition with other religions such as Christianity and Buddhism. The government attempted to organize a system of Shintō doctrine during the early 1870s in order to overcome its weaknesses in that regard, but did not succeed. The government was forced by this failure to recognize the incompatibility of doctrinally oriented religious concepts with Shintō's practice-oriented traditions. It then boldly turned the tables, repositioning Shintō outside the scope of religion as conceived in the West.

Throughout Asia during this era, long-standing religious traditions like Buddhism in Japan had to reorganize themselves along the lines of Western modes of religion or face suppression as "harmful superstitions." For that reason, many non-Western teachings took it upon themselves to initiate reform, attempting to invest themselves with Christian-like features of belief.¹⁰⁴ The Japanese government's policy of designating shrines as non-religious, as distinct from the usual approach seen in other non-Western societies, took advantage of the newly created divide between ethics and religion, and using the justification that the practice-oriented Shrine Shintō was different from a belief-oriented religiosity, made Shintō into a non-religious public morality. Treating shrine worship as unconnected to personal religious convictions, and defining such public moral actions as "reverence" (*sūkei* 崇敬), the state made reverence at shrines obligatory for all the people of Japan.

Shūkyō and *dōtoku* had both originally been part of the semantic field of *kyō* (teaching), and both had fallen within the scope of belief. Following the theory that shrines were non-religious, the juxtaposition of belief-orientation and practice-orientation was later converted into the distinction between religion and morality, but still the difference between belief and morality could only constitute an issue conceptualized within the one category of belief. Even if the practice-oriented aspect of reverence at shrines meant that Shrine Shintō could not be considered religion, it also had to be distinguished from morality with its belief-oriented nature.

As we can see, the theory that shrines were non-religious was just a piece of sophistry involving fraudulent substitution of logic. What is noteworthy, however, is the way the non-Western side resisted the Western pattern. By adopting the logic of the law of evolution, which advocated the superiority of secular morality, an attempt was made to relativize religion itself, and resist entanglement in the struggle for hegemony in the realm of religion. Indeed, the way the eminently rationalistic Western discourse on morality ended up being mobilized in the attempt to limit the spread of the Western concept of religion, demonstrates how deeply Western logic had penetrated Japan. The governing

104 Keyes, Kendall, and Hardacre 1994, p. 4.

and elite strata of society were united in the use of this Western-style discourse and through it they tightened the domestic political controls over the general populace even further.

The Emergence of Academic Discourse on Religion

Of course, with such features as the theory of the non-religious nature of shrines, understandings of religion that developed by circa 1890 were not necessarily acceptable for believers. Frequent debates took place: Could morality (*dōtoku*), rites (*saishi*), and religion (*shūkyō*) be truly separated? How could science and religion be reconciled? In particular, the dividing line between religion and morality developed into a major political problem connected to the state's Shintō policy. One of the main issues was that Shrine Shintō taught "reverence" for the ancestors of the imperial house as part of one's moral duty, but that not all of the rituals were conducted for human beings. Even if it were tentatively recognized that these were ancestral rituals, by the late 1890s it was clear that these were obviously religious acts going beyond just the secular celebration of human beings as spirits.¹⁰⁵

Debates concerning the unconstitutionality of shrine worship also unfolded, and, as a result, questions concerning the conceptual essence of religion came to the surface. Here, the concept of *shūkyō*, the "lexical definition" of which had only been tacit, came to acquire a "precise definition" through deliberate debate.¹⁰⁶ What appeared on the scene to assume this role was the study of religion, i.e., religious studies (*shūkyōgaku*).

Religious studies in Japan was founded by Anesaki Masaharu (1873–1949) of Tokyo Imperial University. Anesaki studied under Inoue Tetsujirō and read Hegel at Tokyo University, lectured there in 1898 on "religious studies," and, following a period studying in Germany, was appointed associate professor at his alma mater in 1905 when the professorship in religious studies was established. In this capacity he became the driving force in the transplantation of religious studies to Japan. The establishment of professorships in religious studies in the Euro-American nations had begun with Geneva University in 1873, Dutch universities such as Leiden and Amsterdam in 1877, and Harvard University in 1891. Although Tokyo University's professorship was founded later than these examples, it was close in time to the establishment at the University of

105 For an overview of this debate, although mainly on its later phases, a convenient source is Katō Genchi 1930.

106 Wilson 1998, p. 143.

Manchester in 1904 and even preceded the establishment at the University of Berlin in 1910.¹⁰⁷

Although the introduction of the concept of freedom of religion occurred more than a century later in Japan than in Europe, there was little or no difference in timing in the establishment of professorships in religious studies. The importation of Euro-American religious culture and institutions into Japanese society began with the opening of the country in 1858 and led to the lifting of the ban on Christianity and the approval of freedom of religion. With the establishment of the academic discipline religious studies in 1905, formally Japan had caught up with the progress of Western nations in the short span of fifty years. Of course, it was the political agenda of revising the unequal treaties that had promoted such developments, and without this fundamental factor such dramatic changes would not have occurred.

Religious studies represented by Anesaki shared with religious believers the perspective that religion is something essential to human nature. The discipline did not, however, adopt the perspective of revealed religion as in evangelicalism, but viewed religion basically as consisting of moral norms (*dōtoku no kihan*)¹⁰⁸ and in doing so drew upon the same current of rational religious interpretations of the day as did liberal theology and the assertions of Inoue Enryō. Methodologically, religious studies inherited from liberal theology the historical criticism of sacred texts called “higher criticism.” This approach distinguished historical fact (*rekishiteki jijitsu*) from blind belief in legend (*densetsu mōshin*) and clarified what was apocryphal and false in religious texts; higher criticism thus aimed to liberate true faith from what he called “pathology.”¹⁰⁹ Anesaki’s experience with putting this method into practice was found in the *Daijō hi bussetsu* debate (the argument that Mahāyāna Buddhism does not represent the original teaching of Shakyamuni) that unfolded after the publication of his book *Bukkyō seiten shiron* (History of Buddhist Texts) in 1899.¹¹⁰

While liberal theology was premised in part on the standpoint of Christianity, religious studies clearly differed in that it privileged the essence of religion transcending the frameworks of individual religions. The method of religious psychology, which Anesaki defined as understanding the relationship between human beings and the divine as a fundamental impulse universal in

107 On the processes of institutional formation of religious studies in various Western countries, see Sharpe 1986, chapter 6; Molendijk and Pels 1998, part 1 *passim*; *Shūkyōgaku bunken tenrankai mokuroku*, pp. 1–4.

108 Anesaki 1900a, p. 193.

109 Anesaki 1900a, p. 1.

110 Anesaki 1899a.

the human mind (*shūkyōteki ishiki*),¹¹¹ played an important role in this privileging of the essence of religion. By making the "religious consciousness"¹¹² of the individual the standard, all religions and sects regardless of their differences could be interpreted as manifestations of the same religious phenomenon.¹¹³

In *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (Outline of Religious Studies), which is considered the manifesto of religious studies in Japan, Anesaki defined the discipline and the concept of religion as follows:

The study of religion begins with the phenomenological fact of religion as a universal and fundamental impulse of the human mind; it studies its various manifestations in human life. In other words, religion, as it is studied by religious studies, does not merely mean particular traditions or their denominational branches. Since all religions are equally historical facts in human civilization and products of human spirituality, religious studies is a matter of a comprehensive conceptual grasping of the processes that produced religion.¹¹⁴

With regard to individual religious awareness, religious studies as Anesaki conceived it was clearly distinguishable from the comparative religion of the previous generation, as seen in the writings of Inoue Enryō and Kishimoto Nobuta.¹¹⁵ A number of works in comparative religion or religious studies, such as Inoue's *Jissaiteki shūkyōgaku* and *Rironteki shūkyōgaku* (Religious Studies in Practice, Theoretical Religious Studies; 1887), Munzinger's "Shūkyōgaku no hitsuyō o ronzu" (The Necessity of Religious Studies; 1890), Minami Hajime's "Hikaku shūkyōgaku to Kirisutokyō" (Comparative Religion and Christianity; 1890), or Kishimoto Nobuta's *Shūkyō no hikakuteki kenkyū* (Comparative Study of Religion; 1894) had been previously published in Japan.¹¹⁶ Yet, as Anesaki insightfully noted, none went beyond assuming an externalized idea of the divine: "According to these methods the most universal definition of religion is "worship of God/gods."¹¹⁷

111 Anesaki 1895b, pp. 995–96; Anesaki 1898a, p. 11.

112 Anesaki 1900a, p. 33.

113 See also Suzuki Yūko 1977, chapter 4.

114 Anesaki 1900a, p. 1.

115 Takagi Kiyoko 1989; Shigeru 1984; Suzuki Norihisa 1979, chapter 4, part 1.

116 Inoue Enryō 1887a and b; Munzinger 1890; Minami Hajime 1890b; Kishimoto Nobuta 1894. On literature of the period, see *Shūkyōgaku bunken tenrankai mokuroku*, pp. 5–10.

117 Anesaki 1900b, p. 121.

Comparative religious studies must be viewed as similar to research on the universal psychology of religion, which has come to express the same yearning in religious terms. The reason for applying the comparative method is first, via comparisons, to clarify the historical affinities (the identical source and diffusion); then, in addition, by surveying the extensive resemblances in correspondences within human nature, to come to know how a universal study of religion should use this primary power.¹¹⁸

Anesaki's most direct target of criticism was Max Müller, whose method involved going back to the source of religion by using linguistic comparisons. For Anesaki, who sought to understand religion within "human cultural history" or "historical development," Müller's method seemed to treat lightly "the developmental principle of human spiritual life."¹¹⁹ In this period of time, along with working hard on his systematic construction of religious studies, Anesaki was engaged in research on the history of early Buddhism. Not merely critiquing the Mahāyāna scriptures for their lack of connection to the historical Buddha, he addressed the problem from the standpoint of the development of faith, as something demonstrating how "Buddhist followers gradually turned their devotional feeling away from the human Buddha, pouring it into the so-called *honbutsu* and *hōshinbutsu* (primary Buddha or *dharmakāya*)."¹²⁰

At the time Müller's school of comparative religion was flourishing in Europe and the United States.¹²¹ Clearly distinguished from Müller, Anesaki's scholarship was "a religious studies that must employ psychological and historical methods, assuming in general that religion is a phenomenon of human cultural history"¹²²—that is, assuming that religion is a manifestation of psychological phenomena within a historical process. Whatever Anesaki's original position had been, he subsequently developed a different approach under the influence of C. P. Tiele and William James, who had been the first to depart from the earlier schools.¹²³ Anesaki's religious studies emerged as a

118 Anesaki 1900a, p. 20.

119 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 1–21.

120 Anesaki 1951, p. 8; Serikawa 1989, chapters 4, 8.

121 Müller 1972. On Müller and comparative religion, see Sharpe 1986, chapter 4; Masuzawa 1993, chapter 4; Matsumura 1999, chapter 3.

122 Anesaki 1899b, p. 438.

123 Anesaki 1899b, pp. 438–49; Anesaki 1931, p. 5.

clear system around 1898, and his ideas were published in 1900 in the above-mentioned *Shūkyōgaku gairon*.¹²⁴

Anesaki began teaching religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1898 and the professorship (*kōza*) was founded there in 1905. Afterwards (here taking only the imperial universities as examples), professorships were established at Kyoto Imperial University (1906), at Tōhoku Imperial University (1922), at Kyūshū Imperial University (1925); and finally Keijō (Seoul) Imperial University (1927). In the same period a religious studies society was founded in 1910 at Tokyo Imperial University and then in 1917 religious studies research groups were organized at both Tokyo and Kyoto imperial universities. The national Japan Society for Religious Studies was founded in 1930 (today the Japan Association of Religious Studies).¹²⁵

Religious studies was steadily advancing as far as the scholarly world was concerned, and yet the views originating from religious studies did not hold much sway in society as a whole. As late as the mid-1920s it remained an academic discipline without a solid foundation. When the Tokyo newspaper *Nichinichi shinbun* published a series of articles surveying the academic world in Japan around that time, its comment regarding religious studies, whose founding father was Anesaki, was:

It must be said that religious studies, which got its start at the end of the nineteenth century, is not very substantial. Even today, in the twentieth century, it is still fighting for the right to exist and be recognized in response to the question: what is religious studies anyway? As yet there does not seem to be a definite answer.¹²⁶

The already discussed inadequacies of their arguments notwithstanding, the advocates of national morality (*kokumin dōtoku*)—who did not take the

124 A record of lectures in the department of literature at the Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō was published in July 1898 under the old-fashioned title "Comparative Religion." However, the content was almost the same as that of *Shūkyōgaku gairon* published in 1900. Anesaki had already titled the lectures he had begun at Tokyo University in Fall 1898 "Introducing Religious Studies"; immediately before that in a letter to Ōnishi Hajime he stated that he wanted to call it *shūkyō sōron* in Japanese after the German term *Allgemeine Religionswissenschaft*, a concept that would clearly distinguish it from comparative religion (letter dated 25 August 1898, from collected letters of Anesaki to Ōnishi, in *Ōnishi Hajime, Ikuko shokanshū*, p. 301).

125 *Shūkyōgaku bunken tenrankai mokuroku*, p. 3.

126 See Ōtsuka Torao 1931, p. 81.

position that religion is part of human beings' essential nature—remained as stalwart as before. The disciplines of history, literature, and philosophy were all engaged in the project of establishing national identity via the non-religious aspect of human beings. It was thought that the traditional Japanese spirit ought to be conceived only morally, understood in terms of a secular “doctrine of national character.” Institutionally, the mainstream of intellectual society adopted this same non-religious approach, and once the separation of the religious and the secular was institutionally established, religion was considered a matter basically confined to the private affairs of the individual, so it was not easy for discourse to emerge in the public sector as it could for history or philosophy.

However, because there was dissatisfaction with the public discourse of separation of the sacred and the secular, other discourse in the field of religious studies—although in numbers it was a small minority—did begin to surface, starting from the dividing line between religion and morality. This movement appeared not only in religious studies, but also in the more reactionary form of Shintō Studies (*Shintōgaku*). Shintō Studies was a Shintō-centered discourse that sought to transcend the unnaturalness of the doctrine according to which Shintō was not a religion. Here Shintō was seen not only as morality but as part of the religious domain and was considered to embody the structural elements of a religion. This discourse presented Shintō as furnished with the elements not only of a moral code but of a religion, an ultimate concept that transcended the religion vs. morality dichotomy.¹²⁷

Thus in the field of religious studies, Shintō was considered a part of the broader category of religion from the standpoint of the believer; but Shintō Studies considered religion to be part of the domain of the broader embrace of Shintō, so their two interpretations remained at odds.¹²⁸ Both groups did agree, however, that the national morality argument that shrines were not religious was unnatural and that the debate ought to take into account religious elements. On that point alone, the appearance of the religious studies discipline and Shintō Studies signaled that the time had come for public discourse that included not only the moral domain but also extended to the realm of religion in order to redress the unnatural dichotomy between the religious and secular in Japan, including theories on Shintō itself.

However, the individual religious consciousness that was the basis of the religious studies approach was not that of the individual in isolation. Religious consciousness was understood to be universally present in all individuals,

127 See chapter 7.

128 See chapter 4; Akazawa 1985, chapter 3.

but those individuals were ultimately to be understood as members of the nation-state. According to Anesaki, "The essential role of religion is reliance on the ideals of belief, discovery of the deep significance of the history of the nation, and, on that basis, elevation and purification of the ideals of the state."¹²⁹ In later years Anesaki put this vision of the "coincidence of state and religion"¹³⁰ into practice by cooperating with the Ministry of Home Affairs on an event called the Conference of the Three Religions (*Sankyō Kaidō*). Bringing together various Christian, Buddhist, and Sect Shintō organizations at the government's invitation, this meeting, held in 1912, was intended, "through unity of religion and the state . . . to heighten appreciation of the importance of religion among the general population."¹³¹ In that it sought to move away from specific religions towards the establishment of an alternative national consciousness, Anesaki's ideas of religious studies drew on the ruling class's concern for national governance as seen in Inoue Tetsujirō's equation of the *kokutai* with morality.¹³²

Seen in this manner, religious studies could be said to have shared with liberal theology and advocates of national morality the notion that religion can be understood rationally. The discipline appeared to try to unite liberal theology's understanding of religion with that of the national morality project that sought to establish a national consciousness transcending specific religious organizations. That vision could be seen as an attempt to bridge opposing points of view, especially the stance on the part of the Meiji government that religion was not compatible with the state or with science. In the face of the national morality doctrine and the argument that the function of shrines was non-religious, it sought to mediate the conflicting views while protecting that which was religious. Moreover, the turn of the century was known as the era of "spiritual anguish."¹³³ Young people dissatisfied with the formalistic norms of national morality were searching for ideas that could fulfill their individuality from within, as offered by Naturalist literature or Takayama Chogyū's ideas on Nietzsche. Patriotism increased over the course of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, yet with the advance of capitalist society, the gap between the rich and the poor widened and labor problems arose. The

129 Anesaki 1896b, p. 553.

130 Anesaki 1896b, p. 556.

131 Tokonami 1912, p. 109. For overviews of the Conference of the Three Religions, see Dohi 1967–1969; Fujii Takeshi 1989; Lee 1992.

132 Anesaki studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University under Inoue, who no doubt recognized the younger man's potential; it was probably no coincidence that the woman Anesaki married was Inoue's niece.

133 Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996b, p. 195; Anesaki 1903a.

government was in need of a new policy for winning the hearts of the people over to its cause.

In this sense, while religious studies shared the emphasis on rationalism with the national morality doctrine, it affirmed religion's unique role in addressing issues that could not be resolved by reason or moral rectitude, and in this it was in tune with the Romanticist introspection that was the trend of the times.¹³⁴ Considering that "The root of religious aspiration is "to transcend the finite and obtain the infinite,"¹³⁵ Anesaki criticized the national morality doctrine as follows:

Among those who assert that "ethical religion" is the sole genuine form of religion, many believe that this-worldly morality is the epitome of morality. They declare that religion is incompatible with morality, and harmful to public morals. For this reason the human heart's affinity for the mystical or devotion to the transcendent is made to submit to this-worldly morality.¹³⁶

The morality Anesaki was talking about was not limited to secular ethics, but was something that "obediently cooperates in following a sense of the divine, or perhaps the thought of the final purpose of the divine."¹³⁷

Religious studies was unsatisfied also by revealed religion, but it retained the potential to fulfill the religious needs of intellectuals who were not content with the milieu in which secular moral conduct reigned supreme. On the other hand, the government, which realized that the effectiveness of the national morality doctrine had run its course, began to see the potential of religion—as in the Conference of the Three Religions—as a new means for capturing people's hearts.

In sum, the discourse of religious studies was ambiguous. To those with an inner yearning, it asserted that all individuals possessed an inner religious consciousness whether they belonged to a specific religious organization or not. Meanwhile, vis-à-vis the state seeking to unify the nation, the discourse indicated the possibility of controlling the minds of the people through religion. In other words, religious studies was attempting to offer a discourse that would

134 On the relationship between religious studies and Romanticism, see McCalla 2000. On the connection of Anesaki and Romanticism, see Ōishi Kiichirō 1985; Sugisaki 1970; Itō Shukundo 1983.

135 Anesaki 1900a, p. 62.

136 Anesaki 1904a, p. 122.

137 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 192–93.

satisfy the desires of both individuals and the state and bind them together. However, more than during the period of the national morality ideology, the religious studies discourse offered an interiorized means by which national identity was made to permeate the individual.

Given the orientation of religious studies to the state, and as long as prewar Japanese society was ordered on the principle of imperial sovereignty, the discourse would inevitably be inclined toward nationalism. This tendency was vividly illustrated in Anesaki's planning of the Conference of the Three Religions sponsored by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Anesaki himself later recalled, "It was designed to support the Throne and the ever-increasing promotion of national morality."¹³⁸ His inclination towards nationalism was evident in his position on the dispute that arose in 1911 over whether it was the Northern or Southern court that formed the authentic lineage of the line of emperors, when as a Southern Court side supporter he offered a fervent defense of the protection of the *kokutai*.¹³⁹ This rather simple-minded orientation to the state stems from the same reason that none of the religions in Japan possessed the capacity for this-worldly criticism. Indeed, Anesaki's religious studies, precisely because of its purpose of making religion adapt to secular society by means of its rationalistic interpretations, was even less able to resolve the tensions between society/state and religion than the efforts of religionists. This could not have been easy for anyone who was a believer. In fact, at the Conference of the Three Religions, voices of concern did arise about the intervention of state authority among some members of the religions attending;¹⁴⁰ no such voices arose, however, from religious studies.

If viewed from the side of believers who accepted nonrationality,¹⁴¹ the religious studies discourse and the rational view it espoused stood outside of the true world of religion and appeared to be an oppressive force that treated anything contrary to its standards as ignorant and unenlightened. That true religious viewpoint came to subsume in the category of religion all forms of

138 *Chūgai nippō* 1912a.

139 See among others Anesaki 1911b; Yamazaki and Horie 1912.

140 Wakimoto 1984a.

141 In the intellectual history of the Meiji period, it is important to recognize a distinction between irrationality (pejorative) and nonrationality (neutral or positive). The terminology of irrationality was employed in the negative sense by intellectuals of the Enlightenment like Inoue Tetsujirō from the 1880s, whereas the term nonrationality was used with a positive connotation by those influenced by Romanticism like Anesaki Masaharu from the 1890s. The estimation of religion of these two parties was obviously different.

folk religion that had hitherto been rejected as superstition. At the same time it did not promise that all religions would be valued equally.

Religious studies did, in fact, acknowledge the nonrational, in contrast to the national morality doctrine, which held rationalism supreme. The non-rationality it accepted, however, was limited to notions of transcendence or infinity in philosophical terms, and was thus ultimately restricted to the category of conceptualized belief. Matters of practice, even within religious studies, were treated as superstitious. Although popular religion and folk beliefs were included in the category of religion, the discipline of religious studies treated them as “pathological” forms requiring remedy.¹⁴² For example, Anesaki dismissed Tenrikyō as “an emotional religion of practice without any doctrinal, intellectual direction” and judged Shugendō and the new religion named Shinshūkyō as “under the sway of some kind of delusional fantasies.”¹⁴³

Of course, this sort of religious studies discourse was not something that could change the self-perceptions of the new religions or followers of folk religion themselves. Those who supported the modern Western discourse, including scholars in religious studies, were really only some members of Japan’s urban educated class—those who were directly under the influence of Western culture. The farther people were from that intellectual society and the closer they were to the life of the masses, the weaker was the influence exercised by the religious studies discourse. For example, concerning the degree of state influence on the new religion Konkōkyō, Kozawa Hiroshi writes:

For the ordinary membership whose greatest interest was their own personal spiritual salvation, the question of the religious group’s public status and changes in its doctrines [under the influence of the state] was at that moment just something added among other generalized issues that could not occupy them as an important concern. Further, in the case of Konkōkyō, since the ideas of the founder basically did not harmonize with the *kokutai* ideology, it was only possible to solidly implant the idea of the *kokutai* among the membership through the mediation of the autonomous form of faith called *toritsugi*.¹⁴⁴

This statement explains why the Western-derived word *shūkyō* was not well suited to the Japanese world of belief. The issue is in a sense local, but there is

142 Anesaki 1896a.

143 Anesaki 1898b, pp. 1, 4.

144 Kozawa 1988, p. 73.

no doubt that it has greatly restricted the broader understanding of religion in Japanese society.

Within the space formed by these various discourses, popular religions and folk beliefs were reorganized according to the expedient rationality of the times. What could not adapt was rejected as superstitious and harmful. At the same time, those who were lumped together as the "minshū"—the folk—were by no means a monolith; indeed, their world was the scene of increasing stratification. As pointed out by Oguchi I'ichi and Takagi Hiroo, impoverished farmers were in no position to adopt any tradition of popular thought, even one like that widespread among the Edo-period rural elite which has been called "common moral behavior" (*tsūzoku dōtoku*).¹⁴⁵ Restoration of respect for the world of the Japanese folk had to await their "discovery" by Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) around 1910. Yet the image that would ultimately be ascribed to the folk through Yanagita's work was, again, filtered by Japanese intellectuals through proxy expressions of Western-type concepts. It was an image from the outset separated from the realities of everyday life.¹⁴⁶

So we can say that, while rationality had previously only denied religion from the outside, it had now moved into the world of religion itself through the discourse of religious studies, shining its light into every nook and cranny. Religions were defined in terms of rational concepts, and the various religions came to be evaluated according to that standard on the basis of religious studies. Christianity had once been in firm control of the power to define the scope of religious discourse; now that position was usurped by academic rationality.



The process of establishing a religious studies-type conception of religion in Japan extended over about a half century from the time of the opening of Japan to the end of the Meiji era. That is roughly parallel to the period from the signing of the first of the unequal treaties (beginning with the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1858) to the time the country regained full sovereign powers with the elimination of extraterritoriality (with the signing of the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation) and the restoration of customs sovereignty (with the 1911 Japanese-American Treaty of Commerce and Navigation). Along with transformations in the realms of government and culture, these treaties showed that Japan had reorganized itself in such a way that it could compete with the West in terms of its national identity.

145 Oguchi and Takagi 1954, pp. 534–35.

146 Akasaka 1994; Ōshima Tatehiko 1989, pp. 301–302; Figal 1999.

The response of Japanese society to the impact of the West was of course not uniform in every respect. As seen in this chapter, the English word religion, introduced from the West with the opening of the country, entered the vocabulary only of intellectuals and the ruling class. Gradually, the idea of religion—its belief and practice, rationality and nonrationality, in the form of individual religious groups and as a form of national consciousness, did penetrate Japan, as it spread out into the many layers of society.

In this dynamic structure “religion”—the concept of religion articulated by the discipline of religious studies and the English word introduced with the opening of the country—can be seen as a point of “arrival.” What had been achieved was the formation of a Japanese-type nation-state that had had to be speedily established following the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars to counter the assumptions of a political framework defined by the concepts of civilized, uncivilized, and primitive. What had been accomplished through linkages to the nation-state and to scientific rationality following the phase of separation of the religious and the secular, was the reorientation of the domain of religion in modern society and the maintenance of the autonomy of the state. Because of its Western guise, the new ways of thinking about religion came to exert an influence that defined all manner of other religious phenomena. The prototype of “religion” (*shūkyō*) as Japanese understand it today was created at that stage.

Then, having secured its national sovereignty and established its identity in line with the West, Japan developed itself by advancing into Asia. From the turn of the century onwards, Japan turned its repressive religious policies outwards towards Korea and other colonies.¹⁴⁷ At the time, Anesaki described the attitude of Japanese towards other religions in Asia as follows:

When thinking about the issue of religion in East Asia, and especially in the cultures of the South Seas (Nanpō), we must first note the indifference or lack of understanding towards religion among contemporary Japanese, especially intellectuals. Taking the situation within Japan as point of comparison, religion there has become so highly organized that many people only think of religion in the sense of institutions and do not think deeply about other kinds of issues. Whereas religion in Japan might be summed up well enough in terms of images of worship, founders, doctrines, and clerical roles, would that accommodate the meaning of religion for other, non-Japanese peoples?¹⁴⁸

147 Han 1988; Cai 1994; Nakajima Michio 2000; Aoi 2005; Kiba and Tei 2007.

148 Anesaki 1944a, pp. 13–14.

Where once Japanese society had been oppressed by the belief-centered orientation of the West, now Japan itself had become the agent of belief-centered suppression of the practice-oriented traditions of other parts of Asia.¹⁴⁹ In the space of about fifty years after the opening of Japan, Japanese society reconfigured itself after the pattern of a Western-type identity intent on domination of the other. This is the dark side of the so-called modernization of Japanese society. The struggle to bridge the gap between "civilized" and "primitive" that stretched between the Western nations and Japan produced various fissures in the political and cultural integrity of the latter. Subsequently, however, that same struggle was repeated in relations between Japan and other Asian nations.

Debate about the concept of religion does continue in Japan today. However, there is a tendency to trivialize the problem as simply a matter of conceptual definitions or issues of the special character of Japanese religion. This chapter has sought to make clear that the concept of religion cannot be seen as a matter of neutral observation. Rather, it is created by consciousness and subjecthood (identity). From the time the concept of "religion" was first transmitted to Japan until now, the Japanese way of conceiving things has been completely changed by this process. Those who have been part of Japanese society have been caught up in the discourse; it was impossible to escape it. I would ask whether people will continue to see things simply on the basis of the dominant discourse? Or, by resisting here and there, will they try to bring to light the structure of oppressive spaces? What it is to be will reveal which way knowledge is facing within the hegemonic space of discourse.

149 Keyes, Kendall, and Hardacre 1994, p. 2. Other works that treat Japan, when it is seen from Asia as a representative of the West, include Yamamuro 2001; Kang Nae-hui 2000, pp. 123–58.

Inoue Tetsujirō and the Debates on Religion and Philosophy

One of the important landmarks of the lineage of “religion” in Japan is the course of lectures entitled “Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy” given at Tokyo Imperial University by Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944). Inoue, mentioned several times in relation to the development of religious studies in chapter 1, earned his degree at Tokyo Imperial University before going to Germany, where he studied at Berlin University for a period of seven years between 1884 and 1890. Inoue has been regarded up until now either as an introducer of German statist philosophy or as a nationalist ideologue.¹ In the latter guise he became prominent for his scathing attacks on Christianity in connection with the Uchimura Kanzō affair. Despite his erudition, he has been categorized as never having gone beyond a rather “pre-philosophical eclecticism,”² and even considering the political context of his times, his ideas have rarely been taken seriously as scholarship.

Many have criticized Inoue’s work as lacking intellectual depth, which was perhaps a product of the tension between scholarship and the political trends of his times. Yet Inoue can also be seen as a pioneering figure who organized a scholarly discourse through the social institution of Tokyo Imperial University to respond to the process by which Japanese society was being incorporated willy-nilly into the ideological context of the Western world. Indeed, we can see his words and deeds as representative of the intellectual discourse of the Meiji era. In the 1890s, buoyed up by the esprit of his sojourn of study in Germany, Inoue became the first Japanese professor of philosophy at the university. His presence would of course have been very influential in a social-institutional sense, but also made him a driving force in the world of Japanese scholarship.

Some might say that Inoue’s reputation as a serious philosopher today rests on the trilogy on Japanese Confucianism he published in the 1900–1906 period while he was in the process of establishing the field of the history of Japanese philosophy.³ His defense of the Imperial Rescript on Education,

1 For basic information, including Inoue’s biography, writings and research, see Hirai 1983. The most detailed chronology of Inoue’s life and work is Sakai Yutaka 1977.

2 Ōshima Yasumasa 1975, p. 65.

3 Ienaga 1948, p. 179.

attacks on Christianity, and other political involvements in the decade before that, however, meant that he did not publish any major work of research during that period, so it has been assumed that he subsequently contributed little of scholarly importance. In fact, though, Inoue taught “Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy” at Tokyo University during this same period, and through these lectures and his own research and publications, he was vigorously involved in transplanting Western comparative religion and the study of East Asian thought, specifically Indian philosophy, to Japan during that time. Indeed, it was from among the students who attended his lectures—people such as Anesaki Masaharu in religious studies, Nishida Kitarō in philosophy of religion, Matsumoto Bunzaburō in Indian philosophy, Takase Takejirō in Chinese philosophy, Kanie Yoshimaru in ethics, Kuwaki Gen'yoku in philosophy, and others—that his successors, who would lead Japanese academia in the latter half of the Meiji era, emerged.⁴

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Inoue served on a number of government advisory committees and became a keen advocate of the national morality doctrine. In 1926 he was appointed to the House of Peers as an imperial nominee; his influence in society continued for a long time. In the world of scholarship, on the other hand, his heyday was more brief. There, by around 1906, he had already come to be considered a figure of the past. Initially Inoue's academic discourse went hand in hand with his position in society, but the period when he exhibited significant leadership in Japanese academia lasted only from the late 1880s through the 1890s. It was in that initial interlude, however, that Inoue, after returning from study in Berlin, delivered the lectures introduced here. Given over a span of seven years, beginning in the spring immediately after his return to Japan in 1891 and continuing up until July 1898, they were a product of the period when he did flourish as a scholar.

The lectures have often been referred to, as does former head of the Japanese Religious Studies Association Tamaru Noriyoshi, as the genesis of religious studies in Japan.⁵ Tamaru and other scholars often introduce the title of these lectures and refer to Inoue's own memoirs, but no one ever mentions whether there were any manuscripts or primary documents transmitting the content of the lectures. As a result there has been no study of what specific position Inoue's lectures occupied in the context of religious studies of the time. No

4 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, pp. 301–302.

5 “In considering the basic nature of religious studies . . . we should first trace the name of this discipline.” Broadly speaking, in Japan, this discipline already has a history of several decades going back to 1890, when Inoue Tetsujirō gave the lectures on “Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy.” Tamaru 1987, p. 12.

one has examined the relationship of this early manifestation of comparative religious studies with the religious studies of Anesaki and others who came after him. Unfortunately, accepted views of the content of the lectures have long remained unsubstantiated, without sufficient inquiry into the issues raised above.

In the 1990s, it was reported by Imanishi Junkichi that manuscripts of some of the original lectures, written in Inoue's own hand, were preserved at the Tokyo Metropolitan Library, and photo-reproductions were published together with explanatory commentary.⁶ Even more recently manuscripts of lecture notes taken down by Anesaki Masaharu, a student of the Tokyo University philosophy faculty at the time, were discovered, and these were also published.⁷ Both of these sets of documents record original notes on lectures on Hinduism; in addition, a portion of Inoue's lecture on ancient Buddhism was edited and printed in 1902 under the title *Shakamuni den* (The Life of Shakyamuni, published by Bunmeidō). However, because it was not regarded as one of his major works, it was never referred to as part of the main lecture series. Here, outlining the content of the "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy" course, which has such seminal significance in the history of religious studies in Japan, I will try to situate Inoue's ideas on comparative religion within his own career as a scholar and ideologue and in the intellectual circumstances of Japan at the time.

The "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy" Lectures

The course on religion formally began in the second semester of the 1890 academic year and continued through the 1897 academic year.⁸ As Inoue wrote in his memoirs, he "First covered all kinds of philosophy other than Buddhism, of course including the six classical schools of Hinduism" and "then introduced

6 Imanishi 1990–1993. Documentation on Inoue, including his diaries, is preserved in the Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryōshitsu, the Tokyo Metropolitan Library, and the Koishikawa Library in Bunkyo-ku in Tokyo. See Nakano Minoru 1989; Sakai Yutaka 1977; Tōkyō Toritsu Hibiya Toshokan 1964; Hirai 1983, p. 309.

7 Item 17 in the documentation relating to Anesaki Masaharu. For reproductions and explanations of the lecture notes, see Isomae and Takahashi 2003.

8 Inoue had just returned from foreign study in Germany in October, so did not begin the lectures until the spring semester in 1891. According to the document "Overview of Imperial Universities" (preserved in the Central Union Library of Tokyo University), in the schedule for the academic year at that time, the new year began on 11 September and ended the following year on 10 July.

various other schools of philosophy, referring to both Japanese and foreign texts." For his lectures on "The Origins of Buddhism," given from 1895 to 1897, as he wrote, "I thought that I must first present the life of the historical Buddha, so I lectured on that topic."⁹

Broad Outline of the Lectures

In spite of the lecture series title, in reality it dealt mainly with "Indian philosophy." The lectures had a good reputation among the students and over a hundred gathered to attend in the Dai Kōdō auditorium, until, it was said, they were "overflowing from the hall."¹⁰ Anesaki, who made notes on the lectures, was one of these, but Nishida Kitarō was also in attendance.¹¹ It is noteworthy that Anesaki, who contributed to the founding of the Tokyo Imperial University Department of Religion, and Nishida, who was involved in the founding of the religious philosophy faculty at Kyoto Imperial University, were both deeply interested in and attending Inoue's lectures at approximately the same time.

The lectures he gave in the first four-year series were on "Pre-Buddhist philosophy," focusing mainly on the six classical schools of Hinduism. As Inoue himself explained, "Philosophy in India outside of Buddhism is called the ninety-five or ninety-six schools, but the nucleus of all these consists of six schools: Mimamsa, Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, and Vaisheshika."¹² Inoue often uses the term "Brahmanism" to refer to those schools, but they were not so much an integrated whole as a variety of philosophies of the Indian elites focused on worship of the Vedas.¹³

Both the original manuscripts in Inoue's own hand and Anesaki's notes on the lectures survive. Neither of them cover the entire contents of the lecture series, but they complement each other. From Inoue's manuscripts we can see that the lectures as a whole consisted of fifteen parts, but unfortunately neither of the two sources records the content of the first seven parts or even the part titles. What can be seen today is limited to parts eight to fifteen, which correspond to the last half of the "Pre-Buddhist Philosophy" series.

9 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 44.

10 Takase 1931, p. 568; *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1896b, p. 931.

11 Nishida Kitarō 1931a, p. 660; Imanishi 1990–1993 (39:1), pp. 6–10.

12 Isomae and Takahashi 2003, p. 13.

13 Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Westerners, the term Hinduism was used for the folk religion of India. However, in Japan at that time, beginning with Inoue, researchers on India exclusively used the term Brahmanism. See R. King 1999, pp. 99–132; Niu 1896; Anesaki 1895a.

Pre-Buddhist Philosophy

Parts 1–7 missing

Part 8: Nyaya School [Inoue manuscript, Anesaki notes]

Part 9: Vaisheshika School [Inoue manuscript, Anesaki notes]

Part 10: Yoga School [Anesaki notes]

Part 11: Mimamsa School [Anesaki notes]

Part 12: Vedanta School [Anesaki notes]

Part 13: Jaina School [Anesaki notes]

Part 14: Various Philosophies [Inoue manuscript]

Part 15: General Evaluation of Indian Philosophy [Inoue manuscript]

The only portion of the material on the lectures that was ever published was a short version called “Tōyō tetsugaku shisō ni tsuite” (Concerning Eastern Philosophical Thought; April 1894), in which Inoue discussed Indian philosophy in general terms, and a short piece “Niyaya to Nigenshi no betsu” (The Distinction between Nyaya and Nirgrantha; June 1894),¹⁴ which summarized the syncretism of Six Schools philosophy and Jaina teaching. Nothing else ever found its way into print. Consequently, while the Inoue manuscripts and Anesaki note materials are incomplete, they are still precious sources that tell us what Inoue talked about in his lectures.

Finishing the Pre-Buddhist Philosophy lectures in 1894, from 1895 Inoue began his new series on “The Origins of Buddhism.” An article in the *Tetsugaku zasshi* philosophy journal at that time¹⁵ confirms that Inoue’s purpose was to clarify the original ideas of Shakyamuni that constituted Buddhism at its inception.

In contrast to the lectures on Pre-Buddhist Philosophy, the series on original Buddhist thought were later published. In 1894, Inoue published “Bukkyō no kenkyū ni tsuite” (On Research on Buddhism),¹⁶ dealing with his research methods, and in 1895, while the lectures were going on, he published other articles including “Indo rekishi ni okeru Shaka no ichi” (Situating Shakyamuni in Indian History) and “Shaka wa ikanaru shuzoku ka” (What Was the Ethnic Identity of Shakyamuni?), the latter taking up a discussion with the Asian history specialist Naka Michiyo about Shakyamuni’s ethnic roots. Subsequently in 1897, he published a small volume *Shaka shuzokuron* (On Shakyamuni’s

14 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894c.

15 “Dr. Inoue intends, by going back to the earliest Buddhism, to investigate the original teaching of Shakyamuni, and in this way discover the true aspect of the principles of Buddhism,” *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1895a, p. 156.

16 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894a.

Ethnicity) that was a collection of previously published essays.¹⁷ Inoue speculated that Shakyamuni's clan group was not Aryan, but originally derived from an ancient Iranian group called the Turanians who were of the same ethnic stock as Japanese. Here we can see his boast that Japanese Buddhism was a legitimate descendant of Shakyamuni's teaching. As I will describe later, this conviction that Japan's traditions should be recognized as legitimate took a very clear form from 1897.

Inoue's Pre-Buddhist Philosophy lectures had also included his thesis about Shakyamuni, but it seems that he had not intended to publish all of his writings on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy.¹⁸ The lectures on Shakyamuni were very popular, however, and lecture notes on them were being copied and widely distributed, so by 1902, when the lecture series was over and there was a need to forestall the spread of false information, he published them through Bunmeidō as *Shakamuni den*.¹⁹ The manuscript notes for the "Shakyamuni thesis" part of the lecture series have yet to be discovered, but the table of contents of *Shakamuni den* unmistakably reflects the "Origins of Buddhism" lectures presented in the academic years 1895–1897, as listed below.

History of the Origins of Buddhism

Introduction [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 1: The Place of Shakyamuni in History [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 2: What Was Shakyamuni's Ethnicity? ["Shakamuni wa ikanaru shuzoku ka"]

Part 3: Shakyamuni's Place of Birth and Its Circumstances [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 4: Shakyamuni's Place of Birth and Childhood [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 5: Shakyamuni's Marriage and the Great Renunciation [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 6: Shakyamuni's Study and Practice of Asceticism [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 7: Shakyamuni's Attainment of the Way [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 8: Shakyamuni's First Preaching of the Dharma [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 9: Shakyamuni's Preaching of Dharma in the Yastivana Forest [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 10: Shakyamuni in His Birthplace [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 11: Shakyamuni's Calling and His Preaching after Returning to His Birthplace [*Shakamuni den*]

Part 12: The Circumstances of Shakyamuni's Death [*Shakamuni den*]

17 Inoue Tetsujirō 1895a and Inoue Tetsujirō 1895b; Naka 1895; *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1895b.

18 In later years he explained the delay in publication by saying that "without having completed everything, I had tossed it all into the bottom of a box." Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, "Jobun," p. 1.

19 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, "Jobun," p. 1; Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 44–45.

By 1897 the lectures on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy came to an end. Later Inoue recalled how his lecturing duties had gradually multiplied so that it became difficult for him to cover all of Indian philosophy and how he had “decided to pass on the task of lecturing on Buddhism from the standpoint of comparative religion in particular to Dr. Anesaki Masaharu.”²⁰

As Anesaki recollected afterwards, “Professor Inoue’s Eastern philosophy course covered the six classical schools of Indian religion, and my curiosity was aroused by names like the Chandogya Upanishad that poured out one after another.” The lectures convinced Anesaki to follow his inclination to get involved in the study of Indian religion,²¹ and he took over as lecturer beginning in 1898. Inoue appeared to view Anesaki as one of his heirs, and in 1898 served as supervising editor for Anesaki’s *Indo shūkyōshi* (History of Indian Religion) when it was published (by Kinkōdō). In the same year Anesaki married Inoue’s niece Inoue Masu.

The lectures as given by Anesaki, retitled “Theories of Religious Studies,” turned out to be rather different in character from Inoue’s comparative religion approach, which ironically would be gradually pushed out of the lime-light. Before we consider the fate of comparative religion, however, let us look in some further detail at the purposes underlying Inoue’s lectures and what kind of historical significance they held.

The Political Dimension of the Indian Religion Discourse

Inoue Tetsujirō’s lectures on Indian religion really centered, as we have seen, on Brahmanism and Buddhism. An article Inoue published in 1894 while he was lecturing, “Tōyō tetsugaku shisō ni tsuite,” aimed to clarify the overall aim of the lectures. The article begins with explanations of the nature of Brahmanism as represented by the six classical schools, goes on to discuss the position of Buddhism in Indian thought, and then assesses the significance of the spread of what he calls Northern Buddhism to China and Japan.

He first explained features shared by the six schools: 1) taking the Vedas as authoritative; 2) pessimism about existence; 3) the idea of the permanence of material substance; 4) the idea of the permanence of the spirit; 5) belief in reincarnation; 6) belief in karma; 7) interest in departure from this world and entry into another, i.e., the longing for liberation from the cycle of rebirth.²² These points can be confirmed in the manuscript written in Inoue’s own hand.²³

20 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 45.

21 Anesaki 1951, pp. 55–60.

22 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 20.

23 Imanishi 1990–1993 (39:2), pp. 68–70.

The lectures presented the Vedanta school as the most profound of the Brahmanical traditions and Inoue was particularly interested in its teaching: “That which is always changing is the phenomenal world . . . the fundamental body of the world is that which certainly does not change. What is this unchanging thing? It is Brahman. What is Brahman? It is Spirit. Thus it is thought that our own Spirit and this so-called Brahman are one and the same.”²⁴ In these lectures, we can see the reflection of Inoue’s belief that at the ultimate root of this world was a universal reality that took on a historical form and appeared as the phenomena of our everyday life; one can infer that Inoue was influenced by the neo-Hegelian philosophical doctrine of “the phenomenal is the real” that was circulating at the time.²⁵

Inoue considered Brahmanism to have been the “orthodoxy of Indian religion of Shakyamuni’s time,” and Buddhism to have been, “rather, the heterodoxy.”²⁶ He explained the distinctive features of Buddhism as originating in “not worshipping the Vedas as sacred text” and in viewing Shakyamuni as a member of a Kshatriya clan, not a member of the Brahmin class.”²⁷

Similarly, in an 1899 lecture titled “Budda ron” (On Buddha), Inoue attributed to Buddhism the quality of “universality,” which was different from Brahmanism’s discrimination on behalf of its own class: “Buddha did not establish his teachings for a single people or clan group.”²⁸ Yet on the other hand, certain features of Brahmanism mentioned earlier could also be observed in Buddhism, such as “pessimism,” “the permanence of material substance,” “reincarnation,” and “liberation from the cycle of rebirth.” In short, according to Inoue’s research on Brahmanism, “If Buddhism really has a close relationship like this with Brahmanism, Buddhists should adequately investigate Brahmanism first.”²⁹ Inoue believed that when the results of this study were compared with Buddhism, the position of Buddhism within Indian religion would become clear. In this sense, research into Brahmanism was simply the groundwork for Inoue; ultimately his main purpose in studying Indian religion was to investigate original Buddhism.

24 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 19.

25 Inoue would consolidate his ideas on the “phenomenal is the real” in “Genshō soku jitsuzai ron no yōryō” (Inoue Tetsujirō 1897b); the ideas were already incipient, however, in his earlier work “Rinri shinsetsu” (A New Explanation of Morality; Inoue Tetsujirō 1883a). For interpretations and evaluations of the doctrine, see Itō Kichinosuke 1955; Funayama 1959, pp. 131–45; Watanabe Kazuyasu 1985, pp. 115–19.

26 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 20.

27 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 22.

28 Inoue Tetsujirō 1899, p. 21.

29 Inoue Tetsujirō 1895a (85), p. 22.

The reason Inoue singled out the life of Shakyamuni as “part of original Buddhism” in his lectures on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy was that Buddhism was at first established independently of Brahminism, while drawing on it, but then later mingled again with Brahmanism and other philosophies. Troubled by this situation, Inoue was attempting to uncover “the true face of pure original Buddhism” by reconstructing the life story of the founder Shakyamuni.³⁰ In *Shakamuni den*, he cautioned Japanese Buddhists as follows:

A great many elements original to Brahmanism are mixed into what is revered and considered to be Buddhism by Buddhists in our country. The flavor of pure original Buddhism therefore differs greatly. What is, for us, Japanese Buddhism is not the true face of Buddhism.³¹

This view signaled the emergence of the *daijō hi bussetsu ron* (the argument that Mahāyāna Buddhism does not represent the original teachings of Shakyamuni) on which Anesaki’s 1899 work *Bukkyō seiten shiron* (History of Buddhist Texts; Kyōse Shoin) and Murakami Senshō’s 1901 *Bukkyō tōitsu ron; dai-ikken* (On Unified Buddhism, Part One; Kinkōdō) would elaborate. These publications referred to Inoue’s research,³² and in fact the reverberations of Inoue’s arguments were not confined to students but also had an impact on the entire world of Japanese Buddhism. It was said that “Professor Inoue’s Eastern philosophy and comparative religion courses at Tokyo University have for a long time attracted the attention of Buddhist scholars.”³³

Inoue’s ideas about original Buddhism were developed, as he himself acknowledged, under the influence of the Western researchers Paul Deussen and T. W. Rhys Davids. Still, in both the instances of Inoue and later *daijō hi bussetsu* scholars, the Japanese situation differed from that of the West. Like the Westerners, the Japanese scholars could assign a high value to original Buddhism’s pure form of the teachings, but unlike the Westerners, they could not easily at the same time reject the evolved Mahāyāna form of those teachings.

In “Tōyō tetsugaku shisō ni tsuite,” Inoue shifted the discussion from original Buddhism to Mahāyāna. Unlike the so-called Hīnayāna Buddhism that had branched out in Southeast Asia, he stated that in the Mahāyāna school nirvana was “not interpreted as nothingness,” but “as something quite different”; that

30 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, “Jobun,” p. 1; “Joron,” p. 25.

31 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, “Joron,” p. 25.

32 Katō Seishin 1932; Serikawa 1989; Yūzanjin 1895, p. 168.

33 *Hansei zasshi* 1897a, p. 89.

is, “regarding its thought about the phenomenal world: in one sense it is about ‘nothing,’ but in another sense it is rather about something mysteriously unified with the fundamental nature of the world.” This revealed an understanding along the lines of Mahāyāna doctrines on the simultaneity of phenomenon and reality.³⁴ Thus, according to Inoue, the Mahāyāna tradition in this philosophical sense was “identical” to Western philosophies such as those of Kant, Schopenhauer, or Eduard von Hartmann, and he praised Eastern philosophy as represented by Mahāyāna Buddhism as follows:

It must be clearly asserted that the worldview of northern Buddhism contains profound truths, . . . for that reason there is great value in the study of Eastern philosophy.³⁵

What he was asserting was that Eastern philosophy had value because it was an intellectual tradition on a par with anything in the West. Yet such an assertion was premised upon logic of a very Western universalist nature, assuming the universality of Western values and proposing that Eastern philosophy was meaningful because it was a particular tradition within that framework of universality.³⁶ Matsumoto Bunzaburō, one of Inoue’s students and a scholar of India, was probably quite right when he pointed out that “[Inoue] researched Eastern thought taking Western thought as the basis, and in Japan, he was probably the first to do this.”³⁷ Indeed, at the same time that Inoue was lecturing on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy, he was giving a philosophy course that discussed Western philosophers such as Kant and Schopenhauer.³⁸

However, how could pure original Buddhism be related to the transformed Mahāyāna Buddhism? Inoue expressed what he hoped to do: “After first describing the true face of original Buddhism, subsequently I want to clarify how its adaptation to various historical eras caused changes, and finally how the present Buddhism of our country came about.”³⁹ Afterwards, however, Inoue’s interests shifted and he never fulfilled this intent.

34 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 25.

35 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 25.

36 For an abundance of suggestions about the relationship between Western universalism and Asian studies, see N. Sakai 2000, pp. 71–94; N. Sakai 1997, chapters 1–4.

37 Matsumoto Bunzaburō. “Shukuji.” (Congratulatory Address) In *Inoue Sensei kiju kinen bunshū*, Matsumoto Bunzaburō 1931, p. 591. For previous research touching on this point, see Ōshima Akira 1996.

38 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 44; Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 300.

39 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, p. 25.

In the meantime, however, after thus establishing the position of original Buddhism in Indian religion, Inoue turned to comparisons with Christianity. His purpose was to “establish clearly the differences between Buddhism and Christianity.” Because of Buddhism’s “eternal existence of the material” and “idea of karmic law of cause and effect,” Inoue considered it a philosophy that conformed to scientific rationality, since “it was a universal truth according to today’s scientific knowledge that no one could repudiate.”⁴⁰ In contrast, because Christianity did not have such characteristics, he criticized it as “an idea from a deeply ignorant past”⁴¹ that did not accord with science.

Inoue assigned his students essays on topics such as “The Historical Relationship of Buddhism and Christianity” and “Comparison of Mahāyāna and Hināyāna” so it is quite likely that he dealt with these topics in his lectures. Further, in the portion of the lecture notes on Brahmanism that concerned differences between Christianity and Vedanta he performed the same sorts of comparisons—was salvation sought in “knowledge” or in “belief”? Is this world “an illusion” or do we entrust our hopes to a “future world”?—and reached the conclusion that Vedanta was superior to Christianity.

Inoue’s critical stance vis-à-vis Christianity, which extends back at least to his 1893 article “Yasobenwakujo” (Criticizing Fallacies of Christianity), remained much the same for the rest of his life.⁴² As it happened, the period during which he was lecturing on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy coincided with the period of the debate on education and religion (known as the *kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu*) that unfolded from the time of the Uchimura Kanzō affair (1891) and into 1893. Inoue took the lead in this debate, taking the firm position that Christianity was not appropriate to the Japanese *kokutai*.⁴³ And regarding the *kokutai*, it was also Inoue who wrote the *Chokugo engi*, a commentary on the “Imperial Rescript on Education” (Fuzanbō, 1891) which served as the official government interpretation of the document, following the lines of a reinterpretation of Confucian filial piety from the viewpoint of Western philosophy.⁴⁴

Inoue’s criticisms of Christianity can be summarized in the following two points. First, as seen in his writings directly critical of Uchimura, Inoue argued

40 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, pp. 23–24.

41 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894b, p. 24.

42 Inoue Tetsujirō 1883b. However, because one wing of liberal theology, the Unitarians, had a strong this-worldly orientation, the judgment was that there was no contradiction with the National Body doctrine. See Inoue Tetsujirō 1893a, p. 6.

43 There is a considerable amount of research concerning Inoue’s ideas about Christianity. Okita 1984; Valles 1965; Shibukawa Hisako 1971.

44 For details on the work, see Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 30–32.

that an absolutist view of the existence of an otherworldly god as in Christianity would relativize existence in this world, undermining the absolutist basis of the *kokutai*, which consists of the ideology centered on the emperor and the principle of filial piety supporting it.⁴⁵ Second, as he noted in his comparative religion studies, Christianity was an “unenlightened religion,” one devoted to belief in a creator god and thus lacking in rational philosophy. This idea that religion was inferior to philosophy and morality was based on a theory of the evolution of the mind according to which the development of reason led to philosophy and moral rectitude.⁴⁶ In contrast to Buddhism’s many philosophical elements (although he considered Buddhism, too, a religion), Inoue declared that Christianity completely lacked such components. This position paralleled the European Enlightenment view of the separation of the religious and the secular, according to which religion was seen as a private, non-rational matter while morality was a public and rational matter, as represented by the Meiji Constitution promulgated in 1889. In his views on religion, morality, and philosophy Inoue was simply a product of his times.

All these points seen together, it is clear that the lectures Inoue gave on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy in this period were not something situated on an “impartial and unbiased standpoint”⁴⁷ as Inoue himself later recollected, but deliberately intended to play a strong political role emphasizing the superiority of Buddhism as an Eastern philosophy over Christianity from the West.⁴⁸

Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy

Inoue’s juxtaposition of West and East, his contrasting of religion and philosophy, and his comparative religion project were of a rather different sort when compared to other scholars. Today, Inoue’s is regarded as the first Western-style research on religion in Japan, but the decade between 1887 and 1896 was an era when not only he but a considerable number of other scholars took up the topic of comparative religion in a variety of ways. Based on Inoue’s essays “Shūkyō no kenkyūhō ni tsuite” (On Methods of Research on Religion; 1893) and the earlier-mentioned “Bukkyō no kenkyū ni tsuite,” I would like to

45 Inoue Tetsujirō 1892d.

46 Inoue Tetsujirō 1903b, p. 4. Katō Hiroyuki and others from the earlier period had assumed a materialistic evolutionary theory; Inoue’s posture of support for spiritual evolutionism probably went back to the first years of the Meiji period when he was a student. See Parson 1878.

47 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 301.

48 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, pp. 104–106.

examine the methods of comparative religion at that time. It appears that by the time he returned to Japan in the autumn of 1890 Inoue had firmly adopted the comparative methodology.⁴⁹

Inoue's methodology consisted of three aspects: historical research, comparative scrutiny, and critical study. He adopted a set procedure: through historical research, both the origins of each religion and their development could be clarified. Then, by comparing religions, their superior and inferior points could be determined. Finally, based upon these relative strengths and weaknesses, each religion's pure ideal form could be critically elucidated. By using such methods, he believed it was possible to grasp what each religion was intended to be.⁵⁰ Phrases such as "comparison of Buddhism, Laozi, and Zhuangzi," "comparison of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna," "critique of the Lotus Sutra text," "genuine and false in the Lotus Sutra," or "defects of Buddhism" appear in the subheadings of a report by Inoue issued at the end of the academic year. All of these reflect his research methods.⁵¹

Inoue wrote: "Studying each religion's doctrine separately does not allow the Buddhism in which we believe to flourish."⁵² This demonstrated his idea that the issue in such research was to overcome sectarianism and grasp an overall image of all the sects of Buddhism and Brahmanism. As is today indeed still strangely reflected in the modern concepts of Buddhism and Brahmanism, this kind of unified designation for religion began in the nineteenth century via contact with Christianity.⁵³ Especially from the late 1880s, coupled with the policy of separation of the sacred and secular, the concept of *shūkyō* as something in a particular category came to the surface. However, *shūkyō* had not yet come to the fore as transcending the boundaries of different religions; rather, this early *shūkyō* was limited to a kind of preparatory knowledge for comparison of religions. Inoue in the late 1880s and early 1890s was not himself a religious believer, but his statement "True Buddhism releases a brilliant light into the universe; if we adapt it to today's society Buddhism will lead us well, as an active religion"⁵⁴ showed that he anticipated the development of Buddhism. The reason his comparative religion and Eastern philosophy lectures in the

49 This can be confirmed from the record of his conversation with a contemporary named Katō Kumaichirō. Katō Kumaichirō 1890.

50 On the early, classics-oriented comparative religion of this period see Paden 1988, chapter 3; Sharpe 1986, chapter 2; Ryba 2001; Tull 1991.

51 *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1896a, p. 425.

52 Inoue Tetsujirō 1893b, p. 105.

53 R. King 1999, pp. 143–44.

54 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894a (85), p. 22.

end focused mainly on Shakyamuni can be seen as deriving from Inoue's then high hopes for Buddhism.

On comparative religion, as noted in chapter 1, Carl Munzinger (1864–1937) published an article “On the Necessity of Religion” (1890) in the German Evangelical Church journal *Die Wahrheit*. In 1893 Inoue Enryō published his lectures in the Tetsugakukan⁵⁵ journal *Hikaku shūkyōgaku* (Comparative Religion), and in the following year the Unitarian Kishimoto Nobuta published manuscripts of his own lectures in the Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō journal *Shūkyō no hikakuteki kenkyū* (Comparative Research on Religion; 1894). Lectures on comparative religion were offered by the Unitarians' Tokyo Liberal Theological Seminary and by the Universalists' Universalist Theological Seminary.⁵⁶ As can be seen from this pattern, the central forces of comparative religion were Christian followers of the liberal theology persuasion along with some Buddhist scholars interested in such study. They got involved in comparative religion in connection with their study of theology, and while they recognized other religions as equally “religion,” they acted as believers in their own specific traditions. Their ultimate goal was to advance the rationalization of the doctrines of their own school and to be able to persuade people of the superiority of their faith over other religions.

What distinguished Inoue's approach to comparative religion was that it was advanced at the imperial university, a place independent from sectarian affiliations. Although Inoue himself supported Buddhism, he did not have a specific belief orientation. In not belonging to any specific sect and in exploring research in religion from a purely academic standpoint, Inoue's comparative religion can be regarded as the forerunner of the religious studies of Anesaki and others who entered the picture in the late 1880s.

Another feature of Inoue's comparative religion, which is also revealed in the name of his course—“Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy”—was his joining of religion together with philosophy. Part of his interest in Shakyamuni was that the sage represented a “combination of remarkable religious figure and profound philosopher.”⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier, Inoue was influenced by Max Müller's theories on the Vedas as well as by research by Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Paul Deussen, and others on original Buddhist texts. In contrast to Müller, who is viewed as the founder of comparative religion, the latter

55 The Tetsugakukan, usually considered the first institute for philosophical studies in Japan, was a private school in Tokyo founded in 1887 by Inoue Enryō; it evolved into today's Tōyō University.

56 See chapter 5 below.

57 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, “Joron,” p. 3.

figures are widely known as scholars not of religion but of Eastern philosophy.⁵⁸ The two currents co-existed in Inoue because both—being of the deistic inclination in rationalist interpretation of religion—sought to reduce religion and philosophy to their primal forms.

From the 1890s up to the present, Inoue has been viewed not as a scholar of religious studies but as the father of the history of Eastern philosophy in Japan. The Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy lectures were often called the “Eastern philosophy” courses for short, even by Inoue himself.⁵⁹ Even though the content of the lectures was entirely Indian philosophy, it was never called “Indian philosophy.” In later years, Inoue offered the following explanation about his presentation of the relationship between religion and philosophy in the lectures:

Before I went to Europe, the main aspect of Eastern philosophy I taught was Chinese philosophy, but after returning home . . . I largely applied myself to Indian philosophy, ranging as far as the non-orthodox philosophies outside of the six classical schools; and later I began lectures on Buddhism. When one tries to lecture on Indian philosophy and Buddhism one always faces the problem of “what is religion?” Although in a way Brahmanism and Buddhism, for instance, are philosophies, in another way they are religions. Religion and philosophy have an intimate, inseparable connection. Here *although the lectures were on philosophy*, because of such problems, *it was necessary to refer to religion*. In this case, whether involving Judaism or Christianity, we must do research that explains them and compares and contrasts them.⁶⁰ (emphasis added)

Already in 1883, before going overseas to study, Inoue had lectured on Eastern philosophy. After returning to Japan, in his Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy lectures he simply changed his main topic from Chinese to Indian philosophy. But, as before, the lectures were on philosophy. The exception was that in the case of Indian philosophy, whether Brahmanism or Buddhism, although Inoue considered the subject matter philosophy, he had to emphasize the religious issues because these traditions simultaneously had religious

58 Inoue Tetsujirō 1893b; Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 23–28. On Indian studies in the West in that era, see Almond 1988; Neufeldt 1980; Droit 2003; Musashino Joshi Daigaku Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 1979, chapter 2; Kubota Chikara 2000.

59 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 44; *Inoue sensei kiju kinen bunshū*, pp. 568, 585, 591, 654, 660; Anesaki 1951, pp. 55, 61.

60 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 300.

elements. If it is assumed that Inoue undertook the body of his lectures with a perspective focusing on Eastern philosophy, then the “Eastern philosophy” appellation is convincing.

Inoue believed the *raison d'être* of religion lay solely “in elevating and improving public morality,” so the various religions of the mid-Meiji period seemed to Inoue to be ineffective: “Because all of our religions are imperfect in that respect, they are incapable of compensating for the weaknesses of our educational system.”⁶¹ For this reason he promoted the idea that it was necessary to create “a new, unified religion, taking the common points of various specific religions and blending and modifying them”—an “ethical religion” to replace the established religions.⁶² That would at the same time “utterly eliminate elements of superstition, paving the way for a morality that is identical with religion.”⁶³ This notion was based on the idea of spiritual evolution in which religion was expected to develop, through reason, toward morality or ethics. His statements about the need for a unified religion that would transcend the different denominations became increasingly strident in the 1890s and thereafter.⁶⁴ In the Association Concordia (Kiitsu Kyōkai 帰一協会) organized in 1912, in which he was an active member, Inoue stressed the need for a unified “ideal religion.” It should be noted that this was in contrast to Anesaki, who presumed the independence of each religious group. The difference in their two viewpoints was quite striking.⁶⁵

Around 1890 there was a movement to create a religious organization—either as a unification of established faiths or as a separate branch of an existing religion—as an alternative.⁶⁶ Inoue himself often used the term “new religions,” but his own aspiration for a unified religion was even older, going back to the early 1870s. In an article entitled “Rinri shinsetsu” (A New Explanation of Morality; 1883) published before going to study in Germany, he wrote about the need for the establishment of “a not-yet-existing kind of higher religion” based on ethical principles.⁶⁷

Until the late 1880s, Inoue placed his hopes in Buddhism as the established religion to serve as the foundation for this unified religion, and his lectures on

61 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902c, pp. 130, 143.

62 Inoue Tetsujirō 1897f, p. 379.

63 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902b, p. 529.

64 Inoue Tetsujirō 1909b; Inoue Tetsujirō 1910c. Additionally, see the theory of religion incorporated in Inoue Tetsujirō 1915b.

65 Inoue Tetsujirō 1943, p. 133.

66 Anesaki 1897a; Anesaki 1897b, pp. 211–14.

67 Inoue Tetsujirō 1883a, p. 422.

Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy were connected with this period of his thought. Because the main point of his arguments on original Buddhism was that it was “the most profound and the most sophisticated of religions” and one that “had a great influence on Japanese culture,” his lectures supported his aspirations for Buddhism, including the reform of its weaknesses.⁶⁸

However, as indicated in his statement that the purpose of “Buddhism is to educate society,”⁶⁹ for Inoue ultimately religion was still nothing more than a means for unifying society. For a deistic intellectual like him, the difference between morality and religion was negligible and made it possible in the Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy lectures to present religion and philosophy side by side. Such treatment of religion reduces it to morality, and in that context comparative religion was expected to play the role of rationalizing religion by “transforming it in accordance with the conditions of society.”⁷⁰ Inoue’s views were difficult to accept by either liberal theologians who were believers or by Buddhist scholars, even though they were also devoted to comparative religion, because Inoue focused on morality. His position insisting that “religion should not exist, only morality should exist” elicited a strong reaction; he was dismissed as suffering from “a scholar’s delusions.”⁷¹

Developments in the History of Eastern Philosophy

Why did Inoue set his sights on Eastern philosophy? As a pioneer in the study of Eastern philosophy in Japan and as a Tokyo University professor, he was in a position to disseminate his discourse throughout intellectual society. The motivation for this, however, was not confined to him as an individual but must also have had meaning in the broad spectrum of Japanese intellectual society from then on.

West versus East

As noted above, the period when Inoue studied in the West was one when research on the Vedas and original Buddhism was flourishing there, and Inoue’s research on India indisputably began under that influence. However, in contrast to the research on India of Müller and others, which was geared toward Westerners who had emerged from the Western tradition of Orientalism,

68 *Kokkyō* 1890, p. 42; Inoue Tetsujirō 1893b, p. 102.

69 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894a (85), p. 17.

70 Inoue Tetsujirō 1894a (85), p. 27.

71 Nemoto 1900, p. 117; Inoue Enryō 1902, p. 83; Itō Tomonobu 1975, pp. 294–95.

Inoue's scholarship—even if it tended to imitate the way the study was pursued in the West—had to transpose the study in a way that would be meaningful for Japanese.⁷² As already pointed out, the ultimate purpose of Inoue's research on India was to clarify original Buddhism. The reason that Inoue's thesis about Shakyamuni, unlike Western research on Buddhism, did not develop toward the idea of denying the legitimacy of Mahāyāna (the *daijō hi bussetsu ron*) was perhaps only natural, given that his research would be for the sake of “a Buddhist country like Japan.”⁷³

As a first-term student at Tokyo University, Inoue had heard dharma talks on the “Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna” from the Sōtō Zen priest-scholar Hara Tanzan (1819–1892), and also seems to have developed an interest in finding correspondences between Buddhism and Western philosophy.⁷⁴ Inoue began substantive research on the history of Eastern philosophy immediately upon his graduation when, beginning in 1880, he was put in charge of compiling a “history of Eastern philosophy” at the government's Department of Education Compilation Office. After that, in 1882 he accepted a post as assistant professor at Tokyo University, where he continued his work on compiling a history of Eastern philosophy. From 1883 he took up Chinese philosophy as his main topic and began to lecture on “history of Eastern philosophy.”⁷⁵ In 1884 he headed for Germany to further his studies, and once there felt all the more keenly the need to study the history of Eastern philosophy. He later recalled a conversation with a scholar of law named Stein as follows:

I paid a visit to Stein, who stated: In Eastern philosophy, there are no rules of argument; in contrast, Western philosophy is totally logically developed. I replied: That is a complete misconception. Firstly, what evidence have you that there are no such rules in the East? How can you say such a thing?⁷⁶

72 Concerning how Orientalism is not projected unilaterally from the Western side, but is also taken up internally and subjectified as a universal by the side which is projected upon as well, see R. King 1999; Chen 1995. For a work analyzing the Western Orientalist gaze in the history of Indian studies, see Inden 1986.

73 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 44.

74 Imanishi 1990–1993 (42:3), pp. 35–40.

75 On his lectures on history of Eastern and Western philosophy before his foreign studies, see Imanishi 1990–1993 (42:3), pp. 56–62.

76 Inoue Tetsujirō 1888, p. 190.

Regarding Stein's declaration that philosophy did not exist in East Asia, Inoue was determined to assert to Westerners, as well as to Japanese themselves, that East Asia did have philosophy on a par with what existed in the West. His reaction to Stein's view can be seen also in the anti-Christian views mentioned above that he held throughout his life. Ten years later, he wrote:

When European and American missionaries came to our country, they preached that Christianity was the only true religion in the world. But from the outset, they did not study Japanese and Chinese religions, but considered only their own religion to be solely correct and without peer. In attempting to convert the ignorant and unenlightened of our country into their fold, they were paragons of ignorance.⁷⁷

Here we can see the Japanese sense of nationality emerging in resistance to the West as revealed in a statement Inoue made immediately after he returned to Japan in 1891: "When [Japanese are] following the religions of other, non-Japanese countries, they must be very cautious about developing too much respect and reverence for those countries that are the fountainheads of those religions."⁷⁸ In order to develop a Japanese identity that could stand up to the West—regarding which Inoue often mentioned the concept "philosophy," since he regarded philosophy as the foundation of the validity of his argument—Japanese philosophy and religion must be re-oriented within that universality so as to go beyond mere reception of Western philosophy. As Inoue himself recognized, as long as the Western Other was viewed as universal, Japan could not construct its own intellectual identity without the approval of that Other.⁷⁹

Inoue's ideas thus show how closely tied was research on intellectual history in Japan to the West-centered orientation from which it sprang. Inoue's philosophy has been criticized for being compromising and eclectic, but that was to be expected since his purpose was to re-read Eastern Philosophy in a Western manner. What is more problematic, however, is that even today, Japanese still think in a space of discourse that is premised upon Western logic. In this we stand on ground that is little different from that of Inoue.

But it is wrong to say that Inoue was satisfied with merely comparing Japanese and Eastern thought to Western thought. Working upon the premise of a Western-type universality, he criticized the Western view of Buddhism: "Since Europeans and Americans teach and study Hīnayāna

77 Inoue Tetsujirō 1893b, p. 103.

78 *Kokkyō* 1890, p. 42.

79 Inoue Tetsujirō 1898, pp. 222–23.

Buddhism, inferring that this is the whole of Buddhism, their view is grievously confused.”⁸⁰ He criticized the biases of Western research on Asia and forcefully argued that Japanese ought to take the lead in researching aspects of Japanese and Chinese philosophy that Westerners had not yet pursued. That was something he himself had felt when on Western soil, beginning when he attended the International Conference of Oriental Studies in 1887,⁸¹ but it was also something frequently pointed out by Westerners. When Inoue, for example, mentioned his interest in writing about Eastern philosophy to Otto Liebman (1840–1912), he recalls that the German philosopher was very encouraging, saying that material on Indian philosophy was insufficient despite the publications of Oldenberg and Max Müller, and that descriptions of Chinese and Japanese philosophy are extremely limited, especially for Japanese philosophy. He urged the young Inoue to write a general history of Eastern philosophy, telling him that “it would be a greater accomplishment than receiving an imperial medal.”⁸²

Within Japan, a recognition had spread among intellectuals that “we must now universally admit, though hesitantly, that no distinctive philosophy has ever existed or is being established in our country.”⁸³ When Japanese referred to philosophy, it consisted entirely of scholarship relating to the West.⁸⁴ Observing this situation, Inoue began to consider working on Japanese and Chinese philosophy himself. For Inoue, of course, this must have seemed the perfect opportunity to establish a national identity for the Japanese people and subsequently an identity for East Asia.

Immediately after his sojourn in Germany, Inoue began teaching Indian philosophy in the Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy course, and parallel to that, published several papers on a variety of subjects, beginning with one presented at the 1890 International Conference of Oriental Studies in Stockholm entitled “Sei zen aku ron” (Is Human Nature Fundamentally Good or Bad?), and several relating to the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism and the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi.⁸⁵ But it seems that the reason he did not immediately pursue research on Japan but rather took up India was that there

80 Inoue Tetsujirō 1891b, p. 16.

81 Inoue Tetsujirō 1898; Inoue Tetsujirō, *Kaichū zakki* (Pocket Miscellany), edition of 25 June 1887. See Fukui 1993, p. 43.

82 Inoue Tetsujirō, *Kaichū zakki*, edition of 4 February 1886. Fukui 1993, p. 29.

83 T. T. 1889, p. 158.

84 Inoue Tetsujirō 1889, pp. 55–56; Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 31.

85 Inoue Tetsujirō 1891c; Inoue Tetsujirō 1892b; Inoue Tetsujirō 1892a; Inoue Tetsujirō 1892c; Inoue Tetsujirō 1893c; Inoue Tetsujirō 1897e; Inoue Tetsujirō 1897a.

was a substantial amount of Western scholarship available to him in the case of either Hinduism or original Buddhism. He may have sought to introduce such work as a means of transplanting to Japan the results and methods of Western research on Eastern philosophy and comparative religion. In addition, prior to studying abroad, Inoue had already given lectures at Tokyo University concerning Chinese philosophy and to some extent had already accumulated knowledge about it.

Inoue had two images of Asia in mind at that time: one centering on India and the other on China. When he evoked “Asia” as the region that shared Buddhism, he meant Asia in the broad sense encompassing India; but when he referred to understanding through Confucianism, it was East Asia that came to the forefront. There were in his mind Asia as Buddhist culture sphere and the Asia of the Confucian culture sphere. But in either case, he posited Japan in a separate sphere. The direction of Inoue’s discourses—about Mahāyāna in the case of Buddhism or about Japanese Confucianism in the case of Confucianism—moved towards his decision to study Japanese philosophy as he had envisioned since his return from Germany. He noted that, “Because I am now continually working with the aim of perfecting Japanese philosophy, any earlier intention of mine to complete the study of the history of original Buddhism seems to be in the distant future.”⁸⁶ Except for *Shakamuni den* he abandoned his research on India and China without publishing his conclusions on the subject and turned to the study of the history of Japanese philosophy.

Shifting Towards the Study of Japan

From 1900 Inoue published his so-called trilogy on Japanese Confucianism: *Nihon Yōmei gakuha no tetsugaku* on the Wang Yang-ming school (1900), *Nihon Kogakuha no tetsugaku* on Ancient Learning (1902), and *Nihon Shushi gakuha no tetsugaku* on the Zhu Xi (Chu Hsi) school (1905; all from Fuzanbō). In that period he also worked on reproduction versions of source documents in Japanese Confucianism, including *Nihon rinri ihen* (Japanese Ethics Compendium, 1901; published by Ikuseikai, edited with Kanie Yoshimaru) and *Bushidō sōsho* (Bushidō Library; 1905, published by Hakubunkan, edited with Arima Sukemasa).⁸⁷ As the book titles suggest, Inoue in this period sought in Confucianism the distinctive features of Japanese and Eastern thought. In

86 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, “Jobun,” p. 2.

87 Machida 1998; Kurata 1968. Later he wrote books about Ishida Baigan and Ninomiya Sontoku and other leaders of popular thought influenced by Confucianism, praising them highly from the standpoint of the national morality doctrine. See Inoue Tetsujirō 191c; Inoue Tetsujirō 1906b.

the end, between the Buddhist and Confucian images of Asia, it would be the Confucian sphere that would be the basis of his understanding of East Asia and Japan.

The direct stimulus that prompted him to pursue this series of studies on Japanese philosophy was his attitude towards the West. At the International Conference of Oriental Studies in Paris in 1897, Inoue presented a paper entitled “Seiyō bunmei no dōnyū izen ni okeru Nihon tetsugaku shisō no hat-tatsu ni tsuite” (On the Development of Philosophy and Thought Before the Introduction of Western Civilization) which was mainly an introduction to Confucianism in the Edo period.⁸⁸ It was following this conference that he became fully engaged in research on Japanese philosophy with Confucianism as its axis:

After I got back to Japan, I came up with the idea of compiling an outline of the history of Japanese philosophy and thought. With that in mind, I lectured at the university on Yōmeigaku, Ancient Learning, the Zhu Xi School, the Eclectic School [Setchūgaku], and others. That led me eventually to the history of Shintō in Japan.⁸⁹

It was in 1898, the year after his trip to Paris, that Inoue transferred the Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy teaching responsibilities to Anesaki, shifted his own energies to teaching on the history of Japanese philosophy⁹⁰ and publishing the cluster of works listed at the beginning of this section. In this same period Inoue organized, with Kimura Takatarō and others, the Dai Nippon Kyōkai (Great Japan Association), a group that disseminated the ideology called Nipponshugi (Japanism). It was described as a movement that “opposing all religions, especially Buddhism and Christianity, sought to create an ideal for the Japanese people through nationalism.”⁹¹ He criticized religion as pessimistic and ignorant and a hindrance to the unification of the people.⁹²

88 Inoue Tetsujirō 1897c. Presented in German, the paper principally treated Confucianists Fujiwara Seika, Hayashi Razan, Nakae Tōju, Yamazaki Ansai, Yamaga Sokō, Itō Jinsai, Itō Tōgai, Kaibara Ekken, Ogyū Sorai, and Satō Issai. See also Inoue Tetsujirō 1900, “Jo,” p. 1; *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1897a; *Hansei zasshi* 1897b.

89 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 45–46.

90 *Teikoku Daigaku ichiran*, 1898 edition.

91 *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1897b, p. 552.

92 *Nipponshugi* 1897, pp. 2–3.

It was exactly this period when Inoue began to strongly advocate religious integration in the form of “ethical religion” and the “ideal religion.”⁹³ The idea was to dismantle the independence of the separate religions and merge them all following the aspirations of Nipponshugi, which sought to blend all religions together into the so-called national morality. Around 1900 Inoue accepted the separate elements of the various religions equally and did not go beyond the idea that religions ought to be made to evolve into a system of ethics. However, by the second decade of the twentieth century, with the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript of 1908 (Boshin Shōsho), which decreed that the government and the people were “one body,” he began to advocate the inculcation of the discourse on national morality throughout society.⁹⁴ Coupled with the opportunities afforded by the revival of classical Chinese studies (Kangaku 漢学) at that time,⁹⁵ he clearly viewed Confucianism as being the axial philosophy for Japan. By this point his former favorable attitude towards Buddhism had disappeared. He now completely rejected it, calling it, just like Christianity, pessimistic, superstitious, and “the religion that would ruin the nation.”⁹⁶ Confucianism, however, he praised as follows:

Even after the beginning of the Meiji era, Japanese education has assumed a Confucian form, a form like the teaching established by Confucius. It is definitively not founded on either Buddhism or Christianity, but rather on pure *moral teaching* [*tokkyō* 徳教].⁹⁷ (emphasis added)

The word *tokkyō* seen here had often been used among intellectuals in early Meiji to translate religion, but as the term was later supplanted by the arrival of the neologisms “shūkyō” and “dōtoku,” it was subsequently forgotten. In the first decade of the twentieth century⁹⁸ Inoue went back to the earlier term for a reason. Originally the concept of *tokkyō* indicated a harmonious whole combining religion and morality; as Inoue noted, “Morality is primary, but includes religious elements” (*Dōtoku ga shu de aru ga, sore ni shūkyōteki bunshi ga*

93 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902c.

94 Inoue Tetsujirō 1909a; Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a; Yamada 1972; Morikawa 1986; Morikawa 1987, pp. 64–66.

95 Uchikoshi 1993; Kenjō 2008; Asanuma 2009.

96 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910b, p. 27; Inoue Tetsujirō 1911a, p. 125.

97 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910b, p. 27.

98 Inoue used the word *tokkyō* (“teaching of morality”) in the late 1890s (see e.g., Inoue Tetsujirō 1900, “Jo,” p. 2), but it was only late in the following decade that it became a key concept.

fukumare[ru]).⁹⁹ However, in referring to religious elements, he still rejected the “other worldly” types of thought like Christianity or Buddhism that were critical of the present world. This resulted in the dominance of the positive Confucian this-worldly character, as expressed in the words “a belief in heaven as each of us has in mind.”¹⁰⁰

Here can be seen indications of a shift from touting the supremacy of ethics up to 1900 towards somehow incorporating religious piety within morality, which moderated his touting of the supremacy of ethics.¹⁰¹ However, it should be noted that Inoue’s axis remained the “secular, realistic” national morality, and that through “Confucian benevolence in accordance with the social order,” it absolutized the emperor at the apex of Japanese society.¹⁰² As before, Inoue remained a figure of the Meiji Enlightenment, but in order to preach the national morality to the younger generation that emerged after the late 1890s (known in Japan as the *hanmon no sedai* 煩悶の世代 or “spiritual anguish generation”) it was necessary for him to appeal to their inner selves. The current of the times had already shifted away from Enlightenment thought to Romanticist passions.¹⁰³

Inoue’s Confucianism was limited to that which had become Japanized; it was distinct from the Chinese tradition, which (for example) admitted political revolution.¹⁰⁴ What this meant was the foregrounding of the “line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal” (as in the Meiji Constitution) which unified veneration of ancestors and the patriarchal family system (*kazoku seido*) and made the Japanese polity (*kokutai*) unique.¹⁰⁵ Already in 1891, in the commissioned work *Chokugo engi*, Inoue had extolled “filial piety, obedience, loyalty, faithfulness,” and “common love of the nation,”¹⁰⁶ all emphasized as the special qualities of the Japanese race backed up by historical tradition. In tandem, Shintō came to have major significance for him. Until the beginning of the 1890s, Inoue had been quite critical of the quality of Shintō religiosity, saying, for example that “popular Shintō is just a lot of superstition,” but by 1900 he had increasing opportunities to speak about Shintō, until finally he recognized that it held the position of an “ethnic spirit” (*minzokuteki seishin*

99 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910b, p. 27.

100 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910b, p. 26; Inoue Tetsujirō 1906a, p. 79.

101 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902c; Inoue Tetsujirō 1903a.

102 Inoue Tetsujirō 1908, p. 67; Inoue Tetsujirō 1897d, p. 12.

103 Yoshida Seiichi 1955–1958.

104 Inoue Tetsujirō 1900, pp. 625–26; Inoue Tetsujirō 1906a, p. 81; Inoue Tetsujirō 1912b.

105 Inoue Tetsujirō 1911b, p. 22; Matsumoto Sannosuke 1974.

106 Inoue Tetsujirō 1891a, “Jijo,” p. 5.

民族的精神), i.e., the core of the national morality that combined veneration of the ancestors and the family system. Ultimately Inoue would declare that he advocated Shintō “as the standard (*hon'i* 本位); Christianity, Buddhism, or whatever other religion would be absorbed within it . . . Shintō arouses a spirit of unifying the world.” This led him even to deem Shintō the central tradition of thought of the whole world.¹⁰⁷

During the period 1886 to 1896, Inoue had been the one who poured energy into establishing a place for Asia and Japan using Western-type universalism as the basis. By the second decade of the twentieth century, however, he was completely committed to foregrounding the uniqueness of Japan.¹⁰⁸ This is plain from his usage of the terms *rinri* and *dōtoku*.¹⁰⁹ Up to 1900, he had evoked the universal concerns of human conduct as *rinri* or *dōtoku* nearly synonymously. But by 1910 he linked the term *dōtoku* to Japanese ethnicity, calling it *minzoku dōtoku* (national morality)—“morality” was “Japanese morality”—and the term ethics, which had once had the connotation of universality, he assigned the role of supporting the uniqueness of that morality.

As already noted, Inoue’s idea of “the phenomenal is the real,” which served as the foundation of his epistemology, was to be understood as the particular and the universal merging with each other. However, at the same time that it offered a way to bind the two together, it also held the danger of reducing the universal to the particular. Inoue’s argument from 1912, the beginning of the Taishō period, was that the “Japanese ethnic spirituality” as embodied in Shintō was, “seen philosophically, the only real existence in the universe.” Thus he came to completely affirm that particularity, in an exclusivist form supported by universality.¹¹⁰

What led Inoue to emphasize particularism? A full consideration of the connections with his times would require a separate study, but according to current research on political and economic history it can be concluded that Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) played a decisive role.

107 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910d, pp. 655, 673; Inoue Tetsujirō 1915a, p. 13; Inoue Tetsujirō 1917; Inoue Tetsujirō 1927; Inoue Tetsujirō 1933b.

108 Okita 1995, pp. 52–56.

109 Inoue Tetsujirō 1903a; Inoue Tetsujirō 1910a.

110 Inoue Tetsujirō 1910d, pp. 670, 678. On one hand, in the Taishō period the approximation to democracy, and the rationalistic interpretation of criticism of the role of the Three Sacred Regalia in the institution of the emperor, and so forth, were severely criticized by the right wing when these ideas were advanced from the Enlightenment position. Ironically, because of his rationalism, Inoue—who had earlier denounced Uchimura Kanzō’s Christianity—was now attacked in turn. Morikawa 1986; “Inoue Tetsujirō fukei jiken.”

As a result of that victory an intense sense of pride pervaded the entire population. Japan was no longer a nation lagging behind the West, but one that ranked among the great world powers. Now people saw their nation as one among others in the world, and a nation endowed with a unique historical tradition. Yet together with this upsurge of nationalism, a sense of spiritual agony pervaded the country's younger generation, which manifested itself in the literary currents of Romanticism and Naturalism as well as in the rise of the labor movement and socialism in reaction to the injustices of developing capitalism.¹¹¹ The national governing elite was driven by a feeling of crisis about the need to integrate people into the nation even more firmly. The scholarship of Inoue Tetsujirō, standard-bearer of the governing elite, reflected the situation in typical fashion.

The Subdividing of Scholarship

This chapter examined Inoue Tetsujirō's scholarship and the ways it changed in the years just before the end of the Meiji period in 1912. After graduating from Tokyo University in the early 1870s, Inoue had begun to devise a "history of Eastern philosophy" focusing on Chinese philosophy. At that time Japan was still subject to the unequal treaties imposed by the European and American great powers and was at risk of being turned into a colony. The Meiji government's initial attempt to indoctrinate Japan as a Shintō nation collapsed, yet conditions were still such that Western-style freedom of religion had not been established and, as Inoue described the situation: "In recent days the people of our country, regardless of whether young or old, and irrespective of social status, are infatuated with the influx of Western studies."¹¹² Sensing a counter-reaction to the tide of Westernization in Japanese society, he began to think of constructing a history of Eastern "philosophy" that could compare favorably to that of the West.

That interest strengthened from 1884 to 1890, as Inoue took advantage of his study in Germany. After his return to Japan he delivered lectures on comparative religion and Eastern philosophy with a focus on India mixed with research on Chinese philosophy, advancing the field he called history of Eastern philosophy.¹¹³ The promulgation of the Meiji Constitution introduced the separation of the sacred and secular, at least for appearance's sake. It was the product of Japan's adoption of modern Enlightenment theory, and in intellectual society religion and (secular) morality—*shūkyō* and *dōtoku*—became

111 Anesaki 1903a; Ōhara 1970; Miyachi Masato 1973; see also chapter 5.

112 Inoue Tetsujirō 1882, p. 10.

113 Nakamura Shunsaku 2007; Inokuchi 2009.

clearly distinguished. That morality, moreover, which was linked to the public sphere—in contrast to religion which was limited to the private sphere—was now emplaced in a superior position since it was considered to be derived from rationalism. The debates on education and religion sparked by the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), for which Inoue wrote the officially sanctioned commentary, clearly illustrated the anti-Christian or anti-religion atmosphere among the Enlightenment intellectuals of that period.

Inoue's lectures on Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy introduced in this chapter were delivered from that viewpoint. Based on the conviction that religion was nothing more than the immature form of philosophy or morality, and treating Brahmanism and original Buddhism as a part of the history of Eastern philosophy, the lectures asserted that Eastern thought was equipped with a philosophical tradition superior to that of Christianity. The methods for researching comparative religion and original Buddhism that Inoue had brought back with him from Germany represented the most up-to-date knowledge about Western research on Asia at that time. We can see how Inoue's scholarship in the 1890s served as a driving force in intellectual society.

Afterwards, around 1900, Inoue began to narrow his research to the history of Japanese philosophy, shifting from his previous wide-ranging discussion of Eastern thought to a closer focus on the history of Japanese Confucianism. With the victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, as popular awareness of Japan as a nation began to take a clearer shape, Inoue's history of Japanese philosophy came to embody that milieu. He had harbored the ambition to write a history of Japanese philosophy since studying in Germany, and now, on the crest of rising nationalism, his ideas finally crystallized. It was these circumstances that caused him, when he had to choose between the two images of Asia—the Buddhist or the Confucian—to opt for the Confucian sphere which linked China and Japan. Buddhism, which he had formerly regarded in a positive light, he now rejected because of its pessimism. Inoue's position in this regard is clearly expressed in the anti-religious patriotism he argued as an advocate of Nipponshugi in the 1890s.

Inoue's new orientation to Japan took even clearer shape around 1910, when he put behind him the arguments about Asian philosophy corresponding to Western universalism that had so absorbed him in the 1890s, and instead began to explicitly assert the uniqueness of Japan. However, only as he became more involved as an advocate of the Ministry of Education's national morality doctrine—which can be seen as the development of the aforementioned Nipponshugi ideas—did his publication of writings of scholarly rigor decline considerably. Today Inoue is remembered largely as a statist ideologue and as

the founding father of Japanese philosophy, but that image is actually based mainly on his later activities from 1900 to 1912.

While Inoue eventually distanced himself from the front lines of scholarly inquiry, a new generation of scholars emerged in the academic world who divided up the history of Eastern philosophy as conceived by Inoue into smaller topic areas. Among Inoue's own students at Tokyo University, Anesaki Masaharu established the chair of religious studies in 1905 and Tanaka Yoshitō and Katō Genchi the chair of Shintō studies in 1920. In both religious studies and Shintō studies religiosity was understood as a central quality of human beings and that understanding was shared in their disciplines. Both were disciplines that handled in a positive spirit the religious issues that Enlightenment ideologue Inoue had not addressed. In that sense Anesaki's religious studies was completely different from comparative religion under Inoue.

In the already established course on education, too, ethics was taught by Inoue's son-in-law Yoshida Kumaji from 1907, and by national morality advocate Fukasaku Yasufumi from 1926. In addition, a chair of Sanskrit and a chair of Indian philosophy were newly established in 1901 and 1917 respectively, the former headed by Takakusu Junjirō, who had studied directly under Max Müller, and the latter by Murakami Senshō, known for his support of the *daijō hi bussetsu*. They were not graduates of Tokyo University, but they emerged on the scene as outstanding scholars of Buddhism whose knowledge of the literature far surpassed Inoue's. In relation to Chinese philosophy, in 1905 the old chair of classical Chinese was reorganized into a chair of Chinese philosophy, history, and literature, which was headed by Hattori Unokichi and others.¹¹⁴

In 1919 the Bunka Daigaku (University of Humanities) was incorporated into Tokyo Imperial University as the Faculty of Letters. All of the above chairs—with the exception of the Shintō Studies chair established the following year, which was not then elevated to the status of department—became departments independent of the Department of Philosophy of which Inoue had been the head. After this, the Department of Philosophy itself gradually became a department specializing in Western philosophy, and Inoue's student Kuwaki Gen'yoku taught neo-Kantianism and other new branches of philosophy.¹¹⁵ Thus the discipline Inoue had formerly conceived as history

114 Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku 1942; Musashino Joshi Daigaku Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 1979; Sakade 1977; Shimazono and Isomae 1996; Isomae and Fukasawa 2002.

115 Inoue's retirement from Tokyo University took place in 1923 when he was sixty-seven. On the contents of lectures given during his last years in the Department of Philosophy, see Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 58–59.

of Eastern philosophy split up into various separate chairs and departments, including religious studies, Shintō studies, Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, ethics, education, philosophy, and so on. The chairs were held by scholars who had been Inoue's students or received training from him, but because of the institutional organization of the new disciplines many of these men came to be viewed as the founders of the various departments and academic fields, and Inoue's name was no longer associated with these disciplines.¹¹⁶ As noted at the beginning of this chapter, a scholar like Tamaru Noriyoshi might cite Inoue as the pioneer of religious studies, but in the end Tamaru really viewed only Anesaki as his direct scholarly forebear, and Inoue was seen merely as part of the prehistory of the field.

Inoue's reputation as a scholar rests heavily on his history of Japanese Confucianism. However, in the end, too, the field of the history of Japanese thought (*Nihon shisōshi*) did not become independent either institutionally or in the way it was defined, and for this reason had no generally agreed-upon founder, as could be identified for some other disciplines. In some ways Inoue's research undertaken from the late 1890s came to serve as a pretense for such origins. However, Inoue himself was not the inventor of the history of Japanese thought, which to the end he understood as the history of Japanese philosophy. The description here is overly brief, but the establishment of the field called *Nihon shisōshi*, even if it were insufficient, would only come later, with the appearance of Muraoka Tsunetsugu and Tsuda Sōkichi in the 1912 to 1925 period.¹¹⁷



The current evaluation of Inoue, whose role became sidelined as the various disciplines separated from the original Department of Philosophy at Tokyo University, may be unjust. Nevertheless, it is probably not suitable to identify him as the founder of *Nihon shisōshi*. The problem is that evaluations of Inoue, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic, have too often been measured anachronistically from the viewpoint of the individual fields that split off from *Nihon shisōshi* from the 1890s. The original undifferentiated breadth of his scholarship cannot be grasped from those different, newer angles. What I want to affirm in this chapter is this: if we want to determine the significance of Inoue's work in

116 It was around this time that Inoue began making statements supporting Japan's policies of incursion into China, starting with the Manchurian Incident. See Inoue Tetsujirō 1939; Inoue Tetsujirō 1932b; Inoue Tetsujirō 1933a.

117 Tsuda Sōkichi 1916–1921; Muraoka 1939.

its historical context, we must reevaluate it as the discourse represented by the Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy lectures, when Inoue defined the field broadly under the name “history of Eastern philosophy,” going back before the era when it was split up into separate academic departments.

As it passed through these various stages, Japanese scholarship first succeeded in incorporating the logic of Western philosophy and then in the next generation proceeded to articulate more specialized principles and institutions. Inoue’s discourse of the late 1880s and 1890s, the product of embryonic movements, paved the way for the establishment of modern scholarship in Japan. The progressive stages of his research on history of Eastern philosophy, beginning in the 1870s with Chinese philosophy, followed by the development towards Indian philosophy in the 1880s, and closing with the narrowing towards Japanese Confucianism and Shintō in the 1890s, tell the story of how Asia and Japan established their identities in the late nineteenth century through negotiation with the intellectual heritage of the Western world.

Buddhism: From Premodern Traditions to Modern Religion

We are now quite aware of how the embedding of the translation of “religion” as *shūkyō* in Japanese usage by the late 1870s marked a shift away from terms such as *buppō* (Buddhist law) or *butsudō* (Buddhist path) (which had included the characters *hō* (dharma) or *dō* (path) and which had been the predominant terms in the Edo period) and substituted a preference for the new term using the character *kyō* (teaching).¹ Michel Mohr has also pointed out how the modern understanding of the term *Zen shū*, meaning “Zen sect”—now referring to the sectarian institutional unification that constituted a conceptual subcategory of *shūkyō*—was a by-product of modernizing bureaucratic institutions.² The word *Bukkyō*, or Buddhism, was itself an invention of modern times, too, created to fit a certain system of belief into the newly conceptualized unitary concept of “religion.” That is, although the Japanese term *Bukkyō* effectively corresponded with “Buddhism” in the Euro-American sphere, the term was something recent, a conceptual innovation created out of European contact with Indian tradition—the result of overlapping layers of influence as ideas and beliefs were transferred across cultural and linguistic boundaries.³

Compared to earlier times, what differed about the modern times that began with the opening of Japan in 1853 was that instead of maintaining only restricted exchange with China, Korea, and the Netherlands, Japan was subsumed in the colonialist competition among the Western powers. In the context of such circumstances of contact with diverse cultures, Japan came to need such an all-encompassing concept of “religion” (*shūkyō*). Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, even Shintō and Confucianism were identified within that rubric as individual “religions,” each with their individual characteristics. In Japan, Christianity and Buddhism, which had teachings or doctrine (*kyō*) at their core, were the first to be strictly recognized as such. Shintō and Confucianism (the latter also referred to as *Jugaku*—the “study” or “scholarship”

1 On the process by which not only the concept of *shūkyō* (religion) but also that of *kyō* (teaching, doctrine) was involved in the development of *buppō* and *butsudō* into *Bukkyō*, see Tanigawa 2008.

2 Mohr 2002, pp. 47–48.

3 Almond 1988, p. 7; R. King 1999, chapter 7.

of Confucius—did not completely correspond to the category of “religion” and were eventually placed outside of or on its margins in the separate category of *dōtoku* or “morality.” Indeed, even Buddhism was thought to be ill-fitted to the new category of “religion” and already from the late 1870s it was located somewhere between religion and philosophy. There were frequent discussions about defining a new category for Buddhism in order to establish Buddhism’s superiority vis-à-vis Christianity, a movement based on Spencerian ideas about the evolution of religion.⁴

The concept of religion or the newly defined *shūkyō* has its vagaries and blank areas; it is certainly not a concept or phenomenon that can be brought to a static position with final or fixed content.⁵ Any concept harbors within it the possibility of self-dislocation, but the concept of religion should not be confused with universal aspirations regarding the transcendently indefinable (like “god”). The concept of religion ought rather—as in the case of the word Buddhism, which is also an example—avoid the preconception that was once held as to “correctness” at its core (that is, whatever scholars or followers were inclined to support). Instead, the concept should embrace a mode of understanding that could reflect a dynamic that would be distinguishable from contingent, short-lived definitions, and yet would be generative, ceaselessly questioning itself.⁶

The word *Bukkyō* as used in Japan today has as its tacit premise the transformation from the premodern usages of *buppō* and *butsudō* over to the modern Western concept of “Buddhism.” Before the Meiji era, there was no unified concept of *Bukkyō*; the several Buddhist organizations of earlier times were identified separately in accordance with categories of *shūmon* (lineage membership) or *shūshi* (lineage or principles of a specific sect), which corresponded to the different sects or schools of Buddhist practice. Christianity, which was prohibited at the time, was called *Yasokyō* or *Jakyō* (the lineage of Jesus’s teaching); it, too, was part of the same categorization. In the Edo period, the various schools of Buddhist teaching were each independently linked to the temple registration system. The temple affiliation records (*shūmon ninbetsu ataramechō* 宗門人別改帳) specified by family unit which school (*shūha*) was to conduct the funeral rights for its members. The categories of *shūshi* or *shūmon* corresponded to this specific religious organizational structure.

4 On how the concepts of Buddhism, philosophy (*tetsugaku*), and religion (*shūkyō*) were unstable, contradictory categories, see Cho 2002.

5 Vries 2008.

6 David McMahan calls this kind of dissemination process “hybridity.” McMahan 2008, pp. 240–43.

By contrast, the commonly used concepts of *buppō* and *butsudō* did not correspond to a particular religious organization in the modern sense, but rather referred to the teachings culminating in the attainment of *satori*, and the truths of those teachings.⁷

In a sense *shūshi* and *shūmon* also corresponded to physical ritual practices, while the terms *buppō* and *butsudō* could be seen as referring to the system of belief or faith.⁸ However, we must not overlook the fact that this *buppō*, as a kind of “belief,” was not something that should be understood in the sense that modern thinkers would do, as the spiritual crystallization of the thought of a specific individual. Rather, Buddhism as “belief” existed only in terms of the Buddhist truths mastered by an individual in the process of immersion in the sutras and the writing of commentaries.⁹ Furthermore, in the Edo period the compound term *bushin* (meaning buddhas and *kami* together in a common pantheon)—as is made clear by the fact that the compound was commonly in use—was not limited by the later view separating the elements of the compound, i.e., conceiving *butsu* (Buddha, as in *butsudō*) and *kami* (*shin*, as in Shintō) as two different, mutually exclusive entities. Rather, the two religious systems coexisted. That very overlap and simultaneity was part of the essential nature of religious life before the separation of Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*), which was enforced by the early Meiji government in the 1870s.¹⁰

A firm separation had been established between the secular public sphere and the private sphere of religious affairs before the early seventeenth century as the result of some hard-fought conflicts between secular authority and religious power—especially the power struggles of the sixteenth century involving Christianity and the Ikkō *ikki* autonomy movements of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism.¹¹ But the context was not modern: we see before the modern period no creation of a religious organization truly centering on exclusivist teachings and no political strategy for utilizing religion as a channel for indoctrinating the people or shaping a popular consensus. The Christianity introduced to Japan in the late sixteenth-early seventeenth century was, after all, not Protestantism,

7 Ōkuwa and Maeda 2006.

8 For this perspective I have taken a suggestion from Ōtani’s research, which perceives the double-layered character of modern Buddhism as constituted by both doctrinal faith (a narrow sense of Buddhism) and ancestral religion plus belief in magical benefits (a broader sense). Ōtani 2009, p. 7.

9 On the Buddhist text commentary (*chūshaku*) of the premodern period, which differed from the modern “treatise” (*ronbun*), see Isomae 2009. See also Foucault 1993.

10 Sueki 2003.

11 Hayashi Makoto 1992.

centering on personal interiorized belief, but Catholicism emphasizing physical ritual practices.¹² Moreover, the types of political regimes with which Japan was in contact with at the beginning of the seventeenth century, especially Spain and Portugal, were typical old-style empires, not nation-states that took as their basis a horizontal sense of community among their people.¹³ Thus, it was only later that it first became possible to establish a concept of “religion” like that which revolved around modern Western Protestantism. This was accomplished in several ways: by establishing a nation-state which aimed to train the populace; by taking hold of the interior consciousness of individuals as the object of control; by presuming a new mode of separation of the religious and the secular; and by hardening a belief-centrism focused on individual interiority.¹⁴ For Japan, politically this had to wait for contact with Europe and the United States, which had already passed through religious reformation and popular revolution. At least from the viewpoint of the history of religion, it was with Japan’s subsumption into that globalized world that the modern age of Japanese society began.

When we seek to clarify the concept of “religion” or assumptions behind the modernity of the notion of *Bukkyō*, we have to be aware of the constraints imposed by our historically conditioned consciousness and be extremely cautious about going back retroactively to past eras. Of course, even if we should recognize the characteristics of our contemporary times, we have not necessarily gotten outside of our own epistemological horizon of awareness. Instead, what is important is critical realization: knowing the discordances with the objects of our awareness, discordances which are created by the constraints of our own horizons; knowing what kind of intersections with other horizons the various horizons of awareness achieve; knowing what new concepts of Buddhism were disseminated; and in all this knowing not to propose any orthodoxy but rather to extend to the limit the process of proliferation of meaning.¹⁵ In such a process the historical situatedness of the concept of *Bukkyō* must also become clear. It is not a matter of applying to a concept of Buddhism any exclusionary negation on the basis of an orthodoxy or a claim on origins, but rather of considering the concept itself as one kind of historical phase. This historical phase applies not only to Buddhism, but also to its hybridization with other concepts, where cross-fertilization

12 Asad 1993, chapters 1–2.

13 Anderson 1991, pp. 19–22.

14 Asad 2003, chapter 6.

15 Gadamer 2004, part 2.

and creolization flourish. Jacques Derrida denied the retrieval of any unitary authenticity related to origins:

The implex: that which cannot be simplex. It marks the limit of every analytic reduction to the simple element of the point. An implication-complication, a complication of the same and the other which never permits itself to be undone, it divides or equally multiplies infinitely the simplicity of every source, every origin, every presence.¹⁶

Is there any such thing as pure Buddhism, or anything that can be called authentic religion? Has such ever existed at all? Japanese have long been looking for the source of the diffusion of a single foundational reality or unitary purity. Relevant examples include the Meiji-era *daijō hi bussetsu ron* (the argument that Mahāyāna Buddhism is not the original teaching of Shakyamuni), or conversely the claim that Zen is the true essence of Buddhism. Yet is not this desire for purity only imaginary? Or, if there were some primal religion, since at least in its initial phase it would be something advocated by a single individual, could that purely authentic something ever be recovered? An example here would be the “historical Jesus.” Supposing such an original religion were possible, could that one person’s thought even be preserved in its original unitary form? From the instant that one person’s thought germinated, were not disparities—including randomness and instability, together with the common urge to unify—all reiterated within that person? The process of reiteration would be disseminated out to the margins, or proliferate according to response from the margins. Thus do we not have to see that from that very moment of inception religion would reiterate both pluralization and identification?¹⁷

As Russell McCutcheon has said, if we assume that “religion” was established on the premise of an intrinsic essence,¹⁸ or if we assume the validity of the critiques offered by the *daijō hi bussetsu* advocates against traditional ritual Buddhism promoted by scholars of Buddhist studies in the late 1890s as they aimed at the restoration of some fundamental Buddhism,¹⁹ then, according to Gauri Viswanathan, would not that aiming at some pure authenticity as the essence of religion break away from actual religious faith? This was an issue that became clear in the religious conversion doctrines promoted under

16 Derrida 1982, p. 302.

17 Derrida 1981, p. 304.

18 McCutcheon 1995.

19 Serikawa 1989; Sueki 2004a; Isomae, Takahashi, and Fukasawa 2002, pp. 28–29.

colonialism in India.²⁰ Viswanathan describes how, in conducting the population censuses that were part of Britain's policy of colonial rule, the authorities in charge had the preconceived notion that one person could not belong to multiple religions, so they forcibly separated the categories of Hinduism and Islam in India, and the categories then became cast in stone.²¹ The pattern resembled the modern conceptualization of Bukkyō and Shintō in Japan, where in the course of contact with Western Protestantism, external factors became the main determinant of ideas, even though the actual situation was always fluid and was intimately connected to inherited cultural practices. Despite such innate heterogeneity, the modernist response was always to aim for homogeneity.

The "Doubling" of Buddhism²²

These days, as is clear from how the term "Western Buddhism"²³ has to some extent become commonly understood, "Buddhism" conceptualized as a "religion" has not only spread its influence in Japan and the rest of Asia, but has been recognized as an important factor in the reappraisal of the West's own Christian traditions. Naturally, the constellation of perceptions changes along the axis of time as well as over the axes of space. What had been called *buppō* and *butsudō* in premodern Japan was in the modern age given a new modern name: Bukkyō in Japan and "Buddhism" in the West. The method of its differentiation was naturally not the same in Japan and in the West; that "West," furthermore, included both Europe and the United States, and even within Europe its reception occurred in diverse ways. Theravāda and Mahāyāna acquired different names, coming to be called Southern and Northern Buddhism. And in addition to these two Asian lineages,²⁴ there is a distinct third, called Western Buddhism, which has developed in the West.

20 Viswanathan 1998b, chapter 2.

21 Viswanathan 1998b, chapter 5.

22 Doubling is the richly allusive term used in the postcolonial discourse of Homi Bhabha and others which refers to the pluralizations and overlappings of identities (repetitions of difference and sameness) that arise in colonized cultures under the influence of colonial rule (either literal or merely intellectual colonization). See Bhabha 2004.

23 For example, McMahan 2008, p. 247.

24 According to Takasaki Jikidō, there are at least three spheres: Southern Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and East Asian Buddhism. In this case, Southern Buddhism is the Theravāda traditions of Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian countries which use the Pali scriptures; Tibetan Buddhism is the Buddhism of inner continental Asia, especially the

An upshot of the search for the historical roots of Buddhism undertaken by Western Buddhology was the reversal of the former perceived superiority of Northern Buddhism (Mahāyāna) vis-à-vis Southern Buddhism. (In East Asia Mahāyāna, or the “Greater Vehicle” had traditionally disparaged the Southern tradition as Hinayāna or “Lesser Vehicle.”) This led to the *daijō hi bussetsu* theory, which claimed that it was the Southern tradition that maintained the original form of Buddhism. In Europe, this theory gained impetus from new investigations into the historical Jesus by Renan and Strauss, and, following the work of Rhys Davids and others, developed into scholarship on the “historical Buddha.”²⁵ The discourse of Western Buddhism, which through contact with the different cultural traditions resulting from imperial expansionism, came to recognize Buddhism as a “world religion.” Still, while this discourse actually emerged from within the Christian tradition as a form of self-criticism, the Christian conception of religion—even though it laid the groundwork for a critical expansion of the meaning of religion—retained among its premises the idea of universality based on historical foundership.²⁶

Naturally, to establish the discourse of Western Buddhism it was necessary to make contact with the Buddhism that was born in Asia. Yet at the same time, in order to recognize Asian Buddhism as a “religion” (or perhaps rather a philosophy) called “Buddhism,” an interiorization or immanentization of the “gaze” of Western Buddhological research was necessary—even if this involved a version of Christian self-criticism nurtured on the basis of Christian tradition. The anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt has noted that in general this kind of cultural contact does not consist of an equal relationship based on free intention, with the possibility of rejection of the relationship, but instead takes place without the possibility of refusal on the basis of a coercive political differential, as occurs in relationships involving suzerain and colonized countries.²⁷ In the case of Buddhism, the reality was that it was hard to avoid the internalization of Protestant concepts of religion in the Asian countries. For Euro-Americans, Buddhism, with its idea of “emptiness,” held a special religious attraction that could shore up declining Christian faith, yet at the

Tibetan traditions with their Tibetan-language scriptures. East Asian Buddhism is the tradition spread in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, which uses the scriptures translated into Chinese. (Takasaki 1995, pp. 4–6). However, in order to simplify the discussion here, I adopt a simpler division referring to Southern and Northern Buddhism. On interactions between Tibetan Buddhism and Japanese priests, see for example Okuyama 2003.

25 Almond 1988, pp. 61–77.

26 Masuzawa 2005, chapter 4.

27 Pratt 1992, p. 4.

same time it posed a threat that could shake Western religion—in particular, anthropomorphic monotheism—at its very foundations.²⁸ Contact with these Western views of Buddhism heightened awareness in Asian Buddhism of the differences between the Northern tradition and the Southern tradition. Japan belonged to the Northern tradition, but under the influence of the *daijō hi bussetsu* theory promoted in Western Buddhology, Japanese scholars as early as the 1870s reached out to the Southern tradition that relied on Pali scriptures and tried to renew or regenerate the Japanese Buddhism of earlier traditions that had relied only on Chinese-language texts. As exemplified by Nanjō Bun'yū (1849–1927), who had studied under the guidance of the comparative religion scholar Max Müller, they began in the late 1870s to study the Sanskrit texts from which the Chinese texts had been translated.²⁹

In the consciousness of scholars at that time, such projects were aimed at returning to the original purity of Buddhism. The Buddhist-Shintō separation (*shinbutsu bunri*) decrees of the early years of Meiji, in tandem with the *daijō hi bussetsu* theory that flourished from the late 1880s to late 1890s, sparked a drive to return to the true and orthodox teachings of Buddhism that had merged with Shintō in syncretic fashion through the centuries up to the modern period. The government-led campaign to separate Shintō and Buddhism was above all an opportunity for Shintōist advocates to implant a consciousness of the purity of their own teaching. But among the Buddhists who were being oppressed as well, it aroused—even though in negative form—a new awareness that Buddhism and Shintō were clearly different.³⁰ In 1877 the ultimately short-lived Kyōbushō (1872–1877; Ministry of Religious Education) project to invent a unified modern national religious ideology for Japan was abandoned and the Shaji Kyoku (1877–1900; Bureau of Temples and Shrines) established instead in the new Meiji government's Ministry of Home Affairs (Naimushō); additional, stronger distinctions were made with the formation of the Shūkyō Kyoku (1900–1945; Bureau of Religion) and the Jinja Kyoku (1900–1940; Bureau of Shrines) separately in the government starting in 1900. The separation of Shintō and Buddhism thus was not conducted merely at the level of abstract teachings but was given decisive meaning by the institutional division of religious organizations. According to Viswanathan, in India under British colonial rule, it was the syncretism capable of merging the differing religious categories of Hinduism and Islam that fostered an Indian national consciousness that

28 Droit 2003.

29 Vita 2003.

30 Yasumaru 1979; Murata Yasuo 1999.

could resist the British empire.³¹ In Japan, by contrast, the pursuit of purity within the categories of Shintō and Buddhism respectively was bound up with nationalism. At least up through the 1890s syncretism was thought to taint the purity of nationalist consciousness. Undoubtedly at the core was the strong desire, present ever since the advent of National Learning scholars (Kokugaku) in the Edo period, to link Shintō to the historical traditions of Japan.³² Yet Buddhists also responded, saying their religion, too, was suitable ground for the cultivation of Japanese nationalist consciousness. The Buddhist side reiterated this argument, and from this point we must be cognizant of the deep connection between Buddhism and the state, which would manifest itself more clearly later in the Asian-Pacific War.³³

Especially important in this respect was the impact of the campaign early in the Meiji era to “discard Buddhism” (*haibutsu*). In order to counter the charge that Buddhism, with its encouragement of taking the tonsure and other world-renouncing teachings, harbored “anti-social” elements, Buddhists had to argue proactively that their practices were useful to Japanese society. Given that at that time Japanese society was in a condition in which there was no distinction between civil society and the state, it was obvious that being “useful to society” was the other side of the coin of swearing service to the emperor-centered state, a situation that became clear later as Japanese Buddhism tended toward nationalism. At that historical moment, there was still no separation between the civil society and the state in Japan; to be “socially useful” was identical to serving the Meiji state founded on the institution of the emperor. This makes it obvious why Japanese Buddhism later tended toward nationalism.³⁴

Even as Japanese Buddhism looked to Southern Buddhism for its origins—and many Japanese priests did travel directly to India or Sri Lanka³⁵—probably it was the philological study of European scholars of Buddhology that played the major role in the establishment of modern Japanese Buddhism. Japanese scholars who went to Europe (see below) had a much stronger orientation to academic research than to personal religious experience, and they sought the guidance of Max Müller, Rhys Davids, or Paul Deussen. From the late 1870s through the turn of the century Nanjō Bun'yū, Takakusu Junjirō, Anesaki

31 Viswanathan 1995.

32 N. Sakai 1991.

33 Victoria 2006.

34 Ōtani 2001.

35 Jaffe 2004; Okuyama 2008b.

Masaharu, and others went to study in England and Germany.³⁶ In the Western reception of Buddhism, the European tendency was to understand Buddhism as philosophy or philology rather than as religion.³⁷ In the United States, with New England as the center, on the other hand, Buddhism was received more as a religious experience that filled a gap against the backdrop of Christianity.³⁸ Probably that reception would later connect with the late twentieth-century Zen boom in the United States, but in the Meiji era, Japanese intellectuals preferred to associate with Europeans' understanding of Buddhism as philology. After all, Japanese society already had its own form of indigenous Buddhism, so perhaps, rather than studying anew yet another experiential aspect of Buddhist faith, Japanese felt attracted to the philological approach. Still, their purpose was to investigate the original form of Buddhism in order to revitalize ancient Buddhism, and the Department of Indian Studies at Tokyo Imperial University became the base for reception of Western philological studies.³⁹

The lineage of scholarship that can be traced back to Inoue Tetsujirō represented an effort to reform Buddhism into an Eastern philosophy ranking with Western philosophy, i.e., as a kind of rational system of thought transcending any religion containing non-rational teachings. Such efforts to reinterpret Buddhism were not only energized by Murakami Senshō and other members of the staff of Tokyo Imperial University's Department of Indian Studies who promoted the *daijō hi bussetsu ron*. They were also supported by the unearthing at the end of the Meiji era of "Protestant-like" elements in Buddhism by Hara Katsurō, a scholar of Western history. Similar, too, was the critique of Edo-period "funeral Buddhism" and attempts at finding ways to reform the Buddhist tradition carried on from the latter years of World War II into the postwar period by historian Tsuji Zennosuke in the Japanese History Department (Kokushi Gakka) at Tokyo Imperial University.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, as Hayashi Makoto has pointed out, whereas research at Tokyo and the other imperial universities was solely devoted to philological studies of Sanskrit and Pali, sectarian private universities run by the Buddhist organizations continued their readings of the

36 Maejima 1985. Musashino Joshi Daigaku Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 1979; Isomae and Fukasawa 2002, part 1.

37 Almond 1988; Droit 2003; Chin 2002, p. 102.

38 Tweed 2000.

39 "Akademizumu bukkyōgaku no tenkai to mondaiten: Tōkyō (Teikoku) Daigaku no baai o chūshin ni" (Problems in the Development of Academic Buddhism: Focusing on Tokyo Imperial University), in Sueki 2004b, pp. 215–40.

40 Murakami Senshō 1901; Hara 1911; Tsuji 1944–1955; Klautau 2008, pp. 263–303.

Mahāyāna texts in Chinese as had been traditional since the Edo period.⁴¹ The scholar of Buddhist studies Sueki Fumihiko offers the following explanation for this curious state of affairs: “Although Japanese Buddhology has adopted Western Buddhology, it must still go forward meeting a two-sided challenge, for it must support conventional Japanese tradition at the same time; in the West, in contrast, where there was no Buddhist tradition at all, a completely different, independent development was necessary.”⁴²

The education of the Buddhist priests who presided over the actual practice of faith, including the performance of funeral rituals, was carried out by the private sectarian universities. Japanese Buddhism came to be sustained, metaphorically speaking, by the two wheels constituted by the philology of Tokyo Imperial University on the one hand (which was inclined towards Southern Buddhism) and the scholarship of the sectarian schools on the other (which was firmly rooted in the tradition of Mahāyāna or Northern Buddhism). These wheels also represented the two poles that structure religion: creedal religion involving belief and religious experience in practice. One constituted the discourse of religious or philosophical concepts in the Western manner, while the other constituted the domain of faith that had prevailed since the Edo period but could not be recovered in its traditional form. However, the two approaches were not completely separate. Just as belief and practice play complementary roles in religious experience, philology and doctrinal study operating together have maintained Japanese Buddhism. The Buddhologists or academic religious studies scholars produced by the imperial universities eventually took up teaching positions at the sectarian universities. With Western Buddhology or religious studies thus taking control of Buddhism via the categories of religion or philosophy, modern Japanese Buddhism came to exist in concert with the Western world, and moreover with Asian Buddhism in general. Even in the internal awareness of Japanese society Buddhism came to be recognized as a discourse permitting compatibility with modern consciousness.⁴³ But by adopting the shared vocabulary of modern Western scholarship, Japanese Buddhists also secured a position from which to assert their identity by providing their own alternative definitions of certain elements that might not fit completely into Western formulations.

Meanwhile, the Southern Buddhism with which Japanese Buddhists were making contact via the mediation of Western Buddhology was itself also undergoing a self-reformation resulting from contact with the West.

41 Hayashi Makoto 2002.

42 Sueki 2004a, p. 238.

43 Hayashi Makoto 2008.

In that process the Theosophical movement—the occultist society that originated with Helene Blavatsky (1831–1891)—played a major role. Critical of Christianity, and in connection with Irish independence among other things, the movement had shifted its headquarters to India in the late 1870s. Through activities of the American colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and the Sri Lankan Buddhist adherent Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933), it was closely linked to the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka that aimed to regenerate Southern Buddhism by reform in a Protestant direction. It has been established that Japanese Buddhism-related scholars and others who traveled to India and Ceylon frequently visited the center of the Theosophical Society, which was located in Madras. These included not only Japanese Theosophists; it was not unusual that prominent figures like Anesaki Masaharu and Kitabatake Dōryū (1820–1907) would visit there on their way back to Japan after sojourns studying Buddhology in Europe.⁴⁴ Olcott and Dharmapāla were invited to visit Japan several times in the 1880s via the mediation of the Shingon priest Noguchi Fukudō.⁴⁵

However, perhaps because Southern Buddhism did not involve the worship of Amida Buddha, so that it did not fit well into Japan's Mahāyāna-oriented traditions, or because of increasing skepticism about the connection between Theosophy and Buddhism, by the end of the Meiji era such exchanges ceased. Simultaneously, other events were taking place within the Theosophy movement, including the move of Blavatsky to London, and later in India the conflict between Annie Besant (who placed great weight on the relation with Hinduism) and Olcott (who emphasized Buddhism), so that already at an early stage the connection between Theosophy and Buddhism turned out not to be the monolith that Japanese Buddhists and Dharmapāla had hoped it would be.⁴⁶

Although the interaction between Theosophy and Japanese Buddhism was ultimately short-lived, it is rather revealing. As symbolized in the pairing of the American Olcott and the Sri Lankan Dharmapāla, when Southern Buddhism faced the necessity to accommodate modernity, in order to do so it had to navigate through the framework of perceptions developed by Western scholarship.⁴⁷ Indeed, the personal exchanges among South Asian, East Asian, and Japanese Buddhist clergy became possible because of the mediating role

44 Jaffe 2004, pp. 64–73.

45 Snodgrass 2003, chapter 7; Satō Tetsurō 2008.

46 Washington 1993; Sangharakshita 1964; Fujiyoshi 1991.

47 McMahan 2008, chapter 3.

played by Westerners in Buddhist studies.⁴⁸ It is not difficult to imagine that the key to this was the modern Western concept of religion.

So central was the concept of religion revolving around Protestantism at that time that the other religions subsumed within the concept as part of “world religions” were strongly motivated to adopt terminology growing out of the vocabulary of Christianity. That subsuming of other religions into the Christian rubric may also, ironically but undeniably, have been a factor in the decline of Christianity’s centripetal force. Theosophy, which had briefly played a mediating role between Japanese Buddhism and Southern Buddhism, was a branch of the spiritualist movement that had encouraged in the Western world an escape from Christian indoctrination. However, Theosophy was defined as a form of resistance against Christianity more than as a general conceptualization of religion. If that fact had been received in Japan with an adequate degree of understanding, it is possible that Japanese Buddhism, even if it had conformed to Western styles of thought, could have maintained a more critical distance from the Christian-like concept of religion. Nevertheless, interchanges such as those via Theosophy were furthered between Southern and Japanese Buddhism, not by the scholars of Buddhism at the imperial university but rather by scholars within the practice-oriented religious organizations that formed the center of Japanese Buddhist life. Apart from the *daijō hi bussetsu* issue, because of their education in a tradition of philology oriented to Western academicism, the scholars at the imperial university responded differently from sectarian Buddhists, who sought to visit firsthand the southern Asia where Buddhism was born. Here, too, we can discern what Hayashi Makoto describes as the dual character of modern Japanese Buddhism.⁴⁹

There were other Japanese Buddhist movements that did not engage in the *daijō hi bussetsu* debate. The view that it was especially Zen, a late development in Mahāyāna that constituted the purest flower of Buddhist thought, was increasingly asserted. Regarding the *daijō hi bussetsu* debate as it developed in Japan, Sueki Fumihiko has pointed out: “More than is the case with the objective facts of history per se, if ideas about Mahāyāna are seen in terms of the development of their background doctrines, then a consistency can be recognized from original Buddhism onwards to Mahāyāna.”⁵⁰ Thus, even though ambiguity remained, such an attitude allowed compromise. At the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, which was planned under the

48 Yoshinaga 2007b; Jaffe 2004, pp. 75–81; Chin 2002, pp. 97–99.

49 See Hayashi Makoto 2002.

50 Sueki 2004a, p. 235.

influence of the idea of religious evolution by John Barrows,⁵¹ Shaku Sōen of the Rinzai Zen sect, Toki Hōryū of the Shingon sect, and the lay representative of the Jōdo Shinshū sect Hirai Kinza all participated. This event could be seen as an attempt by Japanese Buddhists from the various schools to enter into dialogue with other religions.⁵² Basically, as the name “World’s Parliament of Religions” indicated, the original goal was “to unite all of the religions against non-religiousness,” and to achieve “for that assembly a common platform and purpose.”⁵³ In pursuit of that aim, inviting representatives of the religions recognized as world religions at that time from everywhere in the world—especially the religions aiming at universal social institutions—was an attempt to respond through a pluralistic religious vision to the reality of an American society greatly expanded by immigration. But the real framework of that vision was that of Protestantism, which formed the mainstream in the United States at that time and thus stood at the apex of the event, while the various participating religions from around the world were ranked below it according to the Spencerian scheme of evolutionary theory.

Still, the religionists from the East—Dharmapāla and Vivekananda, and the Japanese Buddhists—participated for their own purposes, which were to promote their own religions in Western society. James Ketelaar suggests that this reveals a dual consciousness among the Japanese Buddhists.⁵⁴ For one thing, even more than they were aware of being representatives of “Japanese Buddhism” they were strongly conscious of representing their separate religious organizations. Towards the American Christians who visited the conference site they strove to emphasize the superiority of Japanese Buddhism as Eastern wisdom. But then, as soon as they returned home to Japan after the conference, for the Japanese audience they emphasized Western-style modernity by supporting Buddhist ideas promoting a cosmopolitan character. In short, for each different audience, a different self-representation was provided.⁵⁵ The Westerners as outsiders made their own assumptions. Meanwhile, as a representation of “Japanese Buddhism” with a unified character gradually became possible, these representatives promoted to the Japanese people ideas that had been modified in the direction of a Western-style conceptualization of

51 Seager 1995, pp. 47, 141–42.

52 Barrows was a professor of religious studies at the University of Chicago, and a local leader of the Presbyterian Church. Suzuki Norihisa 1979, pp. 207–31; Mohr 2002, pp. 48–51; Jaffe 2004, pp. 73–78; Okuyama 2008a; Yoshinaga 2007a.

53 Seager 1995, p. xvii.

54 Ketelaar 1990, pp. 159–73.

55 Ketelaar 1990, chapters 4–5; Nozaki 2005.

religion. In any case, although this kind of self-representation facing in two directions was somewhat distorted, Japanese Buddhism succeeded in attaining a position for itself as one of the world's religions.

The Chicago Parliament was probably the first attempt on the part of Japanese Buddhism to translate its message for the consumption of the Western world. Comparative religion scholar Kishimoto Nobuta (1866–1928), a Doshisha-educated Christian who was at that time studying at Harvard University's School of Divinity,⁵⁶ was their interpreter. So it was through the mediation of Kishimoto's knowledge of theology and comparative religious studies that the words of the Buddhists were translated into language that was intelligible to the Christian audience.

The effort to articulate the Japanese Buddhist message in more substantial form, however, was to be undertaken by Daisetz T. Suzuki in his introduction of Zen. Suzuki was a follower of Shaku Sōen (1860–1919), who had participated in the 1893 World's Parliament. In 1897, through Sōen's introduction, Suzuki went from Japan to be a member of the editorial staff at the Open Court Publishing Company, serving as an assistant to Paul Carus (1852–1919), an exponent of Eastern religions. That event was what laid the foundation of the Zen boom in the United States.⁵⁷ In the same way that Kishimoto Nobuta's knowledge of comparative religions had mediated the message of the Japanese Buddhists at the Chicago Parliament, Suzuki became the figure who rendered Zen tradition in a form that was possible for Westerners to understand. By translating the works of Swedenborg and others (his scholarship in Christian mysticism was extensive)⁵⁸ and by using the language of religious psychology of William James he learned about from his friend Nishida Kitarō, Suzuki re-narrated the experience of Zen meditation. Particularly, in 1896, the year before he went to the United States, he published a work entitled *Shin shūkyōron* (A New Theory of Religion), which showed that even when he was still in Japan Suzuki was influenced by the Chicago Parliament and was intent on re-narrating Buddhism based on the Western concept of "religion."⁵⁹ Also to be considered is the fact that after Suzuki went to the United States he apparently connected with the Theosophical Society, which became one of the primary influences on his understanding of Buddhism.⁶⁰ The flourishing of Theosophy and spiritualism had played a major role in the original reception

56 Harvard was then a flourishing center of Unitarianism.

57 Snodgrass 2003, chapters 10–12; McMahan 2008, chapters 3–4; Sharf 1993.

58 Yoshinaga 2005. On the reception of Swedenborg in Japan, see Senoue 2001.

59 Suzuki Daisetsu 1896; Mohr 2002, p. 50.

60 Tweed 2005.

of Buddhism in the United States beginning with the writings of the aforementioned Theosophy leader Olcott.⁶¹

Thus, from the time of the Chicago Parliament onward, Japanese Buddhism began to engage in active interaction with the United States. For example, the kind of experiential religious practice it offered was embraced centering on the Victorian-era-educated social stratum of the eastern seaboard. By in return internalizing the “gaze” of such people of other countries who accepted Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism was caused to Westernize its own doctrines. Consequently the movement of Buddhism between Japan and the United States was not a one-sided export from the Buddhist/Japanese side; it also encouraged Japanese Buddhism’s absorption of the intellectual environment of the West. As is now well known, the twentieth-century understanding of Zen in Japan itself was reacquired afterwards through the writings of Suzuki, although he had originally directed his material at an English-language audience. Here we see that the (in actuality Western) Buddhism that became established as the Japanese people’s modern understanding of Buddhism was in fact filtered through Suzuki’s American prism. Different from the reception of European philology in Japanese academia, the American-style understanding of Buddhism was nurtured among its religious practitioners and devotees. It became yet another example of the “gaze” obtained by Japanese Buddhism from its interaction with Western-style Buddhism. In contrast, however, Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) Buddhism, which rejected the kind of religious transformation through self-conscious practice (*jiriki*) as taught in Zen, never gained wide support in the West, even in the United States, despite its large and firmly rooted following in Japan and consequently never produced any feedback to Japan along the lines of Suzuki’s Zen. This can probably be attributed to the difference in the pattern of reception of Pure Land Buddhism in the West.⁶²

The 1893 Chicago Parliament helped to subsequently prime the pump of dialogue about religion and cooperation among religions within Japan. This was also the case for the 1896 Religious Friendship Gathering centering around Buddhists and Christians mentioned earlier in chapter 1. Barrows, the sponsor of the Chicago Parliament, took part.⁶³ What we must note is that scholars Anesaki Masaharu and Kishimoto Nobuta also participated, and apparently the concept of “religion” made it easier for different religions to relate to one another. The idea that emerged from this meeting was that the new disciplines

61 Tweed 2000, chapter 3.

62 Amstutz 1997, pp. 63–65.

63 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, pp. 232–50.

of comparative religion and religious studies would provide a space for all the religions to find common ground. In his 1900 manifesto “Outline of Religious Studies” Anesaki defined the concept of religion as follows:

... religion, [as it is studied in religious studies], does not merely mean particular traditions or their denominational branches. Since all religions are equally historical facts in human civilization and products of human spirituality, religious studies pursues the comprehensive conceptual grasp of the processes through which religion is produced.⁶⁴

What the modern, Western concept of religion introduced was the idea that a person could, without being concerned about the real external existence of God or gods, understand a religious tradition different from one’s own as an individual person’s awareness and manifestation of a common human religiosity. Subsequently, through Anesaki’s efforts, the teaching of religious studies began at the Imperial University in Tokyo in 1905 and chairs of religious studies were newly established at all the other imperial universities. In due course the scholars thus trained in the field of religious studies were hired to fill positions for teaching religious doctrine or theology in religious organization-affiliated (not only Buddhist but also Christian- or New Religion-related) universities. However, in the case of the various sectarian religious organizations, religious studies taught not only the modern category of the concept of religion that served as the premise of their existence; rather, whether it was Buddhism, or Christianity, or a New Religion, each unique religious tradition also demonstrated its internal integrity, protected simultaneously by subordination under the Western concept of “religion.”

Even though there now existed this “space” that accommodated all religions, the academic discipline of religious studies, which did not have its own concrete religious organization, was like a huge umbrella framework that had to rely on individual religions at the same time that it was defining and delineating them. The modern religions, including not only the numerous schools of Buddhism but also Christianity or the New Religions, as a result of having been taken up by religious studies both institutionally and academically, learned from other religions a translatable modern vocabulary.⁶⁵ When Shintō, which had been defined in the prewar period as “national morality” by the government, was in the postwar period downgraded to a religion—which represented a realm of individual personal religious faith—the higher schools Kokugakuin

64 Anesaki 1900a, p. 1.

65 To be discussed in further detail in chapter 6.

and Kogakkan (originally affiliated with Shintō) inaugurated departments of religious studies along with folklore studies when they revised their Shintō studies programs. This clearly demonstrates the influence of religious studies within these religious organizations.

State Authority and Universalism

Pre-World War II attempts at religious dialogue include the Wartime Religionists Friendship Gathering in 1904 (during the Russo-Japanese War); the Conference of the Three Religions and the Religionists and Educators Friendship Gathering in 1912 (including the involvement of the Japanese government's Ministry of Home Affairs); and in 1928, to celebrate the accession of the emperor Hirohito, the Great Congratulatory Memorial Japan Religions Conference. Through these events intended to support the state and boost the spirit supporting the war, religious studies scholars became cheerleaders who led the development of religion on behalf of the state. Considering that Anesaki and the other leading religious studies scholars of those times were actually civil servants of the government in their jobs at the imperial universities, such a role can only be regarded as quite natural. However, as in the somewhat awkward expression of Yasumaru Yoshio, who called it the "Japanese-style separation of religion and state,"⁶⁶ to achieve recognition as a religion in Japan even the traditional Buddhist organizations had to obtain the patronage of state authority and find their path forward by internalizing that authority. Although strictly it was not state-religion separation, this pattern established in Japan the basic premise of a legal dualism of "the secular and the religious"—or at least "public and private." Yet in the background there were mechanisms of regulation under state authority working upon the interiority of the people through the channel of religion. Despite the *daijō hi bussetsu* theory and the absorption of European philology, for the Buddhologists of the imperial universities and for the clergy of the sectarian universities alike—men who were deepening relations with southern Buddhism and Buddhism in the United States—the fundamental social environment surrounding Buddhism at that time was controlled by that authority.

The modernization of Buddhism, as Sueki Fumihiko points out, on one hand involved the modern problem of establishing the individual, but at the same time was a search for a logic for transcending the individual. While accomplishing the same role as in Western modernization, he observes, that process

66 Yasumaru 1977, p. 40.

simultaneously meant pursuing a “Japanese logic, or Eastern logic, that, while capable of playing a role on a par with that of the modern West, could even go beyond it.”⁶⁷ In such a context, the concept of “religion” that served as the mediating term for Buddhism and the modern age set in motion a rich dialogue through contact with European philology, through the interaction with Buddhist belief and practice in the United States, and through engagement with Southern Buddhism via Theosophy.

On the other hand, the same concept had the function of propelling a dangerous linkage between the state and religion. Sueki detected that danger in the wartime words and deeds of Daisetz T. Suzuki, who pursued what must be called a “military-state Buddhism.” According to Sueki, Suzuki reasoned that the transcendence of religion does not deny the state; he saw its relation to the state as a “relative truth or expedient [*hōben*]” for realizing the potential of Buddhism in the modern world. Yet such ideas were not a pitfall of Buddhist logic alone, but revealed a more fundamental flaw in the concept of “religion” itself that led towards such a path of modernization. We can certainly understand how the assertion of universalism in Japanese Buddhism served as the driving force for the program of Buddhist proselytizing among the people of the colonies as Japanese imperialism expanded.⁶⁸ As Richard Jaffe notes:

These encounters stimulated Japanese to place their Buddhism in the context of a pan-Asian tradition at a time when contesting notions of nation and region were plentiful. The various competing Japanese Buddhist conceptions of pan-Asianism, the eastward advance of Buddhism, and the global spread of Buddhism that emerged as a result of these contacts played a significant role in the formation of radical anti-colonial solidarities between the Japanese and Asian peoples but also contributed to the emergence of Japanese imperialism.⁶⁹

Even now a disingenuous preaching of the universality of religion and Buddhism goes on, neglecting awareness of this kind of linkage with government power, and unconscious of its own historical role. Academics themselves are often in danger of being bewitched by the power of religious mantras like “transcendence” and “universality.” Historian of religious studies Masuzawa Tomoko suggests that if the tendency to be Christianity-centered could be eliminated from the concept of “world religions,” it might yet become

67 Sueki 2004b, p. 12.

68 Ōtani 2002; Han 1988, chapter 1; Cai 1994; Kiba and Tei 2007.

69 Jaffe 2004, p. 68.

something universal; but universality cannot manifest itself without incorporating the complications of hegemony. The fact that the universality of religion only emerged as a self-critical undermining from within Christian tradition suggests the fundamental limits of the concept of religion.⁷⁰ The “world religions” concept of religion is what is at issue here; on one hand it can indeed be critical of Christian tradition, but in the final analysis that tradition also wants to grasp all world religions together by assuming as universally pivotal its own categories of churches, orthodox texts, or psychological interiority. Thus it can be said that “world religions” has been an effort to revive Christianity.

“Buddhism,” too, inasmuch as it was a concept established in concert with the “Asian world” but incorporated into the West as part of the self-criticism undertaken within the latter, perhaps unavoidably harbored within it the trait tending toward hegemonic centralism.⁷¹ So this modern Buddhism possessed, on the one hand, the potential both to criticize Christianity and take a critical stand toward the “funeral Buddhism” of premodern times; yet on the other, it expediently adopted the Western Protestant-centric terminology and remained inclined toward nativist-inspired nationalism.

Therefore, whether the philological Buddhology of Europe, or the Buddhism of practice in the United States, or Southern Buddhism—how did these multi-layered Buddhisms of the modern era respond in the different regions to the notions of universality and state authority? It is clear enough what the discourse of modern Buddhism, including Japanese Buddhism, created out of mutual contact among all these regions. However, when we look at Buddhism from the viewpoint of how it was accepted in each region, we must give due attention to how the formation of discourse differed in each area—such matters as what was its relationship with Christianity or Hinduism or Islam or what was the exploitative relationship between the rulers and the ruled—and to dissimilarities in the varied modes of Buddhist doctrine.

While as a result of all these differing circumstances, plural Buddhist traditions have developed, they have also mutually influenced each other, resulting in the single proper name “Buddhism.” With people of different standpoints associating themselves with the same religious tradition and at the same time interpreting its doctrines in a diversity of contexts, the reiteration of both identification and differentiation became one of the core features of contemporary Buddhism. It is possible to see that reference to the modern Western concept of “religion” has created a new domain of discourse based on the premise of

70 Laclau 2000.

71 The concept of “Buddhism” that became established in Japan also had a colonial character. For a work dealing with the Korean peninsula as an example, see Cho 2005.

identity. It may have been not so much a return to the original Buddhism, as aspired to by some in the Meiji era, as it was an effort to discover an alternative space within Japanese or even within Christian constraints—a space that was neither premodern Japanese nor Christian—by cloaking itself in the rhetoric of religious originality. There is but the slightest of margins between being very literally externalized and remaining within as an exteriority that invokes heterogeneous reality. According to cultural theorist Naoki Sakai, this kind of layering—of universalism as ideology and universality as equality—is perceived through the ambiguity between cultural difference and cultural species that is contained in the ambitious work by philosopher Tanabe Hajime's (1885–1962) World War II-era on the “shu no ronri” (the logic of species).⁷²

72 On the pitfalls of handling the Kyoto School of Tanabe and others merely as a particularistic school of Japanese philosophical thought, see N. Sakai 2008.

PART TWO

*The Establishment and Development
of Religious Studies*



Discourse on Religion and Social Reality

Questions about the nature of religious studies in contemporary Japan demand a return to the beginnings of the discipline in Japan. Every time an incident involving one of the so-called religious cults is reported in the news, interest spikes in the question “what is religion?” However, those who attempt to answer this question in the magazines and other media—the ones performing the analysis of those hard-to-fathom religions—are mostly lawyers and journalists. Not much is heard from the religious studies scholars whose responsibility it is to explain religion. An increasingly cynical public can only conclude that behind the absence of such voices must be some sort of intention to protect religion. Attention focused again on that ivory tower following the series of incidents involving the Aum Shinrikyō cult, in particular the subway sarin gas incident in 1995. Once more, the events provoked cold smiles from the public.

The Tasks for Religious Studies Today

The subway sarin gas incident and the Aum hostage incident showed us the horror of a religious group taking the lives of others in the name of religious principle. What was most noticeable was the large number of people who were killed and whose property was stolen. And even as the lawyers and journalists, adopting the perspectives both of victims and perpetrators, described the incident in terms of the responsibilities of individuals to society, scholars of religion gave the impression of being on the whole favorable toward religion. Only later—perhaps due to criticism from the general public—scholars began to refrain from overtly affirmative statements about religion and turned instead to analyzing the violence of religion and the social conditions that gave rise to it. One did not see scholars reflecting on the relationship of their own discipline to the world of religion. People still could not help suspecting that scholars in religious studies remained unaware of their own responsibility to society.¹

1 For works that stressed this point, see Egawa 1995; Kobayashi Yoshinori 1995; Mizoguchi 1995; Asami 1995.

The Aum Shinrikyō incident also resulted in severe criticism of the bystander attitude of the mass media, which on the pretext of pursuing social justice covered up their economic motives regarding audience ratings and turned harrowing events into public spectacles. Some religious studies scholars condemned these media tendencies, but what they really needed to do was critique the profession of which they themselves were part. Without looking back critically over the work they had been doing in the past, they themselves would surely stumble into new pitfalls again in the future. I believe the problems are not ones that can be attributed to any specific group of scholars, but rather derive from the hard-to-escape historical proclivities of the field of religious studies as a whole. Thus, I would like to examine why religion scholars give the general public the impression of being apologists for religion. Where did religious studies go wrong?

Anesaki Masaharu's Religious Studies

Religious studies became deeply involved in Japanese society during two historical time frames. One occurred in the Meiji and Taishō eras, at the time of the debates about freedom of religion; the other was the era of the Shintō Directives following the end of World War II. The former period was the dawn of religious studies in Japan; the latter was a major turning point in its history. The figures who played the central roles in these intersections were, in the former case, Tokyo Imperial University professor Anesaki Masaharu, and in the latter case, his colleague Kishimoto Hideo. This chapter focuses on Anesaki, who put in place the foundations of the discipline. Today, Anesaki may seem to have been forgotten. Yet he is the figure who first established religious studies in Japan in the strict sense, and who played the leadership role, not only at Tokyo Imperial University, but in the organization of academic associations and in Japanese religious policy all the way from the late Meiji era through the pre-World War II period.²

There emerged, of course departments of religion at other universities in Japan, reflecting a variety of traditions. A small number of them became successfully rooted, including those at Kyoto University and Tōhoku University and several other national universities of the old imperial system, and others in some of the Buddhist and Christian sectarian universities. However, in the case of Japan, the real core of religious studies should probably be sought in

2 On Anesaki's life and written work, see Anesaki 1951; Nonoyama and Satō 1992; Isomae and Fukasawa 2002.

the former, the national university system, where specialists declared themselves neutral and independent from the Buddhist and Shintō doctrines of religious organizations upon which such studies actually depend.³ Among these national universities the establishment in 1898 of lectures at Tokyo Imperial University was by far the earliest manifestation of academic religious studies.⁴ These lectures given by Anesaki were the starting point of the discipline, and are very useful primary sources in any discussion of the issues of religious studies in Japan.

The Essence of Religion

In his book *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (1900), Anesaki wrote that the purpose of his discipline was to discuss the essence of religion: “the starting point of research on religion must be the desire to identify the central driving force that forms the unifying essence of the concept of religion—that which develops into all sorts of religious phenomena.”⁵ He believed that essence lay “in the consciousness of the individual that is the basis of religious phenomena.”⁶ That is why he explained devotion to god(s) or the divine as “the natural result of the desire to emphasize, extend, enrich, and make eternal the existence of the self—the urge to seek kinship with a power higher than the self.”⁷ Religiosity, therefore, was something founded on an impulse inherent in human existence. Even a mystical state of self-transcendence that might accompany intense self-denial was the paradoxical expression of a desire for individual existence.

In reality there are considerable differences in the gods and systems of belief of different religions, some of which are quite incompatible. For Anesaki, however, who stressed that religion was an aspect of human affairs, such differences were not absolute, but rather only differences in “religious consciousness” manifested on the phenomenal level. He understood religion in terms of

3 Regarding the private-public ratio based on participants in the Japanese Association of Religious Studies, the proportion of the total number of such programs in Japan offered by universities of private religious groups is higher than that of the national universities. However, the religious studies scholars connected with national universities generally consider the religious studies in the private religious institutions as being of lower status and having a theological character. Yet it needs to be understood that both sides form the actual discipline of religious studies. See Hayashi Makoto 2001; Kimura Takeshi 2000.

4 Later establishments of religious studies programs in the old imperial university system included Kyoto University in 1905; Hokkaidō University in 1922; Kyūshū University in 1925; and Seijō (Seoul) University in 1927. See *Shūkyōgaku bunken tenrankai mokuroku*, pp. 2–4.

5 Anesaki 1900a, p. 556.

6 Anesaki 1900a, p. 15.

7 Anesaki 1900a, p. 53.

two layers consisting of phenomena and essence. The individual “established religions” were nothing more than the phenomenal form; he interpreted the underlying essence of religion as really residing in the consciousness of the individual. Of course, even in studying this essence, he did not treat the phenomenal lightly. Undertaking the careful comparison of all religions was the way to explore the essence of religious consciousness, and Anesaki believed that the appropriate place for each individual religion within *sui generis* religion could be found in that essence. In *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, Anesaki articulated his concept of religious studies:

In general, inasmuch as we recognize that human nature is fundamentally the same, we need to discover within the development and change of various religions their unifying essence and explain how these varieties came about. Then we must clarify how the particular developments fit into the general picture of the development of religion. *We must study the capacity of religion within the human heart as an aspect of human psychology.* And we must pursue research on how it emerges in society in both historical and comparative perspective.⁸ (my emphasis)

This “psychologistic” approach became the foundation of Anesaki’s religious studies. Operating from a position of not accepting as absolute the differences of the various religions, he sought the essence of religion in the human psychology or consciousness.⁹ This was apparent in his *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, the first chapter of which opens with a section treating religious consciousness entitled “Religious Psychology.”

Later, after studying in Germany, Anesaki became greatly inclined toward mysticism. He self-critiqued his own earlier work in *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, saying it “only touched upon the outer shell of religion and did not reach into its deeper essence.”¹⁰ In his later article “Fukkatsu no shokō (The Dawning of Revival; 1904), which displays his interest in mysticism even more clearly, he wrote that “people who . . . sense the mystical presence of the divine in life, find it is easy to arrive at the notion of ‘identity of divine and human,’”¹¹ yet even such a mystical religious experience he saw as ultimately an interior event in a person’s life. That is, he consistently tried to grasp religion as an aspect of human psychology. Throughout his life, not only in “Fukkatsu no shokō” but

8 Anesaki 1900a, p. 21.

9 Fukasawa 1985.

10 *Kirisutokyō shinbun* 1906.

11 Anesaki 1904a, pp. 138–39.

beginning earlier with his *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, he maintained this psychological understanding of religion.

In the final, fourth chapter of *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, entitled “Religious Pathology,” Anesaki adds his strong criticism of organized religions that preach the exclusive absolutism of their school’s teachings and he observes that “[schools] that separate themselves with their churches and doctrines and, rather than being all-embracing, make themselves narrow, actually contravene wisdom, making people even more doctrinaire.”¹² For Anesaki, for a faith to assert its absoluteness in the form of a religious group would constitute nothing more than a relative differentiation at the phenomenal level—it would be refusing to look at the essence of religion. What was important for Anesaki was not the phenomenon of the religious group per se, but the depth of the individual religious consciousness that appeared through such groups. Religion ultimately had to be “based upon the destiny of the individual” and through that come to have the force for influencing the trends of society as a whole.¹³ We can see that Anesaki’s understanding of religion was not oriented to religious groups but was rather based on the individual.

Anesaki did not, of course, reject religious groups entirely. While he saw the basis of religion in individual interiority, he understood that when religion appears in the real world, it takes on the outer forms of groups, rituals, and so forth. He cautioned, however, that “exclusionism, bigotry, and forgery of scriptures” or other such stubborn adherence to one’s single faith was the root of “pathology” in religion.¹⁴

Anesaki’s stance separated him from previous religion research, i.e., the earlier genres of comparative religious history and the theologically oriented studies of Max Müller and others that were based on a particular view of religion and discriminated between what was considered religion and what was not religion.¹⁵ Anesaki included in his category of religion all the popular and folk religious beliefs disparaged in those days as “superstitious” along with religions of the so-called uncivilized peoples. In 1897 he reported in *Tetsugaku zasshi* on popular folk religion in the central region of northeast Honshū island (present-day Tōhoku). Although it was a project assigned to him by the university, it was the first organized field study of popular religion ever undertaken in Japan.¹⁶

12 Anesaki 1900a, p. 371.

13 Anesaki 1900a, p. 241.

14 Anesaki 1900a, p. 405.

15 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, chapter 4; Yanagawa 1974b; Tamaru 1984.

16 Anesaki 1897a. For works on Anesaki’s research on folk belief, see Yanagawa 1974a; Suzuki Iwayumi 1997.

There is no question that Anesaki's comparative and philological methods owed much to Max Müller. However, in his stance of equally including all the religions of every time and geographical place in the category of religion, Anesaki's scholarship offered something new that had not been seen in previous work in religious studies. What made that possible was his psychologistic approach that presupposed the common religiosity at the base of diverse historical phenomena. By including all such phenomena in the category of religion, however, he did not necessarily mean that he judged it all equally. The phenomena that Anesaki included in the category of religion were ranked according to the hierarchy of evolution. Regarding the "pure" and "ideal religion" that stood on the highest rungs of that hierarchy, he wrote:

The moral order of the world is sustained by the morality of religion. The ideals of secular morality are subsumed in religious ideals. Acquiring and practicing morality based on awareness of the divine... should be the ultimate purpose of religion, that is, the ultimate morality [of society]. Therefore, a pure and independent religion does not necessarily require acts of ritual worship of gods... accordingly, no priests or other mediators between the human and the divine are needed... Since all goodness is considered coterminous with the divine, all persons of faith, nay all persons of spirituality, become priests.¹⁷

Through these words we can see that he understood genuine religiosity not in the external appearance of religious organizations but rather in the high quality of human character (*jinkaku hinsei* 人格品性) of the individual himself or herself. He did not see the differences in the formal features of ritual and organization as decisive elements affecting a person's religiosity. The best exemplar of human character would be a religious master such as the founder of a historical religion. In later years, Anesaki sought his own embodiment of such exemplars in Nichiren and Prince Shōtoku.¹⁸ At the opposite pole of exemplar were the various "pathological" manifestations of religion. The extremes of the "exemplar" and the "pathological," however, were not completely unrelated: depending on the degree of his or her character development, an individual would shift positions somewhere between those poles. Religiosity, in any case, was not something that was found in the organizational dimension, but was ultimately achieved within each individual. In this shift from theological studies mainly centered on religious organizations towards an understanding of

17 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 191–92.

18 As representative works, see Anesaki 1916b; Anesaki 1944b.

religion as focusing on the human character of the individual, we can identify the distinctive feature of Anesaki's religious studies, which blended his ideas about the essence of religiosity as lying in the human heart and the cultivation of human character.

Anesaki's perspective was very likely shaped by trends in philosophy in those times. It is certainly not a coincidence that in 1898 Anesaki translated Eduard von Hartmann's *Religion des Geistes* (The Religion of the Spirit) and in 1910–1911 Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation; Japanese edition published in three volumes).¹⁹ Backed by his broad scholarship, his idealism was a consciousness-oriented, transcendental type of thought that aimed to discover the fundamental nature of religion and morality in the human impulse of piety. In a context where nationalism was already established on the political side and materialism, utilitarianism, and other modern rationalisms held sway on the intellectual side, intellectuals may not have wished to take up the nationalist cause. Rather, while no longer feeling affinity for the ideas of the existing religions, they sought freedom and peace of mind in the interiority of the individual.²⁰ Anesaki's tendency towards the psychological approach and focus on human character was his own response to that trend. He wrote the following about the relationship of scholarship and belief:

Scientific thought, which had been used as a tool of religion, ended up questioning and critiquing it to the point of undermining its dignity and authority. But that situation, rather than reducing religion to dry and detailed scholasticism, allowed it to freely serve the purpose of providing people's hearts with peace of mind.²¹

Anesaki took as the natural conclusion that scholarship was meant to serve not the purposes of organizational doctrine but the spirit of the individual. However, what must be recognized here is that even though Anesaki might criticize religious groups when they became pathological, he did not intend to reject religion itself. Rather, he criticized what religion had once been and tried to present alternative images of what it ought to be like. In that sense, Anesaki's religious studies was clearly religion-affirming, and this position was distinctively his own. His position, however, created a gap with scholars who

19 Hartmann 1899; Schopenhauer 1910–1911.

20 Miyakawa Tōru 1962, part 3, section 2; Inoue Tetsujirō 1932b; Hyōdō 1990. On the meaning attributed in the West to Schopenhauer's ideas about Buddhism, see Droit 2003, chapter 6.

21 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 382–83.

did not wish to push religious belief forward. In any case, the scholarly activities of religious studies thereafter continued to some extent or other to pursue the ideal image of religion that Anesaki had sought.²²

Here we have looked at the two pillars of Anesaki's vision of religious studies—"religious psychology" ("the study of the religious heart") and "the study of religious pathology"—presented in *Shūkyōgaku gairon* from the viewpoint of the individual religious consciousness. He also discusses two other such pillars of his ideas under "religious ethics" and "religious sociology." These two other pillars will be treated next, from the viewpoint of a communalization of religious consciousness. First, however, I would like to consider the relationship of Anesaki's brand of religious studies emphasizing individualism to what was going on in Japanese society at that time.

Critique of Power and Authority

The policy of the Meiji government had initially been to make Shintō the "national religion" (*kokkyō* 国教), but gradually evolved beyond that. When the Meiji Constitution was promulgated in 1889, its articles stipulated, along with the sovereign rights of the emperor, freedom of religion. In the end, that guarantee proved little more than a formality, for the Imperial Rescript on Education promulgated in the same year spelled out the government's policy declaring that all Japanese must follow the "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku*), the doctrine that replaced the *kokkyō* policy.²³ Anesaki, meanwhile, was very busy: in 1896 he organized the Association for Comparative Religion with Kishimoto Nobuta and others; in 1898 he was appointed to lecture on "Theories of Religious Studies" in the Tokyo Imperial University Department of Philosophy; and in 1905 he took charge of its chair of religious studies.²⁴ Through such activities, Japan's discipline of religious studies was established under Anesaki's guidance, both as an intellectual tradition and in terms of institutions, in the years after 1897. Viewed from the wider standpoint of the social

22 For summaries of the history of religious studies in Japan, see Hayashi and Isomae 2008; Oguchi 1956; Wakimoto 1984b.

23 In the strict sense, the theory or discourse of National (People's) Morality (*Kokumin dōtoku*) was promoted by the government movement aimed at the inculcation of morals launched in the fourth decade of the Meiji reign, but here it should be understood to refer widely to the various ideas and actions following the separation of the religious and the secular which accompanied the enactment of the Meiji Constitution. See Unuma 1979. In any case, the use of the English term "morality" throughout the following discussion must be understood in terms of the specific Japanese historical context and the unique political semantics involved.

24 Fujii Takeshi 1982.

system of the Meiji era, the discipline was launched just at that step when the national morality doctrine and freedom of belief were first established.

The national morality doctrine was in the broad sense a policy through which the government and the conservative elite sought to indoctrinate the people. The doctrine represented the other side of the bargain of allowing “freedom of religion.” The government reasoned that, despite the fact that the constitution had granted people freedom as far as their religious beliefs were concerned, the aim of national indoctrination could still be achieved without violating the constitution by operating through the realm of moral education. In that context Sect Shintō or Denominational Shintō, which was considered religious, would be gradually separated from Shrine Shintō. The national morality would be spread by indoctrinating the people with their “moral duty” to pay their respects at shrines and conduct rituals of reverence to the official portrait of the emperor in schools. And this became the government policy in the late 1880s.

As might be expected, voices questioning these policies as violations of religious freedom were raised: Is not shrine worship an act of religious faith? Do not rituals of reverence for the emperor’s portrait interfere with the principle of freedom of individual faith? Various incidents of the clash between education and religion occurred beginning in 1891 with the Uchimura Kanzō *lèse majesté* incident.²⁵ Some debate developed over the relationship of religion to the *kokutai* between Tokyo Imperial University professor Inoue Tetsujirō and followers of Christianity, and later the issue of whether shrines belonged to the category of religion drew the attention of members of the intelligentsia.

If shrine worship were considered a religious act, making it compulsory would be an infringement of the law guaranteeing religious freedom and the government would have to retract its entire indoctrination policy. It was also the general premise at the time that Shintō consisted of belief in *kami* as spirits or deities, and rituals related to *kami* were clearly perceived as religious acts. Shintō lacked clarity with regard to founders, sacred texts, or enshrined deities, and there was a tendency to judge it as inferior to Christianity and Buddhism since its doctrines did not address the problem of individual salvation. These were weaknesses pointed out not just by Christians and Buddhists from their own critical standpoints; even those who viewed Shintō favorably were concerned, such as Inoue Tetsujirō and the conservative politicians.²⁶ If Shintō were acknowledged to be just another religion, it would be left defenseless to

25 Seki Kōsaku 1893; Ozawa 1961; Ikimatsu 1963. Regarding the Uchimura Kanzō incident, see chapter 1, footnote 77.

26 Katō Genchi 1930; Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985; see also chapter 7 below.

contend with other religions without government protection. It was easy to predict that it would be overwhelmed by Christianity and Buddhism. For the government, which had been planning to capture the people's hearts for the emperor-institution state through the shrines, such a defeat would be a fatal blow. So the government could not allow shrine worship to be deemed a religious act and thereby unconstitutional.

Thus from the second decade of the Meiji era (from late 1880s) religion emerged as a social issue involving the very root and trunk of the *kokutai*. The launching of the government program to promote national indoctrination was shackled as before by the concept of religion, which was defined in terms of the individual's freedom of belief. At the same time, because technically religious freedom had already become part of the formal legal system, the new debate did not focus on the previous issues of making a specific denomination into a national religion or banning proselytization, but instead developed around the issue of the religious character of Shintō. The environment surrounding the study of religion, whether or not scholars themselves were aware of it, was extremely politicized.

The Religious Friendship Gathering held in 1896 reflected the need felt among some (primarily Buddhists and Christians) to respond to this situation. The aim of this conference, besides calling on all the religious groups to put the conflicts of the past behind them and accord mutual respect to their various principles of belief, was to encourage religious activity to be more social and cooperative in character. Anesaki, who participated in his capacity as a columnist on religion for the journal *Taiyō* ("The Sun"), was deeply impressed by this new movement to transcend institutional boundaries. He recorded his reflections: "Religions that emerge in these times really cannot go on being sectarian and doctrinaire; their activities must be directed toward the morality of society."²⁷ Immediately afterwards, along with Kishimoto Nobuta and others, he formed the Association for Comparative Religion, in effect an academic version of the Religious Friendship Gathering.

At the time Anesaki was a student at Tokyo Imperial University, he was studying Indian religious history and German philosophy under Inoue Tetsujirō, one of the principals involved in the debates on education and religion. For Anesaki—who was the son of a family that operated a workshop providing religious art and images to the Bukkōji branch of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, and was thus raised in a family of Shin Buddhist followers—the two events of the debates on education and religion and the Religious Friendship Gathering

27 Anesaki 1896c, pp. 585–86.

demonstrated the political difficulties inherent in the issue of religion and the potential for breaking through those difficulties.²⁸

These were the circumstances that prevailed when Anesaki began to teach religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1898. In his institutional position transcending sectarian lines and as a specialist familiar with both the theory and practice of religion, he was expected to provide answers to the issues of religion. In 1900, in answer to his long-held hopes, he received orders from the Ministry of Education to undertake study in Germany. We can get an idea of the expectations people had of him by reading the following passage published in the Tokyo Imperial University's *Tetsugaku zasshi*:

These days, matters of religion are finally awakening people's interest. It is not uncommon for them to air their views on theory and practice. However, extremely few reach the point of wanting to do impartial research based on the fundamentals, and without leaning towards one religion or sect. Thus much is expected of Professor Anesaki.²⁹

Anesaki was not the first to lecture on religious studies at the Imperial University. In the "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy" series of lectures given from 1891 in the Department of Philosophy, his teacher Inoue Tetsujirō had drawn comparisons among various religions including Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Inoue's purpose had been to explore the possibilities of an "ideal religion" that could be extracted from established religions. For Inoue, however, "religion" did not go beyond being a form of ignorance, which he thought in the end had to be elevated to the level of national morality. The Imperial Way (*kōdō* 皇道)³⁰ would ultimately constitute for him such an ethicized ideal religion, and would transform the passions of religious reverence into loyalty and filial piety associated with the *kokutai*.³¹

In 1897 Inoue passed the baton in the teaching of the Comparative Religion and Eastern philosophy lectures to Anesaki, who the following year proceeded to lecture on "Theories of Religious Studies."³² The degree of Inoue's expectations for Anesaki can be seen in the arrangements for his niece Inoue Masa to become engaged to Anesaki in 1898. However, Anesaki's scholarship ended up betraying Inoue's expectations. Anesaki's view was that a religious

28 Anesaki 1912a; Anesaki 1896c.

29 *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1900, p. 400.

30 See chapter 1, page 53.

31 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930b; see chapter 2 of the present book.

32 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 45.

awareness existed in every single person. For him it was obvious that Shintō and shrines involved a belief in the existence of spirits and that the phenomenon was religion. As an associate professor at Tokyo Imperial University, his views came to have a great influence in society, and were unsettling to the political camp that sought to make shrine worship into a purely secular moral duty. Even his teacher Inoue, when speaking about his pet doctrine of secular “morality” through shrine worship, had had to qualify himself by saying, “In religious studies, scholars deal with Shintō by including it among other religions; that is a matter of course.”³³

Since Anesaki’s religious studies adopted a position defending religion, he inevitably opposed the view of Inoue Tetsujirō and government officials who wanted to designate shrines as non-religious, place them in a position superior to other religions, and regulate freedom of religion. What made Anesaki’s thinking stand out were his remarks at meetings of the government’s Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions (Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai) in 1926 and 1929. This organization was an advisory group; under the pretext of treating the three religions Christianity, Buddhism, and Shintō equally, its purpose was to draft laws aiming at standardizing state intervention in religious belief as well as the organizational forms of religious groups.³⁴

As a committee member, Anesaki made remarks that did not conform with the position of the government, much to the discomfort of other participants, including chair of the committee Hiranuma Kiichirō, the Minister of Education and the head of the Shūkyō Kyoku (Bureau of Religion). Anesaki’s questions arose from his misgivings: How is shrine worship different from religious ritual? What to do about Shintō deities that were by their very nature often morally inappropriate as far as public morals were concerned? Is not shrine worship being made compulsory?³⁵ All of these questions arose from Anesaki’s concern that the Shintō as non-religion theory would be in essence a scheme to revive the earlier Meiji national Shintō indoctrination scheme threatening the people’s freedom of religion.

In his remarks in the Committee Anesaki was especially at pains to point out that the legislative bill that was being prepared ought to be named the “Religious Organizations Law,” not the “Religion Law” as planned. In the Committee’s second conference, on 3 June 1926, Anesaki stated as follows:

33 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 14.

34 Akazawa 1985, chapter 3.

35 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, third meeting, pp. 29–31; Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, fourth meeting, pp. 31–33.

The following relates to what would be controlled by this bill should it become law. Essentially, this law deals with the social phenomena resulting from religious belief, and the religious organizations and rituals that come from that faith. It goes without saying, I believe, that the contents of religious faith itself cannot be dealt with under this law. Now, since that is the fundamental truth, is it not really the case that this bill as a whole should be understood as a law concerning so-called religious organizations?³⁶

Anesaki had detected a concealed problem that was not confined to simply a difference in wording suggested for the title of the bill.³⁷ He thought that even if it were a matter of just religious organizations, the nation-state should not intrude into the realm of the interiority of the individual. Anesaki repeated the same questions later, and an extremely tense exchange took place with the government side, which believed that individual religious belief *should* be controlled.³⁸ In the end, the “religions bill” was submitted in the House of Peers in two separate years but each time failed. Perhaps because of Anesaki’s strenuous efforts, in 1929 the name of the bill submitted was revised to read “Religious Organizations Bill.”

Under the circumstances in which the government coercively imposed the practice of shrine worship regardless of the personal convictions of religious believers, scholars supporting the protection of religion like Anesaki who could not go along with the government’s policies were forced to adopt a critical position towards the state. The same situation was faced by socialists and communists during the Meiji era, many among whom were Christian. Anesaki, who was committed to the development of human character as the goal of human life, did not want to bend from his convictions even should he be disadvantaged by opposing the government. For that reason, the religious studies research center at Tokyo Imperial University drew together followers of Buddhism, Christianity, and Sect Shintō groups and nurtured a “mutually sympathetic ethos in which sectarianism differences were put aside for the sake of mutual understanding.”³⁹

36 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, pp. 16–17.

37 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, p. 27.

38 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, pp. 15–16, 29–34; Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, p. 17 (statement by Shimomura, head of the section for religion); Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, p. 21.

39 Anesaki 1896b, p. 545.

The National Community Theory

The “religions bill” failed twice in the House of Peers because for the sake of national indoctrination policy it was necessary to guarantee more freedom of activity for followers of religion.⁴⁰ That is, even in the conservative House of Peers, the bill proposed by the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions was judged to be too state-oriented and unsuitable to the climate of the day. At the same time, in his statements in the Committee, Anesaki seems to have been inclined to approve the supervision of religious organizations by the state. He wrote that as soon as “one speaks to others as third parties and tries to draw them toward one’s own [beliefs],” the beliefs of the individual “become social phenomena, and thus come within the scope of the law.”⁴¹ These statements may be read as indicating his belief that at the stage at which beliefs move from the individual’s private sphere to the public sphere of communality with other people, the state has the right to supervise religion. This understanding seems incompatible with the individualism-oriented stance from which Anesaki presented a valiant defense of personal belief in the Committee. There is an aspect of Anesaki that cannot be explained through individualism alone, as we will observe from the Teiyū Ethics Association in 1903, where he noted that his idea of personal character development (*jinkakushugi*) was distinct from both individualism and nationalism:

If I should say that nationalism is groundless, there is a great fear that you might immediately misunderstand me as an advocate of individualism. Rather, I believe that character building cannot be achieved through such a one-sided approach.⁴²

As already mentioned, Anesaki’s view was that the fundamental impulse for religion emerges from the individual. Yet this did not mean that the individual dimension was the beginning and end of religion. In *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, he had written (1900), “Although the root of the religious phenomenon is individual consciousness, its performative expression exists in social culture.”⁴³ His understanding was that individual religious consciousness was connected with social communality. The second chapter on “Religious Ethics,” and the third chapter on “Religious Sociology” discuss how individuals form a religious community.

40 Akazawa 1985, pp. 142, 156.

41 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, pp. 15–30.

42 Anesaki 1904b, p. 6.

43 Anesaki 1900a, p. 15.

The basic solidarity of religious groups stems from the same revelation of divine power and the same shared rituals in its honor. Religious groups large and small—from small groups based on family rituals to the official churches of nations evoking universalism—all move according to their shared aspirations to the same ideals and toward the realization of their common longing for salvation by forming unified groups. Their purpose is to more objectively increase the efficient accomplishment of their goals.⁴⁴

Through the construction of communities mediated by common faith and ritual, the “interior religious consciousness” of individuals moves into “religions of objective power and social power.”⁴⁵ Anesaki’s “religious ethics” focused on the first half of this process by which the individual religious consciousness is embodied as action. Through the mediation of acts of expression in ritual, recognition of individual religious consciousness by others for the first time becomes possible. That process becomes the nodal link between the individual and the community. In academia, the discipline that took as its subject the resulting religious community was the sociology of religion.

In Anesaki’s idea of religious studies, individuals were joined together in this way and established religious communities by “their shared aspirations toward the same ideals.” He understood that all of these so-called religious communities—ranging from the family up to world religious groups—were matters of the expansion or turning outward of the religious consciousness of individuals. The community and the individual were seen as originally harmonious. Yet in reality Anesaki did not treat all types of communities equally.

Shūkyōgaku gairon unfortunately does not address the specific issues of the community. After it was written, Anesaki’s own personal interests moved away from the kind of systematic construction of scholarship represented by *Shūkyōgaku gairon* and began instead to lean towards more real-life practice of faith and political practice. Anesaki from this time onward maintained the premises of his views on the community, but his concerns evolved towards the practical tasks of integrating people in Japanese society and achieving peace in international society.⁴⁶ Below I will verify his view of the community by examining the circumstances of the Conference of the Three Religions (Sankyō Kaidō) and the Association Concordia (Kiitsu Kyōkai) organization;

44 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 107–108.

45 Anesaki 1900a, p. 108.

46 See chapter 5 below; see also Isomae, Takahashi, and Fukasawa 2002.

both were strongly linked to him, and through them he actualized the ideas of his scholarship in society.

The Conference of the Three Religions was a meeting held in 1912 that had been encouraged by the government centering on Vice-Minister Tokonami Takejirō of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Consulting with Anesaki, Tokonami invited chief administrators of Shintō and Buddhist organizations along with representatives of Christianity as he aimed at a national indoctrination program working through all religious groups. The Association Concordia, which also carried on the objectives of the Conference, was led by Shibusawa Eiichi and drew on prominent scholars, religious figures, and people in government and business who wanted to provide ideological guidance for the people. Anesaki served as secretary, and he single-handedly undertook the drafting of the association's prospectus and other tasks including the editing of its journal.⁴⁷

The rapprochement of government and religious organizations orchestrated through the Conference of the Three Religions, however, ignited suspicion among those who were concerned about incursions on religious freedom, and the Conference became the target of charges of "politicians exploiting religion!" while the Association Concordia was derided as "the ghost of the Conference of the Three Religions."⁴⁸ Since Anesaki had played the role of promoter, he himself was ridiculed as "Minister Tokonami's lackey" (*Tokonami-kun no sanbōchō*) or as the "Tokyo University scholar in government pay" (*Akamon no goyō gakusha*).⁴⁹

Ironically, Anesaki himself saw these points of criticism as indicating the value of the Conference of the Three Religions. He actively hoped for a monism of state and religion, believing that "through the ideals to which religions are committed, it is the *raison d'être* of religion to discover the deep meaning of the nation's history, to elevate the ideals of the state, and purify them."⁵⁰ Of course, considering the basis of the tenets of Anesaki's religious studies, that monism was not to be found in the establishment of a national religion, but rather based on the idea, which had existed since the Religious Friendship Gathering of 1896, that various religious groups, each retaining its independence, would be involved in the indoctrination of the nation. But a fundamental difference in views of the state separated Anesaki, who sought government

47 Dohi 1967–1969; Lee 1992; Yamaguchi 1996a; Nakajima Kuni 1987–1988; Takahashi Hara 2003; *Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō*, vol. 46.

48 Akashi 1912, p. 74; Takashima 1912, p. 215.

49 Kawamura Gohō 1912, p. 136. On critiques of the Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai, see Wakimoto 1984a.

50 Anesaki 1912b, pp. 548, 553.

participation with the Ministry of Home Affairs as the agency of mediation and liaison,⁵¹ and those who were his critics:

A condition of instinctive bonding gradually formed a familial, tribal way of life . . . Towards this way of life arose the idea of a duty to put it in order, by providing a rational faculty and adding a rational imperative. Then, for the sake of making this obligation towards order into a whole, in the form of law, the solidarity known as the state came into being.⁵²

Here the state was considered indispensable in order to actualize the desires of individuals and also to arbitrate the conflicts among those desires. As noted elsewhere, the state was also conceived along the lines of a traditional polity that “implements the practice of broad loyalty and filial piety.” It simultaneously provides a universal “place of solidarity for the sake of civilization” that labors for “world humanity.”⁵³ Anesaki understood the state as a rational, open-minded entity that harmoniously tied together individuals and, in the name of humanity, created solidarity and mutual interactions with other states. He makes no reference to any state power that produced individuals or class oppositions damaging to such integration. In sum, Anesaki frequently used the “state” as a synonym for “society” and envisioned a natural community based on the extension of the family.⁵⁴

Observing this line of his reasoning, we can see how Anesaki came to emphasize the state as the substratum of the community embracing the individual. It was because he believed in an intelligent state that affirmed the individual that he formed an alliance with the Ministry of Home Affairs through the bureaucrat Tokonami and laid out the plans for Ministry intervention in the religions. It thus appears that his later statements in the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions supporting the administration of religious groups was intended to eliminate dogmatism in religious groups through the *raison d'état* of constructing the communal society of the state.

It is well known that in 1903, on the occasion of the death of his close friend Takayama Chogyū, Anesaki became a devoted admirer of Nichirenism, the fiercely nationalistic ideological blend of Nichiren Buddhism and State Shintō associated with the Buddhist scholar Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939).⁵⁵ When

51 Anesaki 1912b, p. 566.

52 Anesaki 1919b, p. 252.

53 Anesaki 1912b, pp. 77, 300.

54 On the relationships of state and society in the Meiji period, see Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a.

55 On his Nichirenism, see Tamura 1974; Tamura 1972, pp. 162–65.

digested from the perspective of Anesaki's mode of understanding of the state, the nationalist character of Nichirenism, too, was probably something he could accept without much resistance. In 1911, at the time of the Northern and Southern courts legitimacy dispute, Anesaki was an unyielding supporter of the legitimacy of the Southern court cause.⁵⁶ His passionate attachment to emperor and the *kokutai* could be understood as inevitable in order to protect what he considered the true form of the natural community of the state.

To summarize the key points of the above: in Anesaki's version of religious studies the foundation of religion was situated in the individual consciousness. While he made the individual the constitutive unit of religion, he also adopted a posture of strongly criticizing the exclusive character of religious groups, a position that could be understood as the manifestation of a convergence upon the state without any divisions into separate religious bodies. In fact, Anesaki's attraction to nationalistically oriented Nichirenism and his immersion in individual interiority through mystical experiences occurred at roughly the same time, soon after he had returned home in 1904 from his period of study in Germany. The implementation of the linking of all the religious groups at the national scale in order to achieve the education of society was undertaken by the Association Concordia and the Conference of the Three Religions. Since Anesaki had been deeply impressed by the Religious Friendship Gathering in his younger days, he must have thought that if the government would show more understanding towards religion and intervene in a positive manner, religion could achieve more influence in society.

Anesaki's understanding that communality presupposes individuality remains valid today. At the same time, contradictions exist in any community, the state included. Despite the fact that the community is the premise for the existence of the individual, internal relations of domination necessarily arise. Indeed, conflicts arise in mutual relationships because each community is pursuing its own interest. This is the unavoidable struggle we live with.

Anesaki, of course, knew about the clash of the individual and the state and class conflict, which were the social issues of his time. Even in terms of ideals he must have known that harmony was not easily achieved. However, the trump card that Anesaki drew on to solve the problem was the practice of "self-cultivation" (*jinkakushugi*), a theory of character development of which he himself was an originator in Japan. In the welcoming remarks below that he delivered for the Teiyū Ethics Association, a group that took as its purpose the study and practice of self-cultivation, Anesaki's views were well articulated:

56 See also chapter 1, page 63. Anesaki 1911a and 1911b; for details on this controversy, see Shigaku Kyōkai 1911; Yamazaki and Horie 1912.

To sustain a lively spirit in every direction and feel vigorous sympathies—which when directed toward one’s country take the form of patriotism, when shown towards one’s fellow human beings are manifested in charity, and when directed towards the self allow control of moral behavior through contemplation of one’s true nature and cultivation of character—such nurture of the capacity to at the same time cultivate one’s nature is called “following the heart’s desire without transgressing the rules.”⁵⁷ Cultivating such a heart and mind so as to be able to bear responsibility for the advantages and disadvantages, joys and sorrows, of the family and nation as they are, and engaging one’s own mature feelings and sincerity while attending one’s character: we believe that is what is called genuine ethical cultivation.⁵⁸

He thus believed that if each individual underwent such positive changes in character, all manner of contradictions and conflicts would be resolved. Anesaki’s interest in social movements derived from his belief that the awakening of character would reach “down to the many in the lower strata of the people”⁵⁹ where it would bring about qualitative change from the people at the bottom of society. The above passage also illuminates Anesaki’s statement mentioned earlier that his idea of *jinkakushugi* represented neither nationalism nor individualism: through the intervention in the awakening of individuals, he believed the opposition between those two approaches could be overcome. Anesaki’s doctrine of religion was that “The moral order of the world is religious morality; the ideal of secular morality is ultimately embraced in religious ideals; all morality is pursued based on an awareness of the divine . . . The ultimate purpose in religion becomes achieving the norm of morality.”⁶⁰ Thus Anesaki’s ideas on religion could hardly be distinguished from Inoue Tetsujirō’s ideas on morality.

Anesaki’s explanation, however, never went beyond the level of principles. He never offered explanations about how to mediate the realization of the ideals or answer such questions as: Could anyone actually become a person of better character? Could the contradictions we struggle with be made to disappear through the improvement of character? Underlying his awareness of reality was an idea of preestablished harmony, as revealed in the statement, “The lives of the myriad things in heaven and earth all unfold in relationships

57 From opening lines of the *Analects of Confucius*.

58 Anesaki 1904b, p. 8.

59 Anesaki 1900a, p. 372.

60 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 191–92.

of compassion and communion; these relationships develop according to an order unchanging since time immemorial.”⁶¹ At the earlier time of the rise of the Nipponshugi (Japanism) of Takayama Chogyū and others who championed ultra-nationalism (*kokusuishugi*) and opposed religion, Anesaki had initially criticized their assertions for not being backed up by documentary evidence.⁶² However, the same kind of criticism might have been directed at his own ideas.

From the latter half of the Meiji era onwards Anesaki’s way of thinking could be considered a variant of the “the phenomenal is the real” doctrine present in the idealism which was then fashionable. According to its advocate Inoue Tetsujirō, who was closely associated with this neo-Hegelian philosophical phase in Japan, in “the-phenomenal-is-the-real” doctrine “the discriminative aspect of the world is called phenomenon, and the equal and uniform aspect of the world is called reality; yet furthermore it can also be said that the discriminated is the real, which is synonymous with the idea of the phenomenal is the real.”⁶³ Because the real world is established in the inner realms of the phenomenal world, conflict on the level of material things is no more than superficial. In its true essence everything is harmonious. It can be said then that in such an idealist posture it was as if Anesaki’s gaze was not touching the ordinary actualities of life; it treated those actualities as pathological, or treated his own visualized thoughts as more like the “more real” essence of the real. Thus Anesaki’s conception of religion, too, was somehow dissociated from the “harmonious” totality’s reality that included both good and evil; it was always assumed to be something of perfect goodness. All of this derived from his idealistic mode of thought.

Anesaki’s idealist tendency was not confined to this idea of “the phenomenal is the real.” In their devotion to Schopenhauer and Hartmann, it seems that Anesaki and his teacher Inoue Tetsujirō were alike. In particular, both were devoted to the unification of the nation in spirit that could serve as the reference point for the sentiment of reverence within the individual. In fact, in the Association Concordia, the Teiyū Ethics Association, the Conference of the Three Religions, and others, not only Anesaki but also Inoue were active members involved in their management. The two differed only on the matter of whether this sentiment of reverence represented religiosity or morality.

There was no difference between the two in their placement of the sentiment of reverence, in their acceptance of the subjective identity of human

61 Anesaki 1912b, p. 166.

62 Anesaki 1897d.

63 Inoue Tetsujirō 1932b, pp. 74–75.

interiority, and in how that identity was thought to revert to the nation as the community. However, as Anesaki concisely explained, such sentiments when understood as secular morality “directly become the standard basis of the nation, molding people for the sake of the nation,”⁶⁴ drawing the argument towards the side of the nation. On the other hand, if the sentiment of reverence is understood as religious, “Individual religion will be put into contact with a uniform, universal ideal,”⁶⁵ which was an idea that hinted instead at world citizenship. Thus Anesaki’s view of the state could be made into a pillar of the *kokutai* doctrine, but it was also consistent with an open, universal civilization. The apparent difference lay only in that they were evaluated as belonging in separate camps, with Inoue labeled a nationalist and Anesaki an individualist.

Certainly Anesaki was different from Inoue. He rejected the notion of an individual who would be buried in the logic of the nation and instead emphasized the inner dignity of the individual. However, even while adopting the awareness of the individual as his foundation, he also believed in the goodness of the established state and the logic of making religious consciousness converge on it. In the final analysis he stood on the same horizon as Inoue. Indeed—unlike the clash of religion and education that Anesaki had experienced as a student—there was no structural pattern of otherworldly religion versus secular state in his thinking.

Consequently, when Anesaki’s religious studies assigned to religion the educational role of national indoctrination, to some degree he was drawing religion, with its inherently anti-state power tendencies, into the state and giving it an established role in secular society. The overall outline of Anesaki’s religious studies really did have a design that acted in concert with such values. His religious ethics served as a watershed among the disciplines, with religious psychology corresponding to the individual and religious sociology to the community. Also, he distinguished the genuine form of religion from its pathologies and aimed at achieving a harmony of the individual and the community by means of the cultivation of human character.

To the religionists and intellectuals who felt uneasy with the statism of the national morality, Anesaki offered a nationalist discourse that allowed the individual to secure the interior realm while still being loyal to the state. In other words, by way of the channels of religious studies he discovered the potential for more deeply integrating national identity into the interiority of individuals than had been done in the earlier era of national morality

64 Anesaki 1912b, p. 80.

65 Anesaki 1912b, p. 125.

indoctrination. However, religion as he explained it was not something that concretely reflected the contradictions of actual conditions. It remained only something idealized and conceptual, lying far beyond such realities.

Making the Discourse Relevant to Society

Following the incidents mentioned at the beginning of this chapter revolving around Aum Shinrikyō, religious scholars were criticized for seeming to condone the activities of the cult, simply giving out empty conceptual comments on its doctrines. The criticisms generally pointed first to religion scholars' defense of religion per se, and second to their seeming indifference to the actual deeds of the cult followers. The roots of the problems associated with these two points go deep. I think in large part they have their origins in how the composition of religious studies in Japan was consistently understood back at the time of its establishment by Anesaki. In closing this chapter, I would like to discuss these two points.

In the prewar period beginning with Anesaki, to take the position of defending religion meant protesting the invasion of individual rights by the national morality doctrine and State Shintō. As we have seen in Anesaki, although power relations are not consciously recognized, which leaves the individual to be assimilated into the state, still, some power to criticize was retained at least in the invisible realm, namely the criticism that considered it improper for the state authority to impede freedom of religion. After the end of World War II, State Shintō was dissolved under the Shintō Directives issued by the Allied Occupation (through General Headquarters or GHQ) and the authority that had oppressed religious communities completely vanished. Once the forceful authority of the previous era had been removed, religious communities were freed from the position of victims, but this laid bare the authority structures with their organizations all too starkly. Although religious studies stuck to its standpoint protective of religion regardless of such changes in the social context, the circumstances in which such a protective role had functioned were changed and occasionally its perspective became simplistically religion-affirming.

As a postwar example, Anesaki supported the dissolution of State Shintō, but he showed practically no concern about the content of Shrine Shintō.⁶⁶ He did not include in his work any critique of the vestiges of the feudal community that lingered in Shrine Shintō nor commentary on its dependency on

66 Anesaki 1945.

the emperor institution. His successors in religious studies at the University of Tokyo, including Kishimoto Hideo and the latter's student Murakami Shigeyoshi, do not seem to have questioned that stance. Kishimoto became a figure linked to the Shintō policy of GHQ; Murakami became known for his criticism of State Shintō. Both appeared to assume that State Shintō and Shrine Shintō were in opposite camps. State Shintō was to be criticized as representing the state's oppression of religion, but Shrine Shintō was praised as the national religion, as if it had had no connection to authoritarianism.⁶⁷

But it should be noted that postwar religious studies did not turn to the state—the entity in which Anesaki had placed his confidence in the prewar period—as the community in which people would feel a sense of belonging. In the postwar era, people were not only wary of the authoritarian aspects of the state but felt in it no reality as the locus for their sense of belonging. Instead, people sought out religious groups or geographical communities that were closer to them and with which they could more readily establish affinity. Anesaki had once criticized such affiliations as potentially obstructing the unity of the individual and the state. Under the postwar conditions, however, in which the state did not arouse any sense of belonging, other communities that could embrace the individual were regarded as suitable. Religious studies, too, changed: the religious consciousness of the individual extended to encompass equally the family and world religion. And because now qualitative differences in communality were not seen as a problem, the scale of the community to which one belonged could also easily change.

In this way, the dissolution of State Shintō paved the way for a more favorable situation in religious studies, which now advocated the equal treatment of all religions. Yet the proclivity of religious studies to shelter communality came to light. As communal and kinship bonds rapidly broke down in the postwar period of rapid economic growth, there had been a great deal of searching for communities in which individuals could feel a sense of belonging. The attempts of religious studies in this direction were praiseworthy on their own terms, although they still operated on the premise of the positive, unifying function of the community. The negative side of the community, namely the way it functions in the oppression of the individual, was never made a key issue.⁶⁸ Certainly in the 1970s, there was a reappraisal of the community as a

67 Kishimoto Hideo 1976; Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970; Toda 1965; Isomae 1996, pp. 29–30.

68 Criticism of the views of religion scholars on community has been widely seen in the United States in the form of critiques of Durkheim. See Masuzawa 1993. However, regarding the community's function in unifying individuals, Durkheim continues to exercise a strong influence over Japanese religious studies scholars.

form of thought to overcome modernity and transcend the rationalism that extolled the individual. In cases where intellectuals failed to be cognizant of the inescapable modernity of their own position, ideas about “overcoming modernity” sometimes tended to end up as naïve arguments favoring reversion to premodern feudalism.⁶⁹

The Aum Shinrikyō incident thrust into the public eye the gravity of the issue of community. Within the cult, a hierarchical structure had been established in which scientific knowledge or property assets determined status in the group. Persons who expressed dissent were eliminated; many members became blind to the values that governed the group. The ideology with which the cult was ruled was exactly the same as that of the secular society the cult had rejected, but in starker form. The group that formed the community was secular to an appalling degree, despite their declarations condemning the norms of ordinary life in society.

The dimension of the community that religious studies saw as the primary focus of social belonging shifted from era to era. For Anesaki it had been to the nation; for his successor Kishimoto it had been the village; and for later religion scholars it first became the New Religions and then smaller scale spiritual communities. Throughout, however, on whatever the dimension, religious scholars presupposed an ideal community and espoused an optimistic view of communality.

Today, however, the time has come to turn toward a critical analysis of communality itself. The notion of a preestablished harmony in which individual and community could supposedly easily coexist needs to be treated objectively. Just as Anesaki sought the essence of religion in the theoretical harmony of the individual awakened to the quality of human character and to the community, in general, religious studies speaks of communality in an abstract manner. For that reason the actual problems of the communities that oppress the individuals within it and exclude the Other outside of it have continued to be concealed. Have we not by now sufficiently suffered from the oppression of individuals by communities? Religious scholars have described communality and religion as something basically good, but this may be simply because such people are in socially favorable positions, locations where they hardly end up feeling the kind of oppression of a community that smothers the socially weak.

The values presented so far by religious studies in defense of religion are not persuasive enough for people outside the discipline. This is not to say that communities are unnecessary or that one can live without a community. Precisely because we cannot survive without communities, what I want to point out is:

69 Wolfart 2000.

rather than building expedient bridges between the community and the individual, do we not need to make the nature of communities as they actually exist the object of analysis?

Regarding the second point about the actual behavior of religions, I would bring up the lack of a sense of reality that emerges in many cases when attempts are made to understand religion. In such instances the discourse on religion promoted by religious studies is strongly tinged with idealism, namely the idealism of Anesaki represented in views of the community assuming a preestablished harmony. As already pointed out in the case of Anesaki, the idealistic approach is such that the ideal is made superior to reality, and reality comes to be discussed in terms of how things *ought* to be. As a result, what researchers *want* to see as reality ends up trumping actuality. When the image religions are endowed with from the outset is that of the good, the various problems they may cause in the real world are likely to be treated not as essential flaws, but as mere deviant pathologies whose very existence is made marginal in the scholar's awareness.

Until now scholars of philosophically idealist views—not only in religious studies—have separated thought from its historical context; they tended to believe that they could understand ideas within their own closed worlds. For example, there might be something worth considering, as some said, in Aum Shinrikyō's doctrines, but, the subway sarin gas poisoning incident illustrated the great danger in treating this kind of problem of thought in abstract terms. We must bring back the social conditions in which thought serves actual social functions. What will happen when ideology comes in contact with society? In other words, we must look at sites where ideology is transformed into a dynamic "social phenomenon."⁷⁰



It is not enough to pay attention to such questions only when we are intellectually analyzing objects of research. The same mindfulness ought to apply on occasions when we as researchers address society about our ideas. Beyond simply carrying out our business of research on religion, our words and our statements as specialists may possibly reach out and have a wide influence; they might even result in the justification of certain specific viewpoints. We

70 Hall 1985. Roger Chartier of the Annales school had already directed similar criticism against the outmoded dichotomy of "popular" and "elite" maintained by the Arthur O. Lovejoy school of intellectual history and by much of the Annales school itself. See Chartier 1982.

should therefore be aware that we have a duty to make persuasive statements, ones that not only apply to those who want to believe in religion but also to people who have no special interest in religion.

Because awareness of how ideology can become a social phenomenon is thus lacking, the issues caused by religious groups have been evaluated only in terms of the text of their doctrines and testimonials. So far, that kind of approach has not produced investigations at the level where religion has impacted society, even to the point of kidnapping and murder. This is why statements from religious studies scholars seem so incongruent with those of lawyers and journalists. Perhaps it is because until now religious studies scholars have been much concerned with their aspirations for an idealized “religion.”

State and Religion in Anesaki Masaharu

What was Japan's modern era like when viewed through the lens of religion? Following the opening of the country in the middle of the nineteenth century, the country was incorporated into the capitalist and imperialist systems of the West. How did Japanese religious life respond? And how was Japan manipulated? This chapter examines the problems faced by modern Japan through the life and perspective of one of the prewar period's leading intellectuals.

Anesaki Masaharu, as already noted, played a leading role in the establishment of religious studies in Japan through his position at the Imperial University of Tokyo and as the first head of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies. He also occupied a series of government-related official posts such as member of the House of Peers, member of the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions (*Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai*), and member of the Advisory Committee for Education in Korea (*Chōsen Kyōiku Shingikai*). Anesaki's career was studded with prominent positions not only in Japan but overseas: he was involved in activities to encourage international peace as a member of both the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation and the Institute of Pacific Relations and he served as secretary of the Prince Shōtoku Worship Association and the Association Concordia (*Kiitsu Kyōkai*), contributing actively in religion- and morality-related movements mainly centered on the educated strata of society. Although Anesaki is largely forgotten today, the political nature of the positions he held meant that he had a great influence on Japan's government and social trends.

Born in 1873, Anesaki experienced each of the major wars in which modern Japan became involved: the Sino-Japanese War broke out when he was twenty-one; the Russo-Japanese War started when he was thirty-one; World War I opened when he was forty-one; and the Japanese war in China that segued into World War II began when he was fifty-eight. He was often to be found abroad in turbulent times: studying in Germany after the Sino-Japanese War when the world feared the "yellow peril"; teaching at an American university at the time of the outbreak of World War I; and residing in England when Japan declared war on the Allies in World War II (he was returned to Japan on a repatriation ship). He was a rare figure able to coolly observe Japan's situation from the perspective of Europe and the United States. At the same time, as the son of a family that had served a family of royal blood, he retained a pious reverence for the emperor throughout his life. In his early thirties he became a

passionate follower of Nichiren, and in his forties, a devotee of the worship of Prince Shōtoku (574–622).¹

How did this nationalistic dimension of Anesaki relate to that part of him devoted to international cooperation? Understanding that connection sheds light not just on Anesaki but on how Japanese society established its national identity under pressures from the Western world and formed relationships with the West and with Asian society. I hope it will also illustrate what connected the state and the individual within Japan's traditional society in the process of being integrated into international society.

As we have seen, Anesaki faced these circumstances through the gaze of religion—*shūkyō* in modern Japanese—and it was largely through the auspices of the academic discipline of religious studies as he introduced it to Japan that the sense of “religion” as Japanese understand it today—with its connotations of the nonrational realm connected to the interiority of individuals—became established. And then, in the ensuing years, along with his devotion to Nichiren and Prince Shōtoku, he relied on religion, which allowed for some national particularity, both in the project of establishing the nation-state of the as-yet-unfinished Japan and in the effort to overcome the confusion brought about by conflict between East and West as Japan forged toward a new civilization based on spiritual self-awareness.

We could dismiss Anesaki's career as that of a fanatic religious follower or a nationalist. However, when we consider that Japanese are still unsure of how to deal with their rigid nationalistic consciousness as well as the various problems caused by religious organizations, we can see that the problems that plagued Anesaki throughout his career are by no means resolved even today. Rather, we can find relevance for our own lives by asking how one scholar of religion thought and acted amid the prescriptive structures thrust upon the country in the name of modernization, namely, by analyzing his words and deeds, both in terms of what they might have been and how they were constrained by the conditions of history.

1 Nichiren (1222–1282) was a priest of Japan's medieval age who seemed to Anesaki to be a prophet who saved the Japanese nation from invaders from abroad. Prince Shōtoku was a legendary figure, and at least for Anesaki a saint and politician with deep knowledge of Buddhism and Confucianism. For Anesaki both Nichiren and Prince Shōtoku were practitioners of a public religion committed to political activities.

Religion and the State

Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism and the Imperial House

In understanding the formation of Anesaki's thought, it is important to recognize the decisive influence of his birth family's relationship to Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism and the imperial house. Recalling his youth, he wrote that the origin of his aspiration to study religion lay in the lineage of the Anesaki family. The family ran a workshop in Kyoto that had been granted exclusive rights to make pictorial images of Amida Buddha for sale to parishioners of the Bukkōji branch of Shinshū—one of the independent lines of Shinshū branch temples and members throughout Japan.² The workshop the family had run for several generations since the eighteenth century was an ideal environment for someone reared as part of the temple society of the time.

When I was a child my grandmother was the center of the household. I was much influenced by her piety. We always had ritual services twice a day, morning and evening, and during those services I heard the story of how the Buddha was the embodiment of compassion.³

Thus the world of faith Anesaki experienced, the world that he recalls centering around his grandmother, evokes the devoted followers and lay practitioners (*myokōnin*) of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism in early modern times. It was a world quite different from the modern Western concept of religion that Japanese today associate with the word *shūkyō*.

People of that time didn't usually ask such conceptual questions as why a sutra reading was required both morning and evening, or why Amida Buddha was the central object of veneration, or how could people be sure they would attain spiritual liberation? They simply devoted themselves to piety and ritual every day. In the terminology of modern anthropology, this is called "practice." However, what is called "religion" in the present day would be understood as representing the Protestant notion of religious faith conceptualized as belief. That latter idea of faith as "belief" belongs in another category, which is introspectively grasped.⁴

The year Anesaki was born, 1873, was the epochal year when the long-banned Christianity began to be tacitly tolerated. From that time onward, followers of

2 Anesaki 1951, p. 3.

3 Anesaki 1951, p. 10.

4 W. King 1987.

schools of thought, including Christianity, Shintō, and Buddhism, which had not previously had any relationships with each other, became aware that they were a part of a shared sphere called “religion.” Also in the same year, spiritual rituals, exorcism, and other folk religion practices were banned as superstitions. Anesaki’s native city of Kyoto was in the throes of being westernized under the progressive governorship of Makimura Masanao, a follower of the Meiji Enlightenment school of thought, making it one of the few areas outside of Tokyo to experience the impact of modernization at that early stage. However, such policies had not yet put down roots in the hearts of ordinary people, and the religious environment surrounding the young Anesaki, too, had yet to open up to the modern concept of religion. It remained as always absorbed in the world of Bukkōji or Jōdo Shinshū traditions.

Anesaki’s autobiography describes the connection between his early life and his decision to specialize in the discipline of religious studies. Yet the quite-considerable leap involved in taking up the study of “religion,” which was a Western academic tradition, must have required him to break away from the traditions of faith of his grandmother and family. Regarding that experience, a critique of the Jōdo Shinshū faith Anesaki wrote at the age of twenty-two after he had entered the Imperial University of Tokyo and come into contact with Western scholarship, offers some valuable insights.

Published in September 1895, this essay entitled “A Great Flaw of the Japanese Character” points out that Japanese do not seem to have the will-power to resist destiny. The young Anesaki wrote: “In my opinion, Shinran’s faith-oriented Amida tradition might potentially have served as good medicine in curing this flaw; however, its influence . . . has not led to any marked change in the national character.”⁵ So while granting to that tradition a certain value, he judged it inadequate to overcoming the “great flaw.” His essay closes with the question: “What religion is best to reform our people and give them courage and fortitude?”⁶ Dissatisfied with the religious traditions of his family and not wanting to limit himself to individual faith and the sectarian world of Bukkōji, Anesaki showed that he was beginning to search for a religion suitable for the nation-state of Japan that was in the process of being formed.

In April that same year, the Sino-Japanese War had been concluded. As the first foreign war fought by Japan as a modern nation, it aroused Anesaki’s self-consciousness as a Japanese citizen, and like his countrymen, he felt “our bitterness extremely deep and strong—I was filled with indignation!”

5 Anesaki 1895d, p. 23.

6 Anesaki 1895d, p. 28.

at the time of the Triple (Tripartite) Intervention.⁷ After entering the Imperial University, Anesaki's idea of religion was influenced by these contemporary historical circumstances; he seems to have been clearly conscious of the relationship of state and religion. Not long after that, Anesaki discovered the means to answer the questions with which he had ended his essay in September 1895 as to what religion was suitable for the Japanese people: he would find out by taking up religious studies.

Another circumstance that exerted a great influence on the formation of Anesaki's thought was the imperial family. This went far in helping him feel pride in the nation of Japan. At the beginning of the Meiji era Fukuzawa Yukichi had lamented, "It is correct to say that in Japan there is only government; there are not yet citizens."⁸ With the exception of some among the government elite, people did not have a clear consciousness of citizenship or nation. In 1873, the year of Anesaki's birth, however, major new laws were put in effect: in January the Military Conscription Order, and in July the Land Tax Reform. As the skeleton of a modern national army and a tax system to support the nation-state was thus being put together, the foundations of the government structure of the modern state continued to be solidified with the emperor institution at the head, although the major task of establishing a constitutional system remained. The formation of a homogenous national consciousness based on its people, language, and territory was formed for most Japanese of the time in the course of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars.⁹ But for Anesaki, that feeling of pride in the nation was first aroused not by the state but by the imperial house.

In addition to working in the Bukkōji image workshop, Anesaki's father Shōsei was also an attendant in the household of Katsura no Miya (Shukushi Naishinnō), a princess of royal lineage.¹⁰ Such connections between ordinary people living in the city and members of the aristocracy had continued throughout the Edo period and were not rare in early Meiji-era Kyoto. Kyoto people, in the course of maintaining businesses such as painting workshops

7 Anesaki 1951, pp. 65–66. At the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese War, the Shimonoseki Treaty provided for the ceding of the Liaotung peninsula to Japan, but Moscow later played the leading role in instigating Germany and France to intervene and join Russia in forcing Japan to return the Liaotung peninsula to China in return for reparations payments. Then not militarily strong enough to resist their combined pressure, Japan was forced to comply.

8 Fukuzawa 1894, p. 52. On the formation of popular consciousness, see Asukai 1984.

9 Makihara 1998, chapter 3.

10 *Katsura no Miya nikki*, entries for 7 and 10 July 1872, December 1877.

and medical practices, or simply while making a living as city residents, often had something to do with members of the court-related society headed by the emperor.¹¹ Anesaki himself recounted a childhood memory relating to the imperial family as follows:

My father was serving in the Katsura no Miya household. On one occasion when he heard the Princess was ill, he was very concerned. I remember how glad he was when he received some leftovers of the soup prepared as nourishment for the Princess. Also at that time, His Majesty the Emperor was on an imperial visit to Kyoto. When he paid a visit to the Katsura no Miya household, a white cloth was spread on the path where His Majesty walked. I received a piece of that cloth with deep gratitude, knowing that the Emperor's footprints were left upon it.¹²

For ordinary Japanese, at least up until 1887, the image of the emperor did not elicit any modern nationalist sense of his nature. The presence of the “*tennō*” (emperor) was created, together with the establishment of the term, in the process of shaping the people's modern consciousness of the nation. Reflecting the older consciousness, Nishi Amane, who had been a samurai in service to the Edo bakufu government, noted in 1874, the year after Anesaki was born: “Although the Emperor is extremely majestic, he cannot escape being a human being.”¹³ Though these words expressed his great reverence, Nishi was declaring publicly that it was a mistake to portray the emperor as a living *kami* as would be projected by the Meiji government. Similarly, for the traditional people of Kyoto who were in the service of families of royal blood, as Anesaki's above reminiscences suggest, at the same time that the members of the royal family were the object of awe they were also closely related to their daily lives. Certainly, for people outside the court, the emperor throughout the Edo period was a figure called the *tenshi* 天子 (the term used in the language of the court), who lived a life set apart and whose world was subject to various restrictions with taboos. Yet for those living in the environment of aristocratic society, although in reality there could be no direct contact with his person, he was also a familiar presence to whom they felt their feelings would be communicated.¹⁴

11 Shimohashi 1922–1924, pp. 279, 304; Kobayashi Takehiro 1998, pp. 31–33.

12 Anesaki 1951, p. 10.

13 Nishi 1874, p. 179.

14 Asukai 1995.

Anesaki reveals this sentiment, which was characteristic of those with links to aristocratic society, in recalling the events in October 1881 following the death first of [Princess] Katsura no Miya and soon after his own father Shōsei. Shōsei had collapsed one evening after he had gone to the Sennyūji temple to inspect the Katsura no Miya grave, and died suddenly the next day.

... young as I was, I could not help feeling that my father had gone to attend the Princess [in death,] and whenever I went to pay my respects at the grave, I felt as if Father's spirit were there, watching over it. How many times I wept there in front of the imperial tomb. That experience aroused a sense of great reverence for the imperial tombs, and I even made a tour of the imperial tombs in Yamashiro.¹⁵

True to these words, in the winter of his eighteenth year (1892) Anesaki made a walking tour around to the grave mounds connected with the imperial household in Kyoto prefecture and recorded his thoughts in a sentimental essay on "The Imperial Mausolea of Old Yamashiro Province."¹⁶ Grief for the loss of his father seems to have made more fervent his love and respect for the imperial house. Later, upon the death of the Meiji Emperor in 1912, he revealed a passion that can be called religious. He wrote, "Solemnly seeing off the casket, I found it difficult to restrain my ardent wish to kneel before his divine spirit."¹⁷ He had joined the imperial funeral service as a participant delegated by self-nomination from among certain imperially appointed officials in the Ministry of Education.

On the evening of the interment of the Meiji Emperor at Kyoto's Momoyama Imperial Mausoleum, he heard the news of General Nogi Maresuke's *junshi* suicide, following the emperor in death. For Anesaki, Nogi's death overlapped with "the death of my father,"¹⁸ who had followed Princess Katsura no Miya in death. He wrote: "His [General Nogi's] loyalty and sincerity were so pure, so direct, so intensely strong, that his death could be called, more than self-immolation, rather an honored invitation from the revered spirit of the former emperor."¹⁹

By the second decade of the Meiji era the modern emperor institution had put down roots among the people, so in July 1912 when the Emperor

15 Anesaki 1912b, p. 28.

16 Anesaki 1892–1893.

17 Anesaki 1912b, p. 28.

18 Anesaki 1912b, p. 34.

19 Anesaki 1912d.

Meiji became critically ill and leading up to his death, there were many public displays of emotion among the people. The response among intellectuals was often cooler. Waseda University professor Ukita Kazutami,²⁰ along with Anesaki a member of the Association Concordia, stated: “Nogi’s death did not have as much of an effect on Japanese, modern citizens with a constitution and modern industry, as some [among the elite] might think.”²¹ Writer Natsume Sōseki was critical of the practice by those in power of placing restraints on everyday life on the pretext of the emperor’s illness: “Our Emperor has not yet passed away. So there is no reason to ban the popular Ryōgoku summer river festival in Tokyo. Such orders cause much trouble for the poor people. We should be shocked at the authorities’ lack of common sense.”²²

Anesaki’s view of the emperor, perhaps because it was suffused with associations from the traditional court-centered society he had grown up with, was quite fervent when compared to the soberer views of many of his fellow intellectuals. Through the orchestration of imperial tours in which Emperor Meiji made personal appearances around the country in the second decade of his reign (1878–1888) and the distribution of imperial portraits to schools from the late 1880s, the Meiji government achieved success in its aim of transforming the image of the emperor from a *tenshi* whose presence was only felt in person by those of Kyoto court society to a *tennō* whom any Japanese citizen could envision as the source of their national identity.²³ We can see how Anesaki, passing from childhood to youth during that same period, developed a view of the emperor that combined a sense of divinity yet familiarity drawn from Edo-period images of awe and fealty toward the emperor as a symbol of the modern nation.

Anesaki was but one of a generation of ideological leaders whose sense of selfhood and identity had been established in the decade from the late 1890s through the early years of the twentieth century—the period during which the foundations of the Meiji state were established. These people did not, unlike the previous generation, objectify the state and the nation; for them, the state and the nation had become self-evident.²⁴ But because of the way he had been raised, Anesaki felt a much greater spiritual attachment than others to the emperor and his personification of the nation-state. When the controversy broke out in 1911 over the failure of the Ministry of Education to incorporate

20 Eizawa 1968.

21 Ukita 1912, p. 9.

22 *Sōseki zenshū*, vol. 20, p. 398.

23 Taki 1988; Fujitani 1996.

24 Nishikawa 1999, p. 31.

into elementary school textbooks the government's position supporting the Southern Court as the legitimate line of the emperors in the fourteenth century (the so-called Northern and Southern Courts Legitimacy dispute), Anesaki spearheaded the attack on the Ministry of Education's bungling of the matter. His passionate worship of Prince Shōtoku in his later years also stemmed from his family background.

From Comparative Religion to Religious Studies

Anesaki's formal study of Western academic traditions began in 1893 when he entered what was later to be the Imperial University's Department of Philosophy. The period between 1892 and about 1896, around the time he started his studies, coincided with the emergence of the notion of "new religion" among religionists and intellectuals in Japan.²⁵ As distinct from the term now used to refer to the popular "new religions" (*shinkō shūkyō*) established before and after the Meiji Restoration, this "new religion" embodied two meanings: one meant the act of "devising a name for a religious group and organizing its creed," in other words, any movement aiming to establish a new religious group. The other concerned "the expression of absolute truths that are universal to all religions," i.e., thought aiming at the articulation of the "religion" that embraces all existing schools of religion.²⁶

In the background of this trend lay dissatisfaction with hitherto established religions. Eager to dissociate themselves from "superstition," Japanese intellectuals began searching for a new religiosity that could respond to the circumstances of modernization they were experiencing. Anesaki disapproved of the former trend which involved establishing new religious groups, describing them in terms of their "regressive, spiritual attitudes" that "consider their own organizations to be without flaw." In contrast he valued highly the latter, intellectual side, which aspired to transcend the frameworks of the various religions and sects and "seek peace of mind sincerely."²⁷

As mentioned earlier, there had been no word corresponding to the Western word "religion" in Japan prior to the Meiji era. Following the tacit recognition of Christianity in 1873, the term "shūkyō" was used to translate the English "religion," embracing not only Christianity but Buddhism and other religions. When an article was included in the 1889 Meiji Constitution guaranteeing "freedom of religion" (*shūkyō no jiyū*), the term came into wide use and was understood among intellectuals to relate to matters of the private domain of

25 Anesaki 1898a, pp. 212–13; Anesaki 1897b, p. 54.

26 Anesaki 1898a, pp. 212, 214.

27 Anesaki 1897b, p. 56; Anesaki 1897c, p. 78.

the individual. In the years that would correspond to Anesaki's childhood, the early Meiji government launched national education policies, initially under the Daikyōin (1872–1875) and later the Kyōbushō agencies. The policies were based on an undifferentiated concept of *kyō* (“teachings,” following the Confucian sense) that was a carryover from the Edo period. Those policies and the official post of national campaign teacher that had been created to carry them out were abolished in 1884.

In 1893, a group of Japanese religionists participated in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, and in 1896 within Japan the Religious Friendship Gathering was convened. As mentioned above, movements seeking to fashion a comprehensive “religion” transcending the conventional boundaries of sect and religion were arising from among such religionists and these efforts, too, went hand in hand with the spread of the concept of *shūkyō* into the world of Japanese spiritual life.

The “new religion” trends of both types faded in 1897, but by that time, comparative religion had begun to thrive in the academic world. In September of the year, when Carl Munzinger's treatise “On the Necessity of Religion” was published in the journal *Die Wahrheit* (1890),²⁸ Inoue Tetsujirō began his lecture series at the Imperial University of Tokyo entitled “Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy.” In 1893 Minami Hajime's essay “Hikaku shūkyōgaku to Kirisutokyō” (Comparative Religion and Christianity) was published in *Die Wahrheit*²⁹ and similarly Inoue Enryō's “Hikaku shūkyōgaku” (Comparative Religion) was published, the latter as a record of lectures given at the Tetsugakukan (Hall of Philosophy). Then in 1894 Kishimoto Nobuta published *Shūkyō no hikakuteki kenkyū* (Comparative Research on Religion)³⁰ as a record of lectures at the Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō (forerunner of Waseda University).

Describing the comparative religion boom, Anesaki wrote: “The appearance of students of religious studies in the graduate school and the establishment of chairs for comparative religion one after another in all the colleges and universities is the result of a sudden rise in research that employs the comparative method for all the religions.”³¹ However, the real mainstream of comparative religion was not represented by Inoue Tetsujirō and Anesaki at the Imperial University but rather by liberal Christian theologians and some philosophy-oriented Buddhists with whom these efforts resonated. Comparative religion lectures were given at the Unitarians' Tokyo Liberal Theological Seminary and

28 Munzinger 1890.

29 Minami Hajime 1890b.

30 Kishimoto Nobuta 1894.

31 Anesaki 1898a, p. 210.

the Universalists' Universalist Theological Seminary. On the Buddhist side too, Furukawa Rōsen organized an association called the Keiikai which encouraged open discussion of Buddhism.³²

The liberal theology that began to come into Japan around 1885 was part of the movement seeking to introduce rationalism into Christianity. These efforts tapped into evolutionary theory, which had previously been considered incompatible with religion, and sought the ethicization of religion free of the authority of churches and cleansed of superstition.³³ It influenced Buddhism too, which had yet to recover from the traumas of the anti-Buddhist policies implemented in the 1868–1874 period, by encouraging a movement stressing the philosophical side of Buddhism.

In this way comparative religion emerged as a theology or doctrine that incorporated the scientific discourse of evolutionary theory. Some people tended to view the “new religion” trends as a movement toward the unification of religion,³⁴ but with the exception of a few people like Inoue Tetsujrō who were without religious affiliation, these movements each remained biased by their own religion. This suggests that even while religionists recognized that other religions were equally “religion,” in the liaisons they formed with other religions, they continued to assume the superiority or priority of their own religion.

This was the atmosphere of comparative religious studies when Anesaki began to study at the Tokyo Imperial University in 1893. In 1896, the year he entered graduate school, he organized a comparative religion society together with Kishimoto Nobuta, and after that gave “comparative religion” lectures at the Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō.³⁵ His first book to be published, on the “history of Indian religion” (1898) with the close supervision of Inoue Tetsujirō, utilized the methods of research in comparative religion for its description of the religions of India.

Already at the age of fourteen or fifteen Anesaki had realized that “What I want to study is philosophy . . . yet, not *just* philosophy, but religion.”³⁶ The world of comparative religion, though it was still biased by individual religions,

32 *Shinri* 23 (1891), back cover; Shigeru 1984; Serikawa 1989, chapter 4.

33 Minami Hajime 1890a; Nihon Yunitarian Kōdōkai 1901.

34 Anesaki 1897b, p. 54.

35 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, chapter 4, section 1. Anesaki's lectures at Tetsugakukan and Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō were published separately by each school respectively as *Gengogakuteki shūkyōgaku* (Linguistics-based Religious Studies, Tetsugakukan, 1897) and *Hikaku shūkyōgaku* (Comparative Religion, Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō, 1898).

36 Anesaki 1951, pp. 3–4.

was his first substantial exposure to the world of Western scholarship. Thus the environment around him changed greatly, from the sectarian world of practice-oriented Jōdo Shinshū to a world assuming the generalized concept of “religion” and centering on Western-type beliefs.

Meanwhile, already by 1895 he had written that “comparative study is not the final stage in the study of religion,”³⁷ expressing his sense of the inadequacy of comparative religion and his groping toward a new form of religious studies that would subsume comparative studies as one means to that end. The point at which Anesaki began to proclaim the establishment of his new “religious studies” in name and fact was with the publication of his book *Shūkyōgaku gairon* in 1910.

Anesaki’s religious studies was at its core a “religious history in terms of the humanities” (*jinbunshiteki*) approach, as he aimed to understand the phenomena of religion in terms of all sorts of angles which were constituted from the faculties of the human mind, the forms of its expression in society, and its historical development.³⁸ He wrote that he considered the human religious consciousness to be the nearest and clearest basis for seeking the origins of religious phenomena,³⁹ but that it emerged from social and historical life.⁴⁰ His approach defined individual consciousness as something appearing as social phenomena.

Indeed, in that he sought to understand religion as a matter of the human heart or psychology, Anesaki’s religious studies was distinct from the conventional comparative religion approach employed by Kishimoto Nobuta and Inoue Enryō. The earlier comparative religion sought to grasp the “common elements” found in the various religions, but did not go beyond the realm of their specific elements such as “religion as the worship of gods.”⁴¹ In Anesaki’s religious studies, however, because he understood religion as the expression of a consciousness that can be found in all human beings, the surface features distinctive of different sects were not part of the essential meaning that Anesaki sought to identify for *sui generis* religion.⁴² In addition, in grasping the social phenomenon of religion, his work was distinct from previous comparative religion in that, rather than investigating the origins of religion or pursuing

37 Anesaki 1895c, p. 987.

38 Anesaki 1900b, p. 1.

39 Anesaki 1900b, p. 10.

40 Anesaki 1900b, p. 243.

41 Anesaki 1900c, p. 121.

42 McCutcheon 1995.

some ideal form in its future, he sought to understand religion's social role in a historical process of development.

Of course, seen globally, those concerned with psychological interpretations included not only Anesaki but C. P. Tiele and Edwin D. Starbuck, and those concerned with historical interpretations included John N. Farquhar and others. All these scholars were working in the same period and context; everything paralleled the general trends of Western research on religion.⁴³ In the case of Anesaki, the process of establishing his new religious studies can be said to have occurred simultaneously with Western movements, demonstrating how his understanding of religion was constructed according to Western logic. Now through his religion research Anesaki was on the cutting edge of Western scholarship in the field in Japan.

We can clearly observe Anesaki's shift from comparative religion to religious studies in a dispute with the mythologist Takagi Toshio (1876–1922) over Japanese myths in the years 1899 and 1900. The year 1899, in fact, has been called the founding year of Japanese mythology studies because of the controversial debate that began then, not only between Takagi and Anesaki but with the participation of Takayama Chogyū and others.⁴⁴ Anesaki emphasized his understanding of myth “as a fact of human history” from “a position of psychological content and social history.”⁴⁵ He castigated Takagi's arguments (viewing the *Kojiki and Nihonshoki* as the universal mythological thought of human beings), saying they were nothing more than comparative linguistic “pursuits of the origins of deity names in natural phenomena” and did not go beyond the “comparative study of superficial resemblances.”⁴⁶

As the outcome of the controversy, Anesaki emerged the victor. Today, the dispute has been called “epoch-making in pointing out the social and ritual aspects of myth.”⁴⁷ Certainly Anesaki's ideas on mythology were not based on questions of origin, and by treating myths as the historical and social product of the spirit, he opened the way for the new research on the “age of the gods” of Tsuda Sōkichi and Watsuji Tetsurō in the Taishō era (1912–1926). But at

43 Tiele 1897–1899 (Japanese translation published in 1916); Starbuck 1899; Farquhar 1901 (see Sharpe 1986, pp. 151–53 and Molendijk 2005); Anesaki 1931; Anesaki 1899c.

44 Takagi Toshio 1973, p. 81. Takayama Chogyū (1871–1902) was a close friend of Anesaki from their time in high school. Takayama studied aesthetics in graduate school at Tokyo Imperial University and was also famous as a literary critic. He introduced the ideas of Nietzsche praising individual instinct, then became a believer in Nichiren Buddhism in the endeavor to synthesize individualism and Japanese nationalism.

45 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 15, 32.

46 Anesaki 1900a, p. 32.

47 Hirafuji 2004.

the same time, his victory may have cut off certain possibilities in the line of research attempting to establish links in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* to universal thought initiated by Takagi and earlier attempted by Kume Kunitake in his essay “Shintō is the Ancient Custom of Worshipping Heaven.”⁴⁸ According to the reasoning of Anesaki’s characteristic “religious history in terms of the humanities” approach, “if we observe these myths as a reflection of culture and society, we can learn much that is profound and earnest in the spirit of our [ethnic] people.” This reasoning was to converge with his later shift to particularism, as he sought to clarify the Japanese polity or *kokutai*.⁴⁹

Anesaki eventually concluded that the theme of the Susanowo myth was the “awe and reverence for [Amaterasu] the progenitor goddess who is the sovereign ruler, and allegiance and reverence toward [the emperors] as the living gods who are her descendants.”⁵⁰ However, despite Anesaki’s advocacy of inquiry into history, the “Japanese people” whom he imagined the myth as explaining appear to have been a single entity transcending class and time. Such inconsistency in Anesaki’s idea of the *kokutai* was also apparent in his view of the emperor as touched upon earlier.

As we have seen, the establishment of Anesaki’s religious studies and concept of religion reflected the influence on him of political events including approval of freedom of religion in the 1889 Meiji Constitution and the upsurge of nationalism in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War that began in 1894. Acceptance of freedom of religion in the national charter clearly separated religion, which was considered to belong to the non-rational, private realm, from morality, which was considered to belong to the rational, public realm. Through the experience of the Sino-Japanese War, the identity of the Japanese nation-state spread widely throughout the populace. It was the first major foreign war conducted by the modern Japanese state for which the entire country was mobilized, and the presence of a foreign power posited as the enemy to be fought helped to bring into focus people’s self-consciousness of themselves as Japanese.⁵¹ Anesaki was no exception.

It was at this point that the nationalist and modernization-oriented movement called Nipponshugi (Japanism) emerged. Inoue Tetsujirō advocated from a deistic viewpoint that morality should replace both Christianity and Buddhism in the position of religion.⁵² He advised promoting the dissolution

48 Kume 1891. For appraisals of Kume Kunitake, see Kano and Imai 1991.

49 Anesaki 1899b, p. 28.

50 Anesaki 1899b, p. 27.

51 Hiyama 2001, pp. 25–30.

52 Inoue Tetsujirō 1902a, p. 84.

of religion, with its non-rational character, and shifting toward a rational morality.⁵³ This Japanism considered itself the emblematic slogan for a spontaneous patriotism emerging from within the nation, and criticized religion as “otherworldly and non-national” and an obstacle to the growth of patriotism. And so we see how Japanism linked rationality with the state, while religion was disdained as irrational and superstitious and considered an obstacle.

But the decade from the late 1890s was also called the “era of spiritual anguish.” For a while Takayama Chogyū had endorsed Japanism, but he soon broke away from it,⁵⁴ having realized it was hopeless that people would find such formalistic moralism fulfilling. Many people who were unsatisfied with the emphasis on morality alone began searching for some new kind of thought that could give them a sense of inner fulfillment. As a result it was as if interest in religion increased, and many people began to talk about their spiritual anxiety and skepticism regarding the official teachings on morality.⁵⁵ The literature of Naturalism that flourished at that time was an attempt to “concentrate on the individual world, cut off from the realm of state and society.”⁵⁶ But religious studies meanwhile appeared on the scene to serve as a discourse aiming to provide a new sense of social cohesion, one that could join together the individual and the nation, which had been called inherently incompatible.

The romantic understanding of religion that Anesaki had learned from Raphael Koeber in his Imperial University of Tokyo student years played an important role in formulating his religious studies discourse.⁵⁷ As Anesaki defined it, “Religion is the establishment of the desire to get help, or to want to acquire it, via negotiation with a power greater than the self.”⁵⁸ He saw religion as the manifestation of the aspiration on the part of human beings who possessed only limited abilities to acquire something unlimited and infinite. Religion seen this way dealt with questions that could not be completely comprehended in rational terms alone. He came to regard that non-rational quality, which the Meiji Enlightenment intellectuals criticized, as having positive significance. Thus when Anesaki noted, “Religion itself is not superstition, it is an intimate power, the fundamental source of inspiration, the fundamental

53 Takayama 1898, p. 442.

54 Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a, p. 202; Maeda 1978.

55 Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a, pp. 195–96.

56 Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a, p. 195; Yoshida Seiichi 1955–1958, vol. 1.

57 Anesaki 1951, p. 60; Anesaki 1923a.

58 Anesaki 1900c, p. 133.

source of morality,”⁵⁹ it became possible for religion to exist as an autonomous realm without being reduced to morality.

This posture of seeking the particularism of religion positively in non-rationality did not begin with Anesaki’s religious studies, but rather had already been a characteristic of the field of comparative religion and among religious followers generally. In that sense, romantic thought was easy to accept for one who knew and loved Jōdo Shinshū like Anesaki. Yet, in religious studies, unlike the various earlier discourses, this inherent quality did not retreat into the form of separate religious groups but was distinguished by being linked to society in general. Religion did not belong only to followers who worshipped specific gods and buddhas but rather, being “the spirit of humankind in general”⁶⁰ it was an aspect of the psychological makeup of any human being.

Thus religion came to be interpreted as something that, not limited to the sphere of otherworldly priests and sages, existed in the everyday secular world of society. For many people, religion came into the limelight in the 1890s as something that could help them fill in the inwardly felt emptiness in their hearts. Whether in the series of inter-denominational conferences begun in the late 1880s and early 1890s, or in lay movements such as Tanaka Chigaku’s Nichirenism that grew significantly in the late 1890s, the main topic turned to how religion could contribute to secular society.⁶¹ The argument developed that it was precisely religion in its non-rational, private realm that could support the morality of the public realm and the lives of citizens.

At that time in Japan, however, when civil society had not yet reached maturity, “society” was absorbed by the state. Anesaki criticized adherence to sectarianism and offered as a substitute identity the nation instead. More than he supported a Japanism—which tended to go little beyond formalistic moralism—he forged links directly from individual interiority to the state. Indeed, Anesaki’s discourse was suitable for the structure of a nation-state based on spontaneity from within the nation. Of course at the political and cultural apex of the state reigned the emperor. For Anesaki, reverence for the early modern-era emperor and the modern consciousness of the people’s nation-state were tied together through the mediation of the Western concept of “religion.”

59 Anesaki 1897b, p. 55.

60 Anesaki 1900b, p. 15.

61 Suzuki Norihisa 1993; Ikeda 1976.

Experience of the West and Representation of Japan

Renarration of Japan's particularism through the lens of Western knowledge had been the task modern Japanese intellectuals took upon themselves ever since Japan opened to the West, whether it emerged in the guise of nationalist "Japanism," as in the case of Inoue Tetsujirō, or as an enlightened and modernized Westernism, as in Fukuzawa Yukichi. Regarding the formation of subjective identity in the modern non-West, Sakai Naoki points out as follows:

... the national, civilizational, and racial identity of the nation in Asia requires the implicit and ubiquitous presence of the West. Only insofar as the West is felt to be the point of counter-reference can nationality in the Rest be rendered sensible to the populace.⁶²

According to Sakai, whether Japan either resists the West or welcomes assimilation, inasmuch as it has been incorporated into the modern Western world, its people have no choice but to live within the universalized criteria that Western logic has established as the frame of reference. Such circumstances often cause those who are non-Westerners to think of themselves as somehow deficient, and whether they strive to overcome that deficiency by acquiring Western knowledge, or whether they conclude that such non-Western characteristics are what define them as Japanese, the choice determines whether they choose Westernism or Japanism.

Before he went overseas to study, Anesaki intended to identify with Western knowledge in the same manner as earlier Japanese champions of the West; the object of his identification was to be Germany. Later Anesaki expressed what his expectations about going to Europe had been like:

Before coming to Europe, I had had only a distant view of its civilization through books. Secretly, I admired the beauty of that civilization. When I was about to depart, my greatest hope was to come into firsthand contact with things Western and I was determined to learn from its spirit.⁶³

Germany, which was then under the leadership of Emperor Wilhelm II, however, had launched numerous foreign policy initiatives with the aim of building up an imperialist state on a par with Britain and France. In its Far Eastern policy, against the backdrop of the October 1895 Tripartite (Triple) Intervention and

62 N. Sakai 2000, p. 78.

63 Anesaki 1902c, p. 211.

despite the November 1897 murder of a German missionary by the members of the Boxer-led anti-foreign movement, Germany pressed forward into China on both the political and cultural fronts with Shandong province as its foothold.

The “Yellow Peril” and Opposition to the West

In June 1900, after another international incident occurred in Beijing in which Boxer rebels murdered a German envoy, the Qing dynasty declared war against the European powers. Anesaki had set off to study in Germany at exactly this time. He arrived there in May, rejoicing to be in the “Europe of which I so long have dreamed,”⁶⁴ but in July in the German city of Bremerhaven he heard the famous speech in which Wilhelm II urged the German troops to crush the Chinese without mercy, and it filled him with indignation.⁶⁵

Anesaki was shocked by Wilhelm II’s rabid “yellow peril” rhetoric, and in a letter to a friend he paraphrased the speech as saying, “let us destroy all non-Christians. By punishing the heretic Chinamen, let us make it impossible for them ever in a thousand years to look a German in the face.”⁶⁶ The speech fanned the flames of European’s dread of the “yellow peril,” “expressing white people’s fear, loathing, mistrust, and contempt for the yellow race.”⁶⁷ There on German soil, he saw that both the China that was being invaded and the Japan that was joining the foreign invasion as one of the great powers were equally despised by Westerners as the “yellow peril.” Already by the closing stage of the Sino-Japanese War Wilhelm II had become increasingly wary of Japan as it rose in Asia. As Anesaki pursued his studies in Germany, he felt the impact of Germany’s anti-Japanese tendency right around him. He wrote, “Everyone, down to the servants and children, despise Chinese and people of the yellow races and go so far as to throw stones when we walk in the streets and hurl insults at us.”⁶⁸

Thus Anesaki’s experience of overseas study in Germany was one that resulted in rejection by the object of his identification as soon as he actually encountered the object he had longed for. How did Anesaki go about reconstructing his own identity as a Japanese? Anesaki’s view of Germany now reversed itself completely, and he became extremely critical.⁶⁹

64 Letter dated 21 May 1900, from Anesaki’s letters to Ōnishi Hajime. In *Ōnishi Hajime, Ikuko shokanshū*, p. 306.

65 Anesaki 1951, p. 85.

66 Anesaki 1917, p. 1.

67 Hashikawa 1976, p. 7. On the yellow peril idea, see also Gollwitzer 1962.

68 Anesaki 1902c, p. 213.

69 Hirakawa 1971.

In public letters written in 1901 and 1902, entitled “Writings in Answer to Takayama Chogyū,” he wrote, “the brilliance of the world of thought and ideas in Germany completely withered towards the end of the nineteenth century.” Pointing out the moral decay resulting from exclusivist patriotism, imperialism, and industrialism, he observed: “the political unification of the country feeds into boastful patriotism and chauvinism and the sudden rise of its industry induces an inflated notion of self-interest and corruption of morality; the two together interact in the absence of any foundation for training of the individual, leading the people into dangerous territory.”⁷⁰ Studying in Germany fifteen years earlier in 1884, Inoue Tetsujirō had had nothing but praise for what he encountered: “in Germany the spirit of autonomy and independence flourishes, and it flourishes in all areas, in scholarship, in the military, in education, and every other field”⁷¹—an extraordinary contrast with Anesaki’s assessment.

Anesaki’s criticism did not stop with Germany but extended to the rest of modern European civilization. His view of British society was cool: “At the coronation, where the imperialism of Great Britain is predictably on display, . . . I see shadows of something frightening and pitiable.”⁷² Giving as examples Britain’s control of India or the American exploitation of the Philippines, he ultimately reached the point of rejecting modern Western civilization: “twentieth-century civilization is nothing but imperialism and colonialist maneuvering.”⁷³ Then, his argument turned back upon Japanese society itself for its proclivity to emulate the West.

Observing the situation in Germany and comparing it to Japan, we can see that although Japan took up arms in the name of a duty to spread civilization under the banner of national unity, it did so without unifying the national spirit or having a solid idea of what civilization should be. After the [Sino-Japanese] war, it suffered the consequences [of that lack]. I shudder to see how the momentary burgeoning of nationalism has produced no good effects, but simply increased the people’s arrogance and the burden they have to bear in supporting the nation’s armaments.⁷⁴

70 Anesaki 1902c, pp. 211, 216.

71 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 31–32.

72 Anesaki 1902b, p. 506.

73 Anesaki 1902b, p. 518.

74 Anesaki 1902c, p. 213.

Yet Anesaki did not totally reject Western civilization. While “learning of the hollowness of modern European civilization”⁷⁵ he discovered alternative dimensions of Western values to substitute for those of the mainstream. Among them were the teachings of Nietzsche, whom he described as “rejecting the formalistic expedience of society and instead assigning limitless value to the aspirations of the human spirit.” He also admired Wagner, noting the idea of “merging all in ‘love’ in trying to rebuild human life.”⁷⁶

In Japan in this period Nietzsche’s ideas were the center of a debate between scholar of German literature and writer Tobarī Chikufū (1873–1955) and critic and writer Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935). Anesaki’s friend Takayama Chogyū had now also broken away from Japanism and was attracted to Nietzsche’s ideas about the central importance of human instinct. Anesaki shared Chogyū’s position of emphasizing individual will, but as distinct from Chogyū, he stressed not only the individual but—as illustrated in his preference for Wagner over Nietzsche—the communality represented by the nation, even while taking the individual as the starting point. Anesaki seems to have been consistent on this point even from before his overseas study.

In any case, from what he learned abroad Anesaki obtained the keys for his critique of modern civilization. He saw his mission in Japanese society after returning home as follows: “Is not my responsibility to mount a major resistance to the morality of expedience, the formalistic society, the imitation of the Other, and the academistic scholarship of today’s Japan?”⁷⁷ Ironically, the very logic he acquired for the critique of Western civilization was itself “the gift of my sojourn in the West.”⁷⁸ And in order to criticize Western logic, rather than breaking away from the sphere of its influence, he had to push even further—through Nietzsche, Wagner, and mysticism—into the world of Western knowledge.⁷⁹

Mysticism and Discourse on the Kokutai

After returning to Japan, Anesaki began to seek in religion the specific focal point for his critique of modern civilization. In this period, religion was for him both “the tool for discovery of the mystery of the great universe within the ‘self’ and the key for understanding the meaning of human life and society,

75 Letter of 19 November 1902, from Anesaki’s letters to Takayama Chogyū. In Takayama 1902, p. 535.

76 Anesaki 1902c, p. 216; Anesaki 1902a, p. 472.

77 Anesaki 1902c, p. 217.

78 Anesaki 1902c, p. 211.

79 Hayashi Masako 2001, pp. 476–77.

respectively by listening to the voice of one's own spirit, and by addressing the problems of what am 'I,' what is 'the other,' and why."⁸⁰

In that "religion" as described here was not concerned with sect or school but with individual awareness of religion as understood from the Romanticist standpoint, it reflects Anesaki's ideas presented in *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (published before he went to Germany). However, in stressing the actual experience of unity of the personal and universal Great Self, he had shifted his relationship to religion from that of the standpoint of the scholar observing religion to that of the religious practitioner. Considering Anesaki's upbringing in a family of pious Shinshū Buddhist believers, it can be said that he returned to a world of faith. Yet now the faith involved was not limited to premodern traditions of practice, but was revised towards the modern Western concept of religion.

Anesaki had firmly believed in the progress of modern civilization before going to Germany, so he had not felt any need to adopt an actively critical approach. His experiences in the course of his study overseas, however, intensified his feeling of crisis about modern civilization and activated his urge to engage in reform. In the summer of 1903, not long after returning to Japan, Anesaki was vacationing at the then-scenic seaside resort of Kiyomigata in Shizuoka prefecture. Recalling Takayama Chogyū, who had fallen ill and died at the end of the previous year, he mused about the mystical world he himself had experienced:

It was probably the night my friend died, that hearing the sound of the Kiyomi Temple bells, I felt the breathing of the earth and sky mourning my friend and was touched by a sense of eternal loneliness. Bowed down upon the sand of the beach, I entered a state of selflessness... Time passes, people change, but in the pulsation of the eternal there is the music of the unchanging "now." Light, do you embrace me? Waves, do you invite me? Would that my body dissolve into the water, would that my heart melt away, together with the light. And when I have become not-myself, how sweet will become the reverberations in my heart.⁸¹

In Japan at that time a younger generation had emerged searching for a "first principle" of human life that would go beyond the ideals of "progress," "rationality" and "nation."⁸² These young people were fundamentally skeptical

80 Anesaki 1903a, pp. 81, 84.

81 Anesaki 1903b, p. 248.

82 Iwasa 1998, p. 277.

about the modern Western civilization centering on science and industrialization as well as about the Japanese society that was importing it all. For them, the impasse that Western civilization faced, as described by Anesaki while he was in Germany, overlapped with the problems of Japanese society of which they themselves were so keenly aware.

In May 1903, immediately after Anesaki had returned to Japan, a student of the prestigious First Higher School named Fujimura Misao committed suicide, throwing himself over the edge of the Kegon Falls. The message he left behind referred to the first principle of the universe, saying, "it is incomprehensible." It was the event that symbolized the mood of the era. Anesaki, who blamed the young man's death on the efforts by educators ever since Meiji to bury in established forms the "selves" of those they educated⁸³ and who pointed out the emptiness of the formalistic values of society, was enthusiastically welcomed by the younger generation. For up-and-coming writers like Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) and Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912), he was an advocate of new ideas that called for the establishment of selfhood through interior religious experience.⁸⁴ Now Anesaki, beginning with the publication of his work *Fukkatsu no shokō* (The Dawning of Revival; 1904), poured himself not only into the scholarly study of religion but into active work as a critic, taking as his main themes mysticism and aesthetic experience.

While on one hand Anesaki was immersing himself in understanding the inner spirit based on mysticism, he was also gradually drawn into belief in Nichiren Buddhism. Up until his overseas studies Anesaki had been rather wary of Nichiren, considering him a nationalistic religious figure.⁸⁵ Upon the death of Takayama Chogyū, however, who had converted to Nichirenism, and also through personal contact with his former teacher, Tanaka Chigaku, Anesaki slowly deepened his devotion.⁸⁶ In an essay published in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War entitled "Kokka no unmei to risō (aikokusha to yogen-sha)" (The Destiny and Ideal of the State: Patriots and Prophets), he began to speak openly about his own faith in the teachings of Nichiren:

The center of everything is the "I" and the "I" is the focal point that reflects the universe. Likewise, by clarifying the state, which is a macrocosm, we can grasp the relationship of the state and the "I." Thus the macrocosm and microcosm are engaged in lively smooth interaction. Every microcosm,

83 Anesaki 1903a, p. 80.

84 Nagai 1995; Sugisaki 1970, pp. 404–405.

85 Anesaki 1902a, p. 235.

86 Tamura 1972, pp. 162–64. Tanaka Hōkoku 1953.

which is the individual person, exists in a relation of mutual interdependency with the center or macrocosm, which is the nation or state.⁸⁷

Here Anesaki tries to superimpose on the historical particularity of the state the cosmic mystery that can be found within the individual. He believed that “It is within the microcosm of the person that the macrocosm of the state is clearly reflected; the person of faith and courage who has the life of the state within his or her own life” is the “genuine patriot” and “prophet.” He offered Nichiren as such a model.⁸⁸ Indeed, Anesaki’s idea of the linkage of the individual and the state had been consistent from before his study in Germany and continued through his appreciation of Wagner while there; it was nothing new. What was new after his return to Japan was that, while he devoted himself further to the inner world through mysticism, he tied the universality he discovered there to the community of the state. He began to assert himself much more practically and politically than before.

This linkage between exploration of the inner self through mysticism and the state was the core of Anesaki’s religious doctrine in this period.⁸⁹ Regarding Tsunashima Ryōsen (1873–1907), who was similarly known for his writings on mysticism, we can understand how Anesaki, while appreciating Tsunashima’s mystical experience, criticized him because “he tends toward the subjective and treats the objective side lightly.”⁹⁰ Tsunashima’s viewpoint seemed buried in individual subjectivity, lacking a connection with objective—in other words, national—communality.

The circumstance that turned Anesaki towards the state must have been the Russo-Japanese War that broke out in February 1904. The war was widely viewed in Japanese society at that time as a just war, and the system for national mobilization extended into the local city, town, and village units of government administration. So even more than the earlier Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) it became a “people’s war” through which popular sentiments converged in national values.⁹¹ Among the reactions of religious leaders, the opposition to the war by the pacifist Uchimura Kanzō is famous, but he represented only a small minority. As seen in the May 1904 Religion and Education Friendship Gathering held at the Chūkōshidō Kaikan Hall in central Tokyo’s Shiba Park,

87 Anesaki 1904c, p. 29.

88 Anesaki 1904c, p. 30.

89 Sugisaki 1970, p. 404.

90 Anesaki 1906b, p. 22.

91 Miyachi Masato 1970, p. 141.

the majority of Japan's religious world actively supported the war.⁹² Anesaki was centrally involved in organizing the conference, drawing up its formal statement of objectives entitled "The Aims for Which Our Country Began This War for the Sake of Justice."⁹³

For Anesaki the Russo-Japanese War constituted a just war, fought for the sake of "peace in Asia and the destiny of the yellow race,"⁹⁴ for "protecting Korea from the incursions of the great powers, and for maintaining the independence of the Qing regime in China." He even argued that the war had to be fought for Russia itself, to liberate "a hundred million Slavs" from the clique government of the Tsarists.⁹⁵ As he made clear in an editorial published on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War declaring "to war, by all means to war!" fighting for Anesaki meant "standing up ourselves and fighting with others, committing our persons and engaging in the struggle." It was a battle of spiritual awakening for both the individual and the nation.⁹⁶

Thus Anesaki ultimately did not consider the real Japanese state as something universal in and of itself. However, critiquing the nation and the society on the basis of his ideals, he asserted his own idiosyncratic logic, arguing for reform by building outward from within the individuals who were the responsible agents. Following Nichiren's thought Anesaki expounded the relationship of nation and individual as follows:

The state with a foundation and an ideal; a government to carry on that foundation and leadership that expresses and tries to realize those ideals; and a vibrant solidarity among the people that can transform the ideal into reality—this is the way the individual and the state should be—with these elements working together, helping each other, and developing each other.⁹⁷

In other words, Anesaki envisioned the state and the individual supporting each other, with the enlightened individual, aware of cosmic universality, critiquing the state, and the sanctified state in turn offering succor to the individual who suffers from the abuses caused by Westernization. In his thinking, the people were not the object of the unidirectional control of the government; rather

92 Miyachi Masato 1970, p. 143; Kashiwahara 1990, pp. 148–49.

93 Dai Nihon Shūkyōka Taikai Jimusho 1904, p. 5.

94 Anesaki 1904c, p. 24; Anesaki 1904e, p. 279.

95 Anesaki 1905a, p. 5; Anesaki 1904d, p. 21.

96 Anesaki 1904e, pp. 274–75.

97 Anesaki 1913b, p. 4.

the subjective and autonomous individuals supported the nation from within, and in turn were endowed in their interior identities by the state. He declared that, because he believed that “the ability or nonability of people to achieve a self-conscious solidarity corresponds to whether they succeed in grasping consciously the macrocosmic power that enters into the spirit of the individual,” his standpoint was distinct from that of the *kokkashugi* “nationalists.”⁹⁸

Anesaki’s argument actively connected the state to inner awakening: on the one hand it sought to rescue the idea of the state from a formalistic moralism imposed by the government, and on the other urged the development of a nation in which the people who identified with it actively shouldered the values of the state. The crucial point, however, was that inasmuch as the state is a real political system, if such a tension between principled critique and reality could not be maintained, ultimately the spiritual awakening of the individual would be assimilated into the realities of mere political power for its own sake.

Anesaki walked a delicate line in this relationship with nationalism. Seen from its results, his assertions in this period to some extent must be seen as having succumbed to “affirmation of the status quo.”⁹⁹ For example, in his series of statements about the Russo-Japanese War, based on his perspective that it was “a battle of moral character” he stated that “war is the grave matter of the nation”¹⁰⁰ in which military actions are justified by a priori transcendental ideas. As Anesaki accepted real occurrences as the basis for his assumptions, not rejecting war outright, his position was the opposite of that of Uchimura Kanzō, who declared that “war is homicide.”¹⁰¹ Considering his idea of moral development, Anesaki’s discourse concealed discrepancies between the real and the ideal.

Anesaki rapidly began to strengthen his links with political society from about the time of the Russo-Japanese War. At the war’s start in 1904, together with Yokoi Tokio, a member of the Diet House of Representatives for the Seiyūkai Party, he published a political opinion journal called *Jidai shichō* (Tide of Opinion of the Times). He published one essay after another calling for “a great awakening of the people”¹⁰² and combined reports of war victories with tracts on party politics.¹⁰³ In the controversy over the official imperial lineage to be taught in the schools, he initiated the discussion, taking a

98 Anesaki 1904c, p. 29.

99 Ōishi Kiichirō 1985, p. 77.

100 Anesaki 1904c, p. 32.

101 Uchimura 1904, p. 274.

102 Yokoi and Anesaki 1904, p. 1.

103 Nagao Munenori 2006.

strong position favoring the Southern Court lineage,¹⁰⁴ and also served as an advisor on arts and culture for the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁵ In 1912, cooperating with Ministry of Home Affairs official Tokonami Takijirō, a member of the Seiyūkai Party camp, he participated in the convening of the Conference of the Three Religions and acted as promoter for the Religionists and Educators Friendship Gathering,¹⁰⁶ and was involved in the creation of the Association Concordia (Kiitsu Kyōkai) with industrialist and leader of the financial world Shibusawa Eiichi.¹⁰⁷

The ten-year span of modern Japanese political history between 1901 and 1913 when Katsura Tarō, who represented bureaucratic politics, and Saionji Kinmochi, president of the Seiyūkai Party, alternately led the Cabinet is referred to as the “Katsura-Saionji era.” Anesaki, who had friendly relationships with Yokoi Tokio and with Tokonami Takijirō of the Seiyūkai, came to support Saionji.¹⁰⁸ Despite their other differences, Katsura and Saionji were in full agreement regarding the goals of establishing ideological education in the schools to support the emperor system and achieving the imperialistic reorganization of Japanese society.¹⁰⁹ Already the Imperial Rescript of 1908 had been promulgated and enforcement of the terms of the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education had been strengthened, but the plot to assassinate Emperor Meiji that was discovered in 1910 aroused a sense of crisis about the solidarity of the *kokutai* among the ruling stratum,¹¹⁰ and efforts at indoctrination of the people were dramatically increased in order to overcome the situation. Anesaki likewise felt the crisis, declaring: “The High Treason incident is the sign of a deep fundamental ignorance (*ganpon no mummyō*) challenging the virtue of the National Body (*kokutai*).”¹¹¹

Anesaki involved himself with the various political issues described above as his way of furthering the ideological metamorphosis of the people through the cultural channels of religion and literature. His efforts, paralleling government programs being implemented at around the same time through the local administrative hierarchy, such as the unification of shrines and the promotion

104 Anesaki 1911a; Yamazaki and Horie 1912.

105 Anesaki 1912a; Wada 1989.

106 Anesaki 1912e; *Chūgai nippō* 1912b; Dohi 1967–1969.

107 Nakajima Kuni 1987–1988 (36).

108 Anesaki 1951, p. 114; Letter of 26 December from Saionji to Anesaki, *Saionji Kinmochi den*, suppl. vol. 1, p. 4.

109 Nakamura and Suzuki 1976, p. 19.

110 Known as the High Treason incident of 1910 (Taigyaku Jiken).

111 Anesaki 1911b, p. 101.

of the Hōtokusha organization (an old educational network deriving from the nineteenth-century agricultural leader Ninomiya Sontoku, 1787–1856), were aimed at cultivating spontaneous nationalist sentiment among the populace.¹¹² Anesaki interpreted the various government schemes in his own characteristic manner, stressing the internal bonding of nation and individual, and actively advocating the ideology of the *kokutai* throughout the Katsura-Saionji era.

Anesaki's stance in the imperial lineage dispute also showed his political leanings. The dispute developed into a national controversy that shook up the Katsura cabinet and drew into the discussion many other prominent scholars including Inoue Tetsujirō, Kume Kunitake, and Hozumi Yatsuka (1860–1912). Among them Anesaki was the earliest to assert in the newspapers the legitimacy of the Southern Court. His fervent discourse and activities earned him the reputation as the “ōzeki” (grand champion) of the Southern Court lineage supporting camp.¹¹³ Of all the arguments presented in the controversy in support of the legitimacy of the imperial line of either the Southern Court or the Northern Court, Anesaki's idea of the *kokutai*, as seen in the following passage, leaves a peculiar impression:

The substance of the *kokutai*, in other words, the spiritual virtue of Amaterasu Ōmikami, transcends all the myriad phenomena of this world. It is unshakeable, unaffected by life or death, and permeates all things. . . . Its revelation within the reality of the human world is the result of the joint endeavor of sovereign and subject and at its center is the Imperial House. . . . When applied to the relationship of sovereign and subject, the moral order of society shall be put right.¹¹⁴

The unusual feature of this argument, expressed the words “unaffected by life or death, and permeates all things,” is his desire to identify the emperor with immanent universality through mystical experience. For Anesaki the main issue involved in the imperial lineage dispute was not the status of the imperial house per se, but rather the attitude of the people towards the emperor. That is, Anesaki perceived that the challenge faced by the nation-state was how the mystical existence of the emperor could be internalized within each individual person making up the nation.

112 Miyachi Masato 1973; Kim 1999.

113 Uchida Shūhei, “Nanbokuchō seijun mondai no kaiko” [The Southern vs. Northern Court Lineage Problem] (see reference in Ōkubo 1952, p. 60); *Gurafuikku* 3:7 (1911) (see reference in Yamamoto Shirō 1973, pp. 63–64). Also on the lineage dispute see Itō Daisuke 1998.

114 Anesaki 191b, pp. 94–95.

By designating the emperor, the sovereign head of state, as the object of mystical religious experience, Anesaki's doctrine of the state necessarily had a strong religious character. Based on the separation, at least as far as appearances, of the secular and religious as stipulated in the Meiji Constitution, veneration of the emperor was a matter of secular morality in the public sphere; it was distinguished from religion, which was considered a matter of the private sphere. Yet Anesaki's argument clearly defines the emperor as the object of religious veneration by the people. The public presence of the emperor, and the private sphere of religion were superimposed. For this reason the Imperial Rescript on Education, which provided the basis for the ideology of the *kokutai*, was not a matter simply of morality for Anesaki, but was "the imperial teaching" that was tantamount to a "Great Religion of Japan."¹¹⁵

Here we can see similarities with the thought of Tanaka Chigaku, Honda Nisshō (1867–1931), and others who aimed at a Buddhist unification of state and religion based on the Lotus Sutra of Nichirenism.¹¹⁶ However, in the case of Anesaki, although he himself was a Nichiren follower, he had no scheme to make the Nichiren tradition the national religion of Japan. From his perspective, all religions and religious organizations could be equally understood as expressions of a "religious" orientation towards the emperor, simultaneously with recognizing freedom of faith and distinctions among the religions. We can see this approach in the Conference of the Three Religions of 1912, to which Anesaki devoted great effort. The conference had as its purpose the support of the emperor by the various religious organizations, but it was billed as a conference, not a union, and it took place on the premise of the autonomy of each religious group.¹¹⁷

In a modern state that outwardly promoted religious freedom, Anesaki's stance—publicly preaching a religious state centering on the emperor institution—was quite unusual among the intellectuals of his time. This could partly be explained by the fact that for Anesaki, who had been raised in a milieu steeped in the early modern view of religion and of the emperor, the modern-world separation of the secular and religious was not easy to understand. Still, he only made the clear linkage of emperor and religion after returning from studying in Germany.

Reacting to the racism he observed in Germany and surrounded by the heightened nationalism in Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, Anesaki may be thought to have been trying to overcome both the hollowing out of

115 Anesaki 1912c, p. 294.

116 Ōtani 2001, p. 15.

117 Anesaki 1912c, p. 546.

Enlightenment thought and the anti-Japanese racist trend in the West by combining emperor and religion based on the Romanticist idea of the nation-state. His identity shaken by the rejection of his aspiration to assimilate with the West during his study overseas, Anesaki saw the emperor institution state as something unique to Japan that could go beyond modern freedom of faith. While we cannot overlook the fact that he was influenced by the worldview familiar from his childhood with its early modern lack of differentiation of the secular and the religious, Anesaki's work in this period is nevertheless more likely to be a kind of post-Enlightenment experiment premised on the Western categories of the concept of religion and of the nation-state.

At the end of the Meiji era, the situation of Japanese nationalism was such that the co-existence of diverse ideas, albeit all assimilable under the control of the state, was still possible. Intellectuals like Anesaki considered how to transcend the idea of religion as the private sphere that had been brought about by the separation of religion and state along Enlightenment lines. Still, ranging from Anesaki's standpoint—which in the Taishō period was liberalist—through the ultranationalist standpoint exemplified by Tanaka Chigaku who called for a religious ideology centered on the state, there were various camps with divergent intellectual priorities. It was not until the 1920s that the vast differences among these varied “bedfellows” would become evident.

East-West Harmony and the Representation of Japan

While by the latter part of the Meiji period Anesaki was beginning to construct his own original view of the state as a religious “emperor-institution state,” from soon after the Russo-Japanese War he also began to assert his ideas on international cooperation, declaring that “the world civilization of the twentieth century is rapidly moving forward to the stage that will require elements common to all countries and international harmony.”¹¹⁸ This view did not, however, stem from his concern about the confrontation of Eastern and Western civilizations or the misery of war. Rather—as was illustrated in his statement, “Our country of Japan, a leader of Asian civilization, conducted a great war of great significance both for the self-consciousness of the people and the development of the world”¹¹⁹—it derived from the confidence that Japan had become the sole Asian country among the great powers; that status made it possible to deal with Western countries on an equal footing.

Here the Anesaki disillusioned by racism in Germany is nowhere to be seen. Now, instead of Europe, it was Japan that harbored a heightened national

118 Anesaki 1905c.

119 Anesaki 1905c, p. 503.

awareness that it was responsible for solving the difficult problems of modern civilization, which he described as “the [falsely conceived] battle between materialism and idealism,” and “the unnecessary hostility between religion and secularism.”¹²⁰ Anesaki anticipated that it would be the United States that would be a partner in the “new epoch of civilization”¹²¹ to come. At that juncture a plan emerged to establish a professorship on “Japanese Literature and Life” at Harvard University. Subsequently, for a period of two years starting in September 1913, Anesaki was invited as the first lecturer. Based in New England, he also visited other universities and institutions and energetically gave lectures¹²² all across the United States about Buddhist traditions of thought, literature, religion, and other topics, with Japanese religious history as the basis.¹²³

After he returned home to Japan, between 1915 and 1933 Anesaki published works in English based on manuscripts he had prepared in the United States. These included: *Buddhist Art in Its Relation to Buddhist Ideals: With Special Reference to Buddhism in Japan: Four Lectures Given at the Museum*; *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet*; “Japanese Mythology” in *The Mythology of All Races*; *History of Japanese Religion: With Special Reference to the Social and Moral Life of the Nation*; and *Art, Life and Nature in Japan*.¹²⁴ However, Anesaki’s scholarly career at the outset had focused on original Buddhism and religious studies; research on Japan had not been his main topic. His research on Japan had begun when, on the occasion of a tour in the West sponsored by the Kahn Foundation in 1907,¹²⁵ he wrote in English *The Religious History of Japan: An Outline*,¹²⁶ and it was during his sojourn at Harvard that his interest substantively shifted to the subject. All of his writings in English mentioned above had the purpose of “advancing interest and knowledge regarding Japanese culture in order to cooperate academically with foreign countries.”¹²⁷ They came into being as representations of Japan stimulated by the existence of the Western Other.

120 Anesaki 1907; Anesaki 1912c, p. 418.

121 Anesaki 1906a, p. 502.

122 “Professorial Work and Public Lectures by Masaharu Anesaki, Professor of the Science of Religion in Tokyo Imperial University: 1913–1922,” Anesaki Archives, Document 80.

123 Anesaki 1947a, p. 30; “Report on the Correspondence and Proceedings in Regard to the Proposed Establishment of a Professorship of Japanese Literature and Life at Harvard,” Anesaki Archives, Document 76.

124 Anesaki 1915a; Anesaki 1916c; Anesaki 1928a; Anesaki 1930b; Anesaki 1933a.

125 See translation of his diaries of the tour in Anesaki/Fessler 2009.

126 Anesaki 1907.

127 Anesaki 1947a, p. 29.

Gradually, beginning with Nichiren, Japanese *kirishitan* Christians, and Prince Shōtoku, Anesaki shifted the main topic of his research to Japanese religious history. Beginning with *Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren* (Lotus Sutra Practitioner Nichiren; 1916),¹²⁸ which was the Japanese adaptation of his book in English (*Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet*), he published a five-volume series on *kirishitan*, and also *Shōtoku Taishi no daishi risō* (Prince Shōtoku's Mahāsattva Ideal; 1944).¹²⁹ Anesaki had venerated Nichiren and the Meiji Emperor before his trip to the United States, but it was from the time of his visit to Harvard that he began to not just revere but study them. Anesaki's research on Japan, which he had begun as a way to promote understanding of Japan in foreign cultures, turned out to be significant for Japanese understanding of themselves.

Anesaki's shift to research on Japan was stimulated in part by the intense anti-Japanese sentiment that he encountered in the United States. After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan sought to monopolize interests in Manchuria, but came into conflict with the United States, which was scheming to join in the exploitation of China.¹³⁰ The longstanding unresolved problem of Japanese immigration to the United States, too, flared up again as well.¹³¹ In 1913, the year Anesaki took up the post at Harvard, the Alien Land Act was passed in California prohibiting Japanese immigrants from owning agricultural land.¹³² "Yellow peril" polemic turned against Japan had stimulated a situation of near hysteria on the Pacific coast¹³³ and even rumors of a Japanese-American war.¹³⁴

In July 1914, coinciding with Anesaki's second year at Harvard, World War I broke out in Europe. The following year Japan, too, declared war on Germany and became a vigorous participant in the war. In January 1915 Japan presented the Yuan Shikai government of China with the Twenty-one Demands. Japan's plans to take control of German interests in Shandong province and strengthen its existing interests in southern Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia heightened anti-Japanese feeling in the United States, which was pressing its right of "equal opportunity" in the exploitation of China.¹³⁵

128 Anesaki 1916b.

129 Anesaki 1944b.

130 Iguchi 1976, pp. 190–91.

131 Anesaki 1914b, p. 38.

132 Wakatsuki 1972.

133 Gollwitzer 1962, p. 85.

134 Letter of 4 February 1908 from William James to Anesaki, Anesaki Archives, Document 336; Asada 1973, p. 287.

135 Hosoya 1960.

Amid all these developments, Anesaki spoke before an American audience in Boston about “some phases” of the “Far Eastern questions.” He called on the United States “to recognize that Japan holds special interests in China;” regarding China, he asserted that “China ought to acknowledge Japan’s superiority in Asia and be more receptive to negotiations with Japan.”¹³⁶ At the end of World War I in 1918, on the occasion of a visit to the University of California, he also stated that “[Japan’s] first declaration of war was due to the spirit of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance for the sake of peace in Asia. . . . Japan’s participation was not for the sake of invasion nor for the sake of expansion.”¹³⁷

Although such statements were standard for liberal Japanese intellectuals of the time,¹³⁸ in today’s perspective, they clearly display the lack of awareness of the imperialist nature of their own country’s aggression in China. Still, Anesaki, who had been in the United States during World War I and thus had heard both the views of American intellectuals¹³⁹ and news reported from the Chinese perspective, did not always swallow the views of the Japanese government. When he returned to Japan in July 1915 he immediately sought an interview with his friend Prime Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1932). In that interview Anesaki explained the necessity of clearly explaining the thinking of the Japanese government to the United States.¹⁴⁰ In handwritten manuscripts by Anesaki we even find passages admitting “the strong possibility [that Japan’s China policy] is effectively an act of conquest.”¹⁴¹

Yet in the final analysis, concerning Japan’s participation in World War I or its China policy, Anesaki in the main affirmed the government’s diplomatic statements as “trying to interpret international problems on the basis of ethics and facts.”¹⁴² He was therefore often frustrated by the Japanese government’s way of expressing itself which seemed to give rise to American misunderstanding. In the summer of 1914, after he had been back in Japan for a while, Anesaki explained the mutual misunderstandings between Japan and the United States based on his own experience:

136 “Some Phases of the Far-Eastern Questions,” 13 March 1914. Anesaki Archives, Document 99, p. 8.

137 Anesaki 1918a, p. 6.

138 Matsuo 1998, chapter 2.

139 Letters of 7 May, 18 June and 30 June, 1915, from Sidney L. Gulick to Anesaki. Documents 269–271 in the Anesaki Archives of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo.

140 Letter of 25 July 1915 from Anesaki to Charles Eliot. Document 160 in the Anesaki Archives of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo.

141 “American-Japanese Question.” Anesaki Archives, Document 101, p. 1.

142 Anesaki 1922, p. 15.

The image of our country of Japan as “an incomprehensible country, an inscrutable country” has been deeply engraved in the minds of foreigners by Japanese themselves. The same is true with the current problems between Japan and the United States: while on one hand professing ourselves to be an incomprehensible country and people, and by not trying to remedy the lack of understanding, we demand equal treatment among white people. It is not only extremely illogical, but provides the Americans with a good excuse for rejecting our demands.¹⁴³

For this reason, Anesaki, taking advantage of his sojourn at Harvard, endeavored to convey accurately, without error, the true face of Japanese civilization.¹⁴⁴ That endeavor was not just Anesaki’s but was shared with others, including intellectuals such as Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933), or political and business figures such as Ōkuma Shigenobu and Shibusawa Eiichi who represented liberal, democratic forces in Japan.¹⁴⁵ Among them Shibusawa was the dominant personality, who organized various private-sector organizations including the Association Concordia, the Japan-America Relations Committee, the Japan-America Association, and the Great Japan Peace Association, working assiduously to improve the Japan-U.S. relations, including the immigration problem.¹⁴⁶ As professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo and a scholar of religion, Anesaki, too, was an active member of this circle.

Despite similar encounters he had with American “yellow peril” polemic, Anesaki’s reaction to the United States contrasted sharply with the vehement repulsion he had felt in Germany. The difference appears to originate in Anesaki’s different expectations of the United States. After the Russo-Japanese War he had begun to hope for a rapprochement between Eastern and Western civilizations and he envisioned the United States leading that rapprochement along with Japan.¹⁴⁷ Observing that the United States, an ethnic melting pot, “while keeping Christianity as its central ideology, is investigating and trying to adopt Indian and general Asian ideas and beliefs without falling into narrow-mindedness or leaning toward biased distortions,”¹⁴⁸ Anesaki saw it as a country suitable for the advance of East-West harmony. Because Japan and the United States were countries that “embraced a cooperative ideal with

143 Anesaki 1914a, p. 18.

144 Anesaki 1914b, p. 40.

145 Asada 1973, p. 304.

146 Okita 1999; Katagiri 1990; Nakajima Kuni 1987–1988 (37).

147 On the various views of America in Japanese society at the time, see Mitani 1973.

148 Anesaki 1905b, p. 441.

a mission for the harmonization of Eastern and Western civilizations in the future,¹⁴⁹ friction between them ought to be eliminated by any means possible.

To address that need, he turned his efforts through research to explaining Japan to the Western world. A typical example of this part of his research was his history of Japanese art. Japanese art is closely related to Japanese views of religion and nature, so discussion of Japanese art amounts to discourse on the essence of Japanese culture.

I want to call attention to the fact that the sensitivity to a simple, austere purity in Japanese art is the product of religion. It is inspired by Shintō, which is Japan's native religion, and by Zen, which is the Buddhist sect that stresses the natural and the intuitive.¹⁵⁰

Anesaki defined the essence of Japanese art in this “austere purity.” He believed that despite superficial historical changes, that quality represented the “prototype” that had vigorously continued from primeval times up to the present.¹⁵¹ And thus in Anesaki, Japanese culture was made to seem “totally different”¹⁵² from the Western tradition.

Precisely because of the recognition that Eastern and Western civilizations operated on differing logics, it was necessary to find ways to achieve harmony between the two. For Anesaki the contact of differing cultures was not only unavoidable; it had a positive significance for the progress of civilization: “without contact with outside, dissimilar peoples, could any nation that reached the heights of civilization have existed in the past?”¹⁵³ The premise that made possible dialogue with other cultures was the underlying universality of humankind: “at root, thought in both East and West springs from the same human impulses.”¹⁵⁴ Ultimately, however, the prevailing definition of that universality rested on Western logic; and since the East was defined by Western concepts, it was destined to be explained as “mutant.”

Even the word “art” used by Anesaki (expressed in Japanese by the neologism *bijutsu*) was a Western term for which there had not been the same concept in Japan before modern times.¹⁵⁵ And then Anesaki emphasized that what stood

149 Anesaki 1905b, p. 443.

150 Anesaki 1916a, p. 560.

151 Anesaki 1916a, p. 556.

152 Anesaki 1916a, p. 551.

153 Anesaki Archives, Document 86, p. 4.

154 Anesaki 1910, p. 53.

155 Satō Dōshin 1999, p. 298; Takagi Hiroshi 1995.

on a par with the arts of the West was the culture of the aristocratic and samurai ruling classes rather than the handicrafts of popular culture such as netsuke or ukiyoe, which was the Japanese “art” present in the minds of Westerners at the time.¹⁵⁶ Here we can detect the same approach Anesaki had adopted in reinterpreting Japanese religious phenomena in accordance with the Western concept of religion: an acceptance and adaptation of initially alien concepts into the Japanese context.

Asia first entered Anesaki’s field of vision as a result of the antagonism he encountered in the United States during World War I. However, when he talked about the harmonization of the cultures of East and West, it was only Japan, which had acquired the apparatus of Western logic, that had “the duty, by showing Asia to the world, to awaken our Asian contemporary countries to an awareness of the world.”¹⁵⁷ The various other Asian countries would be guided in the civilization process under Japanese protection. Here, the previous relationship between the West and Japan would be transformed into a relationship between Asia and Japan, and Japan would occupy the leading position in Asia.¹⁵⁸

In this way, Anesaki’s experience of the West began with his critique of Western civilization triggered by the “yellow peril” polemic encountered in Germany, passed through the period of establishing the particularity of Japan’s religious emperor-institution state in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, continued with introducing the particularity of Japan to the West, and culminated in self-confidence through defining Japan as the intermediary between Eastern and Western civilizations. So Anesaki, who developed a consciousness of himself as an outsider following rejection by the West, assumed the mantle of self-identification of Japan as representative of the East. However, whatever the category—the nation-state, religion, art—through which Anesaki renarrated Japanese particularity, he ended up employing Western logic as something universal. Thus it was through Western hegemony in the world that Japanese intellectuals reorganized their identity, their own particularity included.

Even though Anesaki saw the Western world as something universal, he did not idealize everything about it. Certainly in terms of intellectual logic the West could not be ignored, but it was also clear that the Western world as a whole was plagued by the pathologies of modern civilization. For that reason he concluded that a civilization characterized by the unique qualities of Japan,

156 Satō Dōshin 1999, pp. 305–306.

157 “Religious Movements of Contemporary Japan,” Anesaki Archives, Document 100, p. 8; Anesaki 1915, p. 8.

158 This point is indicated generally in Yamamuro 2001, p. 53.

working together with the United States, which carried on the best aspects of Western civilization, held the keys to overcoming such pathologies. From that time onward, although the internal social integration of Japan was always on his mind, Anesaki became conscious of the role that Japan ought to play in international society, and he became active as an international intellectual.

The Collapse of Harmony between East and West

Anesaki's experience of World War I was different from the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars hitherto. While he considered the conflict a just war against "militaristic" Germany, more generally he came to criticize acts of war, saying, "wars are what arouse bestial instincts; the populace that submits to war is reverting to animalistic instinct."¹⁵⁹ Certainly in World War I airplanes and tanks and other weapons of mass slaughter made their appearance. The dead numbered as many as 8,500,000, differing by an order of magnitude from past wars. As a result Anesaki came to think of war as linked with "the annihilation of human civilization"; now, in order to prevent that fate some "full realization of humanity" was necessary.¹⁶⁰

Moving beyond the competition for advantage and disadvantage of the secular world and taking a stand for human unity and cooperation . . . if we take as our purpose the attainment of human spiritual development, . . . harmony can be achieved in the spirit of all humanity, with self and other joined as the expression of human spirituality. Through such a way of reverence for and faith in the power of the spirit, we should implement it in individual human lives and apply it in both social organizations and international relationships.¹⁶¹

In such words we can see Anesaki's search for spiritual universality in human interiority, a standpoint consistent with his attraction to mysticism from the late Meiji era. However, during the Taishō era (1912–1926), he expanded the scope of universality beyond the emperor-institution state to the mutual partnerships of international society. This tendency was not restricted to Anesaki. As Buddhologist Shimaji Daitō (1875–1927) observed, where Meiji era thought was "political and nationalistic," early Taishō thought was "pan-human, social,

159 Anesaki 1920a, p. 12; Anesaki 1918b, p. 59.

160 Anesaki 1918b, p. 59.

161 Anesaki 1917, p. 7.

and global.”¹⁶² In regard to the relationship of domestic and international conditions, Anesaki further stated: “If the ungoverned international situation remains as it is today, countries will always feel externally threatened, and will be unable to undertake the healthy development of their domestic cultures,” adding an explanation emphasizing the close connections between the international and domestic situations.¹⁶³

For that reason, internationally Anesaki supported the League of Nations, which passed a resolution supporting the Treaty of Versailles system, and domestically he supported the *minponshugi* movement for democratic ideals advocated by Yoshino Sakuzō (1878–1933).¹⁶⁴ He understood the idea of the League of Nations as a “union of humanity”¹⁶⁵ under the banner of “popular self-determination, international democracy, and anti-militarism,” expecting it to be able to deal with the problems that were beginning to intensify in colonized areas. Although originally Anesaki was not a member, through his collaboration with Shibusawa in the private-sector organization called the Japan Association for the League of Nations (*Kokusai Renmei Kyōkai*), he attempted to assist the activity of the League.¹⁶⁶

Anesaki’s view of international relations was heavily influenced by his philosophical idealism. Fundamentally he favored cooperation with the postwar Versailles-Washington system centering on the United States and Great Britain and in the 1920s supported the diplomacy of the Japanese government under foreign minister Shidehara Kijūrō (1872–1951).¹⁶⁷ In his stance on domestic politics, while acting in concert with democracy, Anesaki followed the currents of the Constitutional Party (*Kenseikai*, afterwards the Constitutional Democratic Party or *Minseitō*) that championed Taishō Democracy. Anesaki had formerly backed the *Seiyūkai*, but as it grew increasingly conservative—advocating aggressive diplomacy, an enlarged government budget, and expanded armaments—he switched his support to the *Kenseikai* that instead argued for cooperative diplomacy, a tight budget, and arms reduction.¹⁶⁸

Here some attention must be paid to the contemporary international situation and the inauguration of the Versailles-Washington system. The system extolled international cooperation, but with the dissolution of the

162 Shimaji Daitō 1921, p. 375.

163 “Bunka mondai to shite no kokusai renmei,” Anesaki Archives, Document 241, p. 14.

164 “Bunka mondai to shite no kokusai renmei,” Anesaki Archives, Document 241, p. 13.

165 Anesaki 1918b, p. 60; Anesaki 1918c, p. 17.

166 *Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō*, vol. 36.

167 Eguchi 1994; Uno Shigeaki 1984.

168 Matsuo 1976.

Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the scrapping of the 1917 Lansing-Ishii Agreement between Japan and the United States, Japan was becoming increasingly isolated from Western society. Japanese residing in the United States wrote to Anesaki reporting the concerns expressed at the Washington Conference about Japanese militarism and the resulting isolation of the Japanese.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, Japan's isolation was not only connected to relations with Western countries, but even to those in Asia, where movements defying Japanese imperialism were on the upsurge, such as the March First Independence Movement in Korea and the May Fourth Movement in China. As a Japanese intellectual, Anesaki grappled both with the issues of Japanese immigration in the United States and the Korean and Chinese problems, in hopes of contributing to their resolution.

Under the above-mentioned Alien Land Act enacted in California in 1913 and through the later Immigration Act of 1924 (which is known in Japan as the Hainichi Imin Hō or "Japanese Exclusion Act"),¹⁷⁰ Japanese immigration into the United States was prohibited. Considering the continued openness to Caucasian immigrants at the time, it seems clear that racial discrimination was a primary factor motivating the law. In the attempt to counter such prejudice, Japanese intellectuals, through such organizations as the Japanese-American Relations Committee headed by Shibusawa Eiichi, had allied themselves with the pro-Japanese Americans to put pressure on political and business circles in both countries to stop passage of the Immigration Act.¹⁷¹ However, despite the efforts of Anesaki and others¹⁷² the law was enacted in May 1924, greatly discouraging Shibusawa and other liberal Japanese intellectuals and fanning the flames of anti-American sentiment among the Japanese public.¹⁷³ Anesaki himself recorded bitter thoughts: "The immigration bill that has been passed by the American Congress is deeply injurious to international amity and international justice; almost a fatal blow."¹⁷⁴

As noted above, Anesaki had in his mind that Japan and the United States would take the lead in developing a new world civilization. He had considered Japanese immigrants the symbols of that partnership. Anesaki realized

169 Letter of 20 November 1921 from Takimoto Tamezō to Anesaki. Anesaki Archives, Document 584.

170 Aruga 1984. Yoneyama Hiroshi "Nikkei Amerikajin' no sōzō: Tobeisha (ZaiBei Nihonjin) no ekkyō to kizoku" [The Creation of Nikkei Japanese: Border Crossing and Sense of Belonging]. In Nishikawa 2000.

171 Katagiri 1990, p. 19; Yamaoka 1990.

172 Anesaki 1918d; Anesaki 1923c.

173 Asada 1973, p. 308; Segawa 1963, p. 66.

174 Anesaki 1924.

that immigrants stood for harmony and unity but could represent a source of conflict. Yet at the same time he believed that the concept of a pure race was “a fiction,”¹⁷⁵ and that naturalization of immigrants as citizens is the natural trend. He believed that the tensions and confrontations arising from contact of the races would be resolved through assimilation.¹⁷⁶ For this reason he criticized the anti-Japanese propaganda in the United States as founded in the irrational impulses of hatred, malice, and suspicion.¹⁷⁷ In the end the enactment of the Immigration Act sapped the energies of the Japanese liberal camp and energized the promoters of anti-Americanism and the foreign policy of expansion on the continent.¹⁷⁸ It was under such dangerous domestic conditions that Anesaki tried to explain to the United States the conflict of political forces within his country, which pitted “mediators between East and West” against those who have committed themselves to “the life-and-death struggle between East and West,”

For a long time a deep confrontation between two camps has been evident within Japan, and at present the hope and faith of people who are exerting themselves on behalf of racial brotherhood is seriously threatened, and they are suffering great anguish. The opposing forces raise cries of triumph and are trying to drag all of Japan over to their side.¹⁷⁹

However, the conflict was the source of great inner struggle for Anesaki himself. Even though he believed that the East-West confrontation could be overcome, he could not fend off certain doubts: “Were not America’s ‘white’ labor leaders, in order to halt the ‘rise of people of color,’ welcoming the development of capitalism and militarism?”¹⁸⁰ Betraying the trust he had placed in it as the representative of Western civilization, substituting for the Germany that had so disappointed him, the United States now seemed to champion the “superiority of ‘white people,’” making him think that perhaps after all there was no difference between its leaders and the German emperor with his “yellow peril” propaganda.¹⁸¹

175 Anesaki Archives, Document 108, p. 1.

176 Anesaki Archives, Document 108; for 1914–1917 period, see article on international relations and moral issues, Document 530.

177 Anesaki Archives, Document 108, p. 2.

178 Asada 1973, p. 275.

179 Anesaki 1924.

180 Anesaki Archives, Document 108, p. 5.

181 Anesaki Archives, Document 108, p. 5.

Anesaki viewed the relationship with Korea and China as a problem of the assimilation of different ethnic groups, just like the Japanese immigration problem. From 1921 through 1922 he worked as a committee member of the Korea Governor-General's Education Special Survey. He wrote, "There seems to be an intention to impose the national character of the Japanese upon that of Korea, but it makes for a rigid, distorted notion of the nature of national character,"¹⁸² reproaching the Japanese side for its oppressive stance. Yet the educational policy of the Japanese government to impose the study of Japanese language and Japanese history on Koreans did not change, and Anesaki's hopes for ethnic harmony between Japanese and Koreans were dashed.¹⁸³ At the same time Anesaki himself made statements affirming an optimistic vision of language assimilation ("it is easy for Korean children to acquire Japanese"). And even while warning against expansion on the continent, he supported the fundamental line of colonial policy ("for national defense, Japan needs the Korean Straits, and also the annexation of Korea").¹⁸⁴ Ultimately he did not escape from the position of the typical colonial doctrine of Japanese liberals who took for granted the framework of the Great Japanese Empire.¹⁸⁵

Just as he sought to forge concord of nations and different peoples in international society, in the area of domestic problems, too, he worked to advance harmony among the people through *minponshugi* democracy. In the mid-Taishō period, confrontation between labor and capital heightened, fueling the formation of labor group organizations, with labor-management clashes and strikes occurring constantly.¹⁸⁶ Recognizing the difficulty of breaking through the current situation of labor-capital conflict, Anesaki noted that, "Class consciousness in today's labor movement has reached a really explosive moment. Only a few issues remain in which there is any hope for harmony."¹⁸⁷ Anesaki could not accept the destructive class warfare taught by Marxism to deal with the situation; rather he promoted from a democratic perspective a "humanitarianism that recognized the individual dignity of workers," respecting them as human beings and "as individual people of character who together with the elite form society."¹⁸⁸

182 Anesaki 1923b, p. 58.

183 Pak 1973, vol. 1, pp. 220–26.

184 Pan-Pacific Union 1921, p. 104; Anesaki 1918c, p. 36.

185 Komagome 1996, p. 213.

186 Kakeya 1971.

187 Anesaki 1920b, p. 338.

188 Anesaki 1918b, p. 47; Anesaki 1920b, p. 291.

However, here too, just as in the cases of the Japanese immigrants and his participation in the Korea Education Special Survey, Anesaki felt a discrepancy between reality and his own views. In the 1920s the labor movement became radicalized by links with socialism; the proponents of democracy lost momentum, and labor-capital confrontations became irreconcilable.¹⁸⁹ In this instance, no matter how much Anesaki sympathized with the workers, when he took a look at himself leading a bourgeois life as a university professor he had to admit that his own life was not like that of ordinary people. He began to agonize about the meaning of his existence in society.¹⁹⁰

By this point society for Anesaki was no longer harmonious and endowed with inherent integrity, but plagued by ruptures and gaps between the strong and the weak. Gone is the Anesaki who, from the latter part of the Meiji era (early 1910s) through World War I, had seen a definite goal in combining harmony between the state and the individual (or among opposing views of the state) and a firm optimism about Japan's role and his own role in that endeavor. It had become clear that the visions he had had while at Harvard, of the coexistence of Japanese particularity in a Westernized world, or of Japan playing the role of leader or representative of Asia—were unlikely to be realized. This was the culturally and politically liberal period of so-called Taishō democracy: yet the realities of society that had brought about that great change in Anesaki's mood—immigration, colonies, the labor movement—were full of contradictions and confusion both internationally and domestically. Even the philosophical idealist Anesaki could not easily imagine how to overcome the contradictions simply by believing in religion or the state. He realized that he would have to decide what to do and say based on the recognition of the fissures and gaps of society he saw.

Amid these circumstances Anesaki found common cause with the *minponshugi* advocates of democracy in addressing the realities of society. His purpose was the same as that of Yoshino Sakuzō and others who criticized the ongoing control of the government by the *hanbatsu* political cliques that continued to be based on domanical loyalties going back to feudal times. He understood democracy not as a political system, but as a moral principle involving “the discipline and tempering of human instinct, the fulfillment of the best in human nature,”¹⁹¹ calling for a *jinponshugi* (“human-based power,” in contrast to the *minponshugi* “people-based power” of democracy) that was oriented to

189 Kakeya 1971, p. 108; Hirokawa 1985, p. 210.

190 Anesaki 1920b, pp. 287, 301.

191 Anesaki 1918b, p. 59.

human nature.¹⁹² Moreover, Anesaki's characteristic approach actively linked his emphasis on human-character building (*jinkakushugi*) to the emperor institution: "a democracy that integrates subjects and sovereign is centered on the leadership of the sovereign as its emblem, standing for the interests of the people." This idea of democracy was vividly demonstrated in Anesaki's then current interest in Prince Shōtoku. Presenting the ancient prince who had ruled by example as the ideal image of his *jinponshugi* humanism, Anesaki explained his idea of "Prince Shōtoku democracy"¹⁹³ as follows:

In sum, the solidarity of the people is constituted of the daily life that exalts the vigor of the country, its ideals, and its laws; the wholeness of its order is expressed in its laws, in the constitution. Such ideals become the axis of their cohesion. And what becomes the embodiment of the *kokutai*, and accordingly the Great Unifying Leader, is the monarch. Like the *dharmakāya*, the position of the monarch in the country is eternal, remaining stable throughout the generations.¹⁹⁴

Anesaki believed that Yoshino's idea of democracy left the question of whether sovereignty resided in the monarch or in the people intentionally vague, in the attempt to realize democracy while evading the question of imperial sovereignty.¹⁹⁵ By contrast Anesaki himself, by clearly superimposing a certain religious universality on the emperor and constitution, proposed that the sovereign [or Emperor] and the charter should be the spiritual mainstays of the people. Moreover, for Anesaki, Prince Shōtoku was both the figure who represented the emperor system and—as the "saint" who had propagated faith in the Lotus Sutra in ancient times¹⁹⁶—he was the forerunner of Nichiren belief. From that it can be understood that Anesaki's Taishō-era doctrine of the emperor-institution state was not merely a political system—as it was, for example, for Minobe Tatsukichi¹⁹⁷—but just as it had been in the Meiji era, one based on integration with metaphysical truth.

And yet, since historical conditions continued to change, this kind of religious national structure necessarily became situated in a social context that

192 Anesaki 1918c, p. 62.

193 Anesaki 1919a, p. 27.

194 Anesaki 1919a, p. 15.

195 Yoshino 1916, p. 31; Matsuo 1998, p. 11.

196 Anesaki 1921, p. 45; Mitani 1972.

197 1873–1948; legal scholar trained in Germany who became an advocate of constitutional democracy known for his "emperor-as-an-organ-of-the-state" theory (*tennō kikan setsu*).

was different from that of the Meiji era. As an example connected to Anesaki's Nichiren belief, his 1917 book about Nichiren (*Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren*) was successful in terms of academic religious research, but after returning home to Japan from Harvard he did not keep up his previously close relations with Tanaka Chigaku and other practicing Nichirenists. Tanaka's ultranationalist tendencies had grown stronger with his founding in 1914 of the Nichiren-related Kokuchūkai (National Pillar Society),¹⁹⁸ and he began to associate frequently with *kōdō* (Imperial Way) faction ideologues like Ishiwara Kanji and Kita Ikki. Taking a different path, Anesaki transferred the locus of his own Nichiren faith to the Lotus Association founded in 1915, which was led by liberal intellectuals.¹⁹⁹

In other words, devotees of the doctrine of the religious emperor-institution state as harmonious whole (i.e., as it had been conceived in the late Meiji era), were pressed to make new choices in the 1920s when the situation changed internationally and domestically. Would the direction be continental expansion and ultranationalism, or would it be cooperative foreign policy and democracy? Anesaki chose the latter. By contrast, his former associate in planning the Conference of the Three Religions, Tokonami Takujirō of the Seiyūkai Party, promoted ultranationalist anti-labor and anti-democracy activism via the Great Japan National Essence Society (Nihon Kokusuikai) and was on close terms with Tanaka Chigaku.²⁰⁰ For Anesaki, the problem then became how to connect his ideas about religion and the emperor with a society that he saw as coming apart at the seams. Would they play the role of covering up divisions in society as in the Meiji era? Or would they still serve in the face of the contradictions of society? He was forced to examine the relevance of his ideas to reality.

The 1930s opened with a series of pivotal events: the Manchurian Incident in 1931 in which Japanese troops occupied Mukden; the 1932 founding of the Japanese State of Manchuria (Manchukuo); the 1933 withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations; and in 1934, Japan's renunciation of the Washington Naval (Five-Power) Treaty. Thus Japan broke away from the Versailles-Washington system that had revolved around Great Britain and the United States and turned in the direction of the anti-foreignism and expansionism into continental Asia that Anesaki so deeply disapproved of. In resistance to such trends, Anesaki became active overseas. Besides serving as a member of the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation of the League of

198 The Kokuchūkai (National Pillar Society) was inaugurated by Tanaka Chigaku in 1914 as Nichirenist Buddhist movement. The group became increasingly nationalistic. Among its members were the Kwantung army leader Ishiwara Kanji and poet Miyazawa Kenji.

199 Hamajima 1996.

200 Masujima 1971, p. 133; Ōtani 2001, pp. 289–315.

Nations from 1934, in 1931 he organized the Japan Religious Peace Conference in order to initiate the World Religion Peace Conference. In 1933, he attended the meetings of both the Institute of Pacific Relations in Banff and the Chicago World Religion conference, and then in 1936, as a representative of both the World Congress of Faiths held in London and the Japan Academy, he participated in ceremonies for the 300th anniversary of the founding of Harvard.²⁰¹

As a liberal intellectual representing Japan, Anesaki aimed to serve as mediator between Japan and other countries even as Japan's international isolation deepened. In fact, as an aspiration offered to the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, he said, "the humble function which I hope for myself is that the East and the West, taking hands together, can fully examine how to grapple with these contemporary conundrums."²⁰² In his research activities, he also published the studies he had done on Japanese religion and art and on *kirishitan* (the material on which he had based his Harvard-period lectures), continuing his efforts to cultivate understanding of Japan in Europe and America.²⁰³

Within Japan, however, beginning with the shooting of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi in May 1930, the murders by members of the Blood League (Ketsumeidan) group, the attempted coup of May 15, 1932 (Go-ichi-go Jiken) in which the prime minister was shot, and the attempted coup by members of the *kōdō* (Imperial Way) faction of February 26, 1936 (Ni-ni-roku Jiken), terrorist acts by the right wing and by young military officers occurred one after another. Suppression of the freedom of thought was intensified. The head of the central executive committee of the former Communist Party, Sano Manabu (1892–1953) was imprisoned and in 1933 recanted his commitment to communism; in 1935 Minobe Tatsukichi's theory of the "emperor as organ of the state" was denounced as treason. In the course of this series of incidents, the political parties and the liberal camp collapsed, and in their place the Japanese Imperial Army entered politics. The assassinations of Inoue Junnosuke and Hamaguchi Osachi, who were not only central figures of party politics but men

201 Kokusai Gakugei Kyōryoku Inkaikan Bunsho (Documents Relating to the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation) 1935, 1937, 1938 (Document 539–41); "Relating to the World Fellowship through Religion," Anesaki Archives, Document 553; Sekai Shūkyō Heiwa Kaigi Nihon Inkaikan 1932; Katagiri 1996; Nihon Gakushūin 1961–1963, vol. 1; Anesaki 1936a.

202 Anesaki 1934, "East and West" delivered for radio broadcast in Geneva, 20 July 1934 (Anesaki Archives, Document 237), p. 4.

203 Anesaki 1930a; Anesaki 1930b; Anesaki 1933a.

he had studied in school with, were deeply shocking to Anesaki: “their sacrifice to such sordid political notions was painful beyond words.”²⁰⁴

In 1935, at the ceremony for the inauguration of literary lectures in the Imperial Palace, in the presence of the Shōwa Emperor Anesaki delivered a lecture on the Seventeen-Article Constitution of Prince Shōtoku. For Anesaki, this Seventeen-Article Constitution exhaustively treated “the great principles of human life, the righteous way of the nation, and the eternal rules of the national law.”²⁰⁵ By expounding on such ideas at a juncture when things were moving to the political right, he wanted to explain to the emperor, who was the pivot for unification of the people, the state of mind of that ancient constitutional monarch. In a somewhat earlier statement in 1920, in defense of his Imperial University of Tokyo colleague Hoashi Riichirō (1881–1963, a scholar associated with John Dewey studies in Japan who had been falsely accused due to corruption in the legal system), Anesaki had criticized the standpoint that interpreted the supreme power of the emperor to be such that the emperor could at any time make revisions to the constitution. He used terms suggesting that such an interpretation of state authority corresponded to an abuse of power. He stated that instead, fundamentally the emperor’s governance should come from the ideology of a nation that has morality as its basis. In other words it should be a constitutionalism relying on government by virtue.²⁰⁶ In general the Prince Shōtoku ideology during the Shōwa period has been considered an ultranationalist movement taking advantage of the times,²⁰⁷ but on this point Anesaki’s argument was different.

Anesaki was critical of the domestic state of affairs in Japan, but he also censured Western aggression in Asia.

Since the sixteenth century, the countries of Europe have been making continual incursions, squeezing and pressuring, and Asian countries have been passive. . . . The elements of their power are their control over finance and commerce, and these had the power to destroy even the most ancient traditions of Asian peoples. . . . What is striking in the current situation is that under the political, economic, and cultural

204 Anesaki 1932, p. 120.

205 Anesaki 1936b, p. 2.

206 “Hoashi Riichirō shi hikoku jiken benron fukkō” (Draft of the Defense Relating to the Incident of the Accused Hoashi Riichirō), Anesaki Archives, Document 556.

207 Araki 1973; Murata Toshihiko 1953.

pressures coming from Europe and the United States, Asian resistance is increasing.²⁰⁸

Anesaki especially condemned the United States, which was engaged in the “encirclement of Japan’s politics, its immigrants, and its economy from all directions,” and which was provoking the hostility of the Japanese people.²⁰⁹ He likened the confrontation between East and West to a clash between “scientific culture” and “spiritual culture.”²¹⁰ Western scientific culture was the main culprit, bringing with it “the deadweight of machinery and organizations, the corruption of family life, and the opportunistic accumulation of wealth.”²¹¹ Contemporary society was indeed standing at a crossroads: “Will mankind become robots completely subjugated by machines?” he wrote, “Or by opposing this and subjugating the machines, will it recover the necessary power of body and mind to take the lead?”²¹²

Up to that point Anesaki had often spoken about differences between Eastern and Western civilizations, but had worked on the presumption that there was much they basically shared. Now he concluded that the two were essentially different: “In the end, there is a gulf dividing East and West concerning the fundamental ideas relating to human life.”²¹³ He also identified the confrontation between Marxism and capitalism as an intellectual confusion spawned by Western scientific culture, and he dismissed both as not compatible with any Eastern civilization. Under these circumstances, when scientific culture was overwhelming contemporary society, Anesaki proposed as a problem to be tackled on the Asian side that together with critically reexamining Western culture, Japan should reexamine its own traditional culture.²¹⁴ He pondered over the question of “East and West . . . is it harmony or clash? This is the greatest problem of world history, which will affect the entire future of humankind.”²¹⁵ It was impossible, however, to consider any preestablished harmony in the way he had once hoped.

208 Anesaki 1946a (1:1), p. 7.

209 Anesaki 1936c, p. 4.

210 Anesaki 1946a (1:2), p. 23; Anesaki 1946a (1:1), pp. 4, 7.

211 Anesaki 1936c, p. 3.

212 Anesaki 1936c, p. 7.

213 Anesaki 1946a (1:2), p. 23. Yamamuro Shin’ichi has called this a movement from a doctrine of harmony with the West to one of confrontation. See Yamamuro 2001, pp. 52–53.

214 Anesaki 1946a (1:2), pp. 22–23.

215 Anesaki 1946a (1:2), p. 23.

In 1937 the second Sino-Japanese War began and in 1938 Anesaki's term as a member on the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation on which he had served as a member ended. In 1939 the Japan-America Relations Committee was dissolved and the participation of Japan in the Institute of Pacific Relations was also suspended. In 1939, when war began between Britain and Germany, Anesaki was forced to leave Britain where he had been living, and from the time hostilities commenced, terminate all his international activities.²¹⁶ Subsequently in 1940, when the Japanese government chose to tie up with Germany, the Tripartite Japan-Germany-Italy Alliance was formed—much to Anesaki's disappointment—and in 1941 the curtain rose on the Pacific War.

Earlier Anesaki had not hesitated to call the Russo-Japanese War and World War I just wars, but it appears he did not fully support Japan's war in Asia and World War II between 1930 and 1945. Anesaki had been made a member of the House of Peers by appointment of the emperor in 1934, but, not only do we see no statements by him praising the war, he made almost no public statements about it at all. As the breakdown between Japan and Europe and the United States became more definitive it became impossible for him to see any possibility of harmony between the Eastern and Western worlds or accept any sort of assimilation to the Western world. He could not condone the state of Japanese society at the time either. Anesaki battled with complex difficulties within himself. With the upsurge of Marxism in the 1920s and then Fascism in the 1930s, the democracy in which Anesaki believed was attacked from left and right and completely drained of its power to influence society. Under these circumstances what he eventually found as his personal source of strength was religion.

Science in and of itself is a path different from religion; machine culture fosters a non-religious ethos. Nevertheless religion cannot be completely driven away. The contemporary affliction is such that human problems cannot be solved by science and industry alone. Human beings want to know the meaning of their lives to the ultimate extent possible. Seeking some refuge and trust, people want to live with some hopes and ideals, and that is the life of religion, or the religion of life.²¹⁷

No longer visible was Anesaki's earlier confidence in the "essentially universal" quality of science or that "science and its progress are in the process of building

²¹⁶ Yamaoka 1997, p. 97; Yamaoka 1999, p. 206.

²¹⁷ Anesaki 1933b, p. 460.

the foundations of religion.”²¹⁸ Now, in the wake of the confusion brought on by the bloated culture of science, the tactics he had employed were exhausted. The only way to confront this reality was by taking the ideals of religious faith as his guide.

Anesaki chose the Prince Shōtoku faith as his religion. His research on Shōtoku had already begun in the Taishō period, but his interests acquired the clear form of religious belief in 1935 around the time of his lecture at the Imperial Palace. He became devoted to the texts written by Shōtoku, probably inspired by the Chinese character mandalas written by Nichiren. He took up Prince Shōtoku’s teachings not just as an aspect of scholarship; he regarded Prince Shōtoku’s writings themselves as physical embodiments of truth, and Anesaki wanted to make them objects of religious faith.

From about 1933, using a facsimile edition of the “Lotus Sutra Commentary” traditionally attributed to the prince, along with the Seventeen-Article Constitution, the Imperial Rescript on Education, the Oath in Five Articles (Charter Oath), and other materials, Anesaki began to edit the various handwritten texts by Shōtoku. He saw these as constituting the core of a Japanese-style constitutional monarchy.²¹⁹ Following the Blood League incident and the May 15 incident of the previous year, 1933 was the year when Japan withdrew from the League of Nations. The situation between Japan and the West was deteriorating. When the February 26 incident of 1936 erupted, Anesaki noted, “Rather than suffering in vain by your own thinking, engage the words of the sages, obtain a point of light even amidst the darkness.”²²⁰ This was Anesaki’s state of mind under the circumstances in which rational governance was breaking down, in which he made the teaching of Prince Shōtoku, which he believed to be the ultimate truth, his source of strength.

Through the war years, although Anesaki felt powerless in the face of reality, he did not confine himself within his own inner world. He did not have any connections to political movements, but he continued to set forth the teachings of Prince Shōtoku to people inside and outside of Japan, as he wrote in a tanka verse: “Becoming a bodhisattva mahāsattva, the child of the emperor preaches the Buddhist Law to the people.”²²¹ He published numerous essays and articles in Japanese and English from the Japan Academy, and vigorously

218 “An Address Delivered at the Reception of Foreign Students of Harvard,” Anesaki Archives, Document 86, p. 2; Anesaki 1909, p. 181.

219 Nishimura Akira 2001.

220 Anesaki 1936b, p. 1.

221 Anesaki 1947b, p. 465.

pursued educational activities by making radio broadcasts and giving lectures in all parts of Japan.

Anesaki's religious thought finally reached a certain turning point. At the beginning of the 1890s when he had attained prominence as a scholar of religion, the concept of religion was expected to fill the gap that had been created between modern individualism and the communality of the nation. The forms of comparative religion and liberal theology that had been the forerunners of religious studies had begun in a separation from the idea of sin as the essence of religion, something commonly taught in Christianity. Subsequently, in dealing with religion's effects on the world—which were both positive and negative—the religion these leaders advocated dealt only with the positive side. Their idea of religion was as something that was always trying to propitiate the contradictions of reality. It was in that manner that they ended up hoping to mitigate matters ranging from class confrontation within Japan to issues of international relations.

However, given the sense of deadlock felt in Japan, both internally and internationally, religious ideals were no longer adequate to cope with the many contradictions people faced in reality. The meaning of religion for Anesaki, too, in confronting the dark side of reality, began to shift to the role of light that would help to bring out and identify those contradictions. Now his reasoning about religion moved beyond the selective political idealism of earlier years, and by limiting himself to the purely intellectual dimension, he gained a greater strength of principle, a strength that could sustain a conceptual tension with reality. Its concrete manifestation was his faith in Prince Shōtoku.

However, as previously indicated, this Prince Shōtoku faith was intimately connected with the emperor institution, and as far as Anesaki considered that the actual emperor institution was identical with universal truth, a tense relationship prevailed between reality and ideals that had been established once and might be lost again. Anesaki's words vividly show the deep entanglement of Shōtoku faith and nationalism:

For followers of Japanese Buddhism, a union of faith and patriotism has flowed on in the tradition since Prince Shōtoku. With it came a concurrence of ideals that must be accomplished, namely the faith that Japan is a divine country of *kami* and also a Buddha-land. It also is a matter of the concurrence of two spheres of authority, of a sovereign's authority and the authority of Buddhist teaching... Thus between the idea of Shintō and Buddhist faith a kind of apportionment is seen. That is, in Shintō the idea of the divine country places primary importance on the real world, which is our country established and bestowed by many *kami*, our

country prospering under the protection of many *kami*... In contrast, Buddhism has goals of the embodiment of the Buddha-land and the establishment of the Pure Land...²²²

Japan for Anesaki, even if it was inclining towards the political right, was an unchanging ancestral land. In various wartime discourses on Shintō which Anesaki continued to publish—"The Attainment of Nirvana of Plants, Trees and Land, and the View of the Territory of Japan, as Seen in Noh Chants," "Shintō Concepts in Noh Chants," or "Shintō and Buddhism in Noh Chants"²²³—his love for the life of the Japanese people in the name of the indigenous religion of Shintō was repeatedly spoken of in terms of its single embodiment in the emperor institution, as in this citation:

Originally Shintō consisted of agricultural rituals; they were village ceremonies of agricultural life that were deeply rooted in how people saw their native place. An extension of such demarcations, making complete this feeling of native place, lies in the understanding of what is native. Thus the country of Japan becomes a sacred ground; the idea that "Japan is a country of *kami*" becomes fervent. Its central axis is incarnated in the sacred body of the emperor. Sovereign and subjects are all together descendants of the gods, and live a life of faith and gratitude referred to as dwelling in the protective virtue of the gods.²²⁴

Although Anesaki was consistently critical about Japan's waging of the Asian-Pacific wars,²²⁵ after the conflicts began, his name was listed a number of times as a member of the House of Peers who approved resolutions that publicly honored the military forces.²²⁶ Despite his feelings of irritation with the government, Anesaki was still moved by patriotism towards his homeland. To whatever extent the nationality called the Japanese people existed as only a wavering reality in the society of the prewar period, Anesaki's idea of the

222 Anesaki 1943, pp. 113–14.

223 See *Teikoku Gikai Kizokuin giji sokkiroku*, 1–2 (1942) and 1–3 (1942).

224 Anesaki 1943, p. 111.

225 Anesaki 1944c, p. 28.

226 "Rikukaigun ni taisuru kansha ketsugian" [Resolution of Thanks to Army and Navy], 16 December 1941, 15 February 1942; "Ran'in kantei narabi ni Rangūn seiryaku ni taisuru kansha ketsugian" [Resolution of Thanks for the Occupation of the Dutch East Indies and for the Rangoon Strategy], 11 March 1942 (*Teikoku Gikai Kizokuin giji sokkiroku*, vol. 68, pp. 7, 213, 223); "Rikukaigun ni taisuru kansha ketsugian," 26 October and 26 December 1943; 7 September 1944 (*Teikoku Gikai Kizokuin giji sokkiroku*, vol. 70, p. 9).

emperor institution tells a story about the strength of the identity to which the modern nation gave birth.



As the tide of war turned against Japan, eventually air raids on the Japanese mainland began. In 1945 Anesaki's residence in the Koishikawa district of Tokyo was burned down in the firebombing, and in August of that year Japan was finally defeated.

On August 15, 1945...listening to each sentence and phrase of the Emperor's voice with thoughts like tears of blood—what could be said with matters having reached such a point? We can only abandon the path taken up to now and apply ourselves with diligence to new construction in the face of reality.²²⁷

These words are steeped in a deep sense of futility resulting from the defeat of his country. And yet they seem mingled, too, with a sense of relief at the ending of the abnormal political system of wartime. Now the struggle of his feelings—between love for his country and disagreement with the wartime regime—was over. In September 1946, as he set to work on an English text *Prince Shōtoku, the Sage Statesman and His Mahāsattva Ideal*,²²⁸ along with other projects, Anesaki quickly began the activity of his own postwar reconstruction. In an address given around this time entitled “Peace and Religion,” associated with the article on the renunciation of war in the new constitution, he noted as follows his aspirations for religion in the new era.

Now our country is making its constitution anew, is treating renunciation of war as the policy of the nation, and along with the other countries of the world is passionately wishing to establish a new world of peace. Together with other religions of the world and joining with them in the effort, Japanese religion will sustain the ideal of actualizing what has been sought since ancient times.²²⁹

Throughout his life Anesaki was both a person of religion and a scholar of religion. However, as exemplified by the problematic merging of the ideal and the

²²⁷ Anesaki 1946b, p. 14.

²²⁸ Anesaki 1948.

²²⁹ “Heiwa to shūkyō” (Peace and Religion), Anesaki Archives, Document 243, pp. 9–10.

actualization in the case of the emperor institution, the boundary between faith and scholarship within him was blurred. In the end, his scholarship did not manage to treat his religious faith with intellectual objectivity.

In 1947 Anesaki collapsed from a stroke. He recovered for a time, but then he passed away on 24 July 1949. Around the time of his death the postwar purge of government officials in Japan was being called off, the People's Republic of China was being established as a socialist state, and new political problems were surfacing, but he departed this world before the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union brought confrontation back to the world. The fact remained, however, that Anesaki's life had run parallel with Japanese history during the whole prewar period, from the modernization of Japan begun in the Meiji period and reaching onwards to the point of defeat in World War II.

It is certain that prewar society laid the foundation for the modern era up to the present. Of course, as always, it is necessary to rediscover that prewar society from a present-day perspective. Thus, if we today suppose that the few figures who were able to unequivocally oppose the trends of their times were the preeminent intellectuals of the past, then is it really productive to discuss Anesaki—who maintained hardly any distance from the political authorities and the currents of his times—as if he were on the same level as Uchimura Kanzō or Natsume Sōseki? Even if we are able to sense the intellectual suffering that led him to embrace the Shōtoku faith in his later years, through the greater part of Anesaki's life there is no hint of the isolation that so haunted writer Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) and other intellectuals of his time. That may be the reason why Anesaki is no longer mentioned today. However, it is precisely because his life unfolded in the midst of the key trends of his times, without losing touch with either idealism or political pragmatism, that he must be considered a significant figure for scholars studying the currents of intellectual history.

The Process of Development of Religious Studies: From History of Theory to History of Reflective Discourse

Japan's field of religious studies, like most other fields of the humanities and social sciences, has not been very eager to scrutinize its own history. One of the reasons for this was that although the purpose of religious studies is to grasp and understand religious phenomena as the object of study, there seemed to be little interest in making space for self-referential discourse that could establish self-reflective criteria for the manner of that recognition. It was not until the 1990s—with the introduction of Michel Foucault's discourse studies and focus on politicization of scholarship in cultural studies—that the notion of becoming self-conscious about the frame of reference of one's own discipline has begun to take hold in Japan.

It should be mentioned, however, that Japanese historiography has been an exception in this regard. Summations reflecting on past activities in that field have been published at various turning points, such as those by Tōyama Shigeki in his *Sengo no rekishigaku to rekishi ishiki* (Postwar Historiography and Historical Consciousness; 1968) and Carol Gluck in her article in "Sengo shigaku no metahisutorii" (A Metahistory of Postwar Historiography; 1995). The deep involvement of the historical field in both the prewar emperor system and postwar nationalism as well as its considerable influence in society meant that scholars had to be particularly rigorous regarding discourse. Moreover, defeat in the war led to the switch in the mainstream framing of historiography from prewar imperialism and the emperor system to Marxism, facilitating a significant level of self-reflection, with the new generation critiquing the old generation, and the newer scholars being conscious of not having been active participants in wartime historiography.

Religious studies, on the other hand, had in the prewar period been engaged in narrower matters: criticizing the State Shintō system as violating freedom of religion and defending religion (that which is beyond the rational) and in the postwar period opposing the secularization implemented throughout society. In other words, the operations of critical discourse in religious studies were mainly directed against only a few relatively restricted problems in Japanese society. The field was not put in a position of having to examine the broader social responsibility of its own discourse. (The Kyoto School of philosophy,

through its formulations of a Japan-centered philosophy of world history, and anthropologists of religion, with their colonialist views, were also not innocent of links with imperial system fascism.) In addition, compared with Japanese historiography, there was no marked generational replacement of scholars in the field of religion of the kind that might have encouraged straightforward critical engagement with the scholarship of the older generation. In the end, since no positive opportunity presented itself to scrutinize the history of the discipline, the political position of religious studies in the prewar and wartime context remained ambiguous and undefined.

The Study of the History of Religious Studies in Japan

Research into the history of Western religious studies began long ago with Gustav Mensching in *Geschichte der Religionswissenschaft* (History of Religious Studies; 1948). Recent publications include Eric Sharpe's *Comparative Religion: A History* (1975 and 1986), Hans G. Kippenberg's *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (2002), Peter Pels and Arie Molendijk eds., *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (1998), and Arie Molendijk's *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (2005). Although the religious studies activity at every Western university is not described in detail, these works examine each country's distinctive qualities and comprehensively discuss their achievements.

Some efforts have been made to describe and analyze the history of Japanese religious studies, although the number is not large. These include the article that appeared relatively soon after the war by Oguchi I'ichi, "Shūkyōgaku gojūnen no ayumi: Tōkyō Daigaku shūkyōgaku kōza sōsetsu gojūnen o kinen shite" (Fifty Years of Religious Studies: Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of University of Tokyo's Chair of Religion, 1956), as well as writings such as Gotō Kōichirō and Tamaru Noriyoshi's "Nihon Shūkyō Gakkai gojūnen no ayumi" (Fifty Years of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies),¹ or Takenaka Shinjō's "Nihon shūkyōgaku no kiseki" (On the History of Religious Studies in Japan).² These studies pivot on the University of Tokyo's Department of Religious Studies, but they also provide an overall view of the activities of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies, which included scholars from other universities as well.

1 Gotō and Tamaru 1980.

2 Takenaka 1984.

These early studies formed the basis for subsequent research. It is widely agreed that the dawn of religious studies in Japan goes back to 1898 when Anesaki Masaharu gave lectures on his “Outline of Religious Studies” at Tokyo Imperial University. Anesaki afterwards headed the field, serving as the first professor of the religious studies chair when it was officially established in 1905 in the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Letters. Religious studies chairs were subsequently established in the departments of philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University in 1907 and at Tōhoku Imperial University in 1922. Similarly, in 1925 a chair of religious studies and history of religions was set up at Kyūshū Imperial University and a chair in the Faculty of Law of Keijō (i.e., Seoul) Imperial University was created in 1927 that combined religious studies and history of religions. In the private universities related to religious organizations as well, after 1922 (when in accordance with the government’s new regulations, private colleges were elevated to the status of universities), various departments of religious studies were established, such as those at Rikkyō University in 1922, at Risshō University in 1924, and at Taishō University in 1926.

The focus of theoretical interest shifted several times in the course of these developments. An interest in the doctrinal traditions of the established religions Christianity and Buddhism formed the axis in the decade after 1900, but by the late 1920s the center of interest moved on to primitive religion, Japanese folk religion, and other non-Western religious elements of daily life. Similarly, from the study of religious philosophy—initially conducted in the Western conceptual framework influenced by the philosophy Anesaki and Nishida Kitarō brought back with them from Germany—younger generations of scholars moved onwards to research the non-conceptual worlds of ritual practice, as seen in the anthropology of religion and sociology of religion of Uno Enkū (1885–1949) and Akamatsu Chijō (1886–1960), who were influenced respectively by Malinowski and Durkheim.³ Amid all these diverse research approaches the Japanese Association for Religious Studies was established in 1930; it has continued to be an active organization up to the present day.

A certain amount of research has been done about the histories of individual universities; the departments of Religious Studies and History of Religion at the University of Tokyo have shown themselves capable of investigating their own historical path. Groundbreaking examples are the above-mentioned pioneering overview by Oguchi, along with “Nihon shūkyōgaku no hitobito” (The People of Religious Studies in Japan; 1976) by Takenaka Shinjō and *Meiji shūkyō shichō no kenkyū: Shūkyōgaku kotohajime* (Trends of Religious Thought in the Meiji Era: The Start of Religious Studies; 1979) by Suzuki Norihisa, the

3 Anesaki 1900b; Nishida Kitarō 1911b; Akamatsu 1929; Uno Enkū 1931; Furuno 1938.

latter tracing in detail the process of establishment of religious studies in the mid-Meiji era; and finally the publication *Nihon no shūkyō gakusetsu* (Theories of Japanese Religion; 1982–1985) edited by Tamaru Noriyoshi, which comprehensively treats the subject from the founder Anesaki Masaharu up through the leader of the succeeding generation Kishimoto Hideo in the immediate postwar period. Tamaru has continued to write about the special features of religious studies in Japan centering on the University of Tokyo, and in seeking such “special features,”⁴ his profound knowledge of the history of Western religious studies has been indispensable. Systematic studies undertaken of religious studies at other universities—which contrasted with the empirical emphasis found in religious studies at the University of Tokyo—included Ishida Yoshikazu’s book *Nihon no shūkyō tetsugaku* (Philosophy of Religion in Japan; 1993) and Keta Masako’s article “Kyōtō gakuha to shūkyō tetsugaku” (The Kyoto School and Philosophy of Religion; 2006), which treated the lineage from Nishida through Nishitani. These studies were confined to philosophy of religion at Kyoto University, so further, more comprehensive research is still awaited.

Religious studies in Japan has not sought proactively to understand its own history, and currently no effort to describe religious studies transcending the boundaries of individual universities has been brought to completion. Beyond a lack of interest in the history of the discipline within the individual university, the low level of interest in the general structure that makes up the whole of religious studies in Japan is common among all researchers, who represent very diverse subfields of study.

The lack of interest in grasping a whole vision of academia can be thought of as due to the tremendous diversity that is the reality of religious studies in Japan. Although it is customary to refer to the discipline by the unifying term “religious studies” (*shūkyōgaku*), close examination reveals that Tokyo and Tōhoku universities selected the terminology “religious studies and history of religions” for their respective departments, while in Kyoto, although in terms of the institutional system it is a “religious studies” chair, in terms of the actual disciplinary content it has come to be called and identified as “philosophy of religion.” Also, while the name of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies journal is *Shūkyō kenkyū* (Journal of Religious Studies) the content is not necessarily well integrated. Similarly, the terms in the various Western countries reflect differences in their lineages of origin, and as is shown by the varied Western vocabulary such as Science of Religion, Religionswissenschaft, History of Religion, Religious Studies, or Comparative Religion, it must be understood

4 Tamaru 1985, p. 8.

that there, too, “religious studies” is not unified.⁵ However, in recent years, as indicated by research both inside and outside Japan, even though this world of religious studies includes within it a diversity of scholarly discourse, a “distinguishing essence of religion”—an idea of *sui generis* religion—has been maintained as a standard unifying criterion.⁶ Transcending the boundaries of any one religion, this term refers to the treatment of religion according to which there exists a concept—religion—that is distinct and has a homogeneous coherence. The assumption is that even in the consciousnesses of people living in secular societies there can be found some elements of faith that can be regarded as universal. Through the emergence of the academic discourse of religious studies, such elements became conceptually more refined and delineated, so that thereafter, passing from era to era, this idea of *sui generis* religion was always available to be re-narrated by religious studies scholars.

The general idea of religion as a special sphere of experience began to surface in Japan after the country was forced to open up to the West beginning in 1858 and the relationship between Japan’s existing religions and Christianity became an issue. As the presence of the spiritual afterwards came to be viewed as an identifiable dimension of human consciousness, certain kinds of initial debate over the existence of the divine (was it an external phenomenon or not?) ceased, and religious studies came to focus on social and historical phenomena. Yet finally, the concept of religion as possessing a certain larger coherence, transcending the boundaries of any single religion, came to be established as a perspective on the problem of the consciousness of people living in secular society. In his manifesto on religious studies published in 1900, *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (Outline of Religious Studies), Anesaki utilized expressions reminiscent of William James or C. P. Tiele and explained religion as follows:

Religious studies is the science of study of religious phenomena as facts of the diverse aspects of human life which are articulated from the universal basic motives of the human spirit. . . . religion, as it is studied by religious studies, does not merely mean particular traditions or their denominational branches. Since all religions are equally historical facts in human civilization and products of human spirituality, religious studies is a matter of a comprehensive conceptual grasping of the processes of production of religion.⁷

5 Molendijk 1998; Miyakawa Eiko 2002.

6 McCutcheon 1995; Braun 2000.

7 Anesaki 1900b, p. 1. On Anesaki’s interpretation of Tiele and James, see Anesaki 1899c; Anesaki 1903b.

This approach, compared to the lectures given by Inoue Tetsujirō, Anesaki's predecessor at the Imperial University, on "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy,"⁸ provided a common position that took as its premise some particularity of religion beyond all individual religions. In contrast to Inoue—a figure of the Meiji Enlightenment of the 1890s who persisted in dismissing religion as irrational and destined to evolve towards morality or be extinguished—Anesaki viewed religion affirmatively as the workings of the human heart, regarding its trans-rational quality as distinct and different from morality, and thus assigned it high value. We can see in this view of religious studies a new quality assigned to the particularity of religion as re-narrated against the backdrop of Romanticism of the decade after 1900.⁹

The discipline of religious studies has globally adopted the idea of *sui generis* religion as the core of its discourse, and the results of various studies of religion taking place in sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and history have come to be read and appropriated in the subfields of sociology of religion, psychology of religion, anthropology of religion, philosophy of religion, history of religion, and so on. But not long ago in the United States, there was a debate over whether religion really has this essential *sui generis* quality or whether it can be reduced to some harder, more objective modes of knowledge. What emerged from that debate was that even if religion were approached by (for example) the sociological method, still in choosing whether to take religious studies or sociology as the fundamental underlying premise—namely in deciding whether to designate religion according to a transhistorical essence or whether to view it as a (mere) reflection of social change—the meaning of religion could be radically different.¹⁰ This pattern has similarly been applied to the relationship between Christian theology, Buddhist studies, and Shintō studies, on the one hand—each of which takes as its premise commitment to a unique, independent religion, thus producing a diversity of so-called theological disciplines—versus the axiomatic universalization assumed by religious studies on the other. In any case, religious studies has conceptually refined its idea of the *sui generis* particularity of religion in accordance with the times, and has been able to successfully function as an interpretive device

8 The content of these lectures can be reconstructed almost completely through the following literature: Inoue Tetsujirō 1897f; Inoue Tetsujirō 1902b; Imanishi 1990–1993; Isomae and Takahashi 2003. On the historical significance of the lectures, see chapter 2 of the present book.

9 See chapter 2 of the present book.

10 Idinopulos and Yonan 1994; Krymkowski and Martin 1998.

that subsumed within the discourse of religion the achievements of various fields connected with research on religions.

Of course the academic independence of religious studies cannot be supported by arguments about the particularity of religion alone. Only when the discipline incorporates related fields that have something to do with religion does it obtain real scholarly substance.

As a concrete example, although the annual meetings of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies may be crowned by a first session on religious studies in the narrow sense (i.e., following the newer, universalizing redefinition of religion as in Anesaki), they continue to be divided into nine separate sections on Christianity, Buddhism, Shintō, the new religions, and so on according to the conventional practice of specialization. Similarly, a rather large number of scholars of religion, rather than being associated with the older imperial universities that had no close connections to specific religions, instead have belonged to departments of theology or doctrine in religion-based universities and have been fulfilling the role of connecting the specific religions of the universities where they serve to the sphere of religion in general. Thus there exist two elements simultaneously: the idea of the special *sui generis* (but universalizing) character of religion, and specific research into the diverse manifestations of religion. In the course of the dialectic interaction between these two, the discipline of religious studies acquired a two-layer structure. Religious studies in the newer sense was striving to assimilate theology or doctrinal research—or religion research in the humanities or social sciences—on the basis of the idea of the universal uniqueness of religions. But continual contrasting movements also overturn the notion of *sui generis* religion on the basis of the application of concrete research. That process of negotiation has created a bidirectional movement by which *sui generis* religious studies turned towards research on specific religions while the study of religion in other disciplines turned towards *sui generis* religious studies.¹¹

In sum, while the broad term “religious studies” was indeed used in Japan, its actual content was established by assimilating a multiplicity of elements. Moreover, when examined through the lenses of several time periods, involving the rise and fall of academic trends in the universities, then it can easily be understood that the discourse was not monolithic. Because of this diversity, and especially because of the dual structure that formed around this claim of *sui generis* uniqueness in the concept of religion, the total image of religious studies became extremely difficult to see, whether perceived from the

11 Miyakawa Eiko 2002.

viewpoint of the individual scholars identified with it or from that of scholars outside the field.

From Academic Theory to History of Scholarly Discourse

However, the hitherto low level of efforts to describe the history of religious studies in Japan cannot be sufficiently explained as resulting from the complexity of the discourse. Some efforts were made at such description, even though the number was not great. The argument and style of writing of these works were not such as to attract the interest of many scholars, the reason being that they took the form not of the history of discourse but rather the history of theories of religious studies. They also did not question the assumptions of *sui generis* religion. For example, concerning the meaning of the history of theory in religious studies in Japan, Tamaru Noriyoshi, who is one of the leading authorities on the field, states as follows:

The history of theory can be seen as distinct from but intimately connected to and paired with the study of religion as historical phenomena in the plainest sense... as it was conducted by mainstream religious studies scholars. [My] study of theory takes reflectively as the object of study the *processes* of research of historical phenomena that were done in the past.¹²

Tamaru thought that the history of academic theory ought to perform the role of actively supplementing specific research on the phenomena of religion, and situated it in the dialectical interaction through which the concept of religion is elaborated. However, the reason that he poured such tremendous effort into organizing the history of theory in the field was in order to define religion as *sui generis*—which was revealed as the locus of his fundamental concern. In the sense of pursuing his ‘history of theory’ for the purpose of obtaining a stable definition of the concept of religion, Tamaru was doing the same thing as Anesaki. Tamaru’s concern was with the “definition” of the concept of religion and with the description of history of religion in terms of theoretical history (as he clearly stated “what place does investigating theoretical history occupy *within religious studies as a whole?*”¹³ my emphasis). He was apparently

12 Tamaru 1985, pp. 2–3.

13 Tamaru 1985, p. 1.

unconcerned with any Foucaultian construction of “discursive formation”¹⁴ of religion, and instead viewed the discipline of religious studies as an independent academic sector, the purpose of which was to investigate internal changes in doctrines (theoretical doctrines, but not religious, i.e. theological doctrines), in other words, to investigate trends in the definition of religion. Not only in Tamaru, but also generally in the description of the history of religious studies in Japan until now, studies have reviewed various historical shifts in theory, but have retained the normative, implicit premises of discourse on religious studies mentioned above, namely the assumption of a *sui generis* character of religion. In practice that meant examination of the work of the scholarly lineages that constituted religious studies in the various academic communities. Such theoretical history has tried to serve as academic reflection for the sake of more accurately defining the concept of religion. But since it has not shed light on the deeper intellectual foundation on which religious studies has stood, how could such a discourse of religious studies stimulate the awareness of the scholars affiliated with it? Such discourse, moreover, did not discuss the position of religious studies vis-à-vis other discourses in the humanities and social sciences, and could not, therefore, present research topics that would have wide appeal to scholars in those fields either inside or outside Japan.

If religious studies had occupied a place of leadership in postwar Japanese intellectual society, even if it had operated only with a history oriented to theory providing its framework, work that would be referred to in other academic areas might have been produced. However, in postwar Japanese society, unlike in the prewar period during which State Shintō created a rich atmosphere of critical public discourse, the dimension of religious studies that had actively contributed to discussion of social issues gradually disappeared. This change was encouraged by University of Tokyo’s Kishimoto Hideo, the religious studies scholar who contributed to the composition of the postwar Shintō Directive. In the prewar period, many religious scholars along with Kishimoto had been forced to affirm that the national state must be the foundation of identity of the people and that from the standpoint of the State Shintō system, which enforced shrine worship, constitutional “religious freedom” was not desirable. However, with the dissolution of State Shintō, the gray zone within which religion and morality had been the constant target of debate was removed; the category of religion was now guaranteed as a private realm distinct from the

14 The concept of discursive formation is based on Michel Foucault’s usage. It means that the epistemology of a historical period cannot be comprehended as a single discourse, but rather as the relational constellation of a diversity of kinds of discourses. See Foucault 1994.

public realm according to the principle of separation of religion and the state¹⁵ and friction between the state and religionists was significantly decreased. Yet as a result, religious studies ironically lost its significance in society, and from the 1960s—with the exception of the legal contests that periodically flare up over worship at Yasukuni Shrine¹⁶—it retreated into the realm of pure scholarship. As a matter of fact, in the postwar period after State Shintō had been dissolved, practically no new religious studies courses in various governmental jurisdictions of Japan and in the newly established public universities—with the exception of that in the Law and Letters Faculty at Hokkaidō University in 1947¹⁷—were established. As for religion-based private universities in the postwar period after freedom in religious education came to be recognized, in every such university the “religion departments” were eliminated or changed and renamed as departments of Shintō or Buddhist studies.¹⁸

In this way, both national universities and religion-based private universities in the postwar period variously began to distance themselves from the discipline of religious studies. Ultimately, the prominent social status of religion brought about under the prewar State Shintō system turned out to have been a polemic-boostered distortion. Under the postwar system of separation of state and religion, the fact that there were few who sought out the opinions of religious studies was a measure of the confidence and expectation that religious freedom was stable and could be guaranteed. Defeat in the war thus marked a major change in the formation of discourse in the category of religion, and religious studies was forced to change in accordance with this alteration of its position in society. Kishimoto, who cooperated with the religion policy of the Allied Occupation, certainly played a role in transplanting to Japan the American idea of separation of religion and the state, and, acting not only on the government side but also on the academic side, he attempted to shift the content of religious studies in the direction of American-style social sciences. This move was on one hand to an extent a continuation of the tradition of Japanese religious studies that had placed weight on religious experience, but

15 On differences between how the religious and the secular were partitioned in prewar and postwar Japan, see chapter 8 below.

16 See Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970. Murakami's *Kokka Shintō* (1970) has become a classic study in the field and is often quoted not only by religious studies scholars but historians and Shintō studies scholars; however, Murakami was unable to get a permanent job in the university system. Kishimoto's works, which treat less controversial subjects, meanwhile, have won little attention.

17 Hokkaidō Daigaku 1980.

18 Hayashi Makoto 2008.

it did not stop at the conventional delimited point of just regarding it as “religion.” Rather, it involved a newer, expanded disciplinary structure that aimed to describe religion empirically as part of broader “cultural” phenomena. Of course, from the conventional perspective of monotheist traditions, religion was not supposed to be reduced to the level of mere “culture.” This alternate perspective of describing religion as “culture,” as Tamaru has observed, had been promoted by the psychologistic tendency of religious studies at the University of Tokyo, reflecting a widened perspective on religion as a general human cultural activity that did not involve either absolute transcendence or the category of *sui generis* religion. Thus Kishimoto gave the following explanation:

Religious studies is something that has as its purpose the investigation of religion as a secular cultural phenomenon. . . . Religious studies is one branch of the secular humanities.¹⁹

These various developments undermined the idea of a *sui generis* religion that had been the pillar of religious studies, formerly providing the distinction that made it stand above culture, and instead led to a kind of logic of secularization extending from religion to culture. Thus, it may have put at risk the basis for the existence of any religious studies that relied on the particularity of religion as its prop. Indeed, soon after the beginning of the 1970s, Yanagawa Keiichi, one of Kishimoto’s students, published an article declaring that he was abandoning the project of creating an edifice of religious studies. In his essay advocating so-called “guerilla” religious studies (“A Dissenting View: Introduction to Religious Studies,” 1972), he wrote:

We do not have to wear the “official uniform” of religious studies; we do not need to declare ourselves “stalwart soldiers” of academia. Isn’t our specialty research on subjects in areas that scholars of other disciplines have hardly touched?—stealthy, surprise attacks—not clearly identified with religious studies. . . . Lately, however, regular troops from sociology, psychology, and other disciplines have arrived. . . . If they become critical of what we are doing, we ought to simply withdraw.²⁰

This affirmed that the realignment of religious studies as a science of experience according to Kishimoto’s plan would be difficult to implement. Nevertheless,

19 Kishimoto Hideo 1961, p. 2.

20 Yanagawa 1972, pp. 7–8.

as Yanagawa had advocated, when he said, “Become one with the thoughts and emotions of the other and stop differentiating between who sees and who is seen, because from the unification of the two a new interpretation can be accomplished,” or when he advocated scholarship outside academia (“*ya no kagaku*”), another aspect of Kishimoto’s scholarship did come to the fore, namely the experientialism that had been present ever since Anesaki. What was most interesting here was that Yanagawa’s model in advocating scholarship outside academia was the folklore studies of Yanagita Kunio. He rejected the religious studies of Anesaki Masaharu, Yanagita’s “government scholar” contemporary, in no uncertain terms, as follows:

To say this may be disrespectful of the founder, but people today whose goal is religious studies . . . do not have to read any of the more than fifty books and several hundred articles that he has written.²¹

There is no need to address the issue whether Yanagawa’s estimations of either Yanagita or Anesaki were accurate. For the purposes of our discussion here, what matters is how different an overall view of the history of religious studies at the University of Tokyo he offered, although also a student of Kishimoto Hideo, compared to that of Tamaru, his colleague as professor at the University of Tokyo. That is, although it was nothing more than a rough, fragmentary sketch, Yanagawa’s summary was not a history of theory from within religious studies; rather, by contrasting the postwar collapse of Tokyo University religious studies with the sudden rise of folklore studies outside academia, he was trying to understand the meaning of changes within the broader context of Japanese intellectual society. So, although his work was negative and lacked maturity as scholarship, Yanagawa did connect religious studies to the outside: he presented without intending to do so a descriptive method that caused the history of theory in religious studies to jump in the direction of a modern history of Japanese scholarship. In the words of Yanagawa himself, by “killing the father” Anesaki, the founder of University of Tokyo religious studies,²² and by announcing the collapse of Kishimoto religious studies as social science, he broke the spell of the *sui generis* conception of religious studies in claiming to be a science of description, and newly opened the way for wide-ranging interaction to develop with many fields involved with the study of religion including sociology, folklore, and anthropology. Reflecting this transition, in

21 Yanagawa 1987, p. 273.

22 Yanagawa 1987, p. 273.

2003 and 2004 ten volumes of the “Iwanami Series on Religion”²³ were subsequently published, planned mainly by Shimazono Susumu of the University of Tokyo. In this new form, the interaction of religious studies with other fields has progressed steadily.

Kishimoto’s proposition of religion as culture was to be partly fulfilled, however, with the heyday of the religious secularization thesis in the 1970s. Unlike the general secularization thesis—according to which it was thought that religion would go into decline with the rise of modern rationalism—the new version of religious studies adopted the view that even amid the advance of secularization, religion survived by changing its form and penetrating everyday secular life.²⁴ The distinction between the religious and the secular—in Kishimoto’s words between religion and culture—would become ambiguous and vague; religion from the individual private realm would insert itself again into the public sphere of society. That would expose to the danger of collapse the clear dichotomy between “religion as private sphere” versus “politics as public sphere,” which was the essential premise of the idea of state-religion separation.

It was in about the same era that the religious studies of Mircea Eliade at the University of Chicago (who spoke of the repetition—from Deleuze—of the sacred and profane), achieved popularity among young intellectuals, together with the depth psychology of Carl Gustav Jung (a member of the same group of Eranos intellectuals). The younger scholars’ response was based on the idea that not only the private realm of the individual, but also the public realm of society, can transform into a sacred space, such as might occur at the special times of festivals, or even in ordinary everyday life. They were aspiring to transcend the dichotomy of “religion as private sphere” versus “politics as public sphere.”²⁵

Although prewar religious policy had established that the government took as a premise the idea of freedom of religion, it was also true that State Shintō policy had turned that situation to its advantage to coerce the general public. Because of the entanglements involved in this dichotomy of “religion as private sphere” versus “politics as public sphere,” the prewar question of how the concept of religion ought to be defined had been debated without cease. In the postwar period, because the basis of policy became a hard dichotomy of “religion as private sphere” versus “politics as public sphere” as put into effect in one fell swoop under the revised legal system, the topic of how the

23 Ikegami et al. 2003–2004.

24 Luckmann 1967; Dobbelaere 1981.

25 Eliade 1964; Jung 1964; Wasserstrom 1999; Homans 1979.

permeation of these two spheres would be accepted—into a world where in actuality there was no such dichotomy—surfaced in contrast as a completely new issue. In the transition between prewar and postwar society, with the collapse of the State Shintō system, the composition and debate regarding the social construction of discourse about the concept of religion came to a fundamental turning point.

As long as religious studies adhered to the idea of the *sui generis* particularity of religion regardless of changes in the social system and tried to preserve and continue the purity of individual consciousness based on the earlier “religion as private sphere” versus “politics as public sphere” dichotomy, it was only natural that the discipline would not be able to respond to the changing social circumstances of the postwar era. Among those newer, immediate, contemporary topics challenging religious studies, questions were arising about how the discourse on the particularity of religion had been transplanted into Japanese society, and what kind of function it was performing in Japanese society even as its social implications changed with the times. The answer was to be found in a deep reading of the changes in the formation of discourse. In so proceeding it was possible to understand the changes in the concept of religion in contemporary Japan; and by analysis of the concept of religion one could go as far as interrogating the modernization process of Japan itself. What was now required as the form of description for the history of religious studies was not a “theoretical history” that assumed the conventional boundaries of religious studies discourse, but rather a reflective description of the formation of discourse, something that could be called disciplinary or academic history, exploring both the positions of religious studies and the concept of religion itself in Japanese society. The literal descriptions in previous theoretical history had to be fundamentally re-read on the basis of such a vision of disciplinary and academic history.

For that purpose, while not just making an effort to bring in the most recent theories and concepts of religion from the West, the indispensable task was to reliably accumulate critical case studies adopting and modifying Western theory from the independent standpoint of religious phenomena in Japan and other non-Western regions. Beginning from the 1970s, research on the new religions in Japan, which led to the founding of the Research Group for the Sociology of Religions, had in complex ways absorbed results from sociology, folklore studies, and anthropology, and had gone beyond the boundaries of the religious studies field in advancing a re-envisioning of secularization theory and Weberian modernization theory.²⁶ This was represented by works

26 Shimazono 1981; Tsushima et al. 1979 (excerpted in Miyake et al. 1986).

such as *Gendai kyūsai shūkyō ron* (The Theory of Contemporary Salvation Religions)²⁷ by Shimazono Susumu of the University of Tokyo or *Tsugaru no kamisama: Sukui no kōzō o tazunete* (The Goddesses of Tsugaru: Inquiring into the Structure of Salvation)²⁸ by Ikegami Yoshimasa of Tōhoku University. Their research utilizing Japanese case studies turned the Western theories—which they themselves referred to—into objects of study. Because these scholars have succeeded in throwing new light on Japanese religious phenomena, they have made a significant contribution to both Japanese humanities and social sciences as well as Euro-American research on religion.

Such recent work is a reminder that, when we look back at the history of religious studies in Japan in terms of its relationship of conformity with Western religious theory, in another respect there has also persisted a deep-rooted tendency towards establishing Japan's own orientation: how could distance best be maintained from Eurocentric concepts of religion and theories of religion? A line of research has always continued that seeks to promote the expansion of that goal by means of case studies from non-Western regions. Thus was the study of Japanese new religions, from its beginnings in Suzuki Munetada's research into Mahāyāna Buddhism and Anesaki's research on religion in Japan in the 1930s, carried forward by Tsurufuji Ikuta (1909–1974) and Nakayama Yoshikazu (1926–1985). Other work was brought to fruition in the 1940s by Uno Enkū and Akamatsu Chijō, which covered religious ethnography and religious anthropology in many regions of Asia.²⁹ In Japanese religious studies, as noted in the previous section, there existed not only a two-layer structure involving “religious studies as theology, Buddhist doctrine, or Shintō studies” versus “religious studies as other kinds of humanities and social sciences,” but within that, another two-layer typological differentiation between “Western” versus “non-Western or Japanese.” The research path of Anesaki, the founder of religious studies in Japan, took as its point of departure the structure of the Western theoretical tradition in religious studies; but as he turned to concrete description of Japanese religious history, he had to deal with the themes of how—even though Japanese religious studies began with the “import” of Western theory—these could be “adapted” to Japanese society or how Western theory could be re-read. It was with such sophisticated purposes in mind that he continued to appropriate Western religious studies and concepts of religion.

27 Shimazono 1992a.

28 Ikegami 1987.

29 Anesaki 1930b; Suzuki Munetada 1934; Nakayama 1932; Tsurufuji 1939; Akamatsu and Akiba 1941; Uno Enkū 1944.

The Aum Shinrikyō Incident and Theories of Religious Experience

Yet despite this dynamically changing understanding of religion, the discipline of religious studies seems to have had some fundamental flaw. What forced scholars to confront that flaw was the Aum Shinrikyō incident in 1995, when members of the secretive cult executed a plan to release poison sarin gas in Tokyo subways.³⁰ In one way this incident appeared to corroborate the consistent religious studies stance on secularization (that religion would survive while changing its form), but at the same time it ironically revealed how, although religion scholars had maintained their neutrality vis-à-vis specific religions, they clung to extremely empathetic attitudes toward religion in general, that is, toward *sui generis* religion. Seen from this perspective, while Yanagawa Keiichi declared the collapse of religious studies as a system of knowledge, even he would go on to say, “Our purpose is above all to pursue our interest in religion itself; if there is some kind of practical yield, that is sufficient,”³¹ leading one to believe that he, at least to some extent, stood by the normative value of *sui generis* religion. Of course, setting the theme of “religion” in and of itself ought not to be criticized. Approached from the concept of religion, there might be some things we fail to see, but there will naturally be others that the concept of religion makes newly visible. The problem is, however, what has been assumed about the particularity of religion and how those assumptions have been handled as themes of research.

In his watershed book *Shūkyōgaku* (Religious Studies),³² Kishimoto Hideo attempted to redefine religious studies as a field of descriptive science, adopting an objective stance toward all religions following the model of University of Chicago religious studies scholar Joachim Wachs (1898–1955). At the same time, he expressed his subjective commitment to the philosophy of religion and theology as represented by Kyoto University, identifying such approaches with “normative research” that probes what religion “ought to be.” He there tried to draw a clear boundary line within the discipline of religious studies, or research on religion, between normative research and social scientific research. In 1961, the same year that Kishimoto’s book came out, Kyoto University’s Nishitani Keiji published *Shūkyō to wa nani ka* (What Is Religion?).³³ The two works clearly illustrated the differences between religious studies at

30 On the incident, see Reader 1996; Shimazono 1997a. For an account pertaining to scholars who had connections to Aum Shinrikyō, see Shimada 2007.

31 Yanagawa 1972, p. 8.

32 Kishimoto Hideo 1961.

33 Nishitani 1961.

the University of Tokyo and philosophy of religion as taught at Kyoto University, at least at that point in time. Yanagawa's declaration not long after that about the collapse of religious studies as a social science unmasked the fact that the boundary line that Kishimoto had drawn was not all that clear-cut. Thus many of Kishimoto's students had to go on to grapple with the challenge of moving beyond the empirical and rationalistic scholarship of traditional religious studies, which had not been in touch with the experiences and the worldviews of believers themselves.³⁴

As the clear dichotomy between the researcher and object of research collapsed, the question whether somehow the researcher-as-cognizant-subject could approach the research object propelled the energies of young scholars of religious studies at the University of Tokyo. Shimazono Susumu has organized the resulting work in two branches: one consisted of scholars like Nakazawa Shin'ichi and Shimada Hiromi³⁵ who emphasized "experiential, physical understanding." The other, including Shimazono himself, took an empathetic stance vis-à-vis the world of religious faith, but sought an "understanding from the other's perspective" of religious faith in terms of its historical contexts. The former branch of scholarship had a connection with Aum Shinrikyō, and is known for having emphasized religious experience and for making some extremely sympathetic pronouncements about the world of religion. But Shimazono, too, even though he stated, "In my posture of empathy, there is an element of distance and cool observation towards religious believers,"³⁶ tended to want to discover what Deleuze called the "potentialities" of religion. This is evident in the following passage, which explains his research perspective:

My biggest challenge at the time was how best to replicate a vital understanding of the founder's religious experience. I thought that it was necessary to understand the first half of Asahara's life in the context of the social environment of his era. In that connection . . . I began to understand how religion reveals strong rays of hope to people who are suffering in the face of difficulties in their lives, breaks down walls that cannot be broken down through the power of the individual, and vigorously arouses human beings' powers of survival.³⁷

34 Shimazono 1992b, p. 124.

35 For example, Nakazawa 1984; Shimada 1989.

36 Shimazono 1992b, p. 122.

37 Shimazono 1992b, p. 112. For an article in English, see Shimazono 1995a.

Here we can see his active stance affirming the possibilities of religion, but in so doing he does not show awareness of how religion also arises from the dark side of human nature, and of how it can bring people not only salvation but suffering. In this craving for what religion “ought to be,” we find not only the individual religious studies scholars who were tripped up by the Aum Shinrikyō incident but also University of Tokyo religious studies from Yanagawa onward standing in a place not much different in perspective from the philosophy of religion that Kishimoto had labeled “normative research.” That attitude seems to be closely related to the discarding of the idea of sin in understanding human character that occurred when liberal theology, from which religious studies was born, split off from Christianity. Perhaps it was that context that established the attitude peculiar to religious studies of trying to understand religion only in connection with the positive side of humanity. Of course, behind that positive attitude towards religion was the aspiration to understand religious experience.

The orientation toward understanding religion and toward religious experience as the core for understanding its practice began with Anesaki Masaharu and Nishida Kitarō in the Meiji era. That position could be seen everywhere in Japan in the early history of religious studies, as exemplified in Anesaki’s 1903 account, cited earlier, concerning his own mystical experience at the seaside resort of Kiyomigata.

Nishida Kitarō as well, in *Zen no kenkyū* (A Study of Good)³⁸ published in 1911, expounded on “pure experience” involving nondifferentiation of subject and object, which is said to be a reinterpretation of Zen experience under the influence of Henri Bergson and William James. However, in contrast to the position taken by Anesaki, who viewed religion as a product of human psychology to be understood by means of empirical scientific descriptions of established religions (positive religions), Nishida tried to analyze religion through internal, philosophical speculation, rather than by means of external variables. He wanted to explore the relationship between individuals and outer existence that does not differentiate between subject and object and that transcends individuals. Anesaki and Nishida thus represented different vectors regarding the study of religion, and thereby religious studies, which then became the two defining positions in Japan: scientific empirical religious studies, based on psychology, and philosophy of religion, based on reflection. The positions of the two scholars differed all the more in the 1920s because of the debate that then dominated the Japanese philosophical world over whether to adopt the critique of psychologism promoted by the neo-Kantian school. Nishida took a

38 Nishida Kitarō 191b. See translation of *Zen no kenkyū* also in Nishida Kitarō 1990.

position different from the reductionist explanation that regarded religion as merely a product of human subjective consciousness. By employing perspectives from Husserl's school of logic, he developed the idea of a quest for the fundamental reality that could cause this subjective world to exist.³⁹

Although Nishida was appointed to lecture on religious studies at Kyoto University for one year (1914) and did not regard himself as a philosophy of religion scholar, his philosophical ideas pertaining to religion certainly provided a great stimulus to many who were pursuing that branch of philosophy. Sano Katsuya (1888–1946) at Kyushu University abandoned religious psychology and turned to philosophy of religion in order to concentrate on the problem of underlying existence; at Tōhoku University Suzuki Munetada (1881–1963) critiqued the tendency towards psychologism in Tiele's religious studies and attempted a reinterpretation of Tiele oriented toward the philosophy of religion. Hatano Seiichi (1877–1950) as well, who was appointed as lecturer at Kyoto University after Nishida, devised a philosophy of religion that took the experience of reality as its nucleus from an interpretation of Christianity based on a kind of open-ended theology. All of them, including Anesaki students Sano and Suzuki, were graduates of the University of Tokyo's Department of Philosophy who through a grappling with neo-Kantianism came to maintain a philosophy of religion approach with the direct religious experience of reality at its core.⁴⁰ In the courses on religion at the imperial universities that were being newly established one after another at the time, the philosophy of religion approach, rather than the empirical science-based approach to religious studies, became the mainstream.

However, regardless of the interpretation via psychology of religion, in the dawn of Japanese religious studies it became clear that both empirical scientific religious studies and philosophy of religion shared the normative value of seeking to support *sui generis* religion. The drive to re-conceive religion in terms of a transcendental orientation that could be discovered universally through the inner regions of the human mind, transcending any established religion, was the project of the intellectual class baptized by the modern Western Romantic movement; it was the product of the era after the existence of God was no longer self-evident. This orientation towards religious experience was also seen widely in modern Western society. It can be thought to have grown out of the attempt to recover an authenticity of faith via the mediation

39 Nishida Kitarō 1911a; Nishida Kitarō 1926.

40 Sano Katsuya 1935; Hatano 1940; Suzuki and Hayafune 1916. On the problem of neo-Kantianism in religious studies in Japan, see Suzuki Munetada 1948, pp. 36–41.

of the transcendental within the self at a time when the authenticity of doctrine and practice in established religion was in crisis.⁴¹

Religious studies in Japan has expended a huge amount of effort on how to pursue the discourse on religious experience, as exemplified by the debate on psychologism between scholars of philosophy of religion and empirical scientific religious studies. Religious experience itself has been what was thought to bestow credibility on the *sui generis* religion that transcends established religion; such credibility was what would satisfy the aspiration for religion concealed within the religious studies scholars who advocated neutrality towards individual religions.⁴²

Moreover, from about 1930, despite the differences between the approaches of psychologism and philosophy of religion in Japan, a new trend arose to attribute meaning to religious experience through practice and physical ritual rather than through ideological doctrine. Among those who carried on the tradition of psychologistic religious studies were Uno Enkū and Akamatsu Chijō, who were appointed associate professors at Tokyo and Keijō (Seoul) universities, respectively, in 1927. Uno was one of Anesaki's students. Akamatsu, a graduate of Kyoto University, was not a student of Nishida or Hatano, but rather of Matsumoto Bunzaburō (1869–1944), a Buddhistologist who had been lecturing on Indian philosophy and religious studies. In the field of philosophy of religion, in 1935 Nishida's student Nishitani Keiji had been appointed associate professor at Kyoto University. What the leadership of these scholars meant was that in the 1930s the debate over religious experience was not so much a matter of whether or not to interpret religious experience by probing into the inner human consciousness, as a matter of the relationship between the intellectual and corporeal, while allowing each position—psychologistic religion and philosophy of religion—to coexist.⁴³ Kishimoto Hideo, too, drew from

41 Tsuruoka 2000; Tsuruoka 2001.

42 Given that historical lineage, the problem for the group of scholars who dealt with the Aum Shinrikyō incident was not just that some of them were caught off guard, but that the affair exposed in very simple form the impulse for religious experience latent within the whole discipline of religious studies.

43 Tōhoku University appointed Ishizu Teruji from the University of Tokyo in 1938, who, with religious philosophy as the foundation, built up the university's distinctive tradition of religious studies combining folk life surveys, which was passed down through the work in "dynamic phenomenology of faith" (*shinkōteki dōtai genshōgaku*) of Kusunoki Masahiro and the work on folk religion of Ikegami Yoshimasa. At Kyushu University, Furuno Kiyoto, likewise a graduate of the University of Tokyo Department of Religion, was appointed in 1948, and a cultural anthropology approach to religion developed there that focused

the line of thought that sought to understand religious experience in physical practice.⁴⁴

In the 1970s, however, as mentioned earlier, in the case of University of Tokyo religious studies, as leadership passed from Kishimoto to Yanagawa, the devotion to objective, empirical science theory collapsed and—coupled with journalistic exposure amid the “religion boom”—the experience-oriented impulse that had been implicit in the scientific orientation now occasionally appeared as brash empiricism. Unlike the long-time orientation towards description of established religions demonstrated by University of Tokyo religious studies, the Kyoto University philosophy of religion school was proficient in creating description that treated objectively the inner self while keeping away from the danger of falling into simplistic experientialism. The Kyoto scholarship was, however, somewhat lacking in awareness of impending crisis, despite trends that would upset their discourse frameworks—for example, the secularization thesis of the 1970s and the linguistic turn of the 1980s. Under these circumstances, University of Tokyo-trained scholars began in the early 1990s to publish criticisms of the stance emphasizing non-differentiation of subject and object in religious experience. Tsuruoka, Fukasawa, and others questioned the appropriateness of the pure world of subject-object unity propounded by such Nishidan experientialism, by working from the perspective of a language of religion drawn from Ludwig Wittgenstein. Thus the targets of their criticism extended not only to the University of Tokyo’s experientialism, but to descriptions of religious experience via the philosophy of religion dominant since Nishitani Keiji. Their critiques held the potential to fundamentally rethink the orientation to *sui generis* religious experience that had characterized religious studies in Japan from the beginning.

Looking at the ensuing debate, however, we can detect in these new critical viewpoints, just as in the logocentrism that Jacques Derrida had criticized in Western philosophy,⁴⁵ a kind of purism in reflecting on the word religion that risked obsession with the craving for absolute epistemological truth. Some of these criticisms, in order to rebut assertions for the authenticity of the religious experience stemming from experientialism, still based their arguments on dichotomies of truth versus untruth. Yet in presenting a substitute for the discourse of experientialism in which one’s own critical discourse was regarded as a higher metalogic, these scholars ran the danger of falling into

during the war on Southeast Asia and later on Japanese folk religion. See Kimura Toshiaki 2003; Sasaki Kōkan 1989.

44 Kishimoto Hideo 1949.

45 Derrida 1973.

yet another logic that they hoped would guarantee authenticity transcending the limitations of history. That being the case, the discourses of religion or religious studies might become re-entrenched in a transcendent, pure consciousness approach that could criticize the historicity of other doctrines but be immune from or would simply subsume any other sort of criticism.⁴⁶

The dilemma of religious studies today lies in the very struggle between not really being able to describe the authenticity of religious experience and not wanting to let go of the idea of purity of awareness, and that dilemma is of primary interest in understanding the circumstances of today's discourse on religion. As long as religious studies is scholarship for the purpose of discussing religion—no matter how the secularization of religion might progress—it seems probable that somewhere in the minds of the researchers will be hidden the irresistible urge to think that one's pronouncements could achieve a transparency of perception that transcends history.⁴⁷ However, in order to advance the debate, rather than arguing whether a discourse is true or false, should we not—as Homi Bhabha has noted in his discussion of how artistic and religious experience involves “negotiating rapture and speaking between”⁴⁸—completely abandon such arguments? And regarding religious experience that emphasizes transcendence, shouldn't we let that experience be shared in interaction with others in the context of everyday life and see what kinds of new discourse come into being in that interaction? Even if this craving for epistemological truth cannot be expunged from the consciousness of scholars of religious studies, the time seems to have come for it to be taken up for critical discussion.

In any case, the Aum Shinrikyō incident revealed the fact that religious studies could not easily assert the objectivity of its perceptions vis-à-vis experientialism or the standpoint of critical discourse. As a result, the question of how researchers who address the world of religious faith should distance themselves from the object of their study has resurfaced as a topic in religious

46 Such re-ascertaining of the universality of religion and religious studies is represented by Fukasawa's and Tsuruoka's views and typically goes as follows: Even assuming that “the lineage and vicissitudes occurring since this word [religion] surfaced in modern Europe have been confirmed,” there is no reason to discard the word [religion]. Fukasawa stated: “In whatever form, the free and creative use of the term religion is something worth gambling on.” According to Tsuruoka, “Even though there is a drift towards modern Christianity, still for a long time, as with the term ‘humanity,’ people have been wanting to designate some kind of universal thing under the name religion.” (Quote from Tsuchiya 2006, pp. 95–96.)

47 Masuzawa 1993; Murphy 1994.

48 Bhabha 1996, pp. 8–17.

studies. There may be much to learn here from the perspectives of theology and philosophy of religion that Kishimoto rejected as “normative,” because these researchers openly developed the debate on religion on the premises of their own religiosity. At the same time, Nishitani Keiji (who had proposed nihilism and religion as the theme of society as early as the 1930s) and other Kyoto University researchers would not have been likely to stand up resolutely for religious experience amid the secularization of the 1970s. Kyoto University scholars viewed as simplistic the idea embraced by University of Tokyo scholars that even against the tide of secularization, religion would survive in altered form; the Kyoto school argued by contrast that the inevitable breakdown of religion resulting from modernization must be recognized, and only then Eastern religious tradition could be closely studied for clues as to how to “overcome modernity.” However, it was precisely there—and specifically in the process by which Nishitani arrived at his representation of the Eastern tradition of religious experience through the concept of *zettaimu* (absolute nothingness, which he later called simply *kū* or “emptiness”) in order to overcome the nihilism of the modern age—that the deeply rooted problems, as well as the wartime political issues, of Kyoto University philosophy of religion discourse on religious experience lingered unresolved.

Thus, in this evolution of what can be called the self-dismantling of the religious studies tradition, especially at the University of Tokyo, questions arise about any account of religious studies on religion: What kind of historical context did it arise from? Compared to other types of research on religion, what were the special qualities of its narrative? Recently the history of religious studies in Japan has been taken up broadly as the object of research in the humanities and social sciences. Examples of published research include Yamaguchi Teruomi's *Meiji kokka to shūkyō* (The Meiji State and Religion; 1999), and my original work in Japanese, which was the precursor of the present book in English.⁴⁹ Such studies, however, were confined to the University of Tokyo circle and do not treat the objective-subjective structure of religious studies as a whole. An in-depth investigation of religious studies and other universities, including connections with theology and Buddhist studies, is yet to come. But these studies of the so-called “concept of religion” were distinct from the earlier doctrinal histories reflecting the self-consciousness of religious studies scholars who belonged to the inner circles of religious studies discourse through their discussion of the political context of the rise of nationalism and their view of religious studies anew as addressing the problems of Japan's modernization. One example is their emphasis on the hitherto forgotten

49 Yamaguchi 1999; Isomae 2003.

character of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies (JARS) founded in 1930 as a national organization in order to counter the anti-religious agitation of the Japan Communist Party, which was on the upsurge at that time. JARS was one link among the commemorative projects related to the accession of Emperor Hirohito in 1928 and was actually formed in response to a trend originating from an earlier government-sponsored event called the Great Japanese Religion Conference to Commemorate the Rites of the Imperial Succession. In the face of the perceived challenge of the Marxist idea of religion as the opiate of the masses then fashionable among younger members of the intelligentsia, the association brought together the religious community and the religious studies community and issued a ringing rebuttal to the Marxist agenda, declaring that religion is what makes human beings human. The founding of the JARS national organization with this politically activist purpose, clearly advocating the eradication of communism as an ideology violating the spirit of the *kokutai*, was a symbolic event that helps to understand the features of religious studies in Japan.⁵⁰

Discussions of issues like these share an awareness seen in the disciplines influenced by postcolonial studies and cultural studies, like those of anthropologist Talal Asad and religious studies scholar Russell McCutcheon and others.⁵¹ Scholars such as Yamaguchi and myself pursued a critique of the scholarly attitudes in religious studies that remained consistently West-centered, clarifying that the concept of religion has remained under the very strong influence of Protestantism and is closely linked to the idea of separation of state and religion introduced after World War II.⁵² Also, stimulated by the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City in 2001, Islamic studies came to receive a great deal of attention, a shift that had decisive significance. Finally it is being recognized that religious studies is not a discipline of objective description of religious phenomena, but instead is recognized in terms of performative acts of enunciation that reproduce concepts of religion continually adapted to new contexts. The idea of the *sui generis* uniqueness of religion, which had formed the core of orthodox religious studies, had indeed been able to maintain neutrality towards the individual religions, but religious studies has now come to be

50 Nihon Shūkyō Konwakai 1928.

51 Asad 1993; McCutcheon 1997; Fitzgerald 2000; Chidester 1996; Masuzawa 2005; J. Smith 1998.

52 Shimazono 2001a; see chapter 8 below on the state and the emperor system. However, Shimazono's argument rigidly substantializes the non-Western aspect that appears in Japanese religious phenomena as the "Japanese religious structure," placing an emphasis on the indigenous nature of religion.

recognized as having been shaped by history; it has been formed discursively as antithetical to the secular world of politics and morality, with the normative value of purity at one pole.

While religious studies has shifted from objective scholarship based on the understanding and description of religion to the re-reading of Japanese modernity as the object of study, the shift has not diminished in the slightest the *raison d'être* of religious studies. Given the way the discipline was founded, that approach was not always favored, but religious studies has finally made itself ready for discussion on an equal plane with the world of faith and with other scholarly disciplines by accepting that researchers themselves are limited by historicity and are objects of critical discourse. An example is the scholar Yamaguchi Teruomi, who was involved in the early stages of this debate. Since he comes from the field of history—and is thus not constrained by the standpoint of JARS connected scholars—he was able to develop arguments from a less restricted perspective. Moreover, regarding my own research, while my connections have been with religious studies at the University of Tokyo, the free atmosphere that encouraged the secularization not only of religion but of religious studies since the era of Kishimoto and Yanagawa has subsequently reached the point of making scholars' own discourse the object of historical discourse. Thus, as testified by the many who have already engaged in research exchanges with other cultures, scholars of religious studies are no longer the only ones in academia who can speak with authority about religion.

The attempts to place religion and religious studies in historical context that grew out of the debate over the concept of religion have continued to evolve towards addressing the political character of the wartime scholarship of religion. Much is in the process of becoming well established today: Anesaki Masaharu's active contributions to both the imperial lineage dispute of 1911 and the convening of the Conference of the Three Religions in 1912; the close connections of Ōkawa Shūmei, Minoda Muneki, and others to the emperor system ideology; the alliance of religious ethnography and anthropology with management of Japan's colonies; and, as in the case of other disciplines as well, the close relationship with wartime nationalism and the emperor-system state. As an example, ethnographer of religions Uno Enkū wrote as follows about how the Japanese spirit would play a leading role in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere:

Regarding establishment of the framework of the new order in East Asia and leadership of the multiple ethnic groups involved: while simultaneously understanding and respecting their ethnic spirits, more than anything we have to have them fully understand our own Japanese spirit,

which must serve as the guiding principle of the whole; they must be made to merge with and submit to it. Even more effective than the kind of cooperation produced by military coercion and vested interests, if the final goal is to lead the East Asian peoples to a bonding around moral principles, here again the explication of the Japanese spirit to the outside world is absolutely necessary; it must build a foundation of authenticity that will be convincing even to other peoples.⁵³

According to Uno, since the Asian ethnic groups all possessed cultural, or as identified by Uno, ethnic, similarities based on rice culture and reverence for ancestors, which was different from the monotheism of Christianity, they ought to be guided by the Japanese spirit. When we look carefully through Uno's writings of this period, it is evident that he seems to have reinterpreted the concept of "cultural spheres" propounded by linguist Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954) in order to support a rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity that was used to provide the theoretical underpinnings of Japanese colonialism. Religious studies that includes colonialism as its object of study could not be accomplished by religious studies scholars alone, and I would point out that it had already been advanced by anthropologists and scholars in area studies.

Another fundamental inquiry that must be addressed is Nishitani Keiji's notion of "overcoming modernity," about which much has been written about outside the world of religious studies. How was Nishitani's discourse influenced by the spirit of the age in which the Kyoto University school of philosophy passed down from Nishida Kitarō established its distinctive sphere, and by its representation of "West versus East"? After the war, whereas University of Tokyo's Kishimoto worked with the General Headquarters for the Allied Occupation in establishing Japanese religious policy, Kyoto University's Nishitani was dismissed from his post because of his statements during wartime. We must refrain from facile inferences, but it seems that these circumstances had a profound influence on the historical traditions of the religious studies programs at their respective universities: University of Tokyo religious studies pursued a self-dismantling secularization while Kyoto University scholars from Nishitani onward committed themselves to the preservation of their traditions—although it is questionable how successful they were in regarding objectively the religiosity within themselves.

Nishitani was the person who laid the foundations of the Kyoto University philosophy of religion as it continues today, but when we compare his ideas about religion with those of his teacher Nishida, who did not call himself a

53 Uno Enkū 1941, p. 3.

scholar of the philosophy of religion, although we can see traces of the idea of absolute nothingness (*zettai mu*) in both, Nishida's method of rebutting Marxist ideology was different from Nishitani's. Through dialogues with Tanabe Hajime and Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945) and other students who were receptive to Marxism, Nishida tried to understand the relationship of individual and individual, and individual and universal existence through a negative mediation of “absolutely contradictory self-identity”; he created a discourse in which pure experience is thrown into a dialectical relationship with the “historical body” in society. On the other hand, Nishitani understood the relationship of individual and universal existence in terms of “I” and “you,” without a third-person intervening; therefore the individual came to be positively subsumed within universal existence. What is distinctive about Nishitani is that he attributed new meaning to religion in circumstances that under the influence of Heidegger he called nihilistic, where religion had lost its authority as a metaphysics in modern society. Nishitani employed Marxism, as with Uno Enkū, as a tool to criticize religion in terms of Enlightenment ideology; this view, however, eventually came to be understood as a doctrine of materialism, i.e., as a doctrine of structural determinism according to Marxian base theory. But Marxism was not interpreted as a negative dialectic of social relationships as Nishida had done.⁵⁴

Lacking such a dialectic, reality as posited by Nishitani tended to become, more than in Nishida's writings, something realized as a universal that directly subsumed the individual. Thus the East, or particularly Japan, which presumably served as the responsible bearer of this universality, followed a logical process aiming to counter nihilistic conditions introduced by the West, in other words to “overcome modernity.”⁵⁵ (Of course, not even Nishida was completely free of this Japan-centered mode of thinking. He, too, labored under the limitations of his era, for instance, in his paralleling the imperial house with “absolute nothingness,”⁵⁶ as seen in *Nihon bunka no mondai*; The Problem

54 Nishida Kitarō 1946; Nishitani 1945. On the respective understandings of Marx held by these figures, see Nishida Kitarō 1939 and Nishitani 1951. For Uno's critique of Marxism, see Uno Enkū 1930a and 1930b.

55 A similar claim is affirmed in Ishizu Teruji of Tōhoku University, whose speciality was religious philosophy similarly rooted in Buddhist tradition. See Ishizu 1943. Considering that Ishizu was a graduate of religious studies at the University of Tokyo, it is clear that the idea of “overcoming the modern” was not a problem for the religious world confined only to Kyoto philosophy.

56 Hattori Kenji 2000, pp. 43, 68.

of Japanese Culture, 1940).⁵⁷ The series of works Nishitani wrote about “overcoming modernity,” a notion imbued with wartime political implications, came out at about the same time that he was publishing the books and articles that established his ideas on philosophy of religion, so a discussion is required that will come firmly to grips with that inevitable connection to the era in the development of his logic.⁵⁸ Just as in the response to the Aum Shinrikyō incident by the University of Tokyo scholars, in Nishitani’s case, too—irrespective of what his subjective intentions were—the question is how the political and social context affected his scholarly discourse. Therefore, future religious studies should try to locate the danger within that causes it to stumble, and enunciate it in a form that will convince others.



What kind of revised story of religion should be proposed? That is the task for the future concerning either the rise of Islamic studies, or the critical awareness of Protestant-centrism in the conceptualization of religion, or the political character of religious studies. The greatest problem will become what kind of discourse academics can contribute to the world of faith. In this context, the research on spirituality that is currently popular today can also be understood as the product of a desire to re-narrate the world of faith so that it can separate itself from conventional concepts of religion loaded with hardened implications.⁵⁹ Of course, that does not mean a return to the nativism of religious studies of the wartime period; nor, as illustrated in the Aum Shinrikyō incident, will it be tripped up by a longing for connection with religious experience. However, what academics must pay attention to is why the act of discussion about religion has to be entirely separate from the act of religious belief. If we suppose that positive achievements in scholarly cognition concerning the world of faith are more than something that merely establishes hegemony in the world of academic knowledge, then where is it that their positive significance can be found? An effort to answer these questions is underway. Not only in religious studies, but in the whole of research on religion, this ought to be dealt with as a question widely addressed by all participants.⁶⁰ It is impossible

57 Nishida Kitarō 1940. Excerpts translated in Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, eds. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, second edition, vol. 2 (Columbia University Press, 2006).

58 Nishitani 1940; Nishitani 1941; Nishitani 1942; Nishitani et al. 1943; Nishitani 1944; Nishitani 1945.

59 Shimazono 1997b; Itō Masayuki 2003.

60 See the Epilogue below.

to return to a discourse of objective neutrality in religious studies like that offered by Kishimoto or by Tiele, who was so much admired in Meiji Japan.

In general, the method of discourse theory invoked in the concept of religion uses a description focusing on a core regulated by the principle of homogeneity; because of that situation, the Western-style concept of religion seems to have exaggerated the passivity of Japanese society, which has one-sidedly accepted the constraints of intellectual history. Today, it is hard to imagine escaping from Western influence; even fundamentalism and nativism are reactions to a Western modernization that continue to draw into itself. Within the Westernized world, too, there is always an irretrievable Derridean “excess”: for, as Asad has pointed out, modernization is certainly not globally uniform.⁶¹ In that sense descriptions made via a discourse theory that is founded in the conventional theory of the concept of religion must perhaps be redrawn, now as something ambivalent based on the potentials of those acts of enunciation considered the supplementary work of the margins. Yet since it retains its potential for expression on the basis of historical limitations, a reconstruction of a kind of research on religions in the form of considering a relationship with the world of faith is also to be sought.⁶² Precisely on this sort of historical plane, the possibilities of religious experience that have supported the discourse of *sui generis* uniqueness of religion can both transcend the everyday and become something repositioned by returning to it. On the basis of that “quality of completely contradictory self-identity” that Nishida Kitarō reached after long reflection, one must deal with acts enunciating religion as “historically embodied practice.”

In view of the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō incident, speaking about religion cannot be something neutral, for the reason that such discussion is always an act of intervention in the present. This confronts religious researchers with the political nature of their acts. We must not avert our eyes from that: it is impossible to have a simple world without differentiation between subject and object, where the scholar and the believer can be treated as if in a single dimension of existential identity. It is not like Yanagawa Keiichi once claimed: “One assimilates in oneself the emotion of the other, blocks the differentiation between the seer and the seen, achieves a new interpretation from their accordance,” although of course it is significant to objectively treat the existence of that irrepressible desire. In the relationship of scholarship and faith, the time has come for a repositioning, though not either in the form of the dimension of existential identity or the pure dichotomy between subject and object. Rather, at such time the history of religious studies will become raw material for historical

61 Asad 1996.

62 Isomae 2007a.

research that has the purpose of facing the relationship between scholarship and faith squarely; it will unearth leads for opening up new narratives concerning universality and transcendence, faith and knowledge, or salvation and sin.

The reason for this is because within religious studies, various dualistic structures have been adopted: “religious studies versus theology, or Buddhist studies versus Shintō studies versus other humanities and social sciences,” or “Western versus the non-Western or Japanese.” Even if it should occur in a form that runs counter to the consciousness of the participants, this structure always gives rise to opportunities to differentiate selves. In that connection, religious studies more than anything conceals an insatiable desire for unattainable transcendence; and beyond just pairing itself with anxiety about salvation for the self, this desire for transcendence is a destiny that absolutely cannot be satisfied. The desire to be assimilated with the transcendent—regardless of any connection to criticism about whether or not such fusion experience is authentic—is something we ceaselessly resort to, something constantly repeated based on differences in the various contexts surrounding our subjectivities. Obviously the discourse of religious studies is not identical with the doctrines or practices of faith; the discourse of religious studies is not doctrines or practices of salvation or liberation. Still, it represents the vestiges of the hard-to-abandon desire for salvation or liberation. The strong inclination towards *sui generis* religious experience recognizable in religious studies in Japan must be read closely as a process of counter-reaction to the formation of differentiation. However, we must completely reject the universalism of an old-fashioned religious studies that identifies religion with that process of differentiation itself; we must insist instead that there are no positions claiming to be an absolute reflective pure consciousness standing outside this world, like God.⁶³ Whether through discourse theory or deconstruction, regardless of

63 Such hopes come as concepts and theories of religion from scholars who continue to want to perform their work on the basis of this perspective as an academic method. See for example Fukasawa 2006. In trying to reconstruct comprehensiveness and transparency on the basis of a modern design, what kind of problems must be considered? His way of writing as well as that of Nakazawa Shin'ichi, whose works, in contrast to those of Fukasawa, have gained mass popularity, really makes one reconsider the unique logic of contemporary concerns held by Japanese religious studies. For those who define their academic stance only through the relationship of religious studies in Japan with the Western world, Western knowledge is still idealized. As to what kind of reshaping is occurring today through a separation from the Western world: as in Nakazawa's former idealization of Tibetan knowledge, the act of representation, which must be called the politics of the depoliticized, must be taken up for debate.

the newness or oldness of the design, the stance of today's theory of religion must be interrogated.

From the time when that sort of understanding has appeared, the history of religious studies in modern Japan has become a legacy with the potential to serve people outside Japan. However, this will not be achieved by the securing of its own Japanese identity, but by perusing the vestiges of fissure and contradiction hidden within. For people both inside and outside Japan this search must become something that will pioneer the possibility of re-reading, generation after generation, the rutted path of the bitter struggles of the modern Japanese experience of modernization. The act of writing academic history amid that past—even if in that process one's own identity is exposed to the crisis of dissolution—is an opening up, one by one, of the folds that have been tucked in, layer upon layer upon layer.

PART THREE

*Establishment of Shintō Studies and
the State Shintō System*



Modern Shintō Studies and Tanaka Yoshitō

Today the name of Tanaka Yoshitō (1872–1946) is totally forgotten even in Japan. Yet he was one of the leading scholars of Shintō in the prewar period. Besides teaching at Kokugakuin and other universities, he was associate professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo in charge of lectures on Shintō, the only chair of Shintō at any of the imperial universities. Even more importantly, he was the first anywhere to advocate the scholarly study of Shintō and can be considered the father of modern Shintō Studies (Shintōgaku).

Prewar Shintō Studies still carries the stigma of a reactionary, nationalistic discipline to which hardly anyone looks back. In the broader view, however, it was in its own time a new field and scholars from many different backgrounds got involved. Its establishment was bound up with political issues of the era, such as freedom of religion and the categorization of shrines as non-religious. If we trace the process by which Tanaka created the discipline, we discover that Shintō Studies arose not from the premodern Kokugaku (National Learning) movement, but instead as the philosophy-oriented ideological movement of the Meiji era (1868–1912) known as the “national morality doctrine.” Its main advocates were university scholars, moreover, not local shrine priests or popular intellectuals. In this chapter I will examine the way Shintō Studies began and how it was intertwined with the intellectual and political conditions of the prewar period. The scholarship of Tanaka Yoshitō proves a very suitable subject for learning what Shintō Studies was really like at that time.

The National Morality Doctrine

Tanaka Yoshitō was born in the village of Yonegawa in the Kuga district of Yamaguchi prefecture. He was the second son of a family that had provided the village headmen for generations. As a child, he had been an acolyte in a local Zen temple of the Rinzai Kenninji lineage. Indeed, the two Chinese characters of his given name were not read “Yoshitō” at that time, but rather “Ginō,” using the Chinese style of pronunciation typical of Buddhist names.¹ He later attended Kinjō Middle School (in Mita, Tokyo) and after graduating from First Higher School (Tokyo), enrolled at Bunka Daigaku (which later became the

1 Yoshimura 1935, pp. 98–99.

Faculty of Letters of the Imperial University of Tokyo) in 1897, and graduated in the Department of Philosophy in 1903.²

Student of Inoue Tetsujirō

Inoue Tetsujirō was the professor of the philosophy department who lectured on Shintō history and was an active promoter of the national morality doctrine at the time Tanaka was studying at the Imperial University. Tanaka regarded Inoue as his mentor and simultaneously studied the two fields of science of education and Shintō under Inoue's guidance.³ There was then no faculty or even department of education at the university, and only one course in education was taught at Bunka Daigaku; of course there was no chair of Shintō Studies. Consequently Tanaka pursued his interests in education and Shintō within the Department of Philosophy.

The national morality movement that Inoue championed went back to the previous decade, when its ideas were first developed in support of the national policy of encouraging emperor worship and in opposition to what was seen as the this-world-denying nature of Christianity. As typically argued in Inoue's works *Chokugo engi* (Commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education; 1889) and *Kyōiku to shūkyō no shōtotsu* (The Clash of Education and Religion; 1893), this movement viewed "Western and traditional thought as operating in the same dimension," and distanced itself from earlier writers on Japanese morality such as Nishimura Shigeki (1828–1902) by attempting to systematize ideas on national morality in a theoretical and historical manner.⁴

With the advance of capitalism in Japan brought about by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, the period between 1907 and 1916 (roughly Meiji's fifth decade) brought about the intensification of labor activism and the rise of socialism. Countering such popular political energies, a reactionary movement arose tapping into the growing patriotism of these years. As Unuma observes, national morality was spread throughout the country by including the moral principles of unity of loyalty and filial piety and the idea of Japan's unique polity (*kokutai*) as set forth by scholars such as Inoue Tetsujirō in state-designated ethics school textbooks. The movement also aimed at clarifying the essential principles of moral education for teachers in primary and secondary schools, as well as teachers' training schools, through lectures organized by the Ministry of Education.⁵ The national morality doctrine in the narrow sense

2 On Tanaka Yoshitō's life, see Inoue Nobutaka 1987; Kishimoto Yoshio 1955.

3 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 45; Tanaka Yoshitō 1912b, "Jo," p. 3; Tanaka Yoshitō 1918, "Jo," p. 2.

4 Watanabe Kazuyasu 1985, p. 99; Yamada 1972, p. 235.

5 Unuma 1979, p. 366.

meant here refers to the movement of the latter half of the 1900s and early 1910s when it broadened its scope from countering Christianity to opposition to the labor movement and Western-centered thought in general. The particular work that “approached being a state-designated theory of ethics, and had a profound influence on education in Japan in this period” was Inoue’s *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* (Outline of the National Morality Doctrine; 1911).⁶

The 1897–1903 period when Tanaka was a student at the Imperial University in Tokyo coincided with the incipient phase of the national morality movement. During this period, Inoue published his *Rinri to shūkyō no kankei* (The Relationship of Morality and Religion; 1902) criticizing scholars of ethics of the time who advocated a purely Western style of education. He also produced his three-part set on Confucianism, publishing in rapid succession works on the Wang Yangming (1900), Ancient Learning (1902), and Zhuxi (1906) schools. In these works Inoue consistently discussed early modern Confucian studies from a standpoint aimed at developing the national morality doctrine.⁷

Tanaka’s encounter with Inoue was to influence the content of his research throughout his life. After completing the Bunka Daigaku postgraduate course, Tanaka published two works on Shintō thought of the National Learning lineage, both under Inoue’s influence: *Hirata Atsutane no tetsugaku* (Hirata Atsutane’s Philosophy; 1909) and *Motoori Norinaga no tetsugaku* (Motoori Norinaga’s Philosophy; 1912).⁸ In 1922 he submitted his doctoral thesis entitled “Nihon tetsugaku no hattatsu” (The Development of Japanese Philosophy) based on these earlier publications. The thesis sought to define National Learning as a philosophical tradition that was uniquely Japanese, and in it Tanaka voiced the hope that his findings “would contribute both to the theory and the practice of our national education.”⁹ As such, his works can be described as a “National Learning version” of Inoue’s trilogy on Japanese Confucianism. In addition, Tanaka also turned his attention to Sect (or Denominational) Shintō. These were all subjects mentioned by Inoue in his memoirs as topics that captured his interest and that he felt should be thoroughly investigated.¹⁰

Towards a Japanese Theory of Education

After graduation in 1903, Tanaka taught subjects such as “Practical Morality” and “Theory of National Morality” at Kokugakuin University while pursuing his

6 Yamada 1972, p. 235.

7 Inoue Tetsujirō 1905, p. 6.

8 Tanaka Yoshitō 1909a, “Hanrei,” p. 2.

9 Tanaka Yoshitō 1944, “Hanrei,” p. 2.

10 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 46.

studies at the graduate school of what had become the Imperial University's Faculty of Letters.¹¹ Soon afterwards he began to teach education at Nihon University and Tōyō University as well.¹² Both institutions were well known for their *kokutai* ideology-influenced teaching for Shintō priests and lawyers. Tanaka's colleagues at these universities included Miyaji Naokazu (1886–1949) of Kokugakuin (who would later become Tanaka's fellow professor of the Shintō Kenkyūshitsu (Shintō Research Office) at the Imperial University of Tokyo), Yamada Akiyoshi (1844–1892), and Hiranuma Kiichirō (1867–1952) of Nihon University, all of whom were also politicians with a keen interest in Shintō matters. It seems, however, that Tanaka's university positions were all part-time lectureships, and his main employment was as a teacher (and later head instructor and principal) at Kinjō, his middle school alma mater.¹³

During this period, Tanaka's research and publications dealt with education and national morality.¹⁴ From 1905 onwards he published a series of articles about what he called his "New Education" in a number of specialized journals. His article "Gojin no iwayuru shin kyōikugaku" (My New Pedagogy), written in 1905 in the immediate aftermath of Japan's victory over Russia, set the tone:¹⁵

This I call Knowledge . . . that which makes us realize the origins of our nation and the glory of our *kokutai*, and which encourages us to fulfill our given occupation as a member of our national society. . . . This I call Feeling: to love our nation from the heart, and to be loyal to our nation with true sincerity. This I call Determination: the determination to exert oneself in one's given occupation without a single thought for one's own benefit or comfort. To perfect these is the true and great aim of our education; this is the fundamental philosophy of what I call my "New Education."¹⁶

Setting out a nationalistic pedagogical doctrine that aimed to instill absolute devotion to the state in the entire populace, Tanaka detailed an educational practice that penetrated into all aspects of people's lives—intellectual,

11 *Nihon Daigaku kyūjūnenishi*, vol. 1, p. 352. Since graduate school programs at the time were five years long, according to simple calculation Tanaka's enrollment continued up until June 1908.

12 *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1933, p. 203; *Kokugakuin Daigaku hyakunen shi*.

13 *Kinjō hyakunenishi*, pp. 246–47; *Kinjō Gakuen Kōtōgakkō dōsōkai meibo*, p. 3.

14 For commentary on Tanaka's educational theories, see Yamamoto Hitoshi 2006.

15 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932a, p. 3.

16 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, pp. 30–31; repr. in Tanaka Yoshitō 1909b.

emotional, and volitional. In his main work in this field, *Saishin kagakuteki kyōikugaku* (The Latest Scientific Pedagogy) of 1909, Tanaka discussed not only theoretical questions but also practical teaching methods such as the choice of textbooks, discipline and punishment, health, and physical training. In a work called *Katei kyōikugaku* (Education for the Home) of 1912 he even addressed everyday matters such as prenatal care, clothing, and child care.¹⁷

The outlook that defined all Tanaka's writings on these subjects was that of *wakon yōsai*, that is, embracing "Japanese spirit" while making the most of "foreign learning":

In my opinion, in fact, regarding the form for research on education . . . the views of Johann Friedrich Herbart and Tuiskon Ziller, and the research methods of Paul Gerhard Natorp and Paul Bergemann, must all be addressed and referred to. In the area of content we must delve into educational phenomena of Japan in the past and present and thereby seek the foundation of education in the depths of our own country's thought. It is urgent that we organize education on that foundation.¹⁸

While Western science needed to be absorbed as formal knowledge, he also argued that this knowledge must be adapted to the unique, historical traditions of the Japanese people. Thus his publications can be divided into works that expound on Western principles of education and ethics, such as *Keitōteki seiyō kyōiku shi* (A Systematic History of Western Education; 1908) or *Rinrigaku gairon* (Introduction to Ethics; 1927), and works that treat education and national morality as adapted to Japanese circumstances, such as *Saishin kagakuteki kyōiku* (The Latest Scientific Education; 1909), the above mentioned *Katei kyōikugaku*, and *Kokumin dōtoku yōryō kōgi* (Lectures on the Main Points of National Morality; 1918).

Tanaka wrote: "The ultimate goal of education must be absolute and universal. However, its immediate aims and methods must be particular to each state and each historical period and must be selected in such a way as to serve the attainment of this ultimate goal in the best possible manner."¹⁹ Underlying these statements was the concept inherited from Inoue Tetsujirō summed up in the phrase "the phenomenal is the real."²⁰ This concept defined the particular as directly coupled to the universal without any intermediary. In this

17 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, p. 21.

18 Tanaka Yoshitō 1909b, "Jo," p. 4.

19 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, p. 27.

20 Inoue Tetsujirō 1901.

way, Tanaka managed to separate Western pedagogical principles from their social background and transform them to suit Japanese society from the viewpoint of the state. This was the core principle of the national morality movement, which stressed the necessity “to investigate historically and critically our national morality while referring to ethical theory, and to raise awareness of the guiding role of ethical theory in shaping the policies of the future.”²¹

As an advocate of the national morality doctrine, Tanaka evoked the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), writing, “Revering above all the sacred principles of the Imperial Rescript on Education, we make it the foundation of education.”²² Among the “unique Japanese ideas” referred to in the Rescript, Tanaka stressed loyalty and filial piety to the state, conceived as a household stemming from the unbroken, eternal imperial line:

The imperial line is unbroken through the millennia. The multitude is loyal and dutiful, and the relation between ruler and subject is not second even to that between father and son. The imperial house is the family head of the multitude; the people are children of the imperial house. Ruler and subject are in harmony as one body; high and low come together to form one whole. With its *kokutai* unrivalled in the universe, our nation maintains eternal independence. This is certainly not coincidental; in truth, these facts form the basis of our education, and constitute the fundamental principle of my New Education.²³

Japan’s national morality, then, is “a philosophy unique to our nation, rooted in our history and geography.”²⁴ Being different from Western ethics, Tanaka argued, the national morality theory on education had to be derived from Japan’s own historical traditions. This is the reason Tanaka studied these traditions and called his theories “Japanese education.”²⁵

Critics of Tanaka’s time described him as a scholar “who has a very distinct message that is rarely heard from others.”²⁶ He was a well-known figure among educators, and the three-volume reference work *Nihon gendai kyōikugaku taikei* (Outline of the Modern Science of Education in Japan; 1929) dedicated no less than a hundred pages to his writings. His books *Keitōteki seiyō kyōikushi*

21 Yamada 1972, p. 240; Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, chapter 2.

22 Tanaka Yoshitō 1909b, “Hanrei,” p. 2.

23 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, p. 28.

24 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, p. 27.

25 Tanaka Yoshitō 1905, p. 31.

26 Dai Nihon Gakujutsu Kyōkai 1927, pp. 104–105.

(A Systematic History of Western Education), *Kokumin dōtoku yōryō kōgi* (Lectures on the Main Points of National Morality), and *Rinrigaku gairon* (Introduction to Ethics), which became popular as textbooks used for the national teachers' examination, were reprinted over and over, and even sold well second hand.²⁷

Until 1908, however, Tanaka did not refer to what he considered Japan's distinctly Japanese thought as "Shintō." At the time, Shintō was regarded as different from the Confucian-inspired "Imperial Way" (*kōdō*) and was not at the center of discussions about national morality. At this early stage Tanaka was still heavily influenced by Inoue and did not venture beyond the well-trodden paths opened up by his teacher. When and why, then, did Tanaka try to place Shintō at the very basis of national morality and to systematize it as the "fundamental philosophy of the Japanese people"? Looking at this question will provide us with important keys to understanding the origins of modern Shintō Studies.

Tanaka's Shintō Studies Project

Tanaka Yoshitō's first article to fall within the scope of Shintō Studies²⁸ appeared in 1908, three years after his 1905 debut article on pedagogy, but from 1910 onwards, writing on Shintō constituted the bulk of his publications. Most of these articles appeared in journals for shrine priests, including *Zenkoku Shinshokukai kaihō*, the organ of the Zenkoku Shinshokukai (National Association of Shintō Priests) founded in 1898, the *Jinja Kyōkai zasshi* published by the Jinja Kyōkai (Shrine Association) founded under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs Shrine Bureau in 1902, *Kokugakuin zasshi*, the journal of the Kōten Kōkyūsho (Research Institute for the Imperial Classics) and its successor Kokugakuin University, and *Kōten Kōkyūsho zasshi*, published by the Hyōgo branch of the Kōten Kōkyūsho.²⁹

The publication of *Hirata Atsutane no tetsugaku* (Hirata Atsutane's Philosophy) in 1909, *Shintō hongī* (The Essence of Shintō) in 1910, and *Motoori Norinaga no tetsugaku* (Motoori Norinaga's Philosophy) in 1912, all as monographs, established Tanaka as an expert on National Learning Shintō and

27 Dai Nihon Gakujutsu Kyōkai 1927, p. 105; *Kyōiku ronsō* 1927, p. 167.

28 "Motoori-okina oyobi Hirata-okina no gakusetsu no idō o ronjite kongo no Shintō kenkyū-jō no chūi ni oyobu" (On the Differences between the Theories of the Masters Motoori and Hirata; Including Suggestions for Future Shintō Research), *Zenkoku Shinshokukai kaihō* 112 (1908).

29 *Teiyū rinrikai rinri kōenshū* 251 (1923); *Kyōiku ronsō* 10:6 (1923).

Shintō philosophy. Soon he became a sought-after speaker on Shintō for all sorts of meetings and events,³⁰ appearing on the same podium with prominent figures like Miyaji Naokazu, Inoue Tetsujirō, Mizuno Rentarō (head of the home ministry's Shrine Bureau), Kōno Seizō (Kokugakuin University), and Saeki Ariyoshi (Kōten Kōkyūsho).

What is notable about the occasions at which Tanaka spoke on Shintō is that they were not for specific private groups, but were either seminars for shrine priests or, less often, lectures open to the general public; they were organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs, by local associations of shrine priests, or by Kokugakuin University. The scope of his activities in this field was thus most strongly oriented towards teaching about Shintō for shrine priests. Tanaka, like other Shintō Studies scholars of his time, regarded shrines as the embodiments of the Meiji government principle that people should revere the gods and worship the imperial ancestors (*keishin sūso*) and thus the very heart of the *kokutai*. In this light the training of priests was a matter of national importance: "Priests, who serve at shrines from morning till night, must be of outstanding ability and knowledge and present guiding examples to society."³¹ Thus, Tanaka's move into the study of Shintō did not constitute a break with his earlier interest in national morality and education, but the focus of his concern shifted from the general population to the more specific group of shrine priests, whom he called "representatives of myself."³² In this context, it is also interesting to find that Tanaka became president of the Shintō Youth Association of Kokugakuin University in 1913, an association whose membership consisted of "students of Kokugakuin University and the Kōten Kōkyūsho."³³

In August 1918 Tanaka left Tokyo and his various university posts there to become a teacher at the Fifth Higher School, located in Kumamoto, Kyushu.³⁴ Rather than as an impediment to his research, Tanaka probably regarded this position as an excellent opportunity to put his pedagogical ideas into practice, since he wrote, "Real education is the putting into practice of educational

30 *Zenkoku Shinshokukai kaihō* 118, 119 (1908); *Kokugakuin Daigaku hyakunen shi*, vol. 1; *Kōten kōkyū zasshi* 54–56 (1913), 80 (1915), 110–12 (1917).

31 Tanaka Yoshitō 1925, pp. 34–35.

32 Tanaka Yoshitō 1925, p. 35.

33 Kishimoto Yoshio 1955. The goals of the Shintō Youth Association (Seinenkai) of Kokugakuin University were "to clarify the Great Way of the pure *kami*-mind, study the trends of the times, and manifest the essence of the *kokutai*." See Kokugakuin Daigaku Shūren Hōkokudan Shintō Seinenkai 1941.

34 Five three-year higher schools had been set up at the same time in different parts of the country (Sendai, Tokyo, Osaka, Kanazawa, and Kumamoto) to prepare students to enter the imperial universities.

theory.”³⁵ Reflecting this orientation, when he served in later years as president of the Imperial Women’s University, he was known as “the Passionate Professor.”³⁶ Although the number of his articles and speeches decreased during his time in Kumamoto, Tanaka continued to lecture on Shintō at seminars for priests organized by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Tokyo, publish some articles in the journal of the Kumamoto Association of Shrine Priests, and engage in other activities.³⁷

Three years later, in April 1921, Tanaka was invited to teach as associate professor in the Faculty of Letters at the Imperial University of Tokyo under the new chair of Shintō Studies that had been established there the previous year. Tanaka was forty-nine years old at the time. The chair of Shintō Studies had apparently first been proposed by Inoue Tetsujirō after consulting with Haga Yaichi (professor emeritus, and then president of Kokugakuin University; 1867–1927) at a faculty meeting in 1919, but it was ultimately established as part of the University Reforms Directive (*Daigaku Kaisei Rei*) implemented in 1920, with the aim of “pursuing the comprehensive study of Shintō, which is deeply related to the nation’s public morals.”³⁸ In contrast to the training courses for shrine priests established earlier at the Jingū Kōgakkān in the city of Ise and the Kōten Kōkyūsho in Tokyo,³⁹ this course was unusual in that it was to be an institute for research and teaching open to all, not just trainee priests.

Initially, the university had asked Inoue to be one of the professors of Shintō Studies, but he had declined, and Katō Genchi, Miyaji Naokazu, and Tanaka were selected instead as its professors on Inoue’s recommendation.⁴⁰ Among these, Tanaka’s interests were closest to Inoue’s own, so it is believed that he specially recommended Tanaka as his substitute. Tanaka taught two courses, while Miyaji and Katō taught one course each. Except for teaching National Learning for the first two years, Tanaka annually offered “Outline of Shintō,” based mainly on national morality doctrine, and “Reading the Classics” focusing on the *Kojiki*.⁴¹ The chair of Shintō Studies was upgraded to a “research

35 Tanaka Yoshitō 1912a, p. 27.

36 *Sagami Joshi Daigaku hachijūnen shi*, frontispiece photograph.

37 Tanaka Yoshitō 1920.

38 “Chokurei 409 gō.” (Imperial Order No. 409) Issued 17 September 1920. *Hōrei zensho* 166 (1920), p. 514.

39 Sakamoto Ken’ichi 1983, pp. 4, 88–89; Tani 1985.

40 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, pp. 48–49; *Tōkyō Daigaku hyakunen shi: Bukyokushi*, vol. 1, p. 429.

41 See Endō Jun, “Shintō Kenkyūshitsu no rekishiteki henshen,” in Shimazono and Isomae 1996.

office" (*kenkyūshitsu*) in 1923 and Tanaka continued to serve as its head professor until his retirement in 1938.⁴²

The Imperial Way and Shintō

In 1930 Tanaka wrote:

I know of some who have interpreted the Imperial Rescript on Education as the morality of our nation, but I know of none who argue that it is Shintō. Therefore, my impression is that I am the first to interpret this Rescript in terms of Shintō.⁴³

Searching through Tanaka's writings, we can actually trace his interpretation of the Rescript as the expression of Shintō as far as back as 1908, so his boast can generally be corroborated. We can at least say there is no doubt that he was a pioneer in that respect. The ideas that Tanaka read into the Rescript on Education, however, did not fundamentally go beyond Inoue Tetsujirō's ideas. The foundations of Tanaka's interpretation, like those of Inoue, included several primary points, starting with nationalism: "For the Japanese people, the state forms the foundation of their lives; it rests on the hegemony of the state over the members of society from the outset." He rejected individualism as "an ideology that creates conflict between the state and the individual." In line with his idea of the state as resembling a household, he explained "the household as the state on a small scale and the state as a household on a large scale." The people are expected to "worship the ancestors, honor the household lineage, and ensure the continuity of its rites," viewing the emperor as the head of the household, and pledging "loyalty and filial piety" to the state.⁴⁴ As Yoshida Hikaru points out, Tanaka's view also resembled Inoue's in seeing "the very core of the Rescript as lying in the idea of the preeminent state and the ethic of loyalty and filial piety, both based on the doctrine of the *kokutai* that combines the idea of the state as a family with the theory of the state as an organic body."⁴⁵

The novelty of Tanaka's approach, however, was to place Shintō at the center of the national morality doctrine. While this may seem to be an obvious, conservative argument from the standpoint of later developments in Shintō

42 On his retirement, see *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1933.

43 Tanaka Yoshitō 1930, p. 30. On the side of Tanaka involved with national morality doctrine, see Suzuki Giichi 1965.

44 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, pp. 146, 151, 174.

45 Yoshida Hikaru 1956, p. 241.

thought, at the time it was genuinely new. To understand how fresh it was, we may consider briefly Inoue's views on Shintō, which were typical of a national morality ideologue.

In his 1912 *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* treatise on national morality, Inoue had valued Shintō as part of Japan's *kokutai*: "Shintō is closely connected with Japan's national character... this fact should certainly not be made light of... The importance of the continuity of spirit from ancestor to descendant permeates the spirit of Japan, in both ancient times and today."⁴⁶ Inoue mainly linked Shintō to the goddess Amaterasu's oracle promising eternal imperial rule, the oracle that supported the Rescript on Education.⁴⁷ As mentioned above, it was originally Inoue who took the initiative to found a Shintō Studies chair at the Imperial University of Tokyo, an act that alone indicates his high regard for Shintō. Still, in Inoue's opinion Shintō had some fatal flaws that rendered it unfit as the cornerstone for carrying out government policies.

First, he regarded Shintō technically as a religion, putting it in the same category as Christianity or Buddhism: "There is no doubt that Shintō is a religion; its rituals are those of a religion."⁴⁸ Since already at that time freedom of religion had been guaranteed in Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution (1889), Inoue concluded that, "an interpretation is therefore impossible that would include Shintō, as a religion, in national education."⁴⁹

Another problem for Inoue was that in considering Shintō as a religion, "it appears to be at a much lower level than Buddhism and Christianity... and would not be able to compete with them."⁵⁰ He points out that except for certain *kami* that had been accorded human-like personalities even the names are often unknown, and "[Shintō] includes many "immoral rites and evil teachings" [*inshi jakyō*], so that it cannot help being criticized as "immature" in comparison with religions that have founders such as Buddhism and Christianity. Tanaka was well aware that the concept of "religion" (*shūkyō*) itself was a translation of the English word religion and typically defined with reference to Christianity, thus involving "a founder, scriptures, precepts, articles of faith, missions, and missionaries."⁵¹ Also, most religions dealt with matters of death and the afterlife of the individual.⁵² Shintō lacked almost all of those features;

46 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, p. 131.

47 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, pp. 98–99.

48 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, p. 146.

49 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, pp. 147–48.

50 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, pp. 99–100.

51 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936a, p. 3.

52 Suzuki Norihisa 1979.

its absence of concern about the afterlife, especially, must have detracted from its appeal to potential believers.

Indeed, it was the Imperial Way, not Shintō, that was widely regarded as the spiritual identity of the Japanese as a people. Tanaka noted that: “The general public distinguishes Shintō from the Imperial Way. The first is regarded as irrational and superstitious, and the latter as rational and orthodox; the former is understood as a religion, and the latter as a moral code.”⁵³ Today the two tend to be seen as identical, but at that time most people made a clear distinction between them. Regarding the Imperial Way it was said: “The *kokutai* of Japan is unique. The Japanese as a people are all descended from the imperial house and descendants of the gods (*shinzoku* 神族). For this reason the imperial house is the great ancestral household of the whole Japanese people and the emperor is their great father. The Japanese as a people are one body expressed in the emperor. Being conscious of this, manifesting this, living according to this, is the life of the Japanese people.”⁵⁴ This rhetoric was prescribed in terms of the ideas of loyalty, filial piety, and family-centrism—the core of the national morality accepted from around the third decade of Meiji (1897–1906) as the self-evident morality of the *kokutai*, even by Christians.

Inoue made the same distinction⁵⁵ in placing the Imperial Way at the basis of his ideas on national morality. He valued Shintō merely from the viewpoint of morality in order to subsume it in the Imperial Way, stating that, “Shintō retains early modern tendencies in its morality, and is moreover state-oriented and Japanese-oriented.”⁵⁶ He therefore argued that despite being of a rather lower order, “Shintō cannot be separated completely from our national education, . . . [yet] it will have to be improved” to an ideal condition where “morality has taken the place of religion.”⁵⁷

For Tanaka, by contrast, Shintō was comprehensive, embracing politics, religion, and ethics:

Shintō is an extremely wide-ranging Way that is not easy to grasp in all its aspects. Depending on one’s particular viewpoint one can describe it as political, religious, or moral. But only by attaining a comprehensive

53 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932b, p. 1.

54 Tominaga 1930, p. 56.

55 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 42.

56 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, p. 141.

57 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, pp. 72–73, 142–43. In Inoue’s case this grasp of Shintō in terms of morality was constant throughout his life, but in Inoue Tetsujirō 1933b he does not touch on Shintō’s negative side or suggest any necessity for improvement.

overview of Shintō can one discover that it is an awe-inspiring Great Way that includes all these.⁵⁸

Tanaka thus raised Shintō to a “Way” that regulates all aspects of Japanese life, and that is “identical to the Imperial Way.”⁵⁹ He regarded Shintō as a supra-historical “spirit of the nation” (*minzoku seishin*) that not only remained unchangeable even under the influence of imported religions but even had the power to assimilate them:

The premise is that the people of Japan must always follow Shintō. For Shintō is the principle of Japanese life, without which the Japanese cannot live even for a single day. Before Buddhism and Confucianism arrived it was the norm and basis for everything that Japanese did, and it was through Shintō that they realized their ideals.⁶⁰

That brief passage alone suffices to show why Tanaka is regarded as the pioneer in interpreting Shintō as the basis of national morality.

Shintō and Scholarship

On the basis of his interpretation of Shintō Tanaka laid down the following guidelines for its study:

Japanese all practice the Way of the Japanese nation and realize its ideals. Most of us, however, practice this Way without being aware of it. There is a great difference between practicing it as a mere custom and practicing it with full knowledge of the reasons why. That is why it is necessary for us to study and become aware of the spirit, the ideals, and the Way of the Japanese people.⁶¹

Tanaka’s Shintō studies aimed at establishing a theology that supported the “practice of Shintō,” thus allowing the practice of this “national spirit” to become a conscious effort. Moreover, since this national spirit was a trans-historical entity that absorbed all historical changes without being affected by them, Shintō scholarship served to justify whatever notions scholars chose to read into this spirit. For Tanaka, Shintō scholarship had to serve the same

58 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, p. 132.

59 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932b, p. 2.

60 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, pp. 173–74.

61 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, pp. 23–24.

function as his ideas on education: to support the practical activity of preserving Japan's "national spirit."

This position naturally throws up the question why this national spirit had to be certified as supra- or trans-historical. The answer is that by superimposing on the past such an understanding of the interpreter, thereby supplying it with an authentic character supported by roots in history, the interpreter's position gained legitimacy.⁶²

The spirit of eternal rule by our unbroken imperial lineage goes back to the dawn of time and appears in the form of [Amaterasu's] oracle. In her oracle, Amaterasu gave expression to the great source of life that has been cherished by the Japanese people since ancient times. Therefore this oracle and the national life of the Japanese people are inseparable; this is where Shintō exists.⁶³

For Tanaka, historical changes were not something alien to those who interpret them but were nevertheless merely superficial layers that existed to be transcended by supra-historical universality. His Shintō Studies consisted of a theoretical "Outline of Shintō" on the one hand and of historical interpretations of the Shintō classics and other Shintō topics on the other; but it was clear that the former was much more central to his work because of his strong yearning for trans-historical consciousness. Indeed, he continued to publish books on this subject throughout his life, including *Shintō hongī* (The Essence of Shintō; 1910), *Kamunagara no Shintō no kenkyū* (A Study of Shintō, the Way of the Gods; 1933), *Shintō tetsugaku seigi* (Detailed Exposition of Shintō Philosophy; 1922), and *Shintō gairon* (An Outline of Shintō; 1936).⁶⁴

Tanaka based his interpretations of Shintō on commentaries on the classics and historical studies of Shintō. He regarded the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, especially, as "collections of all that constituted the glory of our people's culture, . . . embracing all fields of philosophy, science, history, morality, and

62 On the relationship of nationalism and historical studies of morality, see Hutchison 1992. On the logic of legitimation in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* mythology, see both Isomae 2010 and Isomae 2009, part 1.

63 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, p. 174.

64 The name "Shintō gairon" Tanaka meant to suggest merely "an initial engagement." See Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, "Hanrei," p. 1. That is, for Tanaka the plan was not confined to an "outline" but was to be a whole study of fundamental principles with the purpose of defining the essence of Shintō.

religion in those days,⁶⁵ and he valued them as the Shintō scripture and the embodiment of the Japanese spirit. He defined the historical studies of Shintō, moreover, as his predecessors' explanation of the national spirit.

Because for Tanaka historical fact was secondary to his theory of essences, his historical works on National Learning and Sect Shintō are no longer valued academically.⁶⁶ His commentaries on the classics, too, are flawed by a lack of bibliographical and philological accuracy and have been largely forgotten. At the time, however, these works did serve a function in providing Tanaka with an historical foundation for his theoretical framework in Shintō Studies.

From the National Morality Doctrine to Shintō Studies

As seen in Tanaka and Inoue, because of the state system from the Meiji era (1868–1912) onward, any discussion of Shintō involved the issue of whether it was a religion or not. In 1970, Murakami Shigeyoshi summed up the situation surrounding Shintō and religion:

The religious policy of the early Meiji period set out by attempting to convert Shintō into a state religion. After much trial and error, policy finally came around to the recognition of freedom of religion for all religious groups with the modern emperor system included in the framework of the principle of religion. This development naturally posed the difficult question of the status of shrines, which contemporary ideology defined as public institutions for the execution of state ritual. In the course of the second decade of Meiji (1877–1886), the government solved this problem by separating ritual and religion. This set the stage for the later development of State Shintō.⁶⁷

Shintō Shrines as Not Religious

Formally, separation of religion and state was established in Article 28 on “freedom of religion” in the Meiji Constitution of 1889, after a long process that had passed from the separation of shrine priests and national campaign teachers in 1882 to the abolition of national campaign teachers in 1884 and the shrine reforms of 1884–1886. Then, however, the government decided to dissociate shrines from religion, defining them as institutions for “ritual” (*sairei*),

65 Tanaka Yoshitō 1922, p. 17.

66 Inoue Nobutaka 1991, pp. 59–67.

67 Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970, p. 113.

while at the same time defining Sect or denominational Shintō as religion.⁶⁸ By this logic, arguing that shrines were not religion, the government chose to place shrines outside the framework of the constitutional freedom of religion, thereby assuring that its policy of making shrine visits a duty of the people would not violate their freedom of religion.⁶⁹

The government identified shrines as places where people's loyalty to the state could be instilled. Shrines were to be no longer associated with "degraded and heterodox" practices; now instead they were places where the ancestral deities who created the state were enshrined and focal points of reverence of the emperors as the founders of the imperial lineage. But if shrines were to be regarded as identical to Shintō, which was often seen as a "primitive" religion, then people might have an excuse for refusing to attend worship at shrines or for treating shrines with contempt.⁷⁰ That was why shrines were dissociated from Shintō.

By the time Tanaka became a university student early in the fourth decade of Meiji (1897–1906), the view that shrines were not part of religion had become established. Even so, discussions for and against this view abounded. Various Christians, Buddhists, and scholars of religion questioned the official position by casting doubt on the non-religious status of shrines and their actual separateness from Shintō. And if they were not religion, what were they instead?⁷¹ Ashizu Uzuhiko and Sakamoto Koremaru have pointed out that those who supported the official position on the non-religiousness of shrines and who were in favor of mandatory attendance at shrine rituals responded to such criticism in two different ways.⁷²

First, there were those who argued that "'shrines were not religious' in the sense that shrines must be distinct from religion."⁷³ Identifying shrines and religion as mutually exclusive concepts was the passive form of the argument. This standpoint, which was the official one supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs among others, was also supported by advocates of the national morality doctrine like Inoue, who wrote: "As a policy, it will be necessary to separate shrines from Shintō, which is a religion . . . Shrine worship must be defined as a ceremony that can be traced back to ancient times in Japan, and

68 Sakamoto Koremaru 1994; Yasumaru 1979; Haga 1994; Inoue Hiroshi 2006, chapter 3.

69 Sakamoto Koremaru 1994, p. 322.

70 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, p. 191.

71 Akazawa 1985; Katō Genchi 1930; Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, chapter 7.

72 Ashizu 1987; Sakamoto Koremaru 1994.

73 Ashizu 1987, p. 125.

be distinguished from religious Shintō. The bad influence of the latter must not be allowed to affect shrines.”⁷⁴

Against that mainstream passivist argument, the more aggressive minority view, with strong support from some quarters, was that shrines and Shintō were identical. In this positive, activist form of the argument, shrines were not “non-religious” because the category of “religion” must technically exclude them, but rather in the special sense that Shintō was an overarching, extraordinary concept involving much more than religion alone, i.e., not solely religious but comprising other functions as well. Advocates of this view argued that shrines and Shintō should not be separated. Tanaka, who belonged to this group, formulated his views as follows:

The Japanese people, being endowed with a true Japanese spirit, sincerely hold an absolute faith in shrines . . . Therefore I firmly hold that Shintō and shrines are religion . . . [The point is that] Buddhism and Christianity are merely religions and nothing more; but Shintō and shrines are politics, as well as morality, as well as a great religion. The combination of these three aspects is the Way of the Gods (*kamunagara no michi*). It is the Great Way of the national subjects of Japan.⁷⁵

As established above, inasmuch as Tanaka defined Shintō as the “national spirit” itself, it was only natural that he would actively support the shrines-as-not-religion argument. That active stance was supported by shrine priests and shrine supporters, as well as members in the House of Representatives in the Diet. Contemporary coverage of lectures by Tanaka reported that his “audiences, consisting of government officials, town and village headmen, school teachers, parishioners’ representatives, and shrine priests, ranged between three and five hundred, and everywhere the venues overflowed with people. The sincere and devoted lectures of speaker Tanaka, especially, which lasted more than three hours, left a strong impression on audiences and touched them deeply.”⁷⁶ One reason given for this popularity was his “skill as a teacher

74 Inoue Tetsujirō 1912a, p. 147.

75 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, p. 187. The intersections of this debate may be easily grasped by referring to sources such as *Jinja mondai ronsō*, *Zenkoku Shinshokukai kaihō*, or *Jinja Kyōkai zasshi*. The view was clearly expressed in a document “Jinja no yōmu” (Important Business of Shrines) (see *Kōten kōkyū zasshi* 71) distributed in 1914 by the Ministry of Home Affairs at a conference of chief Shintō shrine priests. On religious policy in this era, see Akazawa 1985.

76 Lecture given in 1917 for shrines in Hyōgo prefecture. See Tanaka Yoshitō 1917.

and a speaker” but certainly it was established that “In the National Association of Shintō Priests Tanaka’s popularity was astonishing.”⁷⁷

During the late Meiji era and early Taishō era (1912–1926) there had been a “tendency, not only at the Jingū Kōgakkan but also at other specialist schools and programs related to Shintō, to avoid waving the Shintō banner but instead to subsume its study under “National History” or “National Literature.”⁷⁸ This clearly shows that the appearance of a scholar like Tanaka was most welcome to Shintō specialists, since he provided the theoretical underpinnings for their own position. Tanaka’s positive version of the argument on shrines and religion was shared by other scholars who from the late Meiji period onwards actively sought to raise the prestige of Shintō. These included Tanaka’s colleagues at the Imperial University of Tokyo Shintō Research Institute, Katō Genchi and Miyaji Naokazu, along with Kōno Seizō and others at Kokugakuin University. Tanaka kept repeating his views throughout his lifetime, most thoroughly in his book *Jinja hongī* (The True Meaning of Shrines) in 1926.

Making Shintō the State Religion

Tanaka also turned his attention to Sect or Denominational Shintō, which caught his interest because it was “active as a pure religion in missionary work.”⁷⁹ In the space of five years starting in 1932, he completed thirteen articles on Kurozumi-kyō and twelve other official groups of Sect Shintō and in addition an article on a not-legally-recognized body called Shintō Maruyama-kyō.⁸⁰

At the time, Sect Shintō groups were seen as the prototypes of the “immoral rights and evil teachings” that were fiercely criticized both in the media and by psychiatrists.⁸¹ Tanaka, however, made an effort to describe the teachings of the various sects neutrally: “My research on Sect Shintō is neither from the standpoint of the believer who is a fervent worshipper, nor from the standpoint of the opponent who is bent on criticism.”⁸² In addition, although Tanaka had devoted himself to National Learning until about 1910, in his later

77 Yoshimura 1935, p. 99.

78 Miyaji Naokazu, “Shintō no meigi” (The Name Shintō). In Miyaji Naokazu 1943, p. 111. Miyaji lamented the weakness of interest towards Shintō in Miyaji Naokazu 1933.

79 Tanaka Yoshitō 1939 (last section of *Shintō jūsanpa no kenkyū*), p. 181; see Tanaka Yoshitō 1987.

80 Today these works have all been collected and reprinted under the title *Shintō jūsanpa no kenkyū*; see Tanaka Yoshitō 1987.

81 Inoue Nobutaka 1991, pp. 74–83.

82 Tanaka Yoshitō 1933a (last section of *Shintō jūsanpa no kenkyū*), pp. 3–4; see Tanaka Yoshitō 1987).

years he apparently became aware of the inadequacy of National Learning as a medium for educating the masses:

In Shintō the so-called Four Great Masters of National Learning appeared. The pure Way of the Gods (*kamunagara no michi*) they emphasized has been a valuable guiding principle for the educated class, but has proven to be too out of touch with the masses to be useful for their education. . . . But at this time our religious genius Kurozumi Munetada appeared in Bizen province and educated the people's hearts through his deep knowledge of Shintō; improving popular culture, he founded a thriving New Religion.⁸³

Not only in Kurozumi-kyō but also in the other Shintō groups, Tanaka discovered the founders of Sect Shintō to be persons of strength as “teachers of the masses”⁸⁴ who gave Shintō the power to compete even with Christianity. This was something that both National Learning and shrines lacked, yet it was vital if Shintō were to be spread among the people. At the same time, in his treatment of Shintō, no matter what kind of material he was handling, Tanaka always channeled it toward the purposes of the state. Sect Shintō was no exception, so his positive attitude did not extend to those aspects of Sect Shintō that were incompatible with the state authorities, such as the state suppressions of these groups or certain ideas of their founders.

Tanaka regarded Sect Shintō as part of Shintō in the same way that shrines were. On the reasons for the split of Shintō in the Meiji period he wrote:

Our Great Way inherent to our country, . . . Shintō, . . . contributed to the great mission of restoring imperial government and reviving the time when Emperor Jinmu founded the empire; thus it renewed the whole of the religious world and appeared as a pure state religion. However, compared to the past, in our present age of “civilization and enlightenment,” society has become increasingly complicated and it has proven difficult for Shintō to develop as a state religion. It was probably for this reason that the state has emphasized those elements of the Shintō state religion that can be described as the Great Way of government and the Great Way of morality, namely the Shintō of the *kokutai* and Shintō ethics. The

83 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932c (first section of *Shintō jūsanpa no kenkyū*), pp. 2–3.

84 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932d (first section of *Shintō jūsanpa no kenkyū*), p. 2.

development of those other elements that pertain to the Great Way of religion, however, has been left to the people apart from government.⁸⁵

The phrases “Great Way of government” and “Great Way of morality” mentioned here referred to the Shintō of the state, based at shrines; the phrase “Great Way of religion” referred to Sect Shintō. Tanaka regarded both as incorporated into the fundamental idea of “Shintō as a state religion.” Tanaka’s conception of Shintō was identical to Inoue’s concept of national morality in that both aimed to unite the people under the umbrella of statism. By rejecting religious elements and making morality supreme, however, Inoue left shrines and Shintō separated as ritual and religion, respectively, and could not banish the suspicion that shrines might be religion. In contrast, Tanaka actively adopted the shrines-as-not-religion stance that situated Shintō as a superordinate concept subsuming religion. Overcoming the dichotomy of religion and ritual by this logic, he tried to restore the unity of Shintō as it had existed in the early years of the Meiji period.

In order to convince his opponents, Tanaka first of all had to recognize that shrines were “religious” in the same way as the Shintō groups. However, it was necessary to stress at the same time that Shintō was not a religion existing in the same dimension as Christianity or Buddhism, and therefore not “merely” one among many, as had been commonly argued in early Meiji. Here Tanaka accepted the position that “there is not a single person who has no religious consciousness.”⁸⁶ Every human being possesses the impulse to believe in the divine; but the freedom of religion referred to in the constitution was solely that of faith in a specific religious tradition.⁸⁷ The religiosity of Shintō, however, was on a different plane altogether; it was a universal presence within anyone who was Japanese, something that had “an essential relationship with the Japanese as a people (*minzoku*).”⁸⁸

Religion in Japan must necessarily have its base in the religious consciousness of the Japanese people. . . . This religious consciousness can appear as Buddhism, or as Christianity. Only then does it become possible for Christianity or Buddhism not to collide with Shintō. This is the way in which freedom of religion exists.⁸⁹

85 Tanaka Yoshitō 1939, p. 55.

86 Akazawa 1985, pp. 54, 94.

87 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, p. 180.

88 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932e, p. 206.

89 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, pp. 189–90.

For Tanaka, in other words, the freedom of religion guaranteed in the constitution was only possible on the premise that one agreed to believe in Shintō *as well*. By interpreting Shintō as a superordinate concept subsuming religion, as the Japanese spirit itself, as an essence inseparable from the people, Tanaka lifted Shintō above all criticism. The questions why Shintō subsumed religion or why Shintō did not consist of “immoral and evil” practices were not even raised; all attention was given to justifying in a theoretical way the a priori existential starting point that Shintō was the spiritual prop and mainstay of the Japanese people. Tanaka duly took this argument to its logical extreme when he wrote that, “if there are believers of particular creeds who cannot tolerate this . . . they will have to emigrate to another country and practice their faith there.”⁹⁰ This amounted in substance to a resurrection of the ideology of Shintō as state religion.

Tanaka’s conception of Shintō, then, adopted as its premise the religious policy of Shintō as non-religious that had been established by the turn of the century; it aimed to re-unify Shintō, which had been divided between religion and ritual because of the demand for freedom of religion, and recuperate it as a true state religion, at the same time restricting the religious freedom supposedly guaranteed in the constitution. As a result of his insistence on Shintō faith as normative, Tanaka departed from the position of Inoue, for whom Shintō was merely a “phenomenon,” and raised it instead to the higher rank of “essence,” a term that Inoue had used to refer to the ultimate truth of the universe.

Thus, Tanaka’s position differed from Inoue and other members of the older generation who treated Shintō only as an ingredient of the Imperial Way ideology. It also diverged from the approach of institutions such as the Jingū Kōgakkan and the Kōten Kōkyūsho, where the study of Shintō was regarded as the province exclusively of shrine priests. The approach treating Shintō as a superordinate state religion was reflected in the studies on Shintō published by Tanaka, Katō Genchi, Miyaji Naokazu and others from around the 1910s onwards. Tanaka was both chronologically the first to argue along these lines and the scholar whose work most typically embodied these characteristics. Shintō thus gave birth to modern “Shintō Studies” (Shintōgaku) as what Kant called a concept beyond conceptualization, with the notions of loyalty and filial piety advocated by the national morality movement at its core.

90 Tanaka Yoshitō 1932e, p. 210.

Founding “Shintō Studies”

The first research organization to bear the term Shintō Studies in its name was founded in September 1926 as the Shintō Gakkai (Shintō Studies Association) at the Imperial University of Tokyo’s Shintō Research Office. In its statement of purpose this office laid down its aims “to study all aspects of Shintō in a scientific manner and to build up the organization of Shintō Studies” as a field of scholarship.⁹¹ Accordingly, this office’s *Shintōgaku zasshi* (Journal of Shintō Studies) described itself as “the first academic journal in Japan specializing in Shintō.”⁹² Tanaka was the central figure of the Association, author of its statement of purpose and in charge of its management. He ceased publishing in the shrine priest-related journals and became the main author and editor of the Association’s journal; every issue included a foreword and one or two articles by him.

The president of the Association was Ueda Kazutoshi (professor in the Imperial University of Tokyo Faculty of Letters as well as director of the Jīngū Kōgakkai), and the advisory board boasted an impressive array of senior professors of the Imperial University of Tokyo, including Katō Genchi, Miyaji Naokazu, Inoue Tetsujirō, Haga Yaichi (1867–1927), Kakei Katsuhiko (1872–1961), Yamamoto Nobuki (1873–1944), Fukasaku Yasufumi (1874–1962), and Mikami Sanji (1865–1939).⁹³ The Shintō Studies Association was thus an extension of the Shintō Studies chair. The influence of these scholars was felt far beyond the halls of the Imperial University and had a pervasive influence on society through the additional roles played by the participants: Inoue, Ueda, Haga, and Mikami as members of the Kokugo Chōsa Iinkai (Japanese Language Study Committee) from the late nineteenth century; Inoue as a member of the Shūshin Kyōkasho Chōsa Iinkai (Morality Textbook Study Committee); Ueda, Kakei, and Miyaji as either members or secretary of the Shintō Seido Chōsakai (Shintō Institutions Investigation Committee) founded in 1929; and Kakei and Miyaji in 1935 as members of the Kyōgaku Sasshin Hyōgikai (Education Renovation Council).

The word “Shintōgaku” itself was a neologism, first used around 1917.⁹⁴ It remained unfamiliar even in 1926, and in the first issue of the journal *Shintōgaku zasshi* Tanaka was forced to observe, “Since the word ‘Shintō Studies’ is hardly used other than by specialists in the field, there may be those who doubt its

91 *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1926, p. 4.

92 Kishimoto Yoshio 1955, p. 22.

93 Tanaka Yoshitō 1926, p. 5.

94 See bylaws and list of officers of the Shintō Gakkai in *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1926.

very existence as an academic discipline.”⁹⁵ This is evidenced in that neither the Shintō Studies (Shintō Kōza) established at the Imperial University of Tokyo in 1920 nor the Shintō Research Office (Shintō Kenkyūshitsu) that succeeded it in 1923 used the term Shintōgaku in their names. Tanaka himself only began to refer to his “Shintō kenkyū” as “Shintōgaku” in 1924; before that time, he had referred to what he was doing as “Shintō tetsugaku” (Shintō philosophy) since he had understood the true nature of Shintō to be in that category.⁹⁶ To Tanaka, as against the “study” (*gaku*) concerning the dimensions of phenomena as taken up in the sciences (*kagaku*), “philosophy” was “the academic discipline that studies the fundamental principles of all things, and strives to attain an integrated awareness of this world and of human life.” Being the study of essence, philosophy was thus superior.⁹⁷

“Shintō Studies,” however, was now redefined as “the scientific study of facts pertaining to Shintō,” and its methodology was presented as “gathering as much experiential knowledge as possible and organizing it systematically by experimental, observational, and statistical means.”⁹⁸ If this definition were taken at face value, it would have meant that the methodology of Shintō Studies had changed from that of philosophy to that of the natural sciences. In practice, however, there was little if any difference between Tanaka’s later Shintō Studies and his earlier Shintō philosophy. Throughout his life, Tanaka’s approach was to knit together information from historical sources and current conditions in order to discuss the worldview-like system that would govern perceptions of reality. Calling it “Shintō Studies” in order to assert its empirical

95 In my view, first appearances of the term included a piece by Endō Ryūkichirō; see Endō 1917, pp. 228–30; *Tochigi-ken shinshokukai kaihō* 39, 40; *Teiyū Rinrikai rinri kōenshū* 184. See *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1926, p. 5.

96 Tanaka’s use of the term *Shintō tetsugaku* first appeared 1909 in an article “Shintō tetsugaku kōsei no hensen” (The Changing Structure of Shintō Philosophy), *Tetsugaku zasshi* 24:270. The last appearance was in a series of articles titled “Shintō tetsugaku no konpon mondai” (Fundamental Problems of Shintō Philosophy); see vol. 3 of *Shintō kōza*. However, Tanaka’s fondness for and use of the term Shintō philosophy in a positive sense continued until about 1920; see Tanaka Yoshitō 1920. Indeed, Tanaka subsumed both Shintō itself and Shintō research similarly in the category “Shintō philosophy,” which was related to his idea of cognition of essence (see Tanaka Yoshitō 1918, p. 29).

97 Tanaka, “Shintō tetsugaku no konpon mondai,” in *Shintō kōza*, vol. 3, pp. 5–6; this definition was consistent from his first writings onwards. For example, see Tanaka Yoshitō 1910, p. 16.

98 *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1926, pp. 5–6. The first appearance of “Shintōgaku” in Tanaka’s writings was in a piece “Shintōgaku gairon” (Outline of Shintō Studies). In *Shintō Shōgakkai dai ikkai kōshūkai. Kōgi hikki* (1924).

and value-neutral stance was the current of the times in the humanities and social sciences. He was merely trying to camouflage the normative character of his own work by appearing to conform to the rational criteria of the time.⁹⁹

However, the main problem with Shintō Studies was not so much the disguise of empirical methodology as the powerful ambition of the scholars who led the field to unify and systematize Shintō Studies as an academic discipline. As their specialties showed, the members of the Shintō Studies Association came from diverse academic backgrounds and their approaches diverged widely: Inoue approached Shintō from the viewpoint of morality, Katō from religious studies, Miyaji from national history, Haga and Ueda from literature and linguistics, and so forth. Strange as it might seem today, research on Shintō up to that point had certainly not been conducted within a unified framework of “Shintō Studies.” Miyaji described the situation as follows:

Most of the National Learning scholars who devoted themselves to studying and teaching after the Meiji Restoration had already died, and there were not many of sufficient erudition to take their place. The study of Shintō, both its history and its philosophy, was handed over to a younger generation, and the Restorationist school of thought that had dominated the territory for so many years had to make way for the new Meiji system. Therefore, while the field has been explored somewhat more widely than before, the number of its specialists has remained small, research has been lacking in subtlety, and it has failed to gain a prominent position in the academic world.¹⁰⁰

As Miyaji recalled, the failure of the early Meiji policy to establish Shintō as the state religion led to the fall of the traditional National Learning scholars who had been its advocates. Instead, contemporary specialists of philosophy and Japanese history (*kokushi*) with a background in national morality began to take up Shintō (Tanaka and Miyaji were two prime examples). They were unable to align the various academic disciplines from which they originated and build a viable system for the discipline, however, and therefore they failed to fill the gap left by National Learning’s demise. Moreover, while for some (Tanaka, Katō, Miyaji, and others), Shintō was the existential foundation of their scholarship, for many others (such as Inoue and Haga), it was no more

99 For a full treatment of this point see Gadamer’s critique of Dilthey; Gadamer 2004, part 2, pp. 218–41.

100 Miyaji Naokazu 1942, pp. 239–40.

than raw material that had to be reduced to an “idealized core concept” such as the Imperial Way or the national spirit.¹⁰¹

Shintō Studies and the Shintō Studies Association that represented it were founded with the aim of unifying the research on Shintō that had up to then been conducted separately by scholars of philosophy, Japanese history, Japanese literature, and religious studies. However, in order to carry this through it was necessary to attach enough independent value to Shintō to justify its study. What functioned as the requisite “binding agent” was the Shintō research of Tanaka and others who defined Shintō as the Japanese national spirit itself. In this light it was no coincidence that Tanaka played such an important role in the foundation and running of the Shintō Studies Association, including writing its statement of purpose. By these steps, the study of Shintō was transformed from a situation in which scholars from various disciplines merely used Shintō as a source of raw material for research into a scholarly discipline that mobilized and integrated the methods of various disciplines. The field went beyond being the exclusive concern of shrine priests, and emerged as a social force in its own right.

Impasse in Shintō Studies

The Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 on one hand heightened patriotic sentiment among its people and strengthened the advocates of statism but on the other laid bare the social contradictions of capitalism. Yamada Kō portrayed the times as follows:

In the final year of the Meiji era (1912), around the time the national morality doctrine was being advocated, uncertainty and instability filled society in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, and the labor union and other social movements grew increasingly intense. In the literary world, it became fashionable to try to express the anxieties of the times by adopting the models of Naturalism and other cultural trends. The Boshin Rescript of 1908 was issued in an attempt to address the situation, and

101 On the main trends of Japanese cultural nationalist theory at the time, convenient sources include Minami Hiroshi 1994 and Muraoka 1962. Within Japan exposés on the historical context of modern Japanese cultural uniqueness theory have centered around certain postwar bestsellers, but such debunking was undertaken by some foreign researchers earlier than in Japan itself. For example, Harumi Befu, “Nationalism and Nihonjinron,” in Befu 1993; Mouer and Sugimoto 1986.

interpellations in the Twenty-seventh Imperial Diet session took up the question of how best to promote the moral education of the people.¹⁰²

For advocates of statism, the problems of dealing with Western thought were no longer limited to Christianity (e.g., as in Inoue's works from the 1880s and the "clash of religion and education"); they now had to cope with diverse ideological challenges coming from liberalism, socialism, and communism. It was in this atmosphere that Tanaka first began to study Shintō in earnest. He pointed out the dangers of Western thought as follows:

As materialist doctrine became the principle for practical teaching, it led to communism and Marxism in the economic field and to egoism and utilitarianism in the field of ethics, as well as to any number of other modern Western "isms" in other fields.¹⁰³

For Tanaka, the essence of Western thought appeared as "materialist philosophy," marked by "Marxism" and "individualism." Since a materialist "has not the least concern for the fate of the people to which he belongs, and knows only of himself and nothing of his ethnicity," he warned that this way of thinking would lead to the collapse of the Japanese *kokutai* in which "the individual self is subsumed in the self of the state."¹⁰⁴

Western philosophy is entering our country at an alarming rate. It is our duty to study our own distinctive thought, which has developed among high and low over thousands of years, in order to Japanize Western philosophy and to form a great, new philosophical system. We should not be content to simply follow and imitate the superficial residuum of Western thought.¹⁰⁵

Tanaka remained consistent in the stance stated above in 1918 throughout his life. His ultimate aim was to construct a metaphysical system in which Shintō would be on a par with Western thought and philosophy. There is little doubt that among proponents of statism, this sense of the threat posed by Western thought was part of what motivated the rise of a movement for the study

102 Yamada 1972, p. 239.

103 Tanaka Yoshitō 1935b, p. 25.

104 Tanaka Yoshitō 1935b, pp. 2, 4.

105 Tanaka Yoshitō 1918, p. 29.

of Shintō that was even more reactionary than the earlier national morality movement.

The Manchurian Incident of 1931 in particular plunged Japanese society into a state of semi-war, and it imparted further momentum to the pronouncements of Shintō scholars:¹⁰⁶ “The sudden occurrence of the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents will raise the awareness of the people . . . and will lead to a further ascendance of Shintō.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, as Akazawa chronicles, the situation had turned a corner. Through prayer festivals and memorial festivals, and the building of shrines to invoke the war dead and military shrines, shrines were pushed to center stage as religious institutions for the protection of the state, and group visits to shrines were encouraged.¹⁰⁸ Supported by the trends of the times, Tanaka used every opportunity to denounce those who held liberal views: for example Sophia University, where some of its Christian students refused to pay their respects at Yasukuni Shrine in 1932; the Faculty of Law at Kyoto University at the time of so-called Takigawa incident in 1933; and in the attack on Minobe Tatsukichi for his liberal views on the emperor as an organ of the state in 1935.¹⁰⁹ However, as exemplified by Tsuda Sōkichi’s criticism of Shintō, even in these years the thinking of Tanaka and others who maintained that Shintō was an all-embracing concept identical to the national spirit lacked substantiation based on scholarly investigation and failed to convince those who held other positions.¹¹⁰

In the second decade of the Shōwa era (1935–1944), under the influence of the *Kokutai* Clarification Movement (*Kokutai Meichō Undō*) launched by the government to more thoroughly indoctrinate the people, courses on theory of “the Japanese spirit” were offered at universities around the country, including “History of Japanese Thought” at the Imperial University of Tokyo, “History of the Japanese Spirit” at Kyoto Imperial University, and “Japan’s *Kokutai* Doctrine” at Tokyo Bunri University and Hiroshima Bunri University.¹¹¹ But the Shintō Studies chair founded at the Imperial University of Tokyo ended up being the only one established anywhere at the imperial universities, and although it was upgraded to *kenkyūshitsu* status in 1923, in 1927, it was denied promotion to the status of full academic department, making it impossible to

106 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, “Jo,” pp. 2–3.

107 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, “Jo,” pp. 2–3.

108 Akazawa 1985, p. 101.

109 Tanaka Yoshitō 1934; Tanaka Yoshitō 1933b; Tanaka Yoshitō 1935b.

110 Tsuda Sōkichi 1948.

111 *Tōkyō Daigaku hyakunen shi: Bukyokushi*, vol. 1. On the theory of Japanese spirituality current in the mid-1930s, see Taira 1965.

enroll students. In 1938 it was only with great effort that the office was able to secure one professorial post and one assistant.¹¹² The role of Shintō Studies in the world of Japanese education thus remained limited. Tanaka himself said that he had proposed to set up a course of lectures on Shintō philosophy at a private professional school around 1931, but had been rebuffed with the remark from the philosophy professors that the school “did not recognize research of that sort.”¹¹³

The plans of Tanaka and others to establish Shintō Studies soon ran into institutional problems. Within the Shintō Studies Association, too, it proved difficult to attain some kind of scholarly unity in the field. Miyaji and other historians gradually ceased publishing in the *Shintōgaku zasshi* journal, and Ueda, head of the Association, who was a specialist in Japanese language, began to publish only very normative essays that were of much poorer quality than the research studies he published in the specialized journals of his field. Thus the scope of the periodical narrowed to only scholars with an interest in Shintō theory based on national morality: Tanaka, Katō, Fukasaku, and a few others. At the Shintō Research Office, meanwhile, the emphasis changed from philosophy (Inoue, Tanaka, Katō) to national history (Miyaji and Hiraizumi Kiyoshi).

In 1938, a little while after both Tanaka and Katō retired, moves began emerging to make Miyaji, who had been a lecturer at the Shintō Research Office, a full professor there. At the same time, Hiraizumi (who was a professor in the Department for Japanese History) proposed to expand the office with one more professor and one more assistant. Both Miyaji and Hiraizumi were members of the Committee for Educational Reform based at the Ministry of Education, where they were in a position to support or deny support for the founding or abolition of university departments and chairs based on how they “stress Japanese characteristics in education . . . from the viewpoint of the state.”¹¹⁴ Hiraizumi himself was in charge of a new chair of “the history of Japanese thought” established in the same year of 1938. From that year onwards, then, the Shintō Research Office and the chair of “the history of Japanese thought,” both of which had the closest relationship with the *kokutai* ideology, were led by scholars from the faculty of Japanese history. Predictably, the new assistant for the Shintō Research Office was chosen from among

112 See Endō Jun, “Shintō Kenkyūshitsu no rekishiteki hensen,” in Shimazono and Isomae 1996.

113 “Shintō tetsugaku no konpon mondai,” in *Shintō kōza*, vol. 3, p. 83.

114 *Kindai Nihon kyōiku seido shiryō* 14, pp. 439–40.

the scholars of the National History Research Institute in consultation with Hiraizumi.¹¹⁵

Even today there is a tendency for research on Shintō to be divided into two fields: Shintō studies in the narrow sense (theoretical and speculative thought about Shintō), and Shintō history, which actually means the textual and philological study of Shintō. This division may be explained as an echo of the discordant prewar split of Shintō studies into philosophical and historical research. It goes without saying that in terms of recognizing religious elements, both approaches share the post-Meiji tendency to view Shintō as the core of Japan's national spirit. Miyaji attempted to rationalize the study of Shintō while remaining true to this conception of Shintō by applying to it the methodology current in national history, namely Leopold von Ranke's method of textual criticism. For Miyaji, now attempting to base his work on strict principles of textual investigation, the earlier philosophical approach appeared as "no more than playing with abstract theories and nimble feats performed with concepts . . . mere speculation, emphasizing only those notions that one finds subjectively attractive, without proper regard for the facts."¹¹⁶

After retiring from the Imperial University of Tokyo in March 1933, Tanaka became an imperially appointed advisor to the government in April. In December of the same year a grand assembly was held in honor of Tanaka's sixtieth birthday. It was held in the Great Hall of the offices of the National Association of Shrine Priests and featured speeches by the leaders of the Association and the leader Kanzaki Issaku of Shintō Taikyo (one of the sects/groups of religious Sect Shintō), as well as by Tanaka's colleagues Inoue, Ueda, and Katō and the directors of Kokugakuin and Nihon Universities. Tanaka remained president of the Shintō Youth Association and also became the new director of the Shintō Studies Association after Ueda's death in 1938. In these positions he continued to exert considerable influence over the world of Shintō and Shintō Studies.¹¹⁷

Tanaka also remained active in education. He continued to teach at Kokugakuin University and at the Imperial Women's College, and in 1935 once more took up the post of president of the Shintō Youth Association of

115 Endō Jun, "Shintō Kenkyūshitsu no rekishiteki hensen," in Shimazono and Isomae 1996; "Nishiyama Isao shi intabyū" (Interview with Nishiyama Isao), in *Tōkyō Daigaku shūkyōgaku nenpō bessatsu* 11; on Hiraizumi, see Karube 1996. On Miyaji, see Nishida Nagao 1965; Endō Jun, "Miyaji Naokazu," in Shimazono and Isomae 1996.

116 "Shintō shi josetsu" [Introduction to the History of Shintō], originally published 1936 as a lecture proposal, repr. in vol. 5 of Miyaji Naokazu 1985, pp. 3–4.

117 *Shintōgaku zasshi* 1933.

Kokugakuin University.¹¹⁸ In his memoirs Tanaka recalled his activities during this period: “While teaching twenty-six or twenty-seven hours a week at Kokugakuin and other universities and colleges, on days I did not have classes, I gave lectures throughout the country. Also, the next issue of the *Shintōgaku zasshi* was always waiting to be edited. Things were always extremely busy at the university.”¹¹⁹ In 1940 he became the director of the Imperial Women’s College; in the following year, at the age of sixty-nine, he personally acted as drill instructor of a “briefing corps” made up of the wartime students of this College. In September 1942, he traveled to Peking together with ethnologist and linguist Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953) to give a lecture at a local branch of the Institutes for the Study of Classics there.¹²⁰

However, due to the war situation, in 1940 the *Shintōgaku zasshi*, to which Tanaka had devoted so much effort, was forced to cease publication. In 1945, both the Imperial Women’s College and Tanaka’s own home in the Koishikawa area of Tokyo were destroyed in an air raid, and a few months later Japan accepted defeat. Soon afterward, Tanaka contracted both a stomach ulcer and pneumonia and died on 4 March 1946 at the age of seventy-four. We can only imagine the feelings that filled Tanaka’s mind at that time: his career begun amid the excitement of Japan’s victory over Russia, but he now found himself a victim on the burned-out plain of what had been a holy war for the sake of the Japanese Empire. He was honored by the Imperial Women’s College with a college funeral,¹²¹ in what was a fitting farewell for an educator of unrivaled zeal.



This chapter traces the development and significance of Shintō Studies through the work of Tanaka Yoshitō. At least from what we have seen of Tanaka in this story, it is clear that Shintō Studies was not a direct outgrowth of the early modern lineage of National Learning. Instead, following the demise of the National Learning scholars after the failure of early Meiji campaign to make Shintō the national religion, the gap was filled by the modern intellectuals who were scholars at the imperial universities and who advocated ideas about “national morality” formed under the influence of German philosophy. Meanwhile, despite the very basic restrictions imposed by submission to the

118 *Shintō panfuretto* 12. Tokyo: Kokugakuin Daigaku Shintō Seinenkai, 1935.

119 Tanaka Yoshitō 1936b, Introduction, pp. 4–5.

120 *Sagami Joshi Daigaku hachijūnen shi*, pp. 211–12; *Kokugakuin Daigaku hyakunen shi*, vol. 2, pp. 882–85.

121 *Sagami Joshi Daigaku hachijūnen shi*, p. 233.

emperor system, a social regime approving “religious freedom” was established. In contrast to the advocates of national morality, who tried to maintain the centrality of the state through interpretation of Shintō in terms of secular morality, Shintō Studies aimed to define Shintō as the national spirit of Japan itself, thus effectively annulling the “freedom of religion” guarantee. Shintō Studies, despite having been born out of the national morality discourse, sought to distance itself from it and assert an independent identity. In that sense, in spite its assertion of the a-historical nature of Shintō, Shintō Studies was an extremely modern field of scholarship shaped by the academism of the last five years of Meiji through the end of the Taishō era (1910s and 1920s).

It might be mentioned that although this chapter limited itself to the development of the philosophical study of Shintō in which Tanaka was a major player, to complete the picture of prewar Shintō Studies it would be necessary also to consider the development of the historical study of Shintō headed by Miyaji Naokazu. A definitive history of modern Shintō Studies will only emerge from an analysis of its development in both these fields of scholarship.

Today, it is often argued that during the prewar period shrines had nothing to do with the ideology of the state, and were merely manipulated in various ways by the religious policies of the government. It is indeed reasonable to distinguish shrines from the state ideology if referring to the individual responsibility of particular shrines. But we should remember that Shintō had earlier been treated with contempt, and it was Shintō Studies—a state-oriented scholarly discipline that had grown out of the national morality doctrine—that gave it an identity grounded in theory. As demonstrated by the deep impression Tanaka’s speeches left on shrine priests, these priests had a need for the discourse of an academic like Tanaka, which provided legitimacy for their position in a theoretical way. However, it is important not to completely bury the issue of shrines and the state within the dimension constituted by the individual designs of a small group of scholars and Shintō priests. It is in the intertwining with historical phenomena that the intentions of individuals are actualized in ways that transcend individuals. Conversely, historical phenomena bound up with the will of specific individuals are inevitably actualized on a level beyond the individual. We have to keep in mind that both those who develop concepts and those who felt a need for such concepts were determined by historical developments beyond their conscious grasp. It is in order to fathom our own historicity, to throw light on the question how we relate to society and how we fit into its structures, that we turn to history in the first place.

The Emperor System and “State Shintō”: Dislocation of “Religion” and the “Secular”

Recent debates on “religion” and “secularity” in Japan have focused increasingly on the principle of the separation of state and religion.¹ Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and Islam are among the typical topics. Generally speaking, the so-called critical intellectuals in Japan have fundamentally diverging reactions to these topics. In the case of visits by prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine, separation of religion and state is the golden rule invoked by those who oppose such visits.² On the other hand, Japanese intellectuals often question the validity of the same principle in the case of Islam, in which case the separation of state and religion is seen as a product of Western Enlightenment that applies only to a specific historical and regional context.³ Thus, when it comes to how a society under Western influence should cope with its own social problems, one approach asserts that Western principles must be actively adopted while the other argues that such principles are inappropriate to the realities of non-Western societies. This behavioral twist may be best expressed in the words of social anthropologist Talal Asad, who stated that even people outside the Western world live “in a world in which ‘the West’ is hegemonic” and where “the old opposition between modernity and tradition” no longer functions. Instead they find themselves in a convoluted state “at once modern and traditional, both authentic and creative at the same time.”⁴ From this point of view, even the Islamist claims for the unity of state and religion and the revival of Islam are fundamentally new phenomena resulting from resistance against Western secularization, and cannot be explained only by principles directly derived from premodern Islamic traditions.⁵

1 Expressions including “the religious and the secular” and “state-religion separation”—that is, “the political and the religious,” or “state and church”—are not all synonymous. “State-religion separation” is ultimately only one form in which “the religious and the secular” has been articulated. On the religious and the secular, see Fitzgerald 2007b. The translation of this chapter relies in part on a draft by Bernard Scheid of an earlier version of the original manuscript.

2 Takahashi Tetsuya 2005.

3 Ōtsuka Kazuo 2004b, p. 183.

4 Asad 1996.

5 Ōtsuka Kazuo 2004b, pp. 177–79.

Theories of Religion in Postcolonial Criticism

As has been eloquently described in recent studies on the relationship of colonialism and religion, non-Western countries, in order to avoid colonization by Western superpowers, had no other option than to promote Westernization if they wanted to have their autonomy recognized. On the other hand, a country that opens its doors “defenselessly” towards the Western world may still end up in a state of colonization, culturally dominated and politically exploited.⁶ If we consider the above-mentioned separation of state and religion under these suppositions, we realize that the problem lies in the fact that non-Western societies are unavoidably drawn into the Western concept of religion and its related systems. Thus, rather than to ask whether or not the separation of state and religion should be enforced in Japanese society, it is necessary to concretely investigate when and how this principle was introduced into modern Japan and what were the functions it performed. This process will reveal the discourses and institutions of religion in Japan in a new light.

The principle of the separation of state and religion was introduced into Japan's postwar society as a universal principle of the Western Enlightenment and as a means of preventing the use of religion by proponents of statist ideology. Yet in Western societies, separation of state and religion has been the exception rather than the rule. Even among countries that are generally believed to have achieved its realization, such as the United States and France, there are substantial differences in its practice. Asad comments on this diversity within Western society:

For even in modern secular countries the place of religion varies. Thus although in France both the highly centralized state and its citizens are secular, in Britain the state is linked to the Established Church and its inhabitants are largely non-religious, and in America the population is largely religious but the federal state is secular.⁷

Elite intellectuals of the Meiji period, like Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911), a Shin Buddhist priest who was a religious advisor to the government, or Inoue Kowashi (1843–1895), who helped draft the Constitution, did not go as far as theorizing about the religion-related discrepancies between the political systems and the social realities. However, they were well aware of this diversity

6 Isomae and Asad 2006; Chidester 1996; Viswanathan 1998b; Veer and Lehmann 1999.

7 Asad 2003, p. 5.

in the West at the time the Meiji Constitution was drafted. As Inoue noted in 1884:

The contemporary state-religion system in both Britain and Russia is basically extremely conservative; it is not a doctrine to adopt or discuss today. There are several different theories about freedom of religion, but such freedom is not totally free or left just as it is, not even in the United States. Countries that follow the principle of “tolerance” tolerate faith in teachings other than those observed by their king and do not prohibit such teachings; medieval Catholicism in Germany is a case in point. Yet even under tolerance the cases vary. Some schools may be permitted, protected, and supervised, while others are not prohibited but treated differently from those that are protected. This is true in France, where Protestantism, traditional Catholicism, and Judaism are recognized, but others are not.⁸

The Meiji intellectuals created descriptive political labels to apply in their own contemporary language, including “state-religion system” for Great Britain, “supremacy of state over church” for Prussia, “system of publicly acknowledged religion” for France, or “separation of state and religion” for the United States.⁹ Inoue had studied in Prussia when he was young, and after his return to Japan, he perused Western literature on constitutional law and translated selected parts of the *Dictionary of National Religions* edited by Maurice Bloch, among other research as part of his job of drafting the Constitution. In Shimaji’s case, at the time when he wrote his “Memorial Opposed to the Three Standards of Instruction” (*Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpakusho*;¹⁰ see below) criticizing the Meiji government’s Daikyōin (1872–1875), he was studying abroad in France where

8 Inoue Kowashi 1884, p. 71. On Inoue’s theories of religion and politics, see Nakajima Michio 1974 and Saitō 2006.

9 Satō Kōji 1992, pp. 16, 17, 28.

10 *Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpaku sho* 三条教則批判建白書. The three teaching principles referred to here were set up by the government in 1872 as guidelines for the Daikyōin (Great Teaching Institute) and consisted of three simple phrases: “(1) respect for the gods and love for the country, (2) making clear the principles of Heaven and the Way of Man, (3) reverence for the emperor and obedience to the will of the court.” (Hardacre 1989, p. 43.) Shimaji, who was instrumental in the Shintō Ministry being replaced by the Ministry of Religion (Kyōbu-shō) in 1872, rightfully sensed an attempt to oust Buddhists from the campaign for a national religion and thus opted for a more sophisticated model (see also Nitta 1997, pp. 254–56).

religion was publicly acknowledged by the state.¹¹ At a time when they were still well aware of such diversity, these elites ultimately opted for the Prussian type of “religious tolerance”¹² that became the model for Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution, which reads: “Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief.” However, in contrast to the present Constitution, which clearly provides that “the State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity” (Article 20.3), the Meiji Constitution deliberately omitted any content directly pertaining to separation of state and religion. Once the Constitution was passed in the Diet the system of governance it established came to be accepted as it was, eclipsing any potential critical perspective objectively addressing the issues of religion. After Japan’s defeat at the end of World War II, which meant the end of the Meiji Constitution system, religious policies were reorganized under the guidance of the United States. That meant the adoption of the principle of separation of state and religion under overwhelming American influence, which again came to be regarded as the universal model.¹³

By engaging the above issues, this chapter aims at a new look at how the separation of state and religion in modern Japanese history was related to State Shintō and religion and how the dichotomy of the “religious” and the “secular” articulated itself in modern Japan; it concludes with a look at the problems of the emperor system in modern Japanese society. When this problem of the emperor system and State Shintō is discussed going back to prewar society, however, care must be taken to note how the inquiry may be permeated with projections of the circumstances of our own time. Such awareness will surely help to enable us to treat objectively Japan’s experience of Western modernization.

Theories of State Shintō and the Separation of State and Religion

In 2006, an essay on “State Shintō and Shintō Shrines as Religious Bodies in Postwar Japan” by the scholar of religious studies Shimazono Susumu created a fascinating stir in Japan. This essay, published at the time public interest was focused on the “Yasukuni question,” pointed out that “State Shintō” continued to exist in postwar society, although in changed form.

11 Ōishi Makoto 1996, pp. 6–7; Nakajima Michio 1974.

12 Nakajima Michio 1976; Yamaguchi 1999, part 1, chapter 2, p. 6; Takii 2003.

13 Yasumaru 1999, p. 219.

Certainly the prewar State Shintō, which was led by the state, had a significantly different character from Shintō of our own time, which is hidden in imperial rites and concealed by continual changes responding to social conditions (i.e., by social dynamism). However, there is a deep continuity. State Shintō has not only not disappeared; in reality it is accurate to see it as never even having been abolished.”¹⁴

According to Shimazono, the term “State Shintō” has been employed in two ways so far. In the narrow sense used by Shintō scholars such as Sakamoto Koremaru or Ashizu Uzuhiko, it refers only to that which was defined as non-religious and therefore excluded from the category of religion. In a broader sense, used for instance by the leading scholar of critical research on State Shintō Murakami Shigeyoshi, it encompasses the combination of Shrine Shintō, Imperial Shintō, and the *kokutai* ideology.¹⁵ In other words, State Shintō in the broader sense includes the prewar emperor system and its national morality ideology exemplified by veneration of the Imperial Rescript on Education and the imperial portrait, which Shimazono calls “ritual” (*saishi*) and “state/religion-cum-education” (*jikyō* 治教).¹⁶ In addition, according to my own understanding, there is yet another view of the contemporary term State Shintō, proposed by the historians Yasumaru Yoshio and Akazawa Shirō, who claim it is formed from two elements, Shrine Shintō and the emperor system ideology.¹⁷ In short, the term can be interpreted in several ways.

The position that Shimazono himself has taken is founded on the understanding that the concept of Shintō by nature includes the ritualistic dimension, making it closer to “State Shintō” in the broad sense above. Thus, he says, “imperial rites or imperial household Shintō [...] is the core of State Shintō as it exists within the present system of law.” Its religiosity is explained as follows:

Imperial rites were rituals performed by the emperor as a descendant of Amaterasu Ōmikami. When the people worshipped the emperor who

14 Shimazono 2006, p. 502. In English, see Shimazono 2005.

15 Shimazono 2001b, pp. 525–50.

16 Shimazono 2001b, pp. 324, 326, 332; Sakamoto Koremaru 1994; Ashizu 1987; Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970. In the prewar period, every school had to possess a copy of the Imperial Rescript on Education together with an imperial portrait. Both were the objects of special ceremonies at important school events.

17 Yasumaru 1988; Akazawa 1985. On the research history relating to State Shintō, see Isomae 2007a; Yamaguchi 1999.

had the character of a priest-king (*saishiō*), it became a system linked to the universe of all the *kami* of the nation.¹⁸

According to this interpretation, even postwar imperial rites are obviously Shintō-like activities. Since any form of Shintō is now assigned to the category of religion, and since the emperor is regarded by the postwar constitution as a symbol of the unity of the Japanese people, it leads to the conclusion that his ritual performance of rites for the native *kami* deities breaches the constitution’s provision separating state and religion.

On the other hand, constitutional jurist Hirano Takeshi points out that “the word “State Shintō” (Kokka Shintō) was not in common use before the war, but only became widely known after the so-called Shintō Directive.”¹⁹ Before that time, that is, from the Meiji era to 1945—the period during which postwar scholars assert that State Shintō existed—the term was virtually non-existent in official or academic contexts.²⁰ From around 1930 a term similar to State Shintō—“Statist Shintō” (*kokkateki Shintō*)—was promoted by Katō Genchi (1929–1931), which fit Shimazono’s idea of the broadly defined usage.²¹ That, however, did not go beyond a manifestation of the reactionary ambition of some Shintō scholars who sought to define Shintō as all of the ideology relating to the emperor system and its rituals, even encompassing school education. *Kokkateki Shintō* did not spread to the point of becoming a well-known term of bureaucratic or academic usage at the time. That being the case, it is not surprising that postwar researchers have been unable to discover the expression “State Shintō” used in prewar society.²² State Shintō cannot, therefore, be regarded as a consistent intention of policy before the war that influenced all sorts of political decisions, but rather as a *post hoc* analytical concept for the cumulative result of the succession of laws that could be called contingencies. In that sense, Sakamoto Koremaru’s criticism was incisive:

The thesis that “shrines are lineage rites of the state” which was promulgated by the Daijōkan on 1 July 1871 was the root of State Shintō. As to

18 Shimazono 2006, p. 484.

19 Hirano Takeshi 1995, pp. 163–64.

20 However, according to Sakamoto Koremaru 1994 (see p. 306) at the twenty-fourth session of the House of Representatives of the Diet on 2 March 1908, in a certain advisory committee statement by Diet member Oda Kan’ichi, the term “State Shintō” appeared as Shrine Shintō, distinct from “the religion of Shintō” (*Shintō no shūkyō*).

21 Nitta 1997.

22 Yamaguchi 1999; Nitta 1997.

how this thesis came to be incorporated into the state system, the process itself was the kernel from which State Shintō was formed. Of course, the process proceeded by twists and turns: the thesis was not simply built into the Meiji state without resistance . . . and it did not mean that all shrines, i.e., both those supported by the national government (*kansha*) and local ones (*shosha*), were in name and reality actually treated by the state in terms of “lineage rites of the state.”²³

Since “State Shintō” was a term created “after the fact,” conclusions change about when it came into existence, or whether or not it existed at all, depending on how it is defined. How should we deal with the multiplicity of interpretations of the expression State Shintō? We cannot expect univocal agreement if we pose the question in the traditional, substantialist way: What is State Shintō? Yet this does not mean that we should discard the term altogether. Instead, we should compare the meanings individual scholars have given to “State Shintō” in order to come up with the most plausible interpretation of reality.

To this end, it seems necessary to confirm the definition of State Shintō in the *locus classicus* for the term, the Shintō Directive that was issued by GHQ on 15 December 1945 with the full title “Matters relating to the abolition of government protection, support, supervision and proliferation of State Shintō or Shrine Shintō.” Following are several relevant statements that can be extracted from this Occupation law document:

- 2.a. The purpose of this directive is to separate religion from the state [. . .].
- 2.c. Within the meaning of this directive, the term State Shintō will refer to that branch of Shintō (State Shintō or Shrine Shintō) which by official acts of the Japanese Government has been differentiated from Sect Shintō or Doctrinal Shintō [. . .].
- 2.e.(2) Shrine Shintō, after having been divorced from the state and divested of its militaristic and ultranationalistic elements, will be recognized as a religion if its adherents so desire [. . .].²⁴

According to Nitta Hitoshi, the use of the term “State Shintō” in the Shintō Directive contained (as suggested by Shimazono) new points of view regarding

23 Sakamoto Koremaru 1994, p. 20.

24 This translation with slight modifications follows that of Hardacre 1989, p. 169 (for a complete translation see Hardacre 1989, pp. 167–70).

the relation between Shrine Shintō and the state.²⁵ Reading the cited passages, which resemble the examples from historians Yasumaru and Akazawa, Shrine Shintō appears to have been considered a political institution subordinate to emperor-system nationalism. As recalled by William Woodard, an officer on the staff of the Religions Division of SCAP-GHQ’s Civil Information and Education Section, the division staff understood State Shintō as including the national morality elements such as the Rescript on Education and the school-room portraits of the emperor.²⁶ However, regardless of those background interpretations, the Shintō Directive introduced two new perspectives by its simple use of the term “State Shintō” and by aiming to revamp the relationship of Shrine Shintō and the state in Japanese society: institutionalizing of separation of state and religion and defining Shrine Shintō unambiguously as a religion.

As already mentioned, in prewar Japanese society there was virtually no debate over whether or not the system of State Shintō conflicted with any institutional principle of separation of state and religion. In 1934 constitutional scholar Kanamori Tokujirō (1886–1959) issued a statement, as the plans to establish the Jingiin (1940–1946) gained momentum, about the Meiji Constitution and the idea of state-religion separation. He did not criticize the constitution in relation to any principle of state-religion separation; rather, he confirmed the status quo: “The current reality of the imperial state is near to a system of state-religion separation.”²⁷ Freedom of faith was interpreted in the sense that “the state should not intervene in personal matters of religious activity,”²⁸ which is, according to the widely accepted juridical interpretation, also possible under a system that does not provide for separation of state and religion. Within these preconditions, the Japanese government did not opt to import the religious system of any particular existing Western nation, but instead, within the fundamental frame of a religious tolerance that abstained from “enforcing a single belief in a state religion,” it followed an autonomous pattern.²⁹

25 Nitta 1997.

26 Woodard 1972, pp. 70–71.

27 Kanamori 1934, p. 153. On prewar state-religion separation, see Ōishi Makoto 1996, pp. 7–8.

28 Ōishi Makoto 1996, p. 236. In the body of postwar research on Japanese history and Shintō studies concerning State Shintō, a great deal of material links together freedom of religion and state-religion separation as it were with an equals sign. This is a misunderstanding that arose from the idea of postwar state-religion separation in what was supposed to be a space of popular consensus.

29 Itō Hirobumi 1889, p. 59. This is corroborated by an October 1945 document prepared by the Office of Ritual as an explanatory proposal for the GHQ. Jinja Shinpōsha 1971, p. 17.

Certainly in prewar Japan the emperor system with Shrine Shintō as its mainstay in actuality played the role of a state religion. Yet in order not to fall into an ideological contest with traditions like Christianity or Buddhism which had been defined as religions, or in order to avoid criticism from Western countries for adopting a non-Christian state religion, the government adopted the strategy of assigning Shrine Shintō to the realm of (moral, i.e., secular) “ritual” that defined the civic duties of “Japanese subjects.” The distinction between ritual and religion, however, was not a clear dichotomy; ritual, which was inseparably attached to the power of the state, was something ambiguous and obscure that actually subsumed religion in the individual realm. The result of this policy was that any religious body could gain official recognition as long as it did not object to emperor-centered nationalism spelled out according to the national morality doctrine. Shrine Shintō is thought to have been an active device of state ideology from the time of the Russo-Japanese War, but in principle, it represented a system that had already taken shape between the time of the abolition of the national campaign teachers in 1884 and the proclamation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889.³⁰

The fact that the religious policy of the prewar Japanese government was not a version of a real separation of state and religion can also be gathered from Shimaji Mokurai’s “Critical Petition Regarding the Three Teaching Principles” of 1872. This document is said to be the earliest example in Japan advocating the separation of state and religion. Yet, while Shimaji maintained that “state and religion are different and should never be mixed,” in the end he also held that “state and religion became dependent on each other, . . . only after that did a country become a country and did human beings become human for the first time.” Based on Buddhist language about a dualism of absolute and mundane truth, which had been traditionally reinterpreted in the Shin school in Japan in terms of the two practical spheres of religion and government, he emphasized that religion, which was once separated from the state, must serve the state again.³¹ For the sake of clarity, the separation of state and religion is meant to avoid “institutional collusion of state and religious organizations and institutional fusion of political and religious authorities and keep separate their domains and respective fields of authority. Both should acknowledge the independence of their respective domains.”³² But this assertion does not really fit well with what Shimaji called the “interdependency of state and religion.”

30 On the periodization of State Shintō, see Isomae 2007a; Nakajima Michio 1977.

31 Shimaji Mokurai 1872, pp. 235–36. On Shimaji’s ideas about religion and politics, see Fujii Takeshi 1987.

32 Ōnishi and Chiba 2006, pp. 10–11.

The understanding of the Japanese religious system as not relying on the idea of state-religion separation persisted even during the Taishō era (1912–1926) in the heyday of democratic ideals. Constitutional scholar Minobe Tatsukichi (1873–1948), who advocated the theory of the emperor as an organ of the state, declared his own views:

If Shrine Shintō is considered to be one of the religions, then it is a kind of state religion, and thus the state religion of the empire. But regarding this point shrines have a position in our national law different from that of the other religions generally . . . in our actual national law, the principle of separating state and religion has not yet been implemented; instead the state is based on historical traditions, or offers some kind of special relationship towards a particular religion. These historical traditions cannot be disregarded in the interpretation of Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution; thus although the stipulations in that Article guarantee the freedom of religion of the subjects of Japan, it does not necessarily stipulate that the state will treat all religions equally.³³

Among other things, we can verify from this that prewar Japan did not conform to the model of a society where dichotomies of “politics and religion” or “morality and religion” were clearly differentiated as implied by the principle of separation of state and religion. Immediately after the war GHQ implemented the principle based on the spirit of the U.S. Constitution. At that point in time this was not an uncommon idea at the international level: *laïcité de l'état* was put into effect in France, and Germany also had carried out to some extent a separation of state and religion in the Weimar Constitution, though it had been rendered ineffective under the Nazi regime. Yet certainly different approaches to this separation were possible, ranging from the Soviet Union's hostility towards religion to the benevolent “non-concern” of the United States.³⁴ In the case of Japan, the postwar stance tends to be understood as hostile because the dissolution of State Shintō was propelled by separation of state and religion, but after various twists and turns in GHQ's understanding of Shrine Shintō,³⁵ the first article of the Shintō Directive was based on the conclusion that “militarism and ultra-nationalism perverted Shintō principles and beliefs.” Thus Shrine Shintō came to be acknowledged as a religious belief whose rights must be preserved just like those of Christianity or Buddhism or

33 Minobe 1930.

34 Ōishi Makoto 1996, p. 5; Koizumi Yōichi 1998, pp. 84–89.

35 Kishimoto Hideo 1963, p. 207; Nakano Tsuyoshi 1993.

other religions.³⁶ Staff member Woodard clarified the GHQ understanding of Shrine Shintō at that time in a section on “Clarification of terms”:

Shinto is the cluster of the beliefs and customs of the Japanese people centering in the kami, a term which designates spiritual entities, forces or qualities that are believed to exist everywhere, in man and nature. Usually without gender and often without anything akin to personality, the kami are believed to infuse the universe, and life for the devout Shintoist is lived in harmony with and gratitude to them.³⁷

That was the perception of Shrine Shintō, which GHQ at first negatively understood as identical to State Shintō. Among the scholars of religion who worked as advisers for the GHQ religion branch of the Civil and Information Section, the University of Tokyo professor Kishimoto Hideo appears to have played a major role. Like his colleague and father-in-law Anesaki Masaharu, Kishimoto's view was based on the religious studies position that Shintō was a religion and had to be treated as being in the same dimension as other religions. Through the mediation of another colleague at University of Tokyo, the Shintō studies scholar Miyaji Naokazu, he searched for a point of compromise between GHQ and the wishes of the Shintō shrine priest associations.³⁸ However, since the decision-making power on policy in occupied Japan rested with the GHQ side, more than anything else it was the U.S. view of state-religion separation that must have influenced decisions. As seen clearly in concepts like “civil religion” or “denomination,” in terms of its laws the United States was founded on the principle of state-religion separation—although its actual society was extremely friendly towards religion (in this case, Christianity).³⁹ That friendliness extended to the GHQ view of shrines in Japan, but the ambivalence regarding the shrines' relationship to the emperor was not cleared up, leading to the situation of debate that continues today over the relation of Shintō

36 In the history of Japan, attention must be paid to how state-religion separation has not existed as a Western-type separation of church and state, but rather must be considered as a separation of two spheres of religion and politics displaying a tendency to more expansive interpretation. See H. Kubota 2004. In this connection the state-religion separation in the Shintō Directive was really a separation between the state and Shrine Shintō which now had been designated as a (private) religious institution, cf., a church.

37 Woodard 1972, p. 10.

38 On Kishimoto's role and his view of the shrines, see *Kishimoto Hideo shū*, vol. 5; Jinja Shinpōsha 1971, p. 188.

39 Bellah 1975; Niebuhr 1929.

shrines to the state.⁴⁰ This is no doubt partly in accord with intentions of GHQ but also partly went beyond its expectations.

To add a word about the intentions of GHQ, the core principle of Occupation policy was rule and reform of Japan by means of the emperor system. As is well known today, towards this end they denied the status of the emperor as a living deity but kept his relation to the people unchanged.⁴¹ Yet, while successfully divesting Shrine Shintō of "its militaristic and ultra-nationalistic elements," GHQ was still unable to identify as problematic the close ties between the shrines and the imperial household, as reflected in the fact that many shrines still venerate *kami* related to the imperial family, or that the emperor honors the *kami* through various imperial rituals. Even after the emperor became "the symbol of the unity of the People," as defined in the Constitution, the emperor system continued to maintain its religious characteristics. As long as the emperor's wartime "godlike quality" was stripped away, GHQ mistakenly thought, the emperor's performance of imperial rituals to the divine ancestors could be seen as a matter of "the private religious life of the emperor and members of the imperial family;" that is, the ritual could be thought of narrowly in terms of a guarantee of freedom of religion for the imperial household. But this was notwithstanding the fact that the emperor was still publicly regarded as a symbol of the Japanese people.⁴² This is the reason why the question of imperial rites has remained unsolved in the postwar period, as has been pointed out by Shimazono Susumu in his explanation about imperial rituals cited earlier.

The limited GHQ perception of the emperor system tells us at the same time something about how the Japanese side regarded the issue: revealing their own problematic attitudes, scholars of religion, Shintō scholars, and bureaucrats welcomed GHQ tolerance as a fortunate turn of events. Indeed, in looking back, any fundamental questioning of the appropriateness of the emperor system had been virtually unheard of at any time except among Marxists around 1930. Before the war, doubts had been raised time and again whether enforced reverence of shrines was in accord with the constitutional freedom of religion,⁴³ but again debate about whether the emperor system itself was unconstitutional was virtually never seen. This can be easily criticized from today's point of view. However, if we consider that the "sovereignty of the emperor" was the

40 However, for the Shintō world, this had a strong tendency to reflect an excessive policy of state-religion separation. See Shibukawa Ken'ichi 1993; Jinja Shinpōsha 1971, p. 188.

41 Dower 1999, chapter 9; Fujitani 2000.

42 Woodard 1972, pp. 251, 269. The same point was confirmed by GHQ reports; see Bunce 1955, p. 170.

43 Akazawa 1985, chapters 2, 3.

very foundation of the modern Japanese nation state and the emperor system was tacitly approved of as a kind of invisible entity beyond the law,⁴⁴ such perceptual blinders were probably unavoidable.

In this connection, Inoue Egiyō (1897–1971) noted the following from the perspective of legal history:

There was no room to question the relationships of the beliefs held by the emperor and the rituals performed in the imperial household to the Constitution because the emperor and the imperial family were naturally not included among “Japanese subjects” described in the Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution and, in any case, Shrine Shintō had been treated as “not religion” by the government since the Meiji era.⁴⁵

The question we have to ask at this point is how the self-evident approval of the emperor system became possible. We will have to re-evaluate its “extra-legal” status in terms of its origins, which will lead us back to the reception of the concept of religion in Japan and to the question of how the emperor system, under the pretext of being an “indigenous tradition,” was seen as a blank left out of the Western conception of religion. In this respect, I would like to raise another point brought up in the Shintō Directive, namely how it defined Shrine Shintō as a form of “religion.” By thus addressing the forms of “religion” and “the secular” in prewar society, including the way the emperor system was given form, we should arrive at a perspective different from other postwar discussions that are based on the assumption of the separation of state and religion.

The Fluctuating Concept of Religion

Under the Shintō Directive, the redefining of Shrine Shintō—which had hitherto been regarded as “ritual” (*saishi*)—as “religion” (*shūkyō*) led to tremendous changes in the status of Shrine Shintō in Japanese society. Based on the

44 The term *hōgai* used here for “beyond the law” or “extra-legal” does not refer back to any realm of legal order, but indicates the existence of a power which entirely relativizes all sense of legality, as Jacques Derrida said. However, Derrida’s usage is still ultimately for the sake of evoking some impossible-to-manifest justice. Instead, here in this book, the term is used without even confining the issue by justice; it means broadly something totally indeterminate that transcends law altogether. (See Derrida 1994).

45 Inoue Egiyō 1972, p. 72.

doctrine of the non-religious nature of shrines, religion and ritual had belonged to different categories in prewar society or were at least officially regarded as different. The borderline between religion and ritual at that time is plainly illustrated in the following translation of part of an essay published in 1890 by the newspaper *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun*:

By *sai*, we mean *saishi* (rites), referring to paying homage to the graves of our ancestors or offering flowers and incense to their home ancestor tablets or memorial markers [...]. Every act of commemoration can be called *sai*. By *kyō* we mean *shūkyō* (religion). It can refer to the emperor or to the Buddha, or to any place or object of veneration to which we turn in awe and piety as our place of spiritual peace and refuge.⁴⁶

What must not be overlooked here is that the classification of religion and ritual in the article corresponds to the categories established to reflect prewar ideas about official Shintō policy, namely the doctrine of the non-religious nature of Shintō shrines. That doctrine was premised on the categorization of religion as a matter of individual faith that everyone could choose freely. In order to extricate Shintō from competition for membership with religions like Christianity or Buddhism, worship at its shrines, by contrast, was defined as belonging to the category of ritual that was a public activity and the duty of every loyal citizen.⁴⁷ As many contemporary intellectuals were well aware, this was fundamentally a “distinction between official and private,” deriving from the political judgment that “if Shintō should become the foundation of the *kokutai* it has to be promulgated by a proper governmental institution.”⁴⁸ Without this “distinction between official and private,” the conclusion would follow that ritual and religion flowed into one another. As the above-mentioned newspaper author observed, “Since rituals are normally one part of any given religion, I would never say that religion has nothing to do with ritual.”⁴⁹

In this way, the awareness that Shrine Shintō would appear as a kind of religion as soon as political considerations were relaxed led to the constant fear

46 See 1890 essay by Haanshi, “Saikyō bunri ron” [On Separation of Ceremony and Religion], quoted in Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 274.

47 On the doctrine that shrines are not “religion,” see Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985; see also chapter 7 above.

48 See “Shinkan kyōdōshoku bunri ni tsuki ikensho” [Opinion on the Separation of Shintō Priests from the National Campaign Teachers], reprinted in Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 67.

49 Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 274.

on the part of believers that the veneration of shrines as a public duty might be in conflict with the right of religious freedom. For example, at a 1926 meeting of the government's Religious Institutions Study Committee, Hanada Ryōun, a Shin Buddhist priest, expressed the following concerns:

I cannot accept the official statement that the worship activities performed in all the shrines in contemporary Japan are not religion. . . . I totally agree that shrine worship is the national duty of all the Japanese people. . . . But, if [shrine worship] is presented to the people of the nation as having religious significance or something similar—or goes so far as having magical prayers added—which stands beyond any authority or standard capable of unifying pure national thought—then serious doubts would be aroused about the definition of religious belief. All particular religions should be protected, I believe, in a constitutional state with freedom of religion.⁵⁰

What I should like to point out is that in the case of either the doctrine that shrines are not religion or the distinction the government decided to draw between religion and ritual, there was no clear definition in the law. As Hanada pointed out in the Committee, “As far as I know, there is no statement in the law on the question whether worship at shrines is religion or not.”⁵¹ The Constitution and other laws granted freedom of faith, but only “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order.” Questions such as whether worship at shrines was religious or ritual, or how such categories were to be defined, were discussed later in official pamphlets such as the *Kokutai no hongī* (Essence of the *Kokutai*), published in 1937 by the Ministry of Education and the *Jinja hongī* (The True Meaning of Shrines), published in 1944 by the Jingiin, yet their conclusions never reached the status of having binding legal authority; they remained matters of interpretation. Under such judicially undefined conditions, or rather indeed precisely because they were never defined by law, debates regarding the nature of Shintō shrines continued without resolution. It meant that freedom of belief could be wider or narrower depending on the official definition of shrines operant at the time. In prewar Japanese society, therefore, the

50 “Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai dai-2-kai sōkai gijiroku.” (Minutes for the Second General Meeting of the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions) In *Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai* 1926, pp. 5–7.

51 “Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai dai-2-kai sōkai gijiroku.” In *Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai* 1926, pp. 5–7.

extent of religious freedom varied in practice as time went on.⁵² To focus on this point, even if the theoretical boundary line between ritual and religion, or morality and religion, had been by some chance settled, just such a decision itself would not mean that the social system at that time manifested state-religion separation. The question of separation would still be involved in the practical relations between the state and religious organizations or religions, that is, whether or not they interfered with each other as working institutions.

Under these conditions, the concept of “religion” became a matter of great interest to prewar intellectuals. The way religion was defined, because of its close relationship to ritual, exerted great influence on not only the nature of shrines but also on the extent of religious freedom. As discussed in chapter 1, the Japanese term *shūkyō* had come into common use as the standard translation of the English word “religion” around 1877. From the early 1890s, however, when governmental shrine policies had to be brought into line with the professed freedom of religion, the problem of “what is religion?” had to be better refined with a “precise definition” of religion.⁵³ That was the point at which academic discourse on religion appeared for the first time in Japan in the form of the comparative religion introduced by Inoue Tetsujirō and others from the early 1890s and of the religious studies introduced by scholars such as Anesaki Masaharu and Katō Genchi in the late 1890s and mid-1900s.⁵⁴

Definitions of religion in Japan can be identified as having two lineages. The main axis of one lineage harks back to Anesaki Masaharu, who took Western Protestantism as the model for his image of religion.⁵⁵ In his *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (1900), which laid the foundation for the discipline of religious studies in Japan, he defined it as follows:

Religion is not limited to particular schools or sects, but is a comprehensive concept based on the understanding that all religion is just a fact of human history, and is the product of the human spirit in the process of expressing itself.⁵⁶

52 The critiques by Yasumaru Yoshio and Sakamoto Koremaru against Murakami Shigeyoshi’s theory of State Shintō concerned how Murakami had traced the form of prewar “State Shintō” in the 1930s as far back as the early Meiji period while depicting it as consistent and unchanging. See Yasumaru 1992, pp. 193–96; Sakamoto Koremaru 1994, Josetsu.

53 Wilson 1998, p. 143.

54 Yamaguchi 1999, part 2, chapter 1; see chapter 4 above.

55 See chapter 5 above.

56 Anesaki 1900b, p. 1.

This definition was based on the psychological perspective that regarded the relations between god(s) and humans as “products of the human spirit.” Taking the individual religious consciousness as his starting point, Anesaki maintained that in spite of their differences, the different religions or schools of particular religions could be understood as variants of the same phenomenon that is “religion.” Religion was therefore not something in a sacred realm outside of the secular: since every layman possesses some orientation to the religious, it was secularized in the sense of being “privatized” within each individual.⁵⁷ Sacred space was not outside the secular, but could be found within the human spirit itself, which in Japan led to the establishment of a new mysticism searching for the essence of religion through experience. This recalls Anesaki’s own religious experience, as described in chapter 5 above:

Bowed down upon the sand of the beach, I entered a state of selflessness. . . . Time passes, people change, but in the pulsation of the eternal there is the music of the unchanging “now.” Light, do you embrace me? Waves, do you invite me? Would that my body dissolve into the water, would that my heart melt away, together with the light. And when I have become not-myself, how sweet will become the reverberations in my heart.⁵⁸

Amid the decline of the doctrinal authority of religion resulting from the spread of Enlightenment thought, this experientialist stance emphasizing the religious experience of the individual can be viewed as a Romanticist searching for reconfirmation of the meaning of religion through the direct experience of the believer.⁵⁹ At first glance, we might think this a stance different from earlier dogma-oriented religious traditions. However, it actually came from within the religious traditions of Christianity itself. The stance arose to shore up the authority of the church and, given its emphasis on the interiority of religious experience of the individual, drew from the belief-centered aspect of Christianity. Indeed, the experientialists also dismissed the religious folk traditions, calling them “pathologies” of religion turned into superstitious belief.⁶⁰

57 On understandings of secularization, see Casanova 1994, chapter 8; Ôtsuka Kazuo 2004a.

58 Anesaki 1903c, p. 248.

59 On the understandings of experientialism, see Tsuruoka 2000.

60 Anesaki 1897a.

Another related definition of religion was provided somewhat later (1938) by Katō Genchi, like Anesaki a student of Inoue Tetsujirō, who focused on Shintō as an indigenous religion.⁶¹

In fastening its attention only on world religions and individualistic religions like Christianity and Buddhism, and contriving a translation for “religion,” the field of religious studies never even imagined group-oriented religions or tribal or popular religions. . . . Religious studies made great strides later, however, when scholarship made it clear that “religion” no longer could be understood to apply exclusively to universalist religions like Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, but also included tribal beliefs or national religions that flourished among different peoples since ancient times.⁶²

Needless to say, from Katō’s point of view,

[. . .] a national religion, as for instance state-oriented Shintō (*kokkateki Shintō*), must be granted inclusion among religions even if it does not have the qualities to join the ranks of the universal or private religions.”⁶³

This understanding further led Katō to the conclusion of affirming Shrine Shintō as aligned with the category of religion. Emulating the theory of the Dutch scholar of religion C. P. Tiele, he considered Buddhism and Shintō to be theanthropic religions, in which there is complete union of the divine and humanity, contrasting them with theocratic religion, in which there is a gulf between God and humanity. Kato tried to juxtapose these as different sub-categories in the same concept of religion that conformed with Katō’s characteristic research stance, which he described as “religious-studies research” on Shintō. Nevertheless, Katō was in accord with his colleague Anesaki and their teacher Inoue Tetsujirō in holding that the core of any concept of religion was religious belief as it was perceived by the individual devotee.

The other lineage of definitions of religion, which was put forward in the attempt to remedy the shortcomings of Anesaki’s approach manifested in the earlier definitions, originated with Yanagita Kunio, the founder of Japanese folklore studies. In his “Shintō shiken” (A View of Shintō), first published in 1918, Yanagita wrote: “I believe that the conclusion that shrines serve no other

61 Shimazono et al. 2004.

62 Katō Genchi 1938, pp. 294–95.

63 Katō Genchi 1938, p. 295.

purpose than as loci of veneration to ancestors or illustrious persons is not well founded.⁶⁴ He criticized the viewpoint of the government's Jinja Kyoku (1900–1945), which interpreted all *kami* as anthropomorphic deities based on the national morality doctrine as well as the interpretations of Shintō scholars who sought to conceptualize shrines as non-religious phenomena. He called attention instead to “the way the *kami* are viewed in rural villages [...], which is unrelated to doctrines or founders.”⁶⁵ Yanagita's emphasis on communal practice rather than individual belief⁶⁶ influenced a new generation of scholars who from the 1930s onward began to revise the ideas of Anesaki and Katō. Yanagita's views gradually developed into the most common approach in Japan to non-Western religions, in the form of the religious folklore studies introduced by Uno Enkū or the religious anthropology established by Furuno Kiyoto (1899–1979) and others.⁶⁷

Such a practice-oriented view of religion also spread in the West through increased contact with so-called “uncivilized societies” via the colonies, and awareness further spread of the existence of understandings different from belief-centered religion persisting not only outside but even within the West. While practice-oriented religions were initially placed at the lowest level of the evolutionary scale with Christianity at the top, they gradually came to be regarded as phenomena that had a logic of their own.⁶⁸ The social anthropologist Talal Asad, for instance, has regarded “the development of prescribed moral-religious capabilities, which involve the cultivation of certain bodily attitudes (including emotions), and the disciplined cultivation of habits, aspirations, desires,” as characteristics not only of Islam but also of medieval Catholicism.⁶⁹ Originally, this kind of religious practice must not be seen as “an autogenetic impulse but as a mutually constituting relationship between body sense and body learning.” Modern Western interpretations centered on belief have an ill-considered tendency to downplay such practices as “obscure meanings” or as symbols to be interpreted.⁷⁰ Asad has further stated:

64 Yanagita 1918, p. 245.

65 Yanagita 1918, p. 246; Hayashi Makoto 1997; Akazawa 1985, pp. 64–66.

66 Kawada Minoru 1990. On the influence of anthropology of religions in Yanagita, see Itō Mikiharu 2002, pp. 55–74.

67 Uno Enkū 1931; Furuno 1980. On the transition from the first generation of Anesaki and Katō which emerged around 1900 to the generation of Uno and Furuno prominent in the 1930s, see Saki 1937, part 1, chapter 4; Isomae 2006.

68 Sharpe 1986, chapter 3.

69 Asad 1996.

70 Asad 1993, pp. 62, 77.

[...] in contemporary Protestant Christianity (and other religions now modeled on it), it is more important to have the right *belief* than to carry out specific prescribed practices. [...] Belief] has now become a purely inner, private state of mind, a particular state of mind detached from everyday practices. [...] the system of statements about belief is now held to constitute the essence of “religion,” a construction that makes it possible to compare and evaluate different “religions.”⁷¹

Although interpretations according to the Protestant model still prevail, practice-oriented understandings of religion have begun to erode the preeminent importance attached to belief.⁷² Religion in the current sense of the word has therefore developed with multiple levels of meaning.⁷³ In modern Japan, too, which was heavily influenced by the Protestant concept of religion—the concept of religion of Anesaki and Katō—initially became established as the standard. However, from the beginning of the dissemination of this concept of religion, some observers recognized differences between Christianity with its fully developed theology and Japanese Shintō. Shimaji, for example, commented, “When one wants to preach about the *kami* of our country, one soon notices that there was no founder who established a clear dogma. That being the case I would simply encourage people [Japanese] to revere the *kami*.”⁷⁴ But this recognition of difference aroused a feeling of discomfort that was expressed through the scholarship of Yanagita Kunio and Uno Enkū. There were fierce debates on this question at the meetings held in 1926 and 1928 of the Religious Institutions Study Committee, an advisory board to the government that was assigned the task of developing religious policy that would treat Christianity, Buddhism, and Shintō as equal.⁷⁵ Thus, serious doubts were raised concerning the appropriateness of the officially represented doctrine about the non-religious nature of Shintō shrines. The concept of religion had conflicting implications that could never reach any unified resolution. These “confusing concepts of religion” are still in the picture today, as Shimazono Susumu has explained:

71 Asad 1996.

72 Regarding the need to take into consideration a practice-oriented concept of religion, see Shimazono 2004, p. 499 and Hayashi Makoto 2004.

73 On the multiplicity of concepts of religion in the West, see H. Kubota 2004; Fitzgerald 2007a.

74 Shimaji Mokurai 1872, p. 237.

75 Akazawa 1985, chapter 3; Inoue Egyō 1972, chapter 4.

The English word “religion” was not introduced simply in its original meaning as soon as it began to be translated as *shūkyō* in Japanese. [...] In today’s Japanese society, there is much confusion as to what *shūkyō* actually means, especially when one asks what the main religion of Japan is [...]. In this sense, the Western concept of “religion” has not yet neatly settled in Japan. Rather, it is widely recognized that there is a certain perplexity regarding the concept of “religion.”⁷⁶

Similarly fluctuating meanings can be also observed in the case of the term “ritual,” which, in the context of the doctrine that shrines are non-religious, served as the antonym of religion. In regard to state management of ritual, the Meiji Restoration had promoted the slogan “unity of administration and ritual” (*saisei ichi*) but without success, and state rituals were soon assigned to different institutions: ordinary shrine rituals were overseen by the Jinja Kyoku at the Ministry of Home Affairs, rites of the Imperial Palace by the Shikiburyō (the emperor’s palace bureau for ceremonial matters),⁷⁷ and ceremonies at Yasukuni Shrine by the Army Ministry. State rituals, therefore, were not administered according to a consistent, well-coordinated plan of the government. Certainly, the rituals had some obscure characteristics in common, since they were all directed towards Japanese *kami* and did not belong to a “religion” such as Christianity or Sect (Denominational) Shintō. However, neither the government nor the general populace had any clear picture of the pantheon containing all these *kami*—ranging from imperial ancestors to loyal retainers and people who died for their country—or how they might be related to each other.

This lack of clarity, however, was a natural consequence of Shintō not possessing an explicit theology except in the case where it was linked to the emperor system. This ambiguity, however, rather than signifying a fundamental defect, worked to give positive meaning to the territory of ritual as an undefined margin for ritual that transcended logical criticism. With the exception of some intellectuals, the descriptions in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* were treated at that time as what the writer Mori Ōgai called “possible” (*ka no yō ni*) historical facts.⁷⁸ Human beings do not necessarily rationally scrutinize every part of the structure of the world they live in.⁷⁹ Among these phenomena the fact that only shrine ritual and its relation to the concept of religion became a heated issue of the day was probably due to its intimate connection

76 Shimazono 1998, p. 63; Shimazono 2000.

77 On rituals and ceremonies within the imperial court, see Saeki 1934.

78 Mori 1912.

79 Berger 1967; Berger and Luckmann 1966.

with indoctrination of the people (*kokumin kyōka*), a matter that was always in latent conflict with the people’s freedom of faith. Especially after the Russo-Japanese War, shrine rituals became intertwined with the national morality doctrine propagated by the Ministry of Education. In the words of Kokugakuin University professor Kōno Seizō (1882–1963), who was an active advocate of the ideology of national morality, “Shintō is a force that makes national morality truly serve the Imperial Way.”⁸⁰ In this fashion, shrines were positioned as sites for the practice of national morality. Thus, in the contrasting conceptual pairs “ritual/religion” and “morality/religion,” the content of which had been regarded as being different up to that time, the terms were now superimposed on each other and considered non-religious within the discourse of shrines. By conceptualizing the non-verbal physical practice of rituals as “moral behavior,” the doctrine of shrines as non-religious was drawn into the secular realm of morality.

Morality (*dōtoku*), however, was yet another term that was interpreted in a number of ways. While scholars in the tradition of Western Enlightenment such as Inoue Tetsujirō and others simply contrasted it with religion, adherents of Shintō, for instance Kōno Shōzō, used *dōtoku* more or less as a synonym for the *kokutai* or the emperor system, as something that transcended religion and was impossible to define. Especially from the 1920s onward, as morality in the latter sense was emphasized by Shintō scholars and conservatives, the public realm embodied in this morality was seen also as subsuming the private realm, and the shrine rites representing indigenous religion were viewed as transcending the distinctions of secular and religious. Both the public realm and shrine rituals were thus inclined toward nullifying Western Enlightenment logic.⁸¹ The idea of the “unification of ritual and government” promoted by the Jingiin founded in 1940 represented the peak of this movement.⁸² The price that was paid for this policy was that folk religion elements rooted in everyday life were wiped out of Shrine Shintō, ironically rendering fruitless the conservative’s scheme to integrate Shintō shrines into the national indoctrination program.

In prewar Japanese society, since the principle of state-religion separation was not adopted, and clear-cut legal distinctions were not drawn between “religion” and “government” or between “religion” and “morality,” probably the only possible strategy for establishing the social position of shrines as non-religious entities and altering the scope of religious freedom was through

80 Kōno 1933, p. 12.

81 Mizoguchi Yūzō 1996; Isomae 2007a.

82 *Jinja hongī*.

definition of the concept of religion. As demonstrated above, both religion and morality were polysemic terms that were moreover related to each other, so that a change in the meaning of one term was likely to bring about changes in the meaning of the other. Anesaki wrote: “A world order based in morality is at the same time a religious order; the excellence of the ideal of secular morality is that, in the end it is subsumed in the ideal of religion, . . . the final purpose of religion becomes at the same time the standard of morality.”⁸³ Based on this interrelatedness of religion and morality, even the borderline between public and private became fluid. In prewar society new interpretations of the line where the one ended and the other began circulated one after the other. In sum, insofar as human existence is fundamentally both communal and individualistic,⁸⁴ it is extremely difficult to decide whether human behavior is moral or religious.⁸⁵ Katō Genchi appears to have been well aware of the dual meaning of Shintō ritual:

In this situation there are both front and back sides, both hidden and prominent; overt and covert, this religion of the Japanese national people is to be called one kind of religion. But in its front or manifest phase, it is called Japanese national morality, or the state ritual and ceremony to which it is closely related.⁸⁶

After the war, the GHQ policy of separating state and religion sought to provide an institutional framework to “straighten out” the ambiguities surrounding the concept of religion and the doctrine of shrines as non-religious in the background by providing an institutional framework for them. Certainly, in Western societies the principle of separating state and religion had derived from lessons learned from the long history of conflicts between religious and secular authority. Still, the model is not necessarily suitable to all societies, as

83 Anesaki 1900b, pp. 191–92.

84 Sugita 2005; Geuss 2003.

85 Casanova 1994, p. 41. The following statement by José Casanova, who has criticized the dualism of Western Enlightenment, may help us to understand the problem in the Japanese case:

“[...] modern walls of separation between church and state keep developing all kinds of cracks through which both are able to penetrate each other; [...] religion and politics keep forming all kinds of symbiotic relations, to such an extent that is not easy to ascertain whether one is witnessing political movements which don religious garb or religious movements which assume political forms.”

86 Katō Genchi 1908, p. 287.

examples in the case of Islam have demonstrated.⁸⁷ Thus in current debates about Yasukuni Shrine it is difficult to correctly understand the relations of state and religion or the role of ritual if one does not understand the specific, non-Western circumstances of Japan and consider how religious discourse originating in the West was articulated in that discourse.⁸⁸ This does not mean to say, of course, that the idea of state-religion separation is invalid. For people of the non-Western world, living as they do in a milieu transformed by Western modernization, state-religion separation has become a well founded alternative. However, even if some principle of state-religion separation is formally adopted at the top, its effectiveness is likely to stop at the systemic, formal or institutional level; in religious phenomena observed at the level of social existential forms, there is unlikely to be full congruence.⁸⁹

This is true not only in state-religion separation: institutions or discourses invariably have vague areas in their periphery and cannot possibly agree exactly with the reality of society. The problem is what effect a particular institution can have in understanding and reforming the social reality.

In terms of the efficacy of institutions or discourses, we should note Shimazono's observation that religion has permeated into the public sphere in postwar society through imperial court ritual and could thus pose a threat to freedom of religion. If we consider the postwar system only from a religious perspective and define it as a continuation of State Shintō, however, our perception of reality might be flawed. If we attribute everything *a priori* to the category of religion, it becomes difficult to understand the process of the larger historical context in which religious and non-religious discourses articulated themselves.⁹⁰ Talal Asad's claim that “there cannot be a universal definition of

87 On relations among the state, the law, and religion in Islam, I have referred to Kosugi 1994.

88 Akazawa 2005; Isomae 2007b; Ikegami 2006.

89 On the understanding of discourse and margins, see Isomae 2007a.

90 Regarding his own concept of religion, Shimazono has explained: “As for calling a cosmological-religious complex ‘religious structure’ . . . In a broad sense it is fine to refer to the discourse and experience of a cosmology by the term ‘religion.’ But this ‘religion’ does not exist in any simple form; it is formed by a coexistence of a plurality of elements with a multiplicity of levels of relationship creating ‘structure’ through fusion.” Shimazono 2001a, p. 48; in English see also Shimazono 2005. However, such a broad concept of religion, which includes cosmologies that are not in the category of religion, makes it difficult to determine the historical phases of anything that is to be analyzed as non-religious discourse. Saki Akio had expressed concerns as early as the 1970s about such an overly broad view, which were shared in Thomas Luckmann's *Invisible Religion*. Saki wrote: “If the concept of religion spreads inappropriately over certain boundary lines it invites confusion. It is not good to call seemingly randomly this or that ‘religion’”; see Saki 1978, p. 77.

religion” pertains to the terminology of scholars of the present as well; indeed, he says, a “definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes”⁹¹ and scholars cannot treat their terms as trans-historical commodities.⁹² Thus, as the core of Japanese national identity not only before but also after the war, the emperor system has assumed its multi-layered character through a variety of terms in dynamic opposition such as “religion/morality,” “religion/Shintō,” and “Western/indigenous.” Therefore it was not simply a phenomenon of either State Shintō or religion. As explained by Kang Sang-jung,

The emperor-centrism of the *kokutai* ideology can be found in the first article of the Meiji Constitution, which stipulated that “The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.” On the other hand, Article 4 states that “The Emperor is the head of the Empire, combining in Himself the rights of sovereignty, and exercises them, according to the provisions of the present Constitution,” and [Article] 55 provides that “The respective Ministers of State shall give their advice to the Emperor, and be responsible for it,” meaning that the emperor, as a constitutional monarch, was to be controlled by the constitution, the parliament, and the government. In this regard, he was confined “within” the constitution as the highest organ of the state. . . . Article 1, however, clearly defined him as an absolute power outside the constitution. Moreover, the absoluteness of imperial power was not just founded on “divine right,” as in the case of Western absolutism, but rather on “the sacred priest-king as a *kami*.” The “contradictions” in these conceptions of the emperor could only be solved by presenting the emperor as a “living *kami*” (*arahitogami*).⁹³

The emperor in the modern emperor system was simultaneously a sacred priest-king clad in the traditional aura of divinity and a constitutional monarch who embodied Western civilization and enlightenment. His status outside the law, says Kang, which could be neither described as religious nor as secular, has been the core of imperial authority in the emperor system. We therefore have to ask how the emperor system ever acquired such an extra-legal status and why that status continues even now.

91 Asad 1993, p. 29.

92 For critiques of Shimazono on this point, see Isomae 2007a.

93 Kang Sang-jung 2001, pp. 58–59.

The Emperor System as Beyond the Law

As we have seen above, in prewar Japan the doctrine of shrines as non-religious was not supported by all the people. Conditions were such that diverse interpretations could be asserted depending on the definition of the concept of religion. The law prescribed neither a state religion nor separation of state and religion, so in that undefined space, a variety of views including those of the government coexisted. The diversity of discourse on the concepts of religion and the role of shrines was suppressed with the shift to the regime mobilizing the country for the war unfolding in Asia, but Japan in the prewar period was clearly a society in which the sphere permitting religious freedom could be variably expanded or contracted in accordance with the circumstances.

Debates that went beyond issues of shrine ritual and appeared to question the authority of the emperor system that formed its background—even in periods when religious freedom was tolerated—were suppressed, as in the cases of the Uchimura Kanzō affair of 1890 or the controversy over the writings of Kume Kunitake in 1892, which were critical of Shintō.⁹⁴ Neither Uchimura nor Kume intended to reject the emperor system as such, but since they expressed objections against its authority over their own speech and conduct, their acts were inevitably condemned and became objects of public denunciation. Moreover, the denunciation was not executed directly by organs of the government; it was initiated in the name of society as a whole by conservative scholars or right-wing political organizations. That the response was not a matter of law or government decree, but a self-censorship movement arising from within society demonstrates how deeply respect for the emperor system had become rooted by that time. In that sense, the authority of the emperor system was maintained not as a result of coercion through the power of the state, but can be thought to have been sustained by its extra-legal existential foundation that in the eyes of the people could never become an object of criticism. Katō Genchi, for instance, who insisted on the religious nature of Shrine Shintō, did not point out the danger of the infringement of freedom of faith inherent in such a conception. Instead, while elevating Shrine Shintō to the status of a state religion, he tried to wedge religious freedom into a sphere where it would not come into conflict with Shrine Shintō:

Founded on the belief in the rule of our divine emperor, state-oriented Shintō, the national religion of Japan, exists in the mind of the Japanese people since time immemorial, long before Article 28 of the Constitution

94 Ozawa 1961; Kano and Imai 1991.

was drafted. Ranking even higher than the Constitution, it has formed the essence of the Constitution. According to my understanding, the spirit of Article 28 involves giving permission for missionary religions from abroad, such as Buddhism or Christianity, as long as they accept statist Shintō (*kokkateki Shintō*) as Japan's national religion and do not create contradictions with it.⁹⁵

Such interpretations of Shrine Shintō as the state religion were held not only by Shintō scholars like Katō, but also, as earlier cited, by liberals such as Minobe Tatsukichi. Whether they belonged to the conservative or the liberal camp, they all took the position that shrines related to the emperor system should not be included in the scope of religious freedom, which might invite competition with other religions. As explained earlier in this chapter, even free interpretations of Shrine Shintō spontaneously avoided asking critical questions at a point that might put them into conflict with the emperor system. Scholars who opted for a concept of religion different from that of Katō eventually arrived at similar conclusions. Anesaki, for instance, writing about his own mystical experiences, argued, that “the ‘self’ is the center of everything; it is the focal point reflecting the macrocosm,” but still, “one of the centers that unites microcosm and macrocosm in vivid and harmonious communication [...] is that basis of all activities that we call the ‘state.’ The center of every individual microcosm exists in harmony with the macrocosmic center of the state, or the people.”⁹⁶ In short, Anesaki sought in the state a superego that was a fusion of individual consciousnesses.⁹⁷ It is often pointed out that Yanagita Kunio embraced reverence for the imperial household, and in a similar way, Uno and Furuno, who were interested in the practice-oriented concept of religion, voiced sympathy for the idea of the “Great East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere” and became involved in research on the everyday lives of native peoples in the new Japanese colonies, Uno wrote:⁹⁸

Today the private and public lives of the Japanese people must be guided, as far as the *kokutai* is concerned and emphasizing the Japanese national spirit, on the basis of our ancestors' deep faith in the founders of the imperial family and their profound gratitude to the *kami* of heaven and earth. That guidance must spread in every direction, simultaneously

95 Katō Genchi 1929–1931, pp. 300–301.

96 Anesaki 1904c, p. 29.

97 See chapter 4 above.

98 Hayashi Makoto 2006b.

ranging from the everyday life of the individual up to the government work of public officials. Then for the first time we will not merely perform simple festivals and ceremonies, but perfect service to the gods and buddhas as part of our daily lives.⁹⁹

By the end of the 1930s, the majority of religious studies scholars engaged in the study of religious anthropology and ethnology were attracted as a very ordinary physical response to the emperor system; the religious passion to serve the *kokutai* derived from the very basis of people’s everyday lives. No matter what concept of religion they opted for—and no matter how different the manifestations of their religion were amid several waves of exaltation of nationalism—through either internal mystical experience or in the corporeal dimension, they all found themselves in collusion in support of the emperor system which they regarded as the essence of ancient Japanese cultural traditions. They imagined the emperor system in the form of the trans-religious, trans-historical unbroken lineage of the *kokutai*, which constituted an unfathomable external sphere that defied definition. Matsuura Hisaki has aptly explained the *kokutai* in the following way:

In contrast to the pompous ostentation of the *kokutai* as a hypersensitive *signifiant*, the *signifié* indicated by it is extremely feeble, almost empty. It seems as if the *kokutai* did not possess a concrete, explicit meaning but was just a stimulus or pretext to activate all kinds of discourse around it. The noise produced by all this discourse seems to have served no other real function than to charge up the *kokutai* symbol. [...] The question of “what is the *kokutai*” was suppressed as an impossible and forbidden theme of discussion to be “problematized”: the *kokutai* was asserted as an ahistorical something that would not be changed because of the fear that the surrounding *kokutai* might be changed under historical situations and their contingencies. It was probably the emperor system that suppressed that question as a taboo. Or it could have been the *kokutai* itself that did so.¹⁰⁰

As Yasumaru Yoshio had explained, the modern emperor system was an attempt to retrieve the existential foundations of Japan. It originated in resistance to the subsumption of Japan into the Western world after the country was opened to trade in the late days of the Tokugawa regime, as a movement

99 Uno Enkū 1938, p. 96.

100 Matsuura 2000, pp. 316–17.

seeking some historical authority to replace that of the shogun under the old feudalistic system.¹⁰¹ That authority, in order for it to be the ultimate authentication of the Japanese nation-state, could not be merely a cultural element articulated within accidental historical circumstances—instead, like the Christian God in the eyes of its believers, it had to be imagined as a shining “undecidable” that transcended historical change. In Japanese society, which lacked the idea of a transcendental origin as in Christianity with its belief in one absolute God, a transcendental entity in the form of an unbroken line of living deities, though different from the Christian conception of God, seemed suitable as the founding principle for the nation state. Moreover, as pointed out by Kang Sang-jung, the emperor had simultaneously to be both a constitutional monarch based on the Western concept that persistently emphasized universal validity and a sacred priest-king embodying the particularities of Japanese culture. He therefore transcended the opposition of “Japan” and the “West,” or rather, he was perceived as the invisible foundation from which the “secular/religious” dichotomy arose. As such the emperor was seen as identical with that empty signifier *kokutai*; he existed as an extra-liminal entity and was therefore beyond the scope of logical critique by people of the nation. This indeed was the secret of the extra-legality of the emperor system. And given recent debates concerning the imperial household even in the postwar period, it cannot be said that Japanese society has really come to grips with this truth.

Of course, this kind of “undecidable” was not necessarily something people were clearly aware of in their everyday lives. As Yasumaru wrote, in looking back on his own experience, “The ordinary person did not reject the nation-state and the emperor system, but from his or her side certainly did not have high expectations of the nation-state and the emperor system.”¹⁰² However, in the case when some kind of “crisis or extraordinary situation”¹⁰³ arose for the society, the importance of the two would surge to the surface as the all-knowing presence that could absorb people’s feelings of uncertainty. Indeed, precisely because such awareness was not part of everyday life, but loomed up on the exterior of ordinary consciousness, they could function as ideational projections that could be variably articulated in people’s lives in accordance with circumstances.

Only Protestants and Marxists, whose ideology was embedded in Western thought, possessed the means of objectifying the emperor system and resisting

101 According to Yasumaru, these are the reasons why the emperor system was regarded as Japan’s existential foundation in modern Japan. Yasumaru 1992, chapter 7.

102 Yasumaru 1992, p. 305.

103 Yasumaru 1999, p. 216.

it. Both of these groups had systems of ideas with specific worldviews that demanded the utmost commitment and which therefore could provide a basis for their adherents to confront the emperor system. Yet in the end, the monotheistic transcendence as taught by Protestantism did not take root among critical Japanese intellectuals and did not result in the rejection of the emperor system as such. Further, even if they differed from the official Japanese mainstream, most Christian believers did not think that their convictions were incompatible with the emperor system.¹⁰⁴ The rise of Protestant liberal theology that had assimilated scientific rationality came later. In it, on one hand stood supporters of the emperor-system nationalism like Ebina Danjō (1856–1937), and on the other Christian socialists like Murai Tomoyoshi, but neither side was concerned about otherworldly Christian discourse, but about active intervention in secular society. With the soil having been prepared by that kind of secularized Christianity, Marxism began to make substantive inroads into the intellectual world of Japan in the 1920s. Marxism criticized religion as false consciousness. It carried on in a secularized form the principles of transcendental critique that characterized Christianity, but as such intellectuals accepted it in a form appropriate to the climate of Japanese society. In the 1930s, when the contradictions of capitalism were definitively exposed, Marxism articulated a clear stance of confrontation with the emperor system on the basis of the guidance of the Comintern and the clear Western authority it asserted.

People who believe in the doctrines of only one specific religious group have always been few in Japan. Therefore, questions of religious freedom arising from the “religion versus shrine” opposition never became a matter of serious concern to society as a whole.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, when the issue of economic exploitation of the people through the power of the state represented by the emperor was raised as a major issue—for instance in the “1932 Thesis,” a statement issued by the Japan Communist Party that year—that secular problem pertaining to the common people aroused interest among large numbers of intellectuals, regardless of whether they were believers of a particular religion or non-believers. Marxism in Japan began as a literary and anti-religious movement offering an analysis of the capitalist economy and an ideological struggle. It was only when Marxists were confronted with massive conversion (*tenkō*) to the emperor ideology in 1933, that those who held their ground against conversion also had to address the historical origins of the *kokutai* ideology, to “expose the origins of the class-exploitative character of the emperor regime which

104 Takeda 1959.

105 Yamaguchi 1999, p. 337.

must be called the source of the *kokutai* concept.”¹⁰⁶ This was the first scholarly discourse in which modern Japanese intellectuals repudiated the existence of the emperor system directly. However, the rules of critique adopted by the Marxists read the emperor system as a secular phenomenon only. And while they unmasked the limitations of the allegedly unbroken existence of the imperial dynasty and maintained that the origins of the Japanese people reached back to much earlier times, they based their idea of national identity on the same logic of historical essentialism as did the emperor system. In the course of their Marxist version of waging a dispute against historical essentialism, the original intent of the critics notwithstanding, they ironically came to support and emphasize the worth of the historical lineage described in the emperor system’s most ancient written records. Unfortunately, it was revealed via such documentary research that the historical grounds for the Marxists’ arguments were much more recent than the emperor system.¹⁰⁷ Naoki Sakai observed the pitfall in their approach to historical ideas:

Without inquiring how history was established, they made declarations that were purely about the lineage of the emperor system. This narrative turn to the examination of whether the recorded object was accurate, or was an imitation, at times assumed the substantiality of something called the emperor system; but insofar as it made that assumption, it became something which actually generated the emperor system.¹⁰⁸

In the end, Marxism was not able to pinpoint the extra-legal status of the emperor system within the realm of the secular. The emperor system could not be grasped through the circuits of secularity alone because, as Shimazono Susumu pointed out, it combined the circuits of religion as well.¹⁰⁹ In spite of its alleged secularity, as in the case of the national morality doctrine the system transcended the “secular/religious” dichotomy in a way that has not yet been acknowledged within the discourse of historiography. Despite this, academic disciplines such as historiography or religious studies turned into established discourses that supported only one side of such dichotomies as “the secular versus religion” or “morality versus religion,” and if maintaining those categories—which as mentioned were articulated in the emperor system as invisible

106 Watanabe Yoshimichi 1974, p. 131.

107 See chapter 9 below; Isomae 2010.

108 Sakai Naoki 1996, pp. 128–29.

109 These problematics within Marxist historiography had already been identified from the Marxists’ own side. See Inumaru 1987, pp. 272–80; Yasumaru 2004, pp. 105–106.

entities beyond segmentation—it became extremely difficult for those disciplines to problematize the emperor system that subsumed such discourses.

In this perspective, some scholars of religious studies and historiography show a transcendentalist yearning to identify an undecidable “radical freedom” with the area of religion—for example, a “space unconstrained by law, not permitting the intervention of police power, not allowing the imposition of taxation”¹¹⁰—as a means to break away from conventional criticisms of secular authority or the historical constraints of secularism. However, the yearning for such a world beyond the everyday permeated with mystical experience is a hotbed for encouraging the emperor system and substitutes for it. Of course, the undecidable and margins are not manifested in their naked form in the actual world, but ultimately are confined to being metaphors for reconsidering reality from the this-worldly side. Jacques Derrida has explained this conceptually absent or indefinable, yet influential, quality of extra-legal sovereignty as follows:

Sovereignty is the impossible, therefore it is *not*, it *is* . . . “this loss.” The writing of sovereignty places discourse *in relation* to absolute non-discourse. . . . it is not the loss of meaning, but . . . the “relation to this loss of meaning.” It opens the question of meaning. It does not describe unknowledge, for this is impossible, but only the effect of unknowledge. “In sum, it would be impossible to speak of unknowledge, while we can speak of its effects.”¹¹¹

As in the words of Asad cited at the opening of this chapter, people of the non-Western world today have been captured into the space of Western modernization. They have no choice but to deal with the “margins” (their own space) from within that modern, Westernized space. Even in the so-called space of “radical freedom” there remains a historical (or articulated) discourse where human beings only feel or think of freedom within the limitations of their historical context. Such being the case, the strategy we should adopt towards the extra-legality of the emperor system should involve not only just repeating criticism based on the ideas of historical essentialism and state-religion separation. Rather we should ask how phenomena like the emperor system, which seem to loom up outside of history, manifested themselves in actuality within history through the dichotomized channels of the secular and the religious, or through Shintō and religion, or even too in a manner transcending

110 Nakazawa 2004, pp. 95–97.

111 Derrida 1978, p. 270.

them. We should treat the process of this manifestation objectively on the basis of a non-historicist theory of origins. We must not be content with the two scholarly discourses of history or religious studies as currently defined, but rather intertwine both discourses to create new forms of expression in order to achieve a containment of the extra-legal nature of the emperor system within society. In order to manage with intellectual objectivity the emperor system that has been projected as outside of history, one must shatter these autistic conventional discourses of religious studies and history that have presumed the one-sidedness of the categories of religion and history as universal conceptions—although these are nothing more than channels of articulation. Above all, we should not forget that the extra-legal status of the emperor system has been not a trans-historical fact, but a historical product that resulted from the experience of modernizing Japan's confrontation with the Western world. It is precisely because it occurred within the framework of Westernization that it is no more than a historical product masked in the guise of the extra-liminal.

The Interior as the Battleground of Discourse

The psychological inside of a human being—interiority—is typically paired with terms about society that describe outer public space as it is distinguished from the human private sphere.¹ Karatani describes how interiority—which we view as being so self-evident today—was possible in Japan for the first time only because of the creation of the new vernacular language that had been forged from the spoken and written language (*genbun itchi*)—the institutional product of modernization and Westernization. He gives as an example the writer Kunikida Doppo (1871–1923):

We will notice that [Kunikida Doppo] appears no longer to have been distanced from writing... his familiarity with it means that he has acquired the capacity to express what was going on within his own mind. Language was no longer something either spoken or written; it went deep down within his inner being. Indeed, it was then that “interiority” became something independent, something direct and immediate. At the same time, however, all memory of the origin of interiority was erased.²

But even with this clever detection of the way interiority was delineated, the situation is not changed. It did not change the vigorous, lively actuality of interiority, or the often bewildering, uncontrollable situation that prevailed there. Pointing out the historicity of a recognized object does not mean that the critics who do the pointing are freed from the spell of historical constraints. Rather they themselves are deeply implicated in that historicity; knowledge only brings a self-awareness of the difficulty of any escape from that nebulous condition.

1 See Preface, p. xix, Introduction, p. 23. Karatani 1998, p. 277; Karatani 1994, part 3; see also Karatani 1993, chapter 2. However, the term “exteriority,” rather than referring to any opposite of the interiority, can also mean the invisible *heterotopos* (heterogeneous, ambiguous margin or space) that dislocates the two binary physical categories of inside and outside.

2 Karatani 1980, p. 86; for another English version, see also Karatani 1993, p. 67.

Incomprehensible Interiority

When we come into close relationships with others we experience how greatly “interiority” is shaped by the ups and downs of our own individual emotions, the sense of isolation we feel that is difficult for others to understand, and the deep imprint of history upon us. It brings home to us the difficulty of getting things to go as we would like them to go and of grasping the mysteriousness and elusiveness within ourselves. What is going on inside us is so familiar and yet at the same time so irrefutably alien that indeed facile homogenizations like “interiority” hardly suit it. Since we do not really understand what is happening inside ourselves, we create interpretations in the attempt to clarify things and give meaning to what we do. That is a measure of the specificity as well as the profundity of interiority.

In the historical space of modern Japan, this difficult-to-manage interiority was usurped by a variety of discourses—those of religions like Christianity, Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, and Shintō, as well as those of the emperor system, nationalism, history, literature, and so on. Through the usurpations and cominglings of these discourses, interiority was repeatedly overwritten. Or rather, perhaps it ought to be said that interiority was a site of discourse that thirsted for such overwriting. In this chapter I would like to present a bird’s-eye view of the ways the discourse of Marxism, which swept through the Japanese intellectual world in the 1930s, sought to sway people and the interior of the self through its emergence in discourse on the history of Japanese religion.

Interiority and Religion

In Japan the overt surfacing of what is called interiority was occasioned by the transplantation to its shores of Christianity, especially Protestantism. Because of its principle of asceticism in the secular world, Protestantism linked transcendental norms to people’s lives in a this-worldly society. Within the individual, it created an interior realm separated from the secular social communities people belong to, such the family, local community, and workplace, etc.³ Of course Christianity, in particular with its devotion to an absolute, anthropomorphic God, did not put down broad-reaching roots in Japanese society. Still, just as religious studies despite its small size did exert a major influence on elaboration of the concept of religion in Japan, so the transcendental character of Christianity played a significant role in creating an interior realm in individuals that was separated from historic communality.

3 See “Confession as a System,” in Karatani 1993.

One of the epochal phenomena that resulted from promulgation of the Meiji Constitution was the establishment, while retaining a certain fluidity, of a dichotomy in the social system between “religion,” which was the inner realm of the individual premised upon freedom of religion, and “morality,” which was a matter of the public sphere. So-called history became “national history,” designated as the bearer of public memory in the name of the native nation or state, and was separated from earlier modes of thought such as Kokugaku (National Learning) and Shintō, wherein religion and history had coexisted. Among the leading texts that emerged in parallel with such developments were Taguchi Ukichi’s *Nihon kaika shōshi* (A Short History of Japanese Civilization; 1877), which presented the “national history,” and Anesaki Masaharu’s *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (Outline of Religious Studies; 1900), which was premised upon the notion of religion as belonging to the private sphere; both offered specific frameworks of discourse.⁴ The gap in the time of publication between these two works shows the belated establishment of the sphere of interiority in modern Japan.

In the Christianity of Meiji-period Japan Catholicism could not gain sway, presumably because it did not situate the normative site of otherworldly asceticism in the everyday life of the citizenry but in monasteries that were outside of the secular community. It was not accidental that the liberal theology that became the wellspring for the religious studies of Anesaki Masaharu and others was the offspring of the union of Protestantism and Enlightenment ideology. Anesaki and others took a concept of religion not severed from the notion of the real existence of the divine and, by presuming it to be located in the mysterious realm within the human heart known as the “psychological,” they assigned it a clear place in civil society.⁵ This psychological realm, however, was not reduced to simple self-consciousness, but was treated as a site connected far beyond the self to the infinite. Yet at the same time, through the interposition of liberal theology and religious studies, the consciousness of sin that had originally been part of Christianity fell away and the tension that had characterized the relationship between the infinite and consciousness was self eroded, opening up the possibility of the all-too-easy embrace of one by the other.⁶

That internal realm, however, was not to be left free and apart from the public realm that was under the jurisdiction of the state. In the confrontation of education and religion in the early 1880s, the otherworldly aspirations of

4 Taguchi 1877; Anesaki 1900b, p. 1.

5 See chapter 1 of this book.

6 Yonekura 1983; Unuma 1988; Isomae 2005, pp. 239–40.

Protestantism clashed with the this-worldly strategy of the emperor system. Christianity in Japan then had to eliminate from itself that critical power it had possessed to relativize secular society; Japanese Buddhism and other religions would follow in the same path, and the realms of other-worldliness involving interiority in general were placed under the control of the secular authority of the emperor system. That process was made all the easier because of the absence of the consciousness of sin in the various religions, and weakened the tension between religion and the self or secular society. In a 1911 article entitled “Tōzai no shūkyō kaikaku” (Religious Reform in East and West) scholar of Western history Hara Katsurō (1871–1924) presented the theory that Shinran, Nichiren, and other religious leaders from the Kamakura period matched in importance the founding fathers of Protestantism including Luther and others. The idea gained wide support,⁷ and it is of interest that the points of commonality between Japan and Europe cited in the study were the focus on doctrine and nationalistic and secular character. By the 1890s, the institutionalization of pseudo-religion, cloaked in the nativism of State Shintō, had made substantial progress in assimilating interiority into the purview of the authority of the state.

The interior realm introduced by Christianity had now been twice over unavoidably subject to change. The first change concerned the anthropomorphic absolute god and the second the quality of transcendence. As a result the inward realm of each individual became established as a space called interiority, but was cut off from actual society. Debates unfolded over how to capture that interiority, and interiority became the site of struggle crisscrossed by various discourses. Interiority was itself a discourse and the interiorities created by such discourses were diverse. The primary discourse, as describe above, was the grasp of the interior by state authority, in other words the transformation of people into citizens of the state.

By the late 1890s to 1900s, the emperor system state had given up its program of superficial respect for freedom of religion in the private sphere while advancing indoctrination of the people through morality in the public sphere. It now shifted to a strategy seeking indoctrination of people from within through the sphere of religion. The discourse that supported this plan was the vision of union of the state and individual via religion originating with the progenitor of religious studies, Anesaki Masaharu.⁸ It was from around this time that religious studies as an ambiguous discourse, which both criticized State Shintō on one hand and bound together the state and the individual on

7 Hara 1911.

8 See chapter 5.

the other, evolved within the departments established one after another at the imperial universities. In those institutions the collusive relationship formed between nationalism and religion through interiority, yet cloaked in the modern guise of freedom of religion, became established as an attempt to re-interpret interiority.

Yet insofar as interiority is itself a discourse, and its essence lacks a clear foundation or source, no matter what kinds of discourses are associated with it, interiority can never be fully explained. This is precisely why we experience the unceasing impulse to somehow explain interiority through discourse. Interiority is thus transformed into the site of struggles between differentiation and identification. Interiority becomes a site of thirst for identification by being exposed to the anxiety of differentiation. The instability of alternating between identification and differentiation is our inescapable destiny. Jacques Derrida describes this instability seen in interiority as follows:

The desire for the intact kernel is desire itself, which is to say that it is irreducible. There is a prehistoric, preoriginary relation to the intact kernel, and it is only beginning with this relation that any desire whatsoever can constitute itself. Thus, the desire or the *phantasm* of the intact kernel is irreducible . . . But one can only forget that there has never been an intact kernel. This phantasm, this desire for the intact kernel sets in motion every kind of desire, every kind of tongue, appeal, address . . . just as without the desire for the intact kernel which doesn't exist, the desire for the untouchable, for virginity (the taboo on virginity has an essential relation to all this)—just as without this desire for virginity no desire whatever would be set moving . . .⁹

In the late 1890s–1900s, interiority, in addition to being exploited for the propagation of nation-state ideology as noted earlier, was embraced anew as the wellspring of powerful instincts (*honnō*) and emotions (*jōdō*) as described in the proliferation of Naturalist fiction by Tayama Katai (1872–1930) and others.¹⁰ In contrast to religion, which understood interiority as the site of wisdom and intellect, Naturalist fiction saw it in physical, bodily terms. The way these novelists became consumed by and then were tripped up by their own obsession with desires and emotions—as if foretelling the way once-passionate Marxists would suddenly repudiate their convictions (the so-called *tenkō*) in the 1930s—came to exemplify the common pattern among modern

9 Derrida 1985, pp. 115–16.

10 For example, Tayama's novel *Futon*; see Tayama 1907.

Japanese intellectuals. It was this fourth decade of the Meiji era that was often referred to as the era of spiritual anguish (*hanmon no jidai*) marked by a spate of suicides among young people. While their urge toward nationalism heightened, young people began to feel intimidated at the incomprehensibility of their own inner selves. In contrast to the way the state sought to capture interiority through the enlightenment-oriented discourse on religion, novelists tried to grasp it as a site of emotive expression. However, as a former poet in the school of classic lyricism, Yanagita Kunio detected in the physical bodies of the characters described by these modern novelists the scent of Western-derived individualism, driving his own aspirations eventually to the very different world of the imagination that he had discovered in the daily life of the farmers, as described in his *Tōno monogatari* (The Legends of Tōno) published in 1910.¹¹

At about the same time, Takayama Chogyū and others introduced the ideas of Nietzsche to Japan in rather digested form. In the sense that these concepts were focused on human nature as instinct, they belonged to much the same trend as the writing of the Naturalist school in trying to present the explanation of interiority through the workings of human instinct.¹² People were beginning to realize, in any case, that Enlightenment reason was of little help in comprehending interiority. Even for the individual, although interiority was right there within, it was not a space that was clearly defined. Interiority began to appear as a dark and ambiguous realm, on one hand linked to the state but on the other to the physical body beyond the control of individual consciousness. However, here too, the lack of the sense of sin indicated a strong possibility of erasing the distance/tension between interiority and any discourse that might try to explain that interiority and unify the two.

Equilibrium Lost

In the 1920s it seemed the opacity of the unseen inner realm increased all the more. Freudian psychology, which began to be introduced to Japan about that time, and the work of Nakamura Kōkyō (1881–1952) in abnormal psychology were all the rage. This was also the era when the novels of Edogawa Ranpo (1894–1965), whose ideas were derived from the psychology of the unconscious, gained popularity.¹³ For example, in the later part of this period, in the short story “Blind Beast,” the abuse of the body of an abducted woman and her grotesque murder afterward in a pitch-dark room is narrated with seductive ghastliness.

11 Yanagita 2008. “The Discovery of Landscape,” in Karatani 1993.

12 Takayama 1901; Nomura 1998.

13 Matsuyama Iwao 1984.

It appears that the entire room set to wriggling . . . A thicket of arms, clusters of wrists and ankles, a forest of thighs, all of them began to sway like treetops buffeted in the wind. Lined up on the floor were perfectly round lumps of meat that began to move in waves. The nostrils of gigantic noses twitched convulsively as they smelled; gigantic mouths with projecting teeth issued groaning voices. . . . A man touched Ranko's foot. The warm palm of his hand tightly grasped her ankle. . . . On the wall a swarm of innumerable breasts flushed red-like faces and swelled up like toy balloons, and from a thousand nipples warm milk poured in a foaming torrent onto the tumbling pair.¹⁴

In Ranpo's novels, people are driven by their psychological drives to sexual acts and murder without reason. Overwhelmed by the power of their physical unconscious, they lose sight of the transparency of their own interiority, and as if having lost any connection with the spirit of the infinite, their consciousness is pulled down into the darkness of corporeal pleasure, or goes mad from being shut up within the self. Along with the rise of democratic forces arising with the opening of the Taishō era (1912–1926), society was in the throes of urbanization, and the people—now referred to as the masses (*taishū*)—were participating as consumers in the new capitalist society. The gaps between the cities and rural villages widened and voices were raised pointing to the contradictions of that unprecedented economy.

As if in concert with this society split between affluent urban and poor rural life, the realm of culture seemed bifurcated as well. The Taishō era was the time when the government incorporated the mythology of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* into school textbooks as historical fact and made worship at shrines mandatory, embedding justifications for the emperor system into the popular consciousness from nonrational directions. Yet it was also the time when the scholar of East Asian history Tsuda Sōkichi (1873–1961) developed his critique of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, which ought to have delivered the fatal blow to the doctrines of racial superiority espoused by scholars of archaeology and historiography based on the previously accepted historical veracity of the ancient texts. In such works as *Jindaishi no kenkyū* (Studies of the History of the Gods) and *Kojiki oyobi Nihonshoki no kenkyū* (Study of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*), Tsuda reappropriated them as psychological fictions.¹⁵ For him, however, the psychological dimension did not have a channel that opened outside the consciousness to the physical body or to the spiritual such as God or

14 Edogawa 1931, p. 48.

15 Tsuda Sōkichi 1924a; Tsuda Sōkichi 1924b; Ienaga 1972.

the gods, but was instead confined only to the individual's self-evident powers of reason.

The fact that there was the kind of attempt at rational interpretation of the emperor system mythology undertaken by Tsuda going on at the same time as the other, irrational interpretation pushed forward by the government meant that the discourse on interiority during the Taishō era was dangerously split and kept moving forward without any sign of resolution. The situation could not be explained simply as the result of the crude forces of the state authority oblivious to Enlightened reason; rather, it has to be seen as a polarizing movement within the discourse of interiority itself that could not be held back. Rational thought was making progress, but the completely opposite impulses of instinct and emotion were mushrooming. Indeed, it was a time when strange forms of deviance were seen alongside rationality, demonstrating the very phenomenon advanced by the then-fashionable Freudian psychology. The heterogeneity of interiority that had been dormant in the early stages of the Meiji era now split into two polar extremes: one was an extremely rational individualism, and the other was the pathologically enlarged unconscious. The discourses of Tsuda and Ranpo can be said to represent these two extremes.

In that way the conflict intensified between the rational self-consciousness and what could not be contained within it. The motif was the disconnect between the whole and parts, seen sandwiched between the Bergsonian-Diltheyan philosophy known as *Lebensphilosophie* on one side and neo-Kantian philosophy on the other.¹⁶ Into this perilous situation emerged two scholars from the seminar on Japanese history at Tokyo Imperial University: Hani Gorō (1901–1983), who introduced to Japan the work of the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce entitled *Teoria e storia della storiografia* (1917) and Hiraizumi Kiyoshi (1895–1984), another Croce admirer.¹⁷ Just as the neo-Kantian declaration that the parts cannot comprehend the whole was about to quite naturally collapse, such new discourses attempting to present a new notion of the whole moved in to fill and support the interiority pervaded by the vague anxieties of the Taishō era. Intense passions were focused on the emperor system in one direction and toward Marxism in the other. Later, Hiraizumi went over to the side supporting the emperor system and Hani became a follower of Marxism.

These were the circumstances in which the writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, describing the “nebulous anxiety” (*bon'yari shita fuan*) he felt, killed himself

16 Miyakawa Tōru 1962, chapter 2; Funayama 1965, part 2.

17 Croce 1921; Hiraizumi 1926; Inumaru 1967; Karube 1996. On Croce see Hani 1939; Moss 1987.

in 1927.¹⁸ His death was like a sign that the rationalist framework of the Taishō liberalist self could no longer stand up under the strains of those opposing forces. In a competition held by the popular opinion journal *Kaizō* (Reform), the essay that won first prize, besting even the piece by the brilliant founder of literary criticism Kobayashi Hideo (1902–1983), was by the Marxist Miyamoto Kenji (1908–2007), who viewed Akutagawa's death in the context of the literature of the defeated.¹⁹

Marxist Historiography and Religion

Hand in hand with the ideology of Christian socialism, Marxism had appeared in the intellectual society of Japan in the mid-Meiji era, at a time when class conflict was intensifying. Under the liberal theology that gave rise to religious studies, some schools of Christianity joined forces with evolutionary theory and made social criticism possible in a this-worldly context.

Russia and the Rise of Marxism

However, by the late 1900s the close relationship between Marxism and Christian socialism broke apart over the question whether to see the primary conditioning factors along Marxist lines, i.e., in terms of the base structure of the economy or, whether to emphasize neighborly love or belief in God according to Christian socialism, which to Marxists was a product only of the superficial ideology of social structure. Subsequently, Japanese Marxism separated from anarchism as well, and proponents of Russian Marxism,²⁰ represented by Bolshevism—that is, the Communist Party's so-called advance guard—seized the opportunity to provide guidance and turned toward a strategy of fomenting a socialist revolution.²¹ Russian Marxism had come into being after breaking away from Christian socialist culture. Despite its vehement anti-religion rhetoric, it actually drew on Protestant traditions in extolling the absoluteness of interiority and absolute fidelity to the Communist Party, as well as drawing

18 Akutagawa 1927, p. 3.

19 Miyamoto 1929; Kobayashi Hideo 1929; Hirano Ken 1963, chapter 1.

20 Russian Marxism refers to the Marxism associated with Lenin and Stalin in the Soviet Union, which was based on Engels's theory rather than directly on Marx himself. The contrasting version can be referred to as Western Marxism, represented by thinkers like Gramsci, Lukács, and Benjamin in Europe.

21 Miyakawa Tōru 1962, chapter 4; Komori 2002.

on general Christian (or Communist Party) millenarian elements.²² Anesaki described the Communists as follows:

Observing the psychological state of followers of Communism, they look just like believers in a kind of religion. The Communist society they idealize is for them a kind of heaven. Their way of reaching this heaven in one stride is the direct path of class warfare, and they do not seem to mind staking their lives for the sake of that goal. In their passion to put their bodies on the line for the cause, they possess a mental state similar to the martyrs of the old days who sacrificed themselves for their faith.²³

Anesaki saw their impulse to self-sacrifice as a kind of religious enthusiasm, and in that his observation was certainly not mistaken. Marxism's theory of economic determinism, according to which the economic substructure determines the formation of human consciousness, demolished the distorted self-consciousness advanced by Taishō liberalist thought. The Marxist doctrine of the base structure of the economy suggested an entirety of being that was incomprehensible to the kind of reasoning derived from such stunted self-consciousness. Yet such a base structure also seemed as a whole to be something outside that gave meaning to individual interiority; it could function like a Christian-like god that, with a single stroke, denied the significance of the stunted self-consciousness. Two pitfalls lurked in that possibility. One was the danger that Marxist discourse, which had come onto the stage as an absolute externality, might be turned into a substantialized object in which Marxists believed blindly. The other concerned the interiority that had been established in the Meiji era, with its two channels open to reason on the one hand and to the physical body on the other: Marxism presented the danger of cutting off the channel to the body. It was no accident that the ascent of Russian Marxism in this era came about by completely burying anarchism. In the anarchist Ōsugi Sakae (1885–1923), for example—who celebrated the idea of life in a manner shown in his unrestrained personal career—the focus on the body easily led to a tendency toward the Epicureanism of consumer society, accompanied by a disorientation of identity.²⁴

Such were the stern absolutist features of Russian Marxism that dangled the possibility of salvation before intellectuals writhing in the agonies of splintered interiority. Backed up by the natural dialectic emphasized by Engels and

22 Fujita et al. 1966.

23 Anesaki 1928b, p. 323.

24 Miyakawa Tōru 1962, chapter 4, section 1; Kamata 1997.

Lenin, Marxism was welcomed as the truth that promised to recover a quality of wholism and that boasted the same objectivity as the natural sciences. It was welcomed as providing the breakthrough to the epistemological limitations imposed by neo-Kantian thought. Now avant-garde intellectuals were looked upon as rationalists who had mastered Marxist theory in contrast to the proletariat, which was considered the body that should obey them. Marxist theory was expected to convert human interiority, buried in its false consciousness, by means of this absolute truth brought in from the outside. These intellectuals had a strong desire for some form of unification with mass society, which was driven by their consciousness of a nation that had arisen with the spread of mass society. This was something that had never been seen in the older generation of Natsume Sōseki and Mori Ōgai.

In the mid-1920s Fukumoto Kazuo (1894–1983) held sway with his theory of “Separation and Reunification,” advocating that the relationship of intellectuals to the proletariat must begin with their separation, and then, after mastering the theory, reunification with the masses. We can interpret this idea as his attempt to relate the consciousness of intellectuals with the body of people, based on the purification of the absolute truth of theory. At this time there was no room in such absolutized thought for critical examination towards interiority; absolutized thought appeared instead as an external force lacking distance or proper elaboration. Many intellectuals projected such an idea of external force onto the Comintern (the Communist International or Third International organized by the Soviet Union between 1919 and 1943). Their belief in its infallibility was understandable.

As one of the kinds of new thought transplanted to Japan from the West, Russian Marxism flourished following the Enlightenment thought of England and France, American Protestantism, German Romanticism, and so on. Just as the word religion was used polysemically on the basis of a variety of discourses—as in Catholicism, Russian Orthodoxy, liberal theology, or even religious studies—it might have been expected that Marxism, like other systems of thought transplanted from the West, would reveal the heterogeneity burgeoning within the West. However, in reality the heterogeneity contained in such thought was streamlined into a single evolutionary hierarchy within a supposedly homogenizing mode of Western thought. Thus it was at best reduced to a dichotomy, placing the West as the admired outside and Japan as the stagnant inside to be overcome by the West.

In that era, Russian Marxism—taking over the place of absolute transcendence occupied by quasi-Protestantism after the latter capitulated to the emperor system—seemed to have won over the interiority of Japanese intellectuals. The viewpoints of transcendental criticism, or some kind

of transcendental criticism, had become possible in Japan as in the West. Of course, that very viewpoint was extremely Protestant in nature. One point I would like to call attention to is that, although in Japan today the impression is strongest of the linkage between Marxism and historiography, less well known is that Russian Marxism initially put down roots in Japan in the 1920s based on connections with religious criticism and literary movements. Russian Marxism in Japan began within a discourse concerning the realm of the interior in literature and religion, as opposed to historiographical discourse dealing with memory in the public realm.

Russian Marxism and Literature/Religion

The connection of Russian Marxism with literature began in the 1920s in the form of links with what was known as the proletarian literature movement. It began with the purpose of remaking the consciousness of the people, transforming them from “subjects of the state” into a proletariat. Participants in the movement were labor dispute activists infused with the Russian Marxist consciousness of the proletariat, such as those depicted in Kobayashi Takiji’s novel *Kanikōsen* (The Cannery Boat).²⁵ At first the necessity of evoking an intentionality (Edmund Husserl) toward history was not yet evident. Citing the Marxist dismissal of “religion as the opium of the people,” they launched a campaign against religion.

We can readily understand how the plan of Russian Marxists to foment revolution would be served by gaining access to the interiority of the people through literature and religion, undercutting the convictions of religious believers, and implanting them with the proletarian consciousness. The attack on religion was launched in Sano Manabu’s *Marukusu shugi to mushinron* (Marxism and Atheism),²⁶ published in 1927, at about the same time as the Comintern’s 1927 Theses. The rebuttal from religionists and scholars of religion was fierce, calling for “the extermination of cults and movements that turn their backs on the *kokutai*.”²⁷ In 1930 the Tokyo University-trained Hattori Shisō and Kyoto University-based Miki Kiyoshi, joined by social activist Kawauchi Tadahiko and others, published a polemic against religion, first against believers within the Marxist camp and subsequently with scholars of religion themselves. (Their essays were collected in the book *Marukishizumu to shūkyō* [Marxism and Religion].)²⁸ After that, however, Miki withdrew from the Japan

25 Kobayashi Takiji 1929.

26 Sano Manabu 1927.

27 Nihon Shūkyō Konwakai 1928, p. 445.

28 Chūgai Nippō Tōkyō Shikyoku 1930.

Communist Party. Hattori, who looked to the potential of religion along with Marxist thought in changing Japanese society, fell silent under pressure from the JCP.

The Union of Militant Atheists was formed in 1931 under the direction of the Comintern.²⁹ As revealed in a work titled *Han shūkyō tōsō no hata no moto ni* (Under the Flag of the Battle against Religion)³⁰ published in the same year, at the same time that this attack on religions represented a transformation of worldviews, it was also a practical issue of transforming believers into a proletariat and bringing about socialist revolution. Significantly enough, among the religions viewed as the enemy was Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, with its transcendental character the closest to Protestantism of all Japan's religious traditions. Marxists sought to acquire their proletariat from the ranks of the most deeply devout believers and do battle with State Shintō using that historic bloc. Likewise, through confrontation in particular with the Naturalist fiction that affirmed innate instincts, they planned to use proletarian literature to "realign" the interiority of the people on the basis of Russian Marxist absolutism.

For those who were to be thus realigned, such a change was nothing short of a flying leap. The advance guard were seen as implementers of a theory of absolute truth and, as the proletariat that was the body into which that truth should permeate, the people were to obey without complaint, abandoning their false consciousness of self-identity and submitting to a new absolute authority. Naturally, any doubts about the authority of the Comintern or the Japan Communist Party were tantamount to heresy. The logic of the party's decision-making about who had qualifications to join the party, too, was extremely close to the concept of divine favor. It is not difficult to see the Christian logic at work here in the form of an absolute outside authority, whether it was called the Communist Party or God. However, being premised upon this kind of unbalanced dualism and pressing for total conversion, Russian Marxism faced the increasing danger that one misstep could lead to destruction in one fell swoop. Kobayashi Hideo and Miki Kiyoshi were quick to perceive that danger at the time. As Kobayashi pointed out:

When ideas are infused with an absolutism that does not permit unique interpretation by individual authors, they take on the original form of socialized thought addressed to others in society. Writers of the newly rising literature could not help but be intoxicated by the novelty

29 On the initial dispute between Miki and Hattori over religion and Marxism, see Honma 1951; Akazawa 1985, chapter 4; Tsuda Masao 1997, chapters 2, 3.

30 Han Shūkyō Tōsō Dōmei Junbikai 1931.

of that form. . . . Until now writers have never relied to such an extent on ideas and theory; nor has it happened that writers so ignored their own physical bodies.³¹

Kobayashi in this period established his status as a critic by being an adversary of both sides of the conflict between proletarian and Naturalist literature. For him, Naturalist fiction caused people to wallow in individual human emotions while Marxism buried them in ideological absolutism. Moreover, both kinds of fiction seemed to him to stand in the way of encounter with the incomprehensibility and uniqueness of individual interiority. Kobayashi thought that the Marxist intellectual submersion in a homogenized ideology, annihilating their individual bodies, caused them to evade a proper confrontation with Marxist ideology itself and “the uncontrollable monster”³² of interiority. When Marxists assumed themselves to be the personification of the consciousness they believed should be infused into the masses, they were caught in the delusion of having jumped the gap that naturally existed between Marxist theory and the historical existence or body of Marxists. They became totally assimilated to the theory strapped on like armor over their bodies. Moreover, just as in the case of the earlier theory of Taishō liberalism, their ideas were not open to the unrecognizable and unlimited body of unconsciousness, but were confined instead within only the clarity of the apparently evident self of consciousness. This was because they confronted such anxieties within their individual interiority arising from the unbridged interstices between the uncontrolled physical consciousness of the Taishō era and a stunted self-consciousness—the latter deriving from how they were prone to fall for the ideology of Marxism with religious passion—even as it gloried in its self-evident externality. In addition, to conceive of the proletariat as physical bodies that must be converted to the Marxist ideology had a function at the time of allowing them to firmly believe in their superiority over the general populace, further suppressing their anxieties as intellectuals. Yet the outsider quality of an ideology was not something that could be so readily applauded.

Miki Kiyoshi was another who recognized the danger imminent in the struggle between religion and Marxism. Miki linked German philosophy, Nishida philosophy, and Marxism on the basis of existential anxiety and became famous as the standard-bearer of a new Marxist philosophy. Miki offered the view that “religion has a relation to the whole of a person’s existence,”³³ and he

31 Kobayashi Hideo 1935, pp. 390–91.

32 Kobayashi Hideo 1930, p. 207.

33 Miki 1930, p. 25.

believed that the reduction of all of human existence to class struggle, as in the pragmatic thought of Marxism, was an oversimplification, and that a realm of particularity, found in uncertainties that could not easily be generalized about, seemed to reside in the interiority of the individual. Kobayashi called this particularity “destiny,”³⁴ but Miki called it “religion.” It is not clear in this period what kind of religion Miki assumed, but we need not here be too concerned about substantive definitions of religion. To find out what Miki was trying to express it is necessary to take a closer look at what lay behind the word.

Miki problematized the idea that things denoted by this word religion resided in an independent realm that could remain unaffected by class conflict or substructure. Under the circumstances of the time, in which capitalism had reached an impasse, he believed that a religious dimension was a necessary part of class struggle because the religious realm existed to reflect the alienation of human beings in a distorted form. This notion was harshly criticized by Hattori Shisō and other advocates of the materialistic dialectic represented by Engels’s *Dialectic der Natur*; they maintained atheist stances in which everything reflected the Marxian base structure. Miki’s contrasting assertion that “even speaking of materialism *per se* . . . depends on the historical particularity of social structure”³⁵—materialism itself is just the product of history—spurned by the absolutization of any ideology or ideas, including Marxist materialism, and was completely rejected by the Japan Communist Party.

The interiority that the Marxists had tried to manipulate by means of anti-religious rhetoric and literary theory was now to be filled in through subordination to a Russian Marxism that stood towering outside as the clear and absolute truth. In 1929 the Proletarian Research Center founded by Hani and others banished Miki—who had received profound influences from Western Marxism and criticized even the authority of Lenin and Engels. His expulsion was inseparably linked to the ideological stance of Marxism in Japan under the guidance of the Comintern, which declared that Russian Marxism was absolute truth. The members of the Japanese Communist Party, to whom it was no longer clear that the ideas they were following were only one version of Marxism, became convinced that their ideas represented the truth of Marxism because they followed the “orthodoxy” of Lenin and Stalin. In that context, interiority as espoused in Marxism could only be that which could be homogenized with the “absolute truth” of class struggle, and the vagueness and immeasurability

34 Kobayashi Hideo 1930, p. 209.

35 Miki 1929, p. 355.

of interiority that Miki sought to describe with his use of the word religion (*shūkyō*) were rejected.

The transcendental critical power of Marxism that was supposed to criticize the ambiguity of reality and shed light on reality now turned towards the suppression of interiority, which had once been a space where multiple voices could rise up. Ironically, that process proceeded as if in step with the emperor system, which—the Marxists' greatest target of subversion—began to march at a similarly militant pace and develop an equally hard line. This soon invited the phenomenon of *tenkō* (ideological conversion)—the overturning, indeed the submission, of the spirit to the physical body, of theory to the everyday, and of the West to Japan. Of course it is not sufficient just to blame the Marxists of the time for that consequence: in the society of those days, the tying of discourses to ideology was part of a current that had been flowing since the Meiji era.

In the face of this situation, the scholars of religion who had been targets in the Marxist anti-religion struggle predicted that the physical dimension in everyday life would be overlooked by Marxism's exclusion of religious practice. During this episode in the history of Japanese religious studies, a second generation centered on the scholarship of Uno Enkū and Furuno Kiyoto was supplanting the first generation associated with Anesaki Masaharu. In terms of content, German Romantic philosophy-influenced studies gave way to a religious ethnology with anthropology and sociology as the axis.³⁶

After Miki retired from the scene, more controversy developed between followers of Russian Marxism and scholars of religion. However, the concept of religion that the Marxists criticized was simply the already obsolete theory of religious evolution influenced by classical Christianity. It was a criticism that could only be appropriately directed at Christianity itself, particularly Protestantism. The entire Marxist polemic against religion was something that was aimed specifically at the cultural sphere of Christianity from which Marxism had also been born; the lack of its applicability to Japanese society was clear. The newer religious studies of Uno and Furuno were based on the anthropology of Malinowski and the sociology of Durkheim and focused on the importance of religion's group-oriented character and ritual activities in everyday life, with a strong influence from the modernist criticism of individualism and rationality. The new generation of Japanese religious studies scholars were trying to bring into view the marginal strata of Japanese society such as the rural villages where life went on out of touch with the modern world and

36 Saki 1937, part 1, chapter 4.

thus outside the purview of the essentially Christian worldview upon which the Marxists premised their ideology.³⁷

Returning to the problem of human interiority that is the main topic of this chapter, the religious studies of Uno and others tried to reappropriate interiority as the site open to the ambiguous and non-intellectual physical body. Theirs was the antithesis of Anesaki's religious studies that had been rooted in a philosophy of idealism. It was not surprising that their arguments found no common ground with the Marxists, but the Taishō-era religious ethnology discourse tended to emphasize the dichotomies of spirit and body, of urban and rural, and conscious and unconscious, adding impetus to such dichotomous reasoning. What we cannot help noting is that religious studies scholars did not pay sufficient attention to this polarizing tendency. They obviously believed that their individual theories could comprehend the religious meaning of everyday life. What they did not recognize was that their discourses only existed in the theoretical dimension. However much they discussed everyday life and the physical body, they lacked the self-awareness to see that their ideas could not be more than theories, albeit motivated by a desire for universal truth. In the end they believed they could easily overcome the epistemological limitations pointed out by the neo-Kantians in the 1920s. When they were unable to recognize the desire for wholism in their own thinking, the discourse of the physical body began to conceal their interiority. This takes us back to the statement by Kobayashi Hideo about proletarian literature mentioned above. How do we deal with such absolutist thought, he had asked. There were various forms of response, but all of them fell into the monism of their own discourse. No matter how absolute the words of everyday life or theory may appear, language is not simply their reflection but inevitably their distortion. Consequently, in the sense that Russian Marxism in Japan was subjugated to an absolutist wholeness that stood outside language, it was little different from Naturalist literature. Kobayashi even wrote as follows:

Writers of the intellectual class are bewildered about how to handle the ideas that have suddenly pervaded literature. They could recognize the realities explained by Marxist thought, but it took much more time for them to realize the rawness of action of the young people possessed by this idea.³⁸

37 Uno Enkū 1931; Furuno 1938. On the theories of Uno and Furuno, see Furuno 1980; Tamaru 1984.

38 Kobayashi Hideo 1934, p. 211.

In fact, by the end of the 1930s the religious scholars who were engaged in the study of religious ethnology had been completely sucked into the discourse of the Japanese spirit, a narrative according to which the people were to serve the *kokutai* with religious enthusiasm from the very basic level of their daily lives. In 1938 Uno wrote the following in *Tenkanki no shūkyō* (Religion at Turning Points in History) issued by a publisher connected to Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism's Nishi Honganji organization:

When it comes to the *kokutai*, even if emphasis is placed on the Japanese spirit, the public and private life of the Japanese people must be conducted with its source in the deep faith in the imperial ancestry from which our own ancestors proceeded, and with profound gratitude to the gods. At the same time [that faith and gratitude] has to be practiced throughout all spheres, from individual private life to governmental activities of administrative offices and public affairs. This should not be simple festivals or ritual ceremonies, but truly be thoroughgoing acts of respect and service to the gods and buddhas in everyday life.³⁹

The criticism of modernity of earlier times had been converted into a discourse clad in the new garb of the homogenization of everyday life. The tasks of keeping a distance from transcendental absolutism pointed out by Kobayashi or of addressing the question of religiosity as a reflection of interior anxiety as called for by Miki have been put aside. Observing the way interiority as explained by Uno and others was fulfilled through the authority of the state following the discourse of everydayness, we naturally recall how State Shintō in this period was systematized as a non-Western religious tradition, and how the recanting of followers of Russian Marxism was seen as returning to the indigenous spirit.

Around the middle of the 1930s, both the debates over religion and the anti-religion polemic died down. Among urban intellectuals there was a boom of religious revival, which was represented by the writings of Tomomatsu Entai (1895–1973) and others and by the currency of similar pseudo-religions (like Ōmotokyō) on the level of the masses.⁴⁰ It was the era when Tsurufuji Ikuta (1890–1974) took the initiative in the study of new religions.⁴¹ With the

39 Uno Enkū 1938, p. 96.

40 Tomomatsu was a well known Japanese Buddhist and scholar of Buddhism, though not affiliated with any particular sect, who popularized Buddhism through his lectures on an NHK radio program. On the atmosphere of the era, see Miki 1934; Miki 1936; Miki 1939; Akizawa and Nagata 1935.

41 Nakayama 1932; Tsurufuji 1939.

breakdown of capitalism seeming in the offing, the anxieties of both intellectuals and ordinary people spurred them to turn to religion. For the intellectuals the mode was ideas; for the people it was collective, physical practice. Both new religions and established Buddhism now began to be swallowed into the current of Japanism. It was as if the discourse of Japanism had newly pacified the anxieties of an interiority that fundamentally could never be satisfied.

Russian Marxism and History

When the ideas that had been understood to be absolute failed to penetrate Japanese society, a retaliation took place claiming the victory of reality over the intelligentsia who had identified themselves with Western ideologies. Now, what was considered to be genuinely Japanese came on stage, ejecting the ideological absolutes that had purported to be universalist. The earlier problems—the gap between urban and rural and the breakdowns of capitalist society—reappeared in the form of Japanese or Asian particularity, but this time with the body fighting back against the spirit and the Japanese challenging the West. In Marxist history, it was not by accident that the Asiatic mode of production was identified as the reason for Asian stagnation and that capitalism still included remnants of feudalism.⁴² Intellectuals who had identified themselves with the “spirit” became the targets of reprisal in the Japanese society that they had regarded as their “body,” though the vengeance was not actually carried out by the public; they were just stumbling within their own consciousness. Ironically, Marxist historical research began in earnest roughly at the same time as the dissolution of the Communist Party and in the emptied space left in the wake of the collapse of the authority of a party that had been absolutely Other.

The beginnings of Marxist historiography in Japan were once sought in the historical research on the modern period carried out around 1927 by Noro Eitarō (1904–1934) and Hattori Shisō. However, as shown in the fact that Noro had been trained in economics and Hattori in sociology and that the principal authors of *Nihon shihon shugi hattatsushi kōza* (Lectures on the Development of Japanese Capitalism),⁴³ published in 1932–1933, were—other than historian Hani Gorō—Tokyo Imperial University Faculty of Economics professors like Hirano Yoshitarō (1897–1980) and Yamada Moritarō (1897–1980), Marxist historiography in Japan therefore was initially propelled as the political and economic analysis of capitalism (rather than as historical research).

42 Watanabe Yoshimichi 1948; Shiozawa 1970, chapter 1; Hoston 1986, chapters 3–6.

43 Noro et al. 1932–1933.

Even the Rōnō faction⁴⁴ scholars with whom they debated about capitalism were based at the Faculty of Economics. Hani, though a historian, was unique in that he, like Miki Kiyoshi, was familiar with Western (non-Russian) Marxism.

Already by this stage the pivot of discussion was the “feudal stagnation” of Japanese capitalism emphasized by the Kōza-ha faction, focusing on the gap between urban areas and agricultural villages and the early modern or “feudalistic” (*hōkenteki*) traits that lingered in rural society, with features that did not fit into the theoretical framework of Marxism.⁴⁵ This period roughly paralleled the shift from the debates on religion to the launching of the attacks on religion around 1932. It was a period when Japan’s feudalistic traits had been singled out as the targets of the Japan Communist Party strategy for revolution. In contrast to the anti-religion debates (the Miki-Hattori controversy and the religious studies debates), coming as they did before the 1932 Theses, which had had an educational tone, the debate on capitalism straddled the announcement of the Theses, and a great deal of energy was expended on analyzing this so-called stagnation. Japaneseness was identified with stagnation and interpreted as backwardness compared to the West. The view of Japan’s uniqueness as particularity, in contrast to what was assumed to be the universality of the West, clearly shows the orientation of Russian Marxism toward Western modernism up to that stage.

So the first substantial steps into historical studies by Russian Marxist scholarship in Japan, which had thus far been discussing Japan’s stagnation in the form of political and economic analysis of capitalism, came around the time of the 1933 ideological conversions from Marxism and the shift to acceptance of the emperor system, when intellectuals revised their thinking about Japaneseness. This was also the time when Russian Marxism, which had established itself as absolute and transcendental in the fields of religion and literature, had to accept the powerlessness of its own logic in the face of the realities of the Japanese people. As Uno Enkū had already pointed out, because

44 In their efforts in the 1920s and early 1930s to accommodate Russian Marxist theory to Japan, Japanese Marxists famously sorted themselves into two main schools of interpretation. The Kōza faction (“Lecture” Faction), that offered an official Japan Communist Party position supported by the Comintern, maintained that despite the Meiji revolution, Japan remained a politically backward, semi-feudal society which still needed a bourgeois revolution (under communist guidance) before it could progress to the socialist revolution. The dissident Rōnō faction (“Workers and Peasants” Faction) held that Japan had already undergone a bourgeois transformation that had created a full capitalist regime with a civil society sector and that Marxist thought must proceed from that position. The disparity in views had many complex implications for theory and practice. See Hoston 1986.

45 Sano Manabu 1923; Inomata 1934; Waswo 1988; K. Smith 2001.

of the so very Christian schematization of its abstractness, Russian Marxism had failed to take hold of the interiority of Japanese; many intellectuals, partly shaken into realizing the non-Western components that lay within their interior and partly under the pressure of intensified repression from the government authorities, turned in the direction of Japaneseism.

Basically such Japaneseeness did not really exist. In the overly Westernized identification of Japanese Marxists, such marginal territory, which inherently could not be named but could be easily *imagined* as Japaneseeness, was a reversal of their own subjectivity. The dichotomies of West and Japan, theory and physical body, urban and rural, all became parallel, and the now-dissipated anti-religion struggle were replaced by economic analysis, which was the first to search out the secret of this Japaneseeness. Towards the end of 1934 Watanabe Yoshimichi recruited members of the study group on materialism (Yuibutsuron Kenkyūkai) and launched a study group focused on ancient Japan's slave system. In 1936 and 1937 the results were published in his book *Nihon rekishi kyōtei* (Methods of Teaching Japanese History).⁴⁶ As Watanabe himself recollected, this research explored the issues of historical orientation in its explanation of the origins of the *kokutai*, which was added to an analysis of social structure like that seen in Russian Marxist analysis of modern capitalism.⁴⁷ Previous Marxist research had done nothing like this.

The earlier-mentioned *Nihon shihon shugi hattatsushi kōza* (Lectures on the Development of Japanese Capitalism) and *Nihon rekishi kyōtei* respectively stressed the two trends of Marx and Engels's research—the economic analysis of *Das Kapital*, and the other historical materialism's orientation to origins as seen in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.⁴⁸ If the former sought to deconstruct historical phenomena that appeared in a disguise of authentic origins (*honraisei* 本来性), the latter sought to restore a conception of the sole origin of the Japanese people, i.e., toward a logic of historical authenticity/legitimacy based on the original “we” that existed before the founding of the emperor system. This orientation to legitimacy of origins, which tied Marxism and historiography together, became the core of Marxist historiography. Of course as examples from history show, the discourse of history is the site of dual meanings, including aspects both of severance and continuity and of renewal and origination. By manipulating the orientation to

46 Watanabe et al. 1936–1937.

47 Watanabe Yoshimichi 1974, pp. 125, 131.

48 Recent English translations of these two classic works include Marx 1990–1992; Engels 2010.

origins, Watanabe and others tried to sever the basis of the competing claim of historical legitimacy that was emphasized by the emperor system.

Failing in Western-style transcendentalism, Japanese Marxism sought to identify in the non-Western a Japanese-style indigenesness, which was latent in the dualities of the people who were drawn to it. For Watanabe and the other Marxist historians of the Kōza faction, the idea of the Asiatic mode of production was not a theory of stagnation, but rather an issue to reinterpret as a point of Japanese uniqueness that could not be assimilated into the Western context. Freed from the command of the Comintern by the dissolution of the Japan Communist Party and halfway closed to the outside by the war being waged, Japanese society no longer needed the notion of itself as an underdeveloped country requiring guidance by the West. This was a period when many former Russian Marxists such as Hashiura Yasuo (1888–1979) and Ishida Eiichirō (1903–1968) became students of Yanagita Kunio.⁴⁹ Yanagita at this time severed his connection with ethnology (*minzokugaku* 民族学) and began to establish the field of folklore studies (*minzokugaku* 民俗学), focused on the folk (*jōmin* 常民).⁵⁰

As it grappled with with issue of Japaneseness, Marxism relied on the same logic as the emperor system: it had sought to fill in the vacuum in the interiority of Japanese by appealing to historical origins, and that, too, led easily to the idea of an “original race” under the name of Japanese uniqueness. What distinguished it from the emperor-system ideology was centered around only whether to seek the historical origins in the present emperor system or imagine it in a different kind of primitive community. Marxism might be viewed as deconstructionist in the sense of appropriating the logic of historical legitimacy. Once the Marxists themselves had been entrapped within the logic of historical origins, however, it became extremely likely that they would be defeated by the emperor system, with its most ancient of historical lineages.

From the late 1920s through the 1930s, polarization over issues of the spirit versus body, of theory versus daily life, of urban versus rural spurred on the conflict between the West and Japan. Ultimately the conflict, due to the collapse of the inflated self-conscious the Japanese Marxists had built up, ended to the overwhelming advantage of the latter term in each of the above pairs. Yet even words infused with the idea of historical legitimacy—the body, the everyday, the rural village—would not be left to their inherent reality; they became historically generated artifacts permeated by the politicized discourse of historical authenticity. For that reason, those whose interiority was occupied by

49 Tsurumi 1998.

50 Gotō 1988, chapter 10.

this kind of ideology were not the general populace, but the intellectuals who were stumbling over their own self-destructive discourse.

Toward the History of Japanese Religion

In this period, when Marxism was forced to turn its attention to the history of Japan, the former archenemies Marxism and religion began to reconnect with one another mediated by the issue of history. The Marxist discourse of the history of Japanese religion arrived with the support of Engels' historical materialism. An epochal work that marked that arrival was *Gendai shūkyō hihan kōwa* (Lectures on Contemporary Religious Criticism), published by Akizawa Shūji and Nagata Hiroshi in 1935. Akizawa and Nagata previously had been central figures in the anti-religion movement and members of the Research Seminar on Materialism (Yuibutsuron Kenkyūkai). In particular, Akizawa, who wrote the main part of the book with the thought that certain weaknesses of the former anti-religion argument now had to be overcome, was in fact among those engaged in the study of Japan's ancient period together with Watanabe and others. After the demise of the Communist Party, the Research Seminar on Materialism provided—amid the relatively mild era of the mid-1930s economic situation⁵¹—a site for exchange of views on natural dialectical historical materialism, the stance which constituted the common worldview of Watanabe Yoshimichi, Hattori Shisō, as well as Saki Akio and Funayama Shin'ichi and others.

Before discussing Akizawa's works, let us look briefly at how the framework of the history of Japanese religion came to be established. Anesaki Masaharu's *Religious History of Japan, an Outline*, an English booklet which he had privately published on the occasion of his 1907 world tour, was—its strengths and weaknesses aside—the first academic attempt of its kind. It is interesting that such a seminal work was written in English and assumed a Western readership. As in the cases of Okakura Tenshin's *The Book of Tea* (1906) and Nitobe Inazō's *Bushidō* (1900), this first explication of Japan's religious history emerged out of the process of making it known to the Western world. In this work, Anesaki sketches the broad outlines of the development of Japaneseness, which he describes as characterized from the outset by the coexistence and mingling of Buddhism, Shintō, Christianity, and Confucianism.

51 Banno 2004; Berger 1977, chapters 2 and 3.

The interest of the history, therefore, lies in the manifold aspects of the alien influences, in their adaptations to the national genius and in the several amalgamations which have resulted from these interferences.⁵²

Thus the initial establishment of a historical narrative of Japanese religion came into being based on the notion of “Japaneseness.” Inasmuch as Anesaki presented the work as “religious history,” it centers on the description of Buddhism, Christianity, and Confucianism, which are easily understandable in terms of Western conceptualizations of religion such as religious founders, sacred texts, and so on. Then, however, since he also sought to fit the material into the framework of Japan, he needed to propose the “Japanese religion” as the soil into which all those various religions were subsumed, and it was here that Shintō was put forth as the indigenous religion of Japan. Yet he does not discuss actual folk religiosity, which was incompatible with the Western concept of religion; instead he presents Shintō according to a Protestant-type premise, i.e., focusing on belief. That selective value judgment approach was, later in the Taishō era, to be criticized by Uno Enkū and others.

The advent of this Japanese religious history discourse occurred around 1907, rather late given the establishment of the concept of religion around 1887 and the discipline of religious studies around 1897. The slowness was perhaps an indication of the difficulty of connecting religion to the national discourse and of fitting Christianity, Buddhism, and Shintō into the framework of the emerging nation. Yet this was directly connected to politics. It was at the earlier Conference of the Three Religions organized in 1896 at the initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs that representatives of the religions present issued public declarations of their support for the *kokutai*.⁵³ Such statements invited considerable criticism at the time for their violations of the Constitution’s principle of religious freedom, but it was an event that signaled the mutual convergence of state authority and religion. It was Anesaki, who at that point was taking a lead in such movements, who subsequently created the framework of Japanese religious history. What played a major role in creating that framework was his proposal of Japaneseness as a particular and a priori site where the various religions, transcending their separate frameworks, would be assimilated into Japanese society.

As is clearly demonstrated in Anesaki’s religious studies, such a narrative became possible only when it was supported by the conviction that Japanese secular society was not something incompatible with religion but rather that

52 Anesaki 1907, p. 1.

53 Dohi 1967–1969; Lee 1992.

religion was something actively part of Japanese society. Anesaki's religious studies offered a discourse situating religion within the core of secular society. However, because his studies lacked any this-worldly criticism bound up with an underlying concept of sin, religion ultimately came to be positioned as a static, transcendent entity lacking engagement with society despite the fact that religion was assumed to exist within it. In assuming such a state of affairs to continue without contradiction, the relationship between society and religion was understood as unchanging over time. In this respect the religious history of Japan as recounted by Anesaki was rather monotonous, and therefore failed to capture any sort of mass following. It would be a long time before any religious studies scholars in Japan would carry on this attempt to systematize the history of Japanese religion.

The Merging of Marxist Historiography and Religion

However, it was thanks to these previous scholarly and other achievements in religious studies that Akizawa and Nagata's 1935 work *Gendai shūkyō hihan kōwa* could so quickly establish the alternative, successful framework for Japanese religious studies based on Marxism. As indicated in Akizawa's summary of the work's basic premises, it adopted an atheistic stance that carried on the legacy of the anti-religion movement: "Firstly, [this work seeks to] apply the historical materialist approach to the study of the origins of religion and its process of historical development (particularly in Japan) and provide scientific explanation of the 'essence' of religion itself; secondly, it presents the materialist critique of the theoretical foundations of the various types of 'religion' found in contemporary Japan."⁵⁴ Although Akizawa represented the ideological standpoint of atheism, he retained a willingness to carefully reexamine the nature of religious ideas and movements. This was shown by his earlier criticisms of the anti-religion movement, pointing out its excessive submissiveness to the politics of the Japan Communist Party, its lack of solidarity with religious leaders based on the Western view of separation of state and religion, and its deficient analysis of the special features of the different religions and their specific historical conditions due to obsession with the slogan of "religion as opium of the people."⁵⁵ His systematic account of Japanese religious history is presented mainly in the second and third chapters of *Gendai shūkyō hihan kōwa*, as can be seen in the subheadings of the chapters listed below.

54 Akizawa 1936, p. 3.

55 Akizawa 1932.

Chapter 2 · The Development of Religion in Japan up to the Meiji Restoration

Primitive religion and clan (*shizoku*) religion in Japan; Formation of a national state religion; The introduction of Buddhism and the challenge to folk religion; Nara-period Buddhism; Religion in the Heian period; The establishment of the warrior class (*buke*) government and the rise of the new sects of Buddhism; The Ikkō *ikki* uprisings; The arrival of Christianity and its spread; Religion in the Tokugawa period

Chapter 3 · The Forms of Religion in Contemporary Japan and Their Roles
Japanese capitalism and religion; Bourgeois atheism; Shintō in our times; Buddhism in our times; Christianity in our times

Akizawa's account of Japanese religion displayed two characteristics. First, as reflected in his view of the Ikkō *ikki* as "the peasant war that had in large part a religious coloration,"⁵⁶ the book reinterpreted Japanese religious history as a precursor to the history of class struggle in Japan based on his understanding that class struggle initially occurred under religious guise. Secondly, Akizawa tried to critically trace Japan's lineage of atheism, for example chiding the modern atheist Nakae Chōmin (1847–1901) for "not undertaking historical research on or specific critique of individual religions or any critique of Buddhist clerical organizations."⁵⁷ Such attempts to pursue how class warfare and religious criticism had developed within Japanese history could only be made by Akizawa, who around that time published a philosophical work titled *Mushinron* (Atheism) and also engaged in the *Nihon rekishi kyōtei* (Methods of Teaching Japanese History) project with Watanabe and others. The movement to investigate the lineage of atheism in seventeenth-through twentieth-century Japanese history was systematized by Akizawa's co-author Nagata in *Nihon yuibutsuron shi* (History of Materialism in Japan; 1936).⁵⁸

Such studies of Japanese society, opened up through explorations of the prehistory of class warfare and atheism, made possible a framework of history of Japanese religion and provided the discourse for the description of the history of Japanese religion for Marxists and other historians of the academy. Ironically this new creative environment was brought about by the collapse

56 Akizawa and Nagata 1935, p. 119.

57 Akizawa and Nagata 1935, p. 172.

58 Nagata 1936. Nagata's writings are linked to the postwar scholarship of Funayama Shin'ichi. See Funayama 1959; Funayama 1965; Funayama 1968.

of the Japan Communist Party, an event that allowed some degree of free interpretation by those liberated from the doctrinaire notion of the Marxist base structure. Initial Marxist historiography has largely been caught between two camps—political and economic analysis of modernity and historical description of the ancient past—leaving the medieval period an untouched black box. The history of Japanese religion, however, by interpreting the *ikki* uprisings of medieval times as a time of popular political awakening, began to be able to achieve an overview of the entire span, from prehistoric to ancient and up to modern times. The more detailed advance of Marxist scholarship on medieval history would await the work of Ishimoda Shō (1912–1986) in the 1940s.

In the halls of academic historiography as well, a number of historians organized the Japanese Religious History Study Group under the supervision of Tsuji Zennosuke (1877–1955), who constructed a systematic history of Japanese Buddhism from his base at the Tokyo Imperial University's Japanese History Research Office (Kokushigaku Kenkyūshitsu). A book compiled by the members of the office, who took up topics in a rather fragmented manner, was *Nihon shūkyōshi kenkyū* (Research on the History of Japanese Religion), published in 1933.⁵⁹ The preface stated that “religion is a social entity,”⁶⁰ a perspective that had been missing in previous studies of Japanese history and probably reflects the influence of the Marxist anti-religion dispute. Concerning the trends of this period, Saki Akio observed:

Materialist study of religion, which had been rapidly pursued from around 1930, did not confine itself to assimilating and introducing the results of the international development of atheism, but also presented a survey of the whole span of Japanese religious history and then moved vigorously into the study of India and China. . . . Research on social and economic history was advanced by other progressive scholars especially in connection with the study of the religious history of Japan. Its focus was on the economic history of Buddhist temples and monasteries.⁶¹

The economic history of Buddhist temples he mentions refers to the empirical research of historian Takeuchi Rizō (1907–1997) and others at the Imperial

59 Nihon Shūkyōshi Kenkyūkai 1933, Jo 1. Contributors included Takeuchi Rizō, Tamamuro Tajjō, Nakamura Kichiji, Kawasaki Tsuneyuki, and Itō Tasaburō.

60 Nihon Shūkyōshi Kenkyūkai 1933, “Jo,” p. 1.

61 Saki 1937, pp. 64–65.

University of Tokyo.⁶² Their basic research served as the catalyst for the wartime-published book *Chūseiteki sekai no keisei* (The Formation of the Medieval World) by Ishimoda Shō, a Marxist from among Watanabe's students in Japanese history. Another contribution from Marxist scholarship was Saki Akio's *Nichiren*, published in 1938. Saki was a religious studies scholar who had studied under Anesaki. He belonged to the Research Seminar on Materialism and in 1937 published the *Shūkyō gakusetsu* (Theories of Religion), which both severely criticized Anesaki's scholarship as philosophically idealist and declared that Uno's scholarship would lead to fascist totalitarianism. In *Nichiren*, Saki resisted the ultranationalist interpretations of Nichiren but attempted to position Nichiren as a leader of class activism. While criticizing the state's "system of oppression," his work shows an unconscious tendency to utilize the value of the religious in order to bolster "the standpoint of the people."⁶³

This tendency was to be carried on after the war by Hattori Shisō, another historian of the Research Seminar on Materialism, in *Shinran nōto* (Notes on Shinran), and by Murakami Shigeyoshi's (1923–) research on popular religions and State Shintō.⁶⁴ Their works posit the state authorities, including the emperor system and State Shintō, as forces external to the people, and they developed a scheme in which religion was regarded as a force for good by considering it the locus of class struggle for resisting the power of the state. That position had the disadvantage, however, of making it difficult for them to criticize religion. It was nevertheless an approach adopted as the government sought to exert tighter control over Japanese thought and religion in the prewar period through the State Shintō system, a process which would lead to the establishment of the Jingiin in 1940 in order to further bind the interiority of the people to itself.⁶⁵ It is not surprising that Hattori's and Murakami's research, which was based on the conditions of this prewar period, made its starting point this period when the image of State Shintō as suppressor became fixed.⁶⁶

Overall, however, in both academia and in Marxism, except for Akizawa and Nagata's *Gendai shūkyō hihan kōwa*, research did little more than focus on individual topics in Japanese religious history. That particularistic research emerged presumably because, from the Marxist historiographical perspective

62 Takeuchi 1934.

63 Saki 1938, pp. 2–3.

64 Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970; Murakami Shigeyoshi 1963.

65 Sakamoto Koremaru 1994; Akazawa 1985.

66 Yasumaru 1992, pp. 193–96; see also Isomae 2007a.

centered on atheism and class struggle, religion came to be seen as an essential element of Japanese history—but only in terms of a general phenomenon of society or as the expression of class movements that gave birth to historical dynamism. Anesaki's pioneering history of Japanese religion had provided a framework for linking religion to secular society, but those who had no interest in religion saw it instead only as a static description imagined by those sympathetic to religion. By relying on interpretations based on Marxist historiography, however, the newer history of Japanese religion came to deal with religion as an essential phenomenon of secular society and transformed religion into a dialectical movement using social contradictions, or class struggle, as a lever for its dynamism. Here the flow of historical time was viewed not as an unvarying continuum, but became something that kept opening up new phases through its evolving Marxist modes of production from the past to the present and onwards to the future. Whether locked up in rational consciousness or swallowed up in a hypertrophied unconscious, previously intellectuals had few options in the Taishō era, but now it seemed that they had discovered an exit from interiority into a state of limitless change.

At the same time, the attempt to identify a lineage of class struggle in Japanese tradition, as in the case of the research on the ancient period undertaken in Marxist historiography, was pushed forward by a conception of historical intentionality directed back to the historical sources and aiming towards ascertaining a historical continuity by way of religious history. Here as before the value norms of class struggle and atheism were assumptions set outside of history, as absolute truths which purported to explain any historical phenomenon. Scholars of this viewpoint aspired to apply them to explain so-called Japanese tradition. By so doing, Marxists tried to fill in their own interiority with absolutes distinct from and rooted in an historical traditionalism older than the emperor system. Further, though the flow of time into the future could be considered as limitless phases of change, ultimately it was also true that it would come to an end before the eternal truths of socialist revolution and of the extinction of religion.

In this context we see that the homogenized dichotomy—the physical body and the spirit—obviously still existed. Now, however, the inexpressible interior, which arose from refusing theories that had formerly remained towering high outside, became infused with absoluteness, contending that Western theory was nothing more than particularistic. The transcendent authority that had been supposedly expelled was thus now brought back to life in the interiority, or an inverted outside, in indigenous guise. Hayashi Tatsuo (1896–1984), a colleague of Miki Kiyoshi who had broken away from Marxism, summarized the former anti-religion struggle as follows:

The sorrow of our intellect is that in the course of its development, parts of things always escape from our grasp of the laws of things. It cannot be concealed that not a few outstanding men of science, out of the shock of coming up against the iron wall of the “incomprehensible,” converted to religion. Rationalism both confronts and constantly brings into being “mystery” and the “incomprehensible.” Rationalism has become a modern channel leading to religion.⁶⁷

Hayashi’s words could have been applied to the history of Japanese religion that ought to have achieved a reinterpretation through the overcoming of Marxism’s rationalist tendency. As mentioned several times, insofar as the discourse of the inside was simply the byproduct of an inverted outside, and since intellectuals were unable to separate themselves from concepts, unavoidably the inside was deeply influenced by absolutism. If, as Hayashi observes, the rational gives rise to the non-rational, then the inherent Japaneseness that the Marxists assumed, as well as what Uno and others called physical everydayness (*shintaitteki nichijōsei*), could become visible only within that Western rationality. When there was excessive confidence about having been able to expel the very Western rationality that produced such discursive space, rationality then ironically became dependent upon the idea of the indigenous or physical body and reappeared in an absolutist guise. Actually the non-rational, too, can only be a shadow of the self; and all sorts of dichotomies can lodge themselves within the self—exterior and interior, spirit and body, Western and Japanese—phantoms that cannot be buried or comprehended. Jacques Derrida explained these specters in terms of a haunting of the living:

For instance, I lose a loved one, I fail to do what Freud calls the normal work of mourning, with the result that the dead person continues to inhabit me, but as a stranger. [By contrast, in normal mourning, if such a thing exists, I take the dead upon myself, I digest it, assimilate it, idealize it, and interiorize it in the Hegelian sense of the term. This is what Hegel calls interiorization which is at the same time memorization—an interiorizing memorization (*Erinnerung*) which is idealizing as well. In the work of mourning the dead other (it may be an object, an animal, or some other living thing) is taken into me: I kill it and remember it. But since it is an *Erinnerung*, I interiorize it totally and it is no longer other. Whereas in unsuccessful mourning, this *Erinnerung* goes only so far and then stops. What Abraham and Torok call introjection (another term for

67 Hayashi Tatsuo 1941, pp. 291–92.

interiorization) reaches its limit: incorporation marks the limit of introjection.] I cannot manage to interiorize the dead other so I keep it in me, as a persecutor perhaps, a living dead.⁶⁸

The issue of how the philosophical absoluteness of Marxism should deal with the inexpressible interior, as pointed out by Miki in religious studies and Kobayashi Hideo in literature, had been left untouched and still not been properly addressed as the 1940s began. The Research Seminar on Materialism had been ordered to disband in 1938, further isolating Marxist scholarship. Under such conditions, as they turned toward Japaneseness the Marxists would inevitably be submitted to the nationalist trend under the influence of their own intentionality. Indeed, Akizawa together with Hirano Yoshitarō and others ended up becoming advocates of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, and Watanabe Yoshimichi also, while he rejected the emperor system, found himself profoundly moved by the great cause of fighting against the West in the name of the Japanese people.

Forced as an entire people into servitude by the forces of American imperialism, . . . the freedom of the Japanese people would be suppressed, making me believe our ethnic plight under the military rule of the U.S. empire would destroy us. . . . I became clearly aware that the emotion welling up within me was unmistakably nationalism. As many times as I tried to deny and reject such nationalism by my powers of reason, every time I imagined through my prison window the scene of Japanese soldiers being mowed down one after another, going to their honorable deaths, my hope that the Japanese army would emerge victorious quite naturally rose up within me.⁶⁹

However, as we will see below, here lurks a gap, a moment that allowed for a leap of thought.

From Wartime to the Postwar Period

Two studies of Shinran were undertaken during the mid-1940s, a span including while the war was going on and then the transitional phase of the postwar period. One was by the Marxist scholar Miki Kiyoshi and the other by the former Marxist Hattori Shisō. Miki's manuscript on Shinran and Hattori's

68 Derrida 1985, p. 58.

69 Watanabe was imprisoned in 1940 for his Marxist beliefs (although not for political activities). Watanabe Yoshimichi 1974, p. 303.

Shinran nōto (1947/1948) were both published not long after the war ended.⁷⁰ Isolated by his expulsion from the circle of Marxist scholarship following the controversy over religion and also targeted by the government, Miki continued to write about Shinran. At the time of the controversy on religion he had focused not on one single religion, but rather on religion in general. However, in his subsequent leaning to Japanese-ness, he ascertained that Shinran was the object of his own thinking.

It cannot be disputed that Shinran's thought is from the outset based on experience, and is humanistic and realistic. His religion reveals to us an extremely deep understanding of interiority. This interiority is not empty subjectivity but rather a supremely objective substance that can be described as physical. Where the transcendental is internal, and internal is transcendental, there we will find genuine interiority.⁷¹

Here we can see that Miki's framework for understanding religion had not changed greatly since the 1930s. Here, too, the problem of interiority was not the realization of something transcendental on the outside, but is described in terms of a channel leading from the inside to the transcendent. A new feature of Miki's thought that appeared during this period was "awareness of sin" (*zaiaku no ishiki*).⁷² It was founded on a grasp of history obtained from Marxism, which he sought to embed in the present.

Recognition of *mappō* means subjectively making contact with the transcendent in our self-consciousness of sin. At such a time anyone must be self-aware of the self as just the "lowest of foolish beings" (*teige no bongu* 低下の凡愚). The promise of Amida Buddha guarantees our liberation. The object of liberation by the Buddha is indeed the ignorant, wrongful person called *akunin shōki* 悪人正機.⁷³

Miki viewed Japanese society in the 1940s through the lens of *mappō*. Should each person become self-aware of *mappō* and his or her foolishness or ignorance, he believed, a faint ray of hope could bring liberation to all people.

70 Miki died in prison in 1945; the manuscript was published in 1968.

71 Miki 1968, p. 424.

72 Miki 1968, p. 431.

73 Miki 1968, p. 458. In the special rhetoric of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, particularly in the Shin school, the *akunin*, or so-called "evil" person, is the specific object of the liberating activity of the Amida Buddha.

Here religion was not projecting an absolutized image from the outside of history. Rather, via the interiority of the self, he understood the historical uniqueness of *mappō* as a process of breaking through to the transcendental in which any kind of identity was heterogenized. The Christian consciousness of sin, which had been rejected in mid-Meiji soon after the establishment of the interiority of the self, now re-emerged in the space of historicized interiority, but with a different meaning. Precisely through the self-awareness of *tsumi* or the idea of *tariki* (i.e., relying on “outside help,” or Amida Buddha, rather than oneself) a new logic was introduced: a heterogenous outside could exist within the inside; the outside, which could never be assimilated into the inside, could transform to the inside. The issues of Japaneseness or the absolutist ideology of class struggle, which up until then the history of Japanese religions had stubbornly adhered to, now became something that could occasion heterogenization instead of assimilating the interiority. It did not matter whether one should call that something Protestant or Shin Buddhist: the issue lay rather in what kind of space lay beyond the use of such language.

Miki's manuscript on Shinran stimulated his former adversary, Hattori Shisō, to publish *Shinran nōto*, soon after the war in 1947. Hattori critiqued Shinran from the perspective of religious institutions and class conflict, carrying on the orthodox line of academic discourse on Japanese religious history exemplified by the old Research Seminar on Materialism. For example, in his words “in Shinran, the grace of God that appears in Luther and Calvin is indeed all the more non-discriminative and moreover exhaustive”;⁷⁴ this grace did not signal an existential religious gap between absolute being and the interiority of the human being, but rather was to be completely dissolved into the equality of classes. In the final analysis this conception hardly differed from Hattori's views in 1930. Regarding his standpoint after the defeat of the Asia-Pacific War, it is hard to say that he deeply recognized the incomprehensibility of the interiority against which earlier Marxists and religious studies scholars stumbled. Yet Hattori himself was actually born in a Jōdo Shinshū temple. This kind of personal background encouraged him to focus on religion through Shinran.

Thus the religion controversy that had begun between Miki and Hattori fifteen years earlier came back again in a conversation between two men on different wavelengths working on the topic of Shinran. Immediately before the war ended, at about exactly the same time as Miki's writing, Ishimoda Shō unintentionally groped for a way to bring the lines of thought of these two men into conversation. Ishimoda had been engaged in research on ancient and medieval history under Watanabe Yoshimichi after graduating from Tokyo

74 Hattori Shisō 1967, p. 68.

University's Department of Japanese History. Ishimoda has been viewed as a typical Marxist-Leninist ideologue, but at the same time he was deeply conversant with Miki Kiyoshi's Marxist existentialist philosophy as colored by Hegelian philosophy. Whatever his own self-understanding, he actually maintained an intellectual position close to that of Georg (György) Lukács, who was seen as heretical from the standpoint of Russian Marxist ideology. In his 1944 work, *Chūseiteki sekai no keisei*, which sought to link the nodes of subjectivity within historical materialism, Ishimoda described religion, especially the lineage from Pure Land belief up to Shinran, as "experiential, self-reflective, founded on self-awareness of individual suffering and wrongfulness." This view of Shinran was influenced by Tanabe Hajime of the Kyoto school⁷⁵ via the 1940 work *Nihon shisōshi ni okeru hitei no ronri no hattatsu* (The Development of the Logic of Negation in the History of Japanese Thought)⁷⁶ by Ienaga Saburō, a former classmate of Ishimoda in the Tokyo University Department of History. In this can be glimpsed the great influence of the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, the Kyoto school's luminary, on thought about interiority in modern Japan. Incidentally, Ienaga relied on Nishida Kitarō's concept of *jikaku*, or self-consciousness/self-awakening, for his standard of evaluation in describing Japanese intellectual history. However, Ienaga was mistaken in making *jikaku* some absolute yardstick outside of history. It was Nishida himself who took on the epistemological restrictions of neo-Kantian philosophy and fought hard to discover absolute things within himself through his engagement with Marxism.⁷⁷ He was a rare thinker in that sense.

The main subject of Ishimoda's *Chūseiteki sekai no keisei* was how certain warriors of a *shōen* estate in the Kinai region brought to an end the ancient *shōen* system of exploitation by the central government and opened the way for the formation of a new medieval society (*chūseiteki shakai*) rooted in local rural communities; the argument considered its potentials and limitations. Following Hegel's example, Ishimoda calls this tumultuous epoch at the end of the ancient period the "heroic age," in which developed "strong group cohesion along with vigorous individual identity," yet at the same time was unbowed by emperor system dominance. He cites "the epic quality of time, along with Pure Land faith in salvation in the next life," as the crystallizations of the spirit of the medieval age.⁷⁸ Ishimoda esteemed the *Heike monogatari* (Tale of the Heike)

75 N. Sakai 2000.

76 Ienaga 1940.

77 For example, this first appeared in Nishida's understanding of history. See Nishida Kitarō 1931b.

78 Ishimoda 1946, pp. 215, 351.

as a work combining both these contrasting features: day-to-day decisions and this-world-affirming character as well as introspective depth.

Lacking as it did reliable corroboration in empirical research, Ishimoda's heroic age idea is hardly ever even mentioned today. If we examine the intent of his argument, however, putting aside for the moment the validity of his conclusions, we can understand that—using modernist terminology—he, too, sought to reveal the inside, the outside, and their mixture as we have discussed above, by locating them in those interstices in the flow of historical time that could not be grasped by empirical historiography. He wrote of “The joining of the spirituality of the old ‘orality’ of rural village and the folk life together with the prosaic expression of urban and aristocratic life” and “a medieval world in literature that was neither aristocratic nor warrior literature.” From the interstices in the flow of time created by the crisscrossing of two different worlds, “individual self-reflection and interiorization” gave rise to discord between consciousness and the physical body, and between community and the individual.⁷⁹

The “outside” Ishimoda mentions over and over is the city, but it is also political power and the power of expression or representation. By linking to that outside world, it became possible for the local community (communal-ity), the closed inside world of the rural village, to break out of the bonds of ancient power structures. He begins by assuming that political power and the power of expression are external, universal forces acting from the outside of the common people's lives. However, by reorienting the reading to the people's internal world, he proposed that change could be attained. By not absolutizing either inside or outside, and making possible mutual difference, change could arise within the inside, the outside, and especially along the boundary lines between them. Ishimoda may have intended to write an empirical history of the past, but instead his mind took flight into a realm of the imagination. For example:

Only by being self-conscious of tradition as righteousness, by transforming custom as law and morality in history, can people actively participate in the making of their own history. That is not something that people living in rural villages can readily do. Self-awareness arises from confrontation with that which transcends the self; being on the land itself (*zaichi-sei*) only had positive significance for people who were not locally on the land. That is, it was for the land-owning class who were able to dispose

79 Ishimoda 1946, pp. 344 ff.

of land, abandon their place and move elsewhere, that for the first time this nature of really being on the land locally became a concrete issue.⁸⁰

Here Ishimoda abandoned the idea of history which followed the Marxist doctrine of the inevitable flow of time according to the theory of the material substratum and instead viewed it as a bundling of moments “where contingency gains momentum with greatest vitality.”⁸¹ It was such momentary contingency that was for Ishimoda the source of identity. And that was why he believed that the ancient world had to be denied, since it stood as a symbol of a historical intentionality that held people’s interiority in bondage by making “facts of hundreds of years earlier the sole source of legitimacy” for ideology.⁸² This was the point on which Ishimoda’s *Chūseiteki sekai no keisei* parted ways from previous Marxist historiography as well as the history of Japanese religions. If Ishimoda’s idea of a heroic age had been only a naive affirmation of reality as found in the great epic narratives, this kind of epistemological leap would have been impossible. It was the reflective consciousness of Pure Land Buddhism and awareness of sin that led him to that idea.

For Russian Marxism the only meaningful approach to the gap between the urban areas and the agricultural village in early modern Japan, an aporia since the 1920s, had been the either/or questions: Is it stagnant, or not? Is it the truth, or not? Ishimoda’s proposition, however, suggested the new interpretation that the answers might lie in not having to choose between only two alternatives. “The living connection between city and village,”⁸³ the fissures produced by the contact of the two, were what created opportunities to make interiority more heterogeneous. Interiority was no longer something simply to be filled up and it was not something closed up in the rational self-evidence of the ego-consciousness. In contrast to Miki, who made the starting point of his discussion the narrow existential issue of the interiority of intellectuals, and Hattori, who focused only on class groupings of politically minded people, Ishimoda, a product of both Russian Marxism and Nishida’s philosophy, with dialectic negativity linked such contrasting metaphors as the ancient and the medieval, the community and the individual, the city and the village, in the attempt to mingle them. In the same way that Ishimoda described the *Heike monogatari*, *Tannishō*, and “Jōei shikimoku” as expressions of the spirit of the medieval

80 Ishimoda 1946, p. 217.

81 Ishimoda 1946, p. 283.

82 Ishimoda 1946, p. 388.

83 Ishimoda 1946, p. 412.

world,⁸⁴ his own works went as far as showing the way to the potential for transcending the boundaries between the disciplines of history, religious studies, and literature.

What made possible Ishimoda's attempt was the special situation in 1944, when the revolution undertaken by the Marxist avant-garde and any resistance it had offered had been completely routed. As the ironic consequence Ishimoda was liberated completely from the authority of the Japan Communist Party and the Comintern. Assuming that the heroic age, the transitional period between the ancient and medieval ages, was a time that did not manifest itself directly in historical space, Ishimoda's parallel idea, too, involved the revelation of a kind of historical interstices. However, the people who ought to have been joined in solidarity with him in the 1940s did not exist, and he became isolated academically. As a result, whether his notion of the heroic age as non-historical time was to be nothing more than the conceptual act of a solitary intellectual or whether it would hold up to the scrutiny of reality was never taken up for discussion. For people at that time—both the intellectuals who kept silent and those suffering under physically coercive emperor-system fascism—any system of thought seemed but empty words compared to the everyday struggles to survive. Ishimoda offered the following words about such a situation.

The Kuroda brigands called *akutō* (outlaw warriors) defeated themselves; [the unfortunate problem is that] no one can conclusively say that the slave-like blood and consciousness inherent in the bodies and minds of the temple workers of the Itabaenosoma estate timberlands had completely disappeared from among the medieval warriors. . . . [Indeed] we can say that as long as those local warriors went on [only] forming bands of brigands, and as long as the peasants working the estates went on thinking of themselves [only] as slaves bound to the Buddhist temples, the practice of ancient period slavery would be revived over and over.⁸⁵

The postwar period began with the sudden arrival of the American Occupation army as the “outside.” Miki died in prison immediately before the war's end. Ishimoda, replacing Hattori and Watanabe, suddenly rose to the top among the leaders of postwar historiography. Feeling that he ought to turn his own thinking towards something practical, he waded into the thick of things in postwar society. The idea of a heroic age he had hatched in his isolation at the end of the wartime period was now pulled into glare of real historical context,

84 Ishimoda 1946, p. 359.

85 Ishimoda 1946, p. 417.

where the Japan Communist Party was emerging as the avant garde, the masses were in need of guidance, the United States loomed as the “outside,” and the traditions of the Japanese people were gaining recognition as the inside. In no time, Ishimoda’s heroes were transformed into historically authentic figures.⁸⁶ In the process, however, attention was given only to the daily life-affirming epic dimension of the heroic age, while the self-reflective awareness that had been coupled with consciousness of sin fell by the wayside. Yet the people, the populace to whom Ishimoda had wanted to appeal with his heroic subjectivity, ignored his ideas, and as he had feared, the slavery passed down from the ancient state was revived through the interiority of Ishimoda himself.

New phases opened up in Marxist historiography: the writing of people’s history (*minshūshi*) commenced in the 1960s; reevaluation of Yanagita Kunio was initiated from the latter half of the 1970s; and then from about 1980, in religious studies, research on the new religions.⁸⁷ All of these worked together with the narrative of restoring the everyday physical body that had disappeared from view due to modern rationalism. The centripetal force of the discourse on Japan’s religious history faded without forming into a mature system of knowledge and instead unraveled into scattered discourses on Marxist historiography, religious studies, Nishida philosophy, Buddhist history, and so on.

Those who have followed the story up until now will notice that we ourselves are not now standing within preexisting discourses on knowledge in religious studies, history, literature, and so on. But if we have been able to efface our affiliations with earlier existing discourses, in what form do matters of interiority now appear before each of us individually? It goes without saying that there is no such reality as interiority. Yet simultaneously, when boundary lines are suddenly pulled away, then inside is transformed into outside; no matter how much we might plead, the old landscapes do not remain. We cannot but feel perplexity and disorientation before our own changing interiority. Relying on the power of words, we will probably expose ourselves to the gap between the reality of our desire for interiority to be filled in and the various discourses to fill it in, and will continue attempting to reveal a heterogeneous space, in the moment of now. Noma Hiroshi describes the heterogeneity of our interiority in his story “Hōkai kankaku” (Disillusionment) as follows:

86 “Kodai kizoku no ei-yū jidai: *Kojiki* no ichi kōsatsu” (The Ancient Aristocracy of the Heroic Age: A Study of the *Kojiki*), in vol. 10 of Ishimoda 1989; Tōma 1977; and Isomae Jun’ichi, “Rekishiteki gensetsu no kūkan: Ishimoda Eiyū jidairon” (Spaces of Historical Discourse: Ishimoda’s Idea of the Heroic Age) in Isomae 1998b.

87 See “Sōtokushū Shisōshi no Yanagita Kunio”; Hirota 2006; and Shimazono 1995b.

He became aware that something like a strange kind of large hole had appeared inside him, and inside this hollow place were countless broad, thin fleshy membranes that were now completely desiccated and waiting to receive some moisture. He had to moisten these desiccated membranes. Yet how could these internal membranes be moistened? The expectations and hatred and anxiety and anger that moved within him, or perhaps the air of a new morning [the speed of a passing car, the feeling of oppression from the silent stars, and then love and hope and melancholy . . .] even if he gathered all of these together, his inner being would not be satisfactorily moistened.⁸⁸

As long as human life continues, there is an inability to forget, produced by nostalgic homesickness and regret that never heals or disappears and can never be wiped away. In that empty space, history and religion will both arise repeatedly, over and over again—even from the space between you and me in our everyday lives.

88 Noma 2000, p. 103.

Beyond the Debate on the Concept of “Religion”

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

ECCLESIASTES 1:18

Religious studies as a field of scholarship in the West emerged, as Eric Sharpe astutely noted,¹ at a time when Christianity as the spiritual pillar of the Western world was facing the spread of secularization accompanying the rise of the natural sciences and the need to reconsider the position of its faith-world based on encounters with other religions in European colonies around the globe. Western intellectuals of Enlightenment-minded thinking began to realize that the truths Christianity tacitly took for granted might not be so self-evident, and to feel the necessity to explain the meaning of their faith in relation to both the laws of science and to other religions. The discourse that subsequently evolved was the discipline of religious studies: no longer would the doctrines and practices of specific religions be taken as absolute; rather, through the comparison of religions from the standpoint of religion in its totality, explanations would be based on a kind of scientific rationality. The watchwords of the discipline were objectivity and neutrality; so the scholars believed, as they strove to view all religious traditions without bias. In fact the field has played an important role in neutralizing the claims to exclusive truth that many religions, especially Christianity, emphasized.

In North America, Europe, and Japan, today, however, religious studies and the Eurocentrism and the essentialism of the concept of religion upon which it relies—as well as the strong aspiration in religious studies for transcendent consciousness—have all been subject to intense criticism. It is now clear that many of the questions we face cannot be answered within the now-outmoded framework of twentieth-century religious studies. Criticism of the earlier discourse on the concept of religion has revealed how the aspiration for transcendent consciousness disengages a speaker from specific political contexts and lays bare the tendency toward formation of a false consciousness of omniscience and transcendence. Religious studies may have emerged as a critique of the exclusivist arrogance found in the claims to unique “Truth” emphasized by many religions or in the concept of religion they defended, but by being

1 Sharpe 1986.

persuaded of the uniqueness of its own alternative epistemological transcendence, religious studies became no different from what it criticized.

Within Western society, this criticism of the concept of religion has allowed for some degree of rethinking of how Western views cling to the Christian-centric view of religion. Towards scholarship in general, as well, such Western criticism has played a cautionary role, pointing to the fallibility of epistemological objectivity. In non-Western societies, meanwhile, that critique has generated two other, extreme responses: the "Occidentalism" impulse among native elites to enhance their status within non-Western societies by assimilating such Western discourses as the concept of religion and religious studies, and the "self-Orientalizing" impulse to respond to the expectations of the West by deliberately wrapping themselves in the guise of the mysterious and "exotic" non-Western Other.²

By problematizing Christian-centricism, this book has not meant any categorical criticism of the teachings of Christianity and the reality they hold for its followers. What is criticized is the exclusionary tendency found in many religions to take only their own view of reality as valid and to criticize the realities of other religions as fundamentally flawed. The problematization of the issue of the aspiration to transcendence in scholarly consciousness, likewise, must not just be criticized for attempting to command an objective and all-encompassing point of view. It also must reject the narcissistic posture of scholars who fail to notice their own subjectivity and the constraints of their own historical position. Unfortunately, the debate on the concept of religion has not been able to clearly delineate this problem. Yet on the other hand to simply reject the concept of religion, or religious studies in its entirety, would be to fall prey to the illusion that one's own criticism is itself some sort of transcendental discourse exempt from historical constraints, revealing yet another exclusionist nature that rejects coexistence with the authenticity of other standpoints.

If it is considered sufficient to expose the specific ideological nature of various arguments on the concept of religion as a third-party observer, then the danger exists that the debate itself will become trapped within academia's petty battles for intellectual hegemony. In one respect, it is undeniable that the critique of the concept of religion can be used to prove one's confession of faith in religious studies, either to defend the scholarly identity of the traditional discipline of religious studies, or to reject it. However, not only in Japan but in the West, since the institutional standing of religious studies in

2 On the history of research into the concept of religion, see the Introduction to this book and McCutcheon 1995.

the narrow sense is not really very large—although of course it is necessary to distinguish carefully between its institutional role and its epistemological role—religious studies has often not gone beyond serving simply to supplement the discourses of theology and doctrinal studies. This is easy to understand by looking at the relationship between theology and religious studies in North American and European universities and in Japan of that between Buddhism and religious studies in sectarian Buddhist universities. The critique of the concept of religion arose by attacking religious studies and the concept of religion that supports it, and yet religious studies, the opponent it seeks to overthrow, is actually a field that is not yet very securely established institutionally. Here critical debate serves mainly to promote the importance of the critics.

A Vision for a New Study of Religion

However, instead of just dismissing the situation as a battle over hegemony in the small world of academia, it is necessary to consider how the ideological exposure can be effectively connected with the realities of society. The process of “renarrating religion” in this book is not limited to critique of the concepts of religion or religious studies but also addresses this question: how can we describe non-“Western” elements that are not subsumed under Eurocentric forms of discourse—and indeed such elements are also ubiquitous within the West itself—yet which must fall under the term “religion”? This is one issue that I would like to consider. Furthermore, as long as we are alive, it is impossible to escape certain problems arising from the anxiety of existence, such as death, violence, and the human community itself. If the task of religion is to confront and think through this host of problems, then it would be an illusion to think that we can bury the term “religion,” putting it well out of sight in the hope of arriving at some separate and free space of discourse. As Jacques Derrida attempted in his essay “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason,”³ one must think about the study of religion in terms both of the excess and the margins of that which does not fall completely under the term “religion.”

The study of religion should no longer be limited to religious studies in the earlier narrow sense. Instead, taking from fields as diverse as anthropology, philosophy, history, sociology, Buddhism and theology, we would hope to

3 See Derrida and Vattimo 1998.

encourage religious studies in a broad sense that moves beyond the boundaries of our current forms of discourse. We must carefully distinguish this from the either-or idea of dealing with the insufficiencies of conventional religious studies by simply shifting to other established academic fields such as anthropology or history. Instead, negating such binary separations between religious studies and anthropology, or between religious studies and history and so on, we should seek an unclassified, chameleon-like interdisciplinary approach. From the perspective of those in religious studies the result may seem to reflect anthropology; for the anthropologists, it may seem to reflect religious studies. Yet once we have accepted this deracination of our own academic fields, there will be no more room for reductionist debate—for such questions as: Is this religious studies? Is this anthropology?—that are based on assumptions about the frameworks of conventional disciplines. For this reason, this new discourse on religion, even if it is no more than a tentative one, must build upon the best points of the earlier legacy of religious studies, for example its avoidance the exclusionary tendencies of particular religions and its capacity for crossing over of the boundaries between individual religions. Religious studies may already be facing an identity crisis, but it is not enough to simply fret about the criticism. Emotional defensiveness or desperate efforts to preserve the exclusiveness of institutional religious studies will not be productive.

The construction of this new form of academic discourse should not be limited to people connected to religions or to scholars: dialogue should be initiated along with those of non-academic experience, especially those who deal with the problem of violence and death on a daily basis. It is such people, who cannot avoid the fundamental questions of life and death—in contrast to scholars who tend to handle such problems as a play of abstractions—who can fulfill the function of helping us to confront the unavoidable realities. Only when academic knowledge is situated within the praxis of everyday life will we be able to determine the validity of our own acts of enunciation. That is where the relationship between knowledge and belief must be interrogated.

The verse from the Old Testament of the Bible cited at the opening of this section records one relevant passage from Ecclesiastes, and another appears below.

For he has absolutely no knowledge what will happen, since who can declare to him when it will come about? Just as no human being has control over the wind to restrain it, so also no human being has control over the day of his death. Just as no one is discharged during war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

ECCLESIASTES 8:7–8

Can anyone argue with these statements? When we take a truly adequate look at the existential problems that afflict us, a new vision for the study of religion can be developed that is not constricted by our existing academic framework and is able to respond broadly to our current situation. This new discourse is not something intoxicated with the consciousness of transcendence that colors its own utterances. Rather, we must always be aware of how powerless we are in the face of the overwhelming forces of reality; such awareness must be something filled with a sense of pain. It is by making gambles on words—even as we struggle against their emptiness—that we open up the possibilities—no matter how faint—for their effectiveness. That being the case, the change to such acts of enunciation will not be accomplished in one stroke as through a sudden institutional shift from the “religious studies” of old to what I have here called the “study of religion” anew. Rather, individual practitioners will have to bear the heavy burden of this act of shifting.

Dialogue under Postcolonial Conditions

In addition to proposing the new concept of “the study of religion,” this book also presents my position on the matter of “postcolonial conditions”—the persistent influence of colonial situations after official political liberations from colonial regimes. One reason I have chosen to discuss this subject is because it relates to the problem of the inequality that haunts dialogue between the West and non-West. Here is an example. In the recent past, in response to the above-mentioned criticism of Eurocentricism in religious studies and regarding the very concept of religion, the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) decided that it needed to overcome its origins in Western-centrism and thus began nearly two decades ago to hold its congresses outside of the West. Held once every five years, the congress was last convened in the West in 1990 (Rome), and then thereafter in 1995 the venue was Mexico City, in 2000 it was held in Durban in South Africa, and in 2005 it was convened in Tokyo. It turned out, however, that simply moving the congress venue physically outside of the West did little to dissolve the embedded binary oppositions that are lodged in the intellectual framework of West versus non-West or in the colonialist pairing of interpreter and informant.

For instance, at the 2000 Congress in Durban, one could observe the following remarkable scene. At the IAHR Congress hotel, Western scholars, who often received large audiences for their talks, offered criticisms concerning the idea of religion and the Eurocentric nature of religious studies. At the same time the resort hotel where the congress was convened—built for the leisure

of foreign tourists—was seemingly far removed from where those in the “local” community lived. As if to rectify their dissatisfaction with this isolation, many of the non-African scholars spent hours journeying into the countryside to experience life in an indigenous village or to see the natural African landscape. However, the “indigenous” village they eventually saw was specifically built for tourists. When the clock struck five in the evening, the “natives” who had been walking around stark naked, put back on their clothes, including neckties, and got into their cars to drive back to the city. Even the animals in the park where the visitors were taken “on safari,” wandered lazily about but it was not their native territory. They had been brought in from a neighboring country for the sake of tourists. A few dedicated scholars who had detected the absence of any genuine Africa faithfully continued their search for the everyday life of local people and eventually arrived at a slum on the outskirts of Durban. This slum, just a short distance from the congress venue, was perhaps closer to the “authentic Africa” they had been searching for, and there had been no need to spend hours traveling in order to experience what was only an artificial Africa.

Perhaps a story that would arouse a smile, that situation illustrates just how difficult it is for those who are visitors from “outside” anything to really learn what it is like within. It also shows how difficult it is to determine what is genuinely indigenous. How persuasive is criticism of Eurocentricism by Western scholars who have not truly encountered anything outside the West? Ultimately, such criticism is more about the construction of intellectual hegemony within the West than anything else. The above story of the IAHR congress example clearly shows how easy it is for those in the West to fall into the trap of thinking of the non-West as something, in the end, that merely offers a pleasant tableau outside the windows of the West.

We might well also ask what the Japanese scholars in Durban were doing as the above scenario unfolded. Outside the hotel, they accompanied their Western colleagues in the search for the “authentic African thing.” Inside, however, many were doing their part to present papers satisfying Orientalist images of the mystical and inscrutable Japanese, which was assumed to be what their Western counterparts hoped for. The irony is that when they are in Japan many of these scholars claim that their field of study is somehow related to the West, such as to European history or philosophy. In contrast to the curiosity and open-mindedness they showed outside the hotel, however, the Westerners and the Africans reverted to their stubbornly narrow vision as scholars interested only in their own fields and did not seek out the presentations given by the Japanese participants. One hour-and-a-half Japanese panel had not a single person in the audience. In ways already seen through by scholars on the Western side, this reveals how conscious the non-Western scholars are of the

Western gaze, how mightily they strive to represent an Orientalist image, and then, how back in their own countries they turn around and behave as personifications of Western knowledge. This story exposes how our Orientalism and Occidentalism are but two sides of the same coin. In short, because of the deep-rootedness of Orientalist ideas even among Japanese scholars, they must not only themselves play the role of the genuine Japan, but among Africans as well search for expressions of genuine Africanness.

Thus, the congress venue might have been moved to a place outside the West, but dialogue between West and non-West—or furthermore, between non-West and non-West (as with between Japanese and Africans)—is still not easy to achieve. Usually the word postcolonial refers to the circumstances in which former colonies, even after they have achieved independence, remain under the influence of the cultures and economies of the old dominating Western states. In the dimension of culture, the influence of Western knowledge can be seen as a blanketing of the entire world. The fact that non-Western scholars are always conscious of the non-Western gaze, even if it is not as obvious as with the Japanese scholars mentioned above, is something of which we must be constantly aware. The epistemological framework of scholars who speak through academic discourse assumes that they belong within the system of Western knowledge, whether they praise it or reject it.

Of course, even when we situate the postcolonial situation in such a manner, we cannot say that it is a completely negative phenomenon. For example, whatever actually goes on inside these congresses, the reason that international conferences are possible at all is because the British, American, or Japanese participants all share the common language of English and a common conception of religion. This is clearly the result of the imperialism of the English language, and the presence of these commonly shared elements has surely transformed certain unique characteristics of our societies into more homogeneous ones. At the same time, this hegemony of language and ideas has facilitated a dialogue between people born and raised in different societies. Furthermore, although the English language and “Western knowledge” have been disseminated into non-Western societies, we also see re-renderings of this transmission into new and different contexts, or what Homi Bhabha refers to as “vernacular cosmopolitanism,”⁴ which is articulated in local and regional environments. From this perspective, despite the fact that the dialogue between the West and the non-West may be conducted on unequal

4 Bhabha 2004, pp. ix–xxv.

terrain, or that there may exist a degree of alienation for non-Westerners due to difficulties in communication, we can still see latent here the possibility of attempts towards transformation into something more positive while retaining the commonality shared among such regional areas.

If we now return to the question of the study of religion, it is because this concept "religion" that originated in the West is now widely shared that we can communicate ideas with that noun serving as the basis. In particular, dialogue between people from many "non-Western" countries, for example dialogue between Japanese and Africans, would be difficult without this commonly shared term "religion." On one hand, conceptions of this term religion vary depending on one's cultural background. Yet while recognizing that issue, we can continue to interpret and examine by exploiting the inexhaustible meanings of our term. The study of religion under postcolonial conditions, then, is an ongoing attempt to clarify the possibilities and constraints of "religion."

In any case, we have reached the point where it is no longer sufficient to simply expose the ideological nature of religion or religious studies. Holding important conferences and congresses outside the West is also not the answer. Today, I suggest we need not worry about such dichotomies as Westerner/non-Westerner, scholar/non-scholar, or religious believer/non-believer. At this stage, an attempt like the one in this book, though still constrained by the circumstances of the postcolonial age, aims to offer a new pathway by presenting a site for experiencing hybridized dialogue. While remaining aware of the difficulty of subverting the Western framework that is typically seen in the concept of religion, a reflective dialogue must be developed that breaks things down as if from within by developing both equal and alert relationships among various ethnicities and academic fields. Yet in order for this process not to end as mere idealization divorced from reality, each speaker must avoid relaxing in the comforts of existing boundaries. Each individual needs to have a very practical acceptance of the discomforts of in-betweenness created by the sublimation of all sorts of dilemmas.⁵

Most importantly, we must undertake a fundamental reassessment of the relationship between belief and knowledge, particularly regarding the space between scholar and non-scholar. What kind of meaning can the academic study of religion, or any conscious acts of discourse on religious faith, have for those who believe in religion? Conventional religious studies has tended to treat belief in terms of dogma and to insist that the epistemological acts of scholars maintain an objective neutrality. Such a position can, however, not

5 Homi K. Bhabha in "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in Bhabha 2004, p. 212.

only hollow out the scholar's own world of faith, but lead him or her to overlook the hidden craving for other-worldliness. If instead we argue that faith and knowledge mutually complement each other, the future study of religion will need to ask just what the role of knowledge is when it confronts the existing horizons of belief. If the study of religion cannot clearly define the significance of its own existence in light of this juxtaposition, the field may have reached the limits of its potential.

If faith is defined as an exclusionary relationship formed solely between the divine and the self, then "knowledge" may yield an impartial bird's-eye view, bringing the gaze of an Other, created by a third-party vision, into the formerly exclusive relationship between the divine and the self. In contrast to any single regime of the absolute as conceived by a particular religion, knowledge thus introduces a different mode of absolute truth; accordingly it must bring about a fundamental change in the exclusive relationship between the believer and the transcendent. Indeed, because knowledge presents multiple versions of the truth equally, it sets up frictions with the absolute nature of faith. In this sense, Ecclesiastes, which was quoted at the beginning of this Epilogue, is entirely correct in pointing out the austere landscape created by the epistemic power of knowledge. Knowledge, which seeks a total view of the episteme, is responsible for producing cracks in the world of faith, which often prefers to retain instead the finished image of a truth that desires self-enclosure. Knowledge aspires to grasp the harshness of the real that is on the other side of the actual world. However, visible in the conclusion of Ecclesiastes is a shift from criticizing the bleakness of knowledge to portraying the unshakable absolute-ness of faith.

And further, my son, be admonished by these.
 The more words, the more they are empty.
 What is this, the human being?
 Of making books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.
 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:
 Fear God and keep his commandments,
 for this is the whole duty of man.

ECCLESIASTES 12:12–13

The world of faith that is portrayed here is by no means comfortable, pre-ordained, or harmonious, and the epistemic power of knowledge exposes how the cruelty of reality is part of its whole. We are not, then, able to dispose of this problem under the schema of any binary opposition between belief and knowledge. The enigmatic relationship between faith and knowledge exists in

the very reality that we must decipher. If the question of faith and knowledge is not an either-or proposition, then surely both must be embodied in each of us in individual and unique ways. Does not such an intersection between these concrete forms of faith and knowledge offer a credibility that can sustain the new study of religion?

The critique of our acts of enunciation vis-à-vis reality, scholarship included, ultimately serves the search for better lives in the everyday world. Its service for religion and the study of religion, though they relate to the world of the transcendent, is no exception.

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