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KOKUTAI -
POLITICAL SHINTÔ
FROM EARLY-MODERN TO
CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Klaus Antoni

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»Of the three chief Religions, which now flourish and are tolerated in Japan, the SINTOS. must be considered in the first place, more for its antiquity and long standing, than for the number of its adherents.«

- Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), *The History of Japan*, vol. 2, Book III («*Of the State of Religion In Japan*«), ch. 1, p. 204 , London: Printed for the Publisher, 1727.

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PREFACE

The history of modern Japan begins with a paradox. This period's axiomatic starting point, the Meiji Restoration of 1868, was marked by intentions which, in further consideration, appear anything but modern: the restoration of seemingly archaic imperial rule. This apparent contradiction cannot be overlooked in any examination of the foundations of modern Japan and its concept of government. Along with the opening of the country, which was forced by the Western powers, the Meiji Restoration also brought the backward-looking concept of a reconstruction of earlier and supposedly autochthonous models of governance. Over the course of the Meiji period, this traditionalist idea was implemented in a comprehensive, religiously and politically based concept of government that postulated a uniquely Japanese »national polity« (*kokutai*). Up until Japan's defeat in 1945, and even afterwards, this idea of the *kokutai*, which was centered on the idea of a divine emperor and based on political Shintô thought, formed the official and binding Japanese concept of the modern state, in which the institution of the emperor served as the metaphysical and mythical core of the national family.

The world of Shintô played a crucial role within this context. Without detracting from the importance of foreign influences in the 19th century and the universal factors of modernity, it must be recognized that the critical impetus and concepts for the development of the modern Japanese nation-state mainly originated in the pre-modern era in Japan itself. A Western-centered view of Japanese intellectual history, with 1868 as an epochal breaking point, is unable to account for the fact that, during Tokugawa times and even earlier, Japanese thinkers themselves had developed their own kind of an ideal nation, based on religious concepts associated with a generic system called »Shintô«. Among Shintô scholars and ideologues of that time it was in particular the construct of a mythical common origin of the Japanese people, based on the myths of the »Age of the Gods«, that was fundamental to this concept. This idea was transmitted through history and eventually elaborated into political radicalism by nativist ideologues like Motoori Norinaga, and especially Hirata Atsutane and his school. Though a religious concept, it always contained within itself a clearly political dimension. So it must be doubted that the idea of political Shintô was an invention of modern times, as many scholars of modern Japan believe. All sources show the opposite, i.e. the enormous historical depth of this world of ideas. Meiji-era State Shintô seems to

be an invention only insofar that it transmuted the political ideas of Shintô thinkers of the Edo and pre-Edo periods into the practical politics of the modern Japanese nation-state, painting the highly ideological picture of a Japanese national polity of divine origin. This was a completely new idea for a modern nation-state, but a quite old one for political Shintô thought itself.

In order to do full justice to the historical development of Shintô, consideration must be given to the above-mentioned fields of political and intellectual Shintô. In particular, the centrally important relationship between Shintô and Confucianism must be taken into account, as well as the highly relevant but complicated topic of nativism. Just denying the pure existence of Shintô in premodern Japan, as some researchers do, especially inspired by Kuroda Toshio (cf. Teeuwen 1999), does not promote our deeper understanding of this historical process. Without accounting for processes in the premodern era, the emergence of the modern Japanese empire would appear to be an incomprehensible miracle. Speaking about political Shintô in this context means explaining it as an extraordinarily convincing example of religious ethnocentrism, which spawned a political and religious ideology to provide a nation state like modern Japan with an ideological and religious foundation. In this sense the Japanese case also provides an extremely valuable example for comparative analysis of religion and politics in general. Since the worldwide interest in problems of religious ideology grew dramatically within the recent years, analyzing the Japanese case can substantially contribute to the general understanding and historical deconstruction of such systems of thought. Additionally a revival of Shintô politics took place in Japan within recent years, highly emphasizing seemingly archaic images, e.g. that of Japan as a »divine country«, and thus proving the importance of Shintô topics for understanding the present state of Japan.

All this led me to the idea to elaborate an English version of a book on the evolution of Shintô and *kokutai*, which had been published already in 1998 in German (Antoni 1998). In that former study an attempt was made to portray the history of modern Shintô in ideological terms mainly as a story of continuity, but also of breaks, between premodern and modern Japan. Shintô, it was argued, was constantly modified by »traditionalistic« inventions to adapt to the current political context and played an important role as an ideological guide line within the historical process of Japan's modernization. The study presented here in fact consists of a slightly revised and enlarged translation of that former work. I wish to thank Anthony DePasquale and others for the translation of the text.

Unfortunately it would have exceeded the scope of this study to include all the research on the topic of Shintô that has been done during the last years. I have

tried to include some of the - in my view - most important works in this respect, but since current Shintô studies mostly do not focus on the historical development from premodern to modern Japan and generally exclude the predominant role of Confucianism in this context, the point of my study seems not too outdated even after nearly twenty years.

For the sake of a general distribution of publicly funded research and thus in accordance with the so called Open Access principles, this book is published and distributed freely by the University of Tübingen. The reader may spread the work within the academic community, when providing the correct bibliographical information.¹

Klaus Antoni

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND FUNDAMENTALS

1. SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVE

Japan's intellectual and religious history from the early modern era (*kinsei*; Edo period), through the modern era (*kindai*; Meiji period to early Shôwa period) and on into the present day (*gendai*; late Shôwa period to present) is marked by the creation of a new religious system that sought to provide the Japanese nation with its own cultural identity and the state with a legitimatory foundation. This system is modern Shintô. The widespread view of Shintô as a supra-historical, quasi ethnically defined national religion is an essential aspect of this religious ideology. This view, however, which is still present in contemporary discourse, does not represent an impartial, factual statement, but rather reveals itself as the product of an intellectual-historical process that increasingly determined the intellectual discourse in Japan from the Edo period up to its climax in war propaganda during WW II in what is known as State Shintô.

For this reason, we must examine not only the theological, but also – and particularly – the ideological development of the religious as well as political system called Shintô. Among the main objectives of this study is to demonstrate the genesis of the intellectual, religious and ideological traditions that postulated Shintô as a politically useable Japanese national religion. A crucial element of this development was the concept of the *kokutai*, the Japanese »national polity« viewed by theorists and theologians since the Edo period as the central feature of religious ethnocentrism in Japan. The institution of the Japanese imperial family can be viewed as a visible manifestation of this concept of the *kokutai* in culture, history and society. Therefore, its development as well as its intellectual and religious foundations will be among the main focuses of this study. The usually drawn distinction between Folk Shintô (*minkan shintô*), Imperial Household Shintô (*kôshitsu shintô*), Sect Shintô (*kyôha shintô*) and Shintô theology and dogma, however, will not be pursued here in detail, since these are ultimately secondary distinctions (see also Naumann 1985b: 224).

More than almost any other subject, dealing with »the« Shintô religion requires a critical analysis of Japanese culture and the Japanese self-conception. Is Shintô a national religion or a construct of the modern age? Should it be viewed as ancient ancestor worship or pan-Japanese folklore? Is it an esoteric doctrinaire religion or syncretistic ritualism? And finally, is it ethnocentric nationalism or peaceful nature worship? Any stereotype regarding Japanese culture can also be found in the debate on »the« Shintô religion. In the ideological development of the modern age, Shintô took on the function of a synonym for the »unaltered,« »homogene-

ous,« »unique,« ultimately »true« and thus essentialist form of Japanese culture which, cleansed of all foreign elements, supposedly offered a glimpse of Japan's true essence. In this respect, the postulation of a Japanese national religion implicitly free from all foreign elements is itself a product of this modern Japanese autostereotype, which helped shape Japan's image both within Japan and abroad as a supposedly authentic cultural statement.

It goes without saying that any evaluation of Shintô's claim to the status of Japan's national religion requires a thorough investigation of the historical developments. Since certain methodological and terminological questions, especially those concerning the understanding of the terms »culture,« »tradition,« »the modern era,« cultural »images« and »stereotypes,« and finally »religion,« are of fundamental importance in this context, our first undertaking will be an excursus on these areas.

2. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

2. 1. *Culture*

In order to understand the current state of a culture, its problems and future tendencies, it is first necessary to examine its intellectual-historical formation. This is especially true in the case of Japanese culture. The term »culture« is understood in this context in the sense of cultural anthropology, and not in its colloquial meaning, which refers broadly to the areas of the arts in what is often called »high culture,« such as literature, theater, and art.

»Culture« in this context means all of humanity's works as a category in contrast to »nature.«² Just as the word »cultivate« refers to the act of making formerly untouched land suitable for the growing of crops, »culture« refers to all changes that have an effect on the natural environment. In the humanities, however, there exists no set definition for the term »culture,« but rather it includes the entire spectrum of approaches in the individual disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Yet there is consensus on at least two points: 1) culture is mutable, not genetically determined; and 2) culture must be learned – that is to say, it is passed on as tradition.

The importance of these two basic points can hardly be overstated. They show that human culture is learned by each individual within a certain context; it is not dependent on biological conditions, for example, in the sense of a biologicistic theory of the mind, but merely on tradition, or the handing down of customs. The cultural anthropologist Thomas Bargatzky (1985: 39) sums up this fundamental principle with persuasive clarity in the following definition:

»Without human beings there can be no culture, but the reverse is even more significant: without culture there can be no human beings. Culture must be learned and passed on; [...] Yet human learning is symbolic learning, and it is the task of anthropologists to study how we learn to become human beings.«

Understanding a culture therefore means understanding its lines of tradition – that is, the culture's path of transmission up to its present state.

Edward B. Tylor, whose works have become classics in this area, outlined the term »the science of culture« as »that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits ac-

² Wolfgang Frühwald (1991: 40f.) speaks in this context of a »cultural form of the world« in which »culture« is understood as »the epitome of all human work and ways of life.«

quired by man as a member of society,« (Tylor 2010 [orig. 1871]: 1). Modern research in this area emphasizes the diachronic aspect of the transmission of culture. H. K. Schneider, for example, states: »The core in the definition of culture is transmission of ideas from generation to generation,« (quoted in Bargatzky 1985: 35). The cultural-scientific approach is therefore fundamentally diachronic, and its object is the understanding of each single case as part of a broad, comprehensive and interconnected cultural system. Modern cultural anthropology, especially in the tradition of cultural hermeneutics (e.g. Dilthey) and the anthropology of symbolic forms (e.g. Cassirer), aims to decipher cultural systems and thus understand the culture in question. In the case of the analysis of Japanese religions, the external, »etic« view – that is, »the view from the outside,« in the sense of »hermeneutics of the outside,« (Krusche 1990; Krusche, Wierlacher 1990) or »hermeneutics of the alien,« (Bargatzky 1997: XV) – must always also take into account the »emic« view from within Japan.³ Axiomatic statements about Japanese self-analysis and reflection, such as the tradition of the Kokugaku, for example, often reveal their true meaning only through cultural-historical analysis.

Since culture is passed on as tradition, we must focus especially on the traditions themselves, or that which is passed on. Yet a mere analysis of tradition is not enough, since any cultural analysis will show that traditions themselves are subject to constant change. The idea of a static tradition that is suddenly confronted with something new – usually the modern era – can only be described as naïve, regardless of its prevalence (cf. Antoni 1992).

2. 2. *Tradition and the modern era*

Hardly any other academic discovery has had such a revolutionary influence in this area as the concept of »invented traditions.« Its core premise states that the divide between tradition and the modern age, which – not just in the case of Japan – appears to be clear and stringent, does not adequately describe complex historical processes. Rather, this theory states, at least one additional category is necessary: invented traditions. It is often the case that, under critical and historical examination, what are thought to be long-standing traditions that embody a culture's identity emerge not only as questionable and unreliable, but prove to be inventions of the modern era.

³ Concerning the antagonist concepts of »etic« and »emic« in cultural studies, especially in regard to Japan, cf. Antoni 2001a.

The (Austro-) British scholar Eric J. Hobsbawm and his colleagues have contributed pioneering studies in this area that have shed light on the global genesis of such artificial traditions.⁴ This pattern of development can easily be recognized in Japan as well, especially since the Meiji period. Examples of the reinterpretation, manipulation and utilization of existing cultural elements in the sense of invented traditions in modern and contemporary Japan are legion.⁵

Hobsbawm's observations have also shaped the view within the field of Japanese studies that the process of the manipulation or even invention of traditions is by no means limited to Japan. Japan does not represent an exception as a country in which tradition and the modern age have entered into a supposedly unique relationship. On the contrary, the case of Japan proves to be an especially striking example of a process accompanying the formation of nation-states throughout the globe. The utilization of traditions is a fundamental aspect within this global development in which the construction of religiously argued, national and nationalistic ideologies are central factors.

A further author, Dietmar Rothermund, takes the critical methodological step toward clarifying this point. Rothermund, who, as a historian examines modern India and especially the ideology of Hindu nationalism, focuses on the term »traditionalism« in his research. This is an incredibly useful tool for analytically differentiating between »true« and »artificial« traditions. Rothermund defines the term »traditionalism« as »the consciously selective interpretation of traditions [...] with the aim of establishing solidarity, which thus either simply denies those elements that are irreconcilable with this aim, or apologetically attempts to reinterpret them,« (Rothermund 1989: 144-145). We will examine this core topic in more detail in the course of this investigation (cf. chapter III: 4. 2.).

2. 3. Religion

Just as there are many definitions of the term »culture,« there are a vast number of ways of defining »religion.« In his discussion of the conditions for understanding religion, the religious ethnologist Josef Franz Thiel (1984: 14) states the basic dilemma of the analytical approach:

⁴ In the collection of essays compiled by Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, the national systems of tradition of various Western nation-states are examined in a number of articles for their actual historical validity. The studies all come to the conclusion that an overwhelming number of those traditions claiming to be ancient are in fact products of the modern era, specifically of the late 19th century.

⁵ Particularly see the works of the historian Fujitani Takashi (1986 and 1996 (1998)).

»Just as the scientist to a large extent lacks an understanding of the central act of the believer, so too does the believer lack the distance to analyze his religion objectively.«

In seeking to define the place of religion within a culture, it first becomes apparent that religion represents a »symbolic cultural system,« (cf. Bargatzky 1985: 116 ff). The cultural-scientific view of religion is not concerned with the truth value of a given religious system; this is the fundamental difference separating it from theology, which operates under the assumption of the truth of its respective religion.

Cultural anthropology assumes the existence of religion as an established fact and investigates its teachings and dogmas, its rituals and ethnic norms, and its function and effect in society at a certain historical point in time. As a cultural system, religion is by definition handed down; every religion undergoes a development in space and time, up to the present day. Matthias Laubscher (1983: 235) emphasizes the cultural determination of religion and states in this context:

»Religion is [...] the background that gives meaning which lies behind cultural manifestations that are neither comprehensible by common sense, nor purely arbitrary.«

Here too, as Thiel (1984: 10) makes clear, the concept of constant development and change is fundamental: »Anyone who deals with religious studies ultimately cannot forego a diachronic analysis.« Finally, the previously mentioned cultural anthropologist Bargatzky (1985: 119-120) sums up some important criteria of what religions bring about:

»First of all, religions explain. They answer questions that have always moved us: questions on the origins of the world, the relationship between people and other living beings and the forces at work in this world. They answer the question of why people die (or are born!), why they experience successes and failures, and so on. Secondly: religions legitimate the status quo by assuming the existence of powers that support the reigning moral and social order. [...] Thirdly: religions have a strengthening effect on human efforts in the struggle against the perils of life such as illness, death, misfortune, failure, distress, catastrophes and so on. They offer the believer inner security by giving meaning to the world and that which occurs in it. Fourthly: religions increase the feeling of belonging for the members of a group, for example, by giving them the opportunity to participate in rituals. Religion has – and here we come closer to answering the question of its purpose – at least two sides: it provides models of the world and models for behaving in the world.«

In the case at hand – the history of religion in Japan – a further problematic area emerges, namely the fact that the culture and religion in question are not those belonging to the observer, but foreign to him or her.

Even if this problem seems insignificant at first, far-reaching consequences emerge as soon as we enter the area of spiritual culture – that is, religion and ethics, philosophy and systems of social norms. The difference between terminology and categorization, for example, which generally remains unconscious, represents in this case merely one of the first and most obvious labyrinths of cultural mimicry, and we are confronted with the problem of translation not only of the overall language, but also of semantics. For instance, does our understanding of the word »god« also apply in Japan, or does it actually mean »spirit«? And what would the word »spirit« mean in this context? To expand upon this on another level, is the meaning of the Chinese character for »spirit« (神 *shen*) identical with the Japanese concept associated with the term *kami*, and does this correspond to the European concept of spirits, or rather to that of ghosts? In this context it is worth considering Klaus Kracht's translation of the Japanese term *kami* in German as *Geist* (»spirit«), and following from that, his translation of *shintô* as *Geist-Weg* (»way of the spirit«; cf. chapter II: 2. 2). Josef Haekel (1971: 73) remarks on the problem that there is often an »unconscious tendency to rely on knowledge of the religious traditions of European and Western nations when describing and assessing the religious life of nations outside of Europe. However, this can easily lead to false interpretations of a foreign religion and give a distorted picture of it.« This states the matter succinctly.

When viewing Japanese and other culturally different religions, we must first determine our own position in order to derive the assumptions behind our judgements. We must ask ourselves what is the position of the observer in relation to the cultural area under analysis – in this case Japan.

The subtle codes, symbols and structural principles of the other religion are often felt to be mysterious, exotic, or at the very least, different. In this context it is the responsibility of cultural science to make the religion in question accessible, and in so doing, to create the conditions for intercultural understanding.⁶

⁶ The distinction between one's »own« culture and »foreign« cultures plays an essential role in the methods and self-conception of the cultural sciences, especially in cultural anthropology (cf. Bargatzky 1997).

2. 4. *Images and stereotypes*

It can be said without exaggeration that stereotypes about Japan outnumber those attached to almost any other country. While in earlier times Western imaginations were captivated by concepts such as geisha and cherry blossoms, in the 1930s and '40s images of war came to dominate stereotypes of Japan. Today these ideas have changed once again and are based more on economic terms and brand names than on ideas of war. And yet, though these ideas have changed, the fascination for the culturally different, which Japan still represents, has remained (cf. Antoni 1993b).

2. 4. 1. *Images as friend and foe*

When looking more closely at widespread views of Japanese culture, it becomes apparent that they often share a common denominator in one point: they present images of Japan that in most cases generalize and globalize to provide a holistic understanding of Japanese culture. From the most common outside perspective, Japan generally appears different, foreign, or promising. In some accounts it takes on elements of an utopia in which everything is done completely differently – and much better – while other views portray it as a demonic force that seeks to surpass its former Western teachers after appropriating all their skills, processes and methods and exploiting them for its own use. This view clearly paints a picture of Japan as an unscrupulous imitator.

2. 4. 2. *Japan as paradise*

In looking for the deeper origins of these images of Japan, it is worth remembering the voyages of Christopher Columbus of Genoa in the 15th century, who went in search of a legendary land of gold in the East reported by Marco Polo before him. This was a land whose palaces were said to be made of pure gold and which possessed fantastic riches. Marco Polo never reached this legendary empire, but he did pass on its name: Zipangu.⁷ In fact, Marco Polo's account of the

⁷ Cf. Kapitza 1990: 45ff.; Columbus's journals (cf. Kapitza 1990: 45-53) show how much he was consumed with finding a passageway to this land of gold and plenty. One day, on October 23, 1492, (Columbus was already anchored in Caribbean waters) his goal seemed just within reach. He recorded in his journal that the natives had told him of a rich land by the name of Cuba not far from his current location. Columbus wrote enthusiastically that he had finally found Zipangu, the land of gold, which was called Cuba here (cf. Kapitza 1990: 50).

land of gold referred to a very real country, namely Japan. The name Zipangu is merely the corrupted pronunciation of the Chinese word for Japan: *Ri-pen-guo*.

Thus, Columbus was chasing after an age-old ideal that, centuries before him, another European, Marco Polo, had learned of in China and passed on to Europe. These reports established the earliest image of Japan in Europe: that of a heavenly country, an »earthly paradise,« a place in which everything was completely different than in the known world.

The second, negative stereotype of Japan as an imitative culture can also be traced to its historical roots, as research in Japanese studies shows (cf. Kreiner 1989: 22ff., among others). Even the first Portuguese missionaries who arrived in Japan in the 15th and 16th centuries praised the high morality of the Japanese people. They immediately recognized Confucianism as the source of this ethical mindset. However, this view laid the foundation for a cliché that soon tuned radically negative and tarnished the once so positive image of Japan for a long time thereafter. The great minds of the European Enlightenment also praised Japan for its Confucian values at first, but they soon recognized all too clearly that the origins of Confucianism lay not in Japan, but in China. Intellectual interest thus shifted away from Japan and toward China. Now Japan was said to be a country capable merely of adopting and modifying foreign cultural influences, but not of producing its own cultural achievements. This marked the birth of the image of Japan as a cultural imitator. This image was propagated especially at the beginning of the modern era, i.e. the time after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. No other country appeared to submit to its superior former opponents abroad as willingly and uncritically as Japan. In fact, however, this served to protect Japan from the fate of becoming a colony.

2. 4. 3. *Heterostereotypes and autostereotypes*

At this point we will make a short detour into the field of stereotype theory in order to better understand the complex jungle of Japan's views both of itself and of the outside world. If one looks up the word »stereotype« in a textbook or dictionary, one finds several definitions, including the following very concise one:

»Opinions about the personal attributes of a group of people. When these opinions are widely shared, they are called cultural stereotypes. The stereotype as a sociological concept was first posited by [Walter] Lippmann [in: *Public Opinion*, 1922], who defined stereotypes as 'images in our minds,' as opposed to the 'world outside.'« (Bierhoff 1984: 199)

Werner Herkner specifies the following important criterion for our ability to understand others, whether they are individuals or groups: »If we learn the stereotype first, before we gain knowledge about individuals, the stereotype will dominate our judgments« (Herkner 1991: 493). Wolfgang Manz (1968: 3) remarks in agreement that »the 'images in our mind' need not agree with the 'outside world' in order to influence human behavior more strongly than the objective conditions.«

The importance of these statements in the present discussion cannot be overstated: they state no less than that our ability to understand the outside world – in this case Japanese culture and religions – is influenced by »images in our minds« that we possess about the foreign culture in question. But stereotype theory takes an important further step. It differentiates between two fundamentally different yet interdependent and complimentary categories of stereotypes called »heterostereotypes« and »autostereotypes,« which respectively refer to our image of the outside world and our image of ourselves. Stereotype theory is based on the complex network of relationships between heterostereotypes and autostereotypes, which apply to individuals as well as groups, societies and nations. Stereotypical views of individual nations are an integral part of this system of ideas.⁸

The definition of heterostereotypes and autostereotypes as a corresponding pair of opposites is crucially important. This demonstrates in theory and analysis the fact that our *etic* views on a culture are not only influenced by prejudices, clichés and stereotypes from the outside, but that our view of our own group is also dominated to a much greater degree by »images in our minds« than a purely hermeneutic approach would suggest. This means the following for our investigation: *emic* statements made by Japanese authors about their own culture – and thus implicitly also religion – cannot be said a priori to be authentic – that is to say, free of prejudice – but rather, they too must be examined for Japanese autostereotypes.

Remarkably, especially within Japan itself, firmly established stereotypes about Japanese culture and its relationship to the outside world are common, resulting in clear ideas about how a »good« Japanese person should act. One of the key tasks of the cultural sciences is to comb through this jungle of historically formed images and stereotypes, both within and outside of Japan, thus making essentialistic characteristics of Japanese culture objectively comprehensible.

⁸ Cf. Hofstätter 1973: 110ff. Erich Witte (1989: 428) gives a concise outline of the individual categories with the example of the relationship between the Germans and the French: autostereotype = Germans' view of the Germans; heterostereotype = Germans' view of the French; perceived autostereotype = the French's view of how the Germans view themselves; perceived heterostereotype = the French's view of how they are seen by the Germans.

2. 4. 4. *Nihonjinron: how Japan sees itself*

The book market in Japan has its own extremely popular non-fiction genre that deals with the question of what it means to be a member of the Japanese culture. These works, which naturally differ widely in quality, are grouped into the category of *nihonjinron* (»discourse on the Japanese«).

As already the first »modern« emperor of Japan, Meiji-tennô (1852-1912), programmatically declared in the fifth paragraph of his famous Charter Oath of April 1868 (see chapter III: 1) shortly after the opening of Japan, the country should orient itself according to Western standards in regard to the economy and technology, while not losing its own character and thus Japanese identity. This attitude continues to provide the basis for the Japanese conception of government. It was no coincidence that Emperor Hirohito (Shôwa-tennô, 1901-1989), Meiji-tennô's grandson, made explicit reference to his grandfather's historic mandate in his speech on January 1, 1946, which was crucial for Japan's development in the post-war era (see chapter V: 1. 2. 2).

This demand is based on the essentialist idea that the Japanese culture would be distinguished by various special characteristics not possessed by other countries, thus justifying its supposed homogeneity. According to the fundamental principles of this view, the Japanese people, language, culture, religion and society are largely isolated and homogenous even today. Based on a long history whose roots lie in the rice-planting culture of pre- and early history, Japan thus distinctly shows all the characteristics of an island mentality. This *shimaguni* (»island country«) mentality is especially evident in religion, and above all in Shintô. The traditional Japanese attitude toward outsiders is an important factor in this context (see below).

2. 4. 5. *Japanese perceptions of the outside world*

Foreign influences have historically been adopted into Japanese culture mostly in highly assimilated, Japanized forms. The adaptation of foreign elements to the standards of another culture is called »acculturation« in the cultural sciences, and the following discussion will attempt to briefly outline some of the basic patterns of Japanese processes of acculturation relevant to the present context.⁹

⁹ On the theory of the »foreign« in the present context, cf. Kreiner 1984: 84ff., Hijiya-Kirschner 1988: 193-211; Krusche 1985 and 1990; Paul 1987, among others; see also the outstanding discussion in Bargatzky 1997.

2. 4. 5. 1. *Patterns of acculturation*

Upon examining Japan's relationship to the outside world over the course of its history, two striking constants emerge. First, it becomes evident that foreign influences in Japan have mostly had an essential, often definitive impact on cultural, and thus also religious, development, but brought about very different reactions, depending on the historical situation. Phases of extreme xenophilia (»love of the foreign«) alternated with periods of xenophobia (»fear of the foreign«) that at times reached fanatic levels. Secondly, however, the inhabitants of the Japanese islands hardly ever had the opportunity to encounter foreign influences directly, much less foreigners themselves. The true outside world was spatially and mentally always far away, only tangible in nebulous ideas, and was therefore said to be threatening, even dangerous.

Furthermore, Japan's status as an island nation allowed the country to regulate contact with the outside world itself. Japan never experienced a free, uncontrolled influx of people or ideas from the outside. Foreign elements were allowed into the country for pragmatic reasons, in order to be integrated into Japan's own cultural context. Thus, Japan's relationship with the outside world was always influenced by efforts toward acculturation and adaptation, by the assimilation of non-Japanese elements to Japan's own cultural horizon.

The 13th century, however, was marked by events that must be seen as a break in Japanese foreign relations: the failed attempts by Mongolian troops to invade Japan. This event has since taken on a traumatic – even archetypal – role in Japanese thought: foreigners, coming by sea, seeking to penetrate into and subjugate the home country by force. Since this time, nationalistic theologians have long attempted to utilize the Mongol attacks for religious and ideological purposes. By attributing the saving of Japan to the influence of native gods – especially the sun goddess and ancestral deity of the imperial household, Amaterasu – the idea of Japan's unique religious position was established. According to this interpretation, the country was only saved because it is a privileged »land of the gods« (*shinkoku*), and it was only thanks to the »wind of the gods« (*kamikaze*) sent by the gods of the shrines of Ise that saved Japan from the foreign threat.¹⁰ In the following centuries, these ideas were formed into an increasingly complete system of religious and nationalistic maxims, according to which Japan and its inhabitants, due to their »divine origins,« were viewed as having a unique position

¹⁰ On the »wind of the gods,« cf. Naumann 1994: 47, 50f., 119f., 134, 145, 169; on the concept of *shinkoku* cf. Nawrocki 1998. *Kamikaze* is the *makurakotoba* (epitheton ornans) for Ise.

among all the nations of the earth (cf. chapter IV: 2.). In the 1930s and '40s this concept of Japan's religiously founded »uniqueness« reached its climax in the form of an ultranationalistic ideology.

But how was this dogmatic concept justified in light of the clear fact that so many of the elements that make up the »Japanese spirit« (*wakon*), beyond the merely technological and pragmatic (*yôsai*), ultimately originated abroad? Even the most ardent supporters of the concept of the Japanese nation could hardly deny the fact that the Japanese writing system, for example, originally comes from China, as is the case with the ethical maxims of the great teachings of Confucianism, which even today form an integral part of the Japanese system of ethics. The origins of Buddhism in India are just as irrefutable as the foreign roots of Christianity in Japan. Modern philosophy, technologies and social systems in Japan also show diverse links to origins outside of the country's borders.

These facts do not present a problem to an enlightened perspective, which assumes the global diffusion of culture to be an inevitability. For religious and ethnocentric thought, however – which constantly seeks to establish the superiority of the home culture over foreign elements and is only capable of recognizing these foreign influences according to the degree to which they have been assimilated into the home culture – such questions indeed present an existential problem. Certain patterns of acculturation of foreign elements can be observed in Japanese history. This is especially true of the country's religious culture, which is largely characterized by a specific pattern of adaptation of foreign influences that is best described as an »adapting« of foreign influences.

The efforts of some Japanese scholars in various areas to show that a certain cultural element that originated abroad is actually Japanese, or at least is so Japanized that its foreign origin becomes inconsequential, are well known. According to this view, foreign ideas consistently enter Japan, where they reach their ultimate perfection. Thus, Japan is to be seen not as a cultural imitator, as the malicious Western cliché would have it, but rather as the cultural terminus of global intellectual activity.¹¹ This model is best summarized as the »perfection« of foreign influences.

There is also a further, more widespread approach to recognizing elements of one's own culture in another, thus transcending its foreignness. In particular, Buddhism and Shintô have made use of this model, which states that deities of foreign religions are actually manifestations of indigenous, Japanese gods. This form of »identification,« as I would like to call this approach, originated in Indian

¹¹ Josef Kreiner (1989: 35) refers to the general problem of this explanation and cites the Indonesian cultural critic Arifin Bey's formulation of Japan as a »terminal culture.«

Buddhism and aimed to integrate polytheistic local and regional beliefs into the universal concept of Buddhism. And yet, nowhere has this approach been more successful than in Japan. Japan's much touted religious tolerance is largely based on the syncretistic identification of indigenous and foreign deities which are thus incorporated into and made accessible to Japanese culture and religion.

Finally, there is a third approach to adapting foreign elements to Japan, which I will call »eclecticism.« According to this view, the best elements of various foreign systems are selected and combined into something new and better. This new conglomeration is to be seen as Japanese and is definitely superior to the mere sum of its parts. An example of this is the state doctrine of the Meiji period, which, as can be seen in the example of the *Imperial Rescript on Education* of 1890 (see chapter III: 3. 1), combined ethical values of different origins into an eclectic doctrine of ethics whose character was then transfigured into an expression of the essence of Japan.

These three categories describe the basic patterns of acculturation in Japan. The idea of »perfection« holds that foreign ideas make their way to Japan, where they are brought to their highest form, refined, and finally perfected. The concept of »identification,« on the other hand, holds that foreign ideas, or elements of them, enter the country and are recognized as being essentially identical with ancient indigenous concepts. Finally, the »eclectic« approach holds that the best elements of various foreign ideas are combined in Japan into something completely new and superior, and thus made Japanese.

All of these models of acculturation share the basic axiomatic principle that foreign elements ultimately can only be accepted in a Japanized form, and not in their original state. It appears that only when the irritating foreign elements have been eliminated and their Japanese core, whatever its nature may be, is revealed can they be accepted without risk. Thus, foreign elements that, for whatever reason, cannot be adapted and assimilated must be perceived as a serious threat and are often painfully excluded from the majority culture (cf. Antoni 1995b, among others).

3. COORDINATES IN JAPANESE CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Since the problem of religion, and especially of Shintô – as we have seen – cannot be viewed separately from the foundations and dynamics of Japanese culture as a whole, the following discussion will summarize some important elements of Japanese religious history in order to prepare the ground for the following discussion.¹²

3. 1. History

Unlike the situation in post-war Germany, in Japan the year 1945 has never been seen to the same degree as a historic turning point in the sense of a new beginning unencumbered by history. The break provided by the Japanese defeat in the war indeed had lasting effects on Japanese society, for example, in the form of a modern(ized) Constitution and a political turn toward the United States, and yet continuities remain in Japan that can only be understood historically.

This is especially clear in the fact that Japan still uses its own calendar system for years. The official Japanese calendar is not the Gregorian, or Western calendar, but the traditional Japanese system based on the periods of rule of the Japanese emperors (*gengô*, traditionally *nengô*). The psychological importance of this calendar in Japan can be seen, for example, in the fact that after 1945, the year of Japan's defeat, the emperor not only retained his position, but also the era name – and thus the cycle of year numbers – remained unchanged. Only after the death of Emperor Hirohito (Shôwa-tennô) on January 7, 1989, was a new era name (Heisei) declared, marking the beginning of a new calendar cycle.

This calendar system has the effect that in Japan history is not viewed as a linear progression, but rather in an insular manner.¹³ One cannot tell how far back in history an event lies simply from the calendar date on which it took place – for example, in the year Taihō 1. Only after placing it in a linear chronology is its true historical distance revealed, as in the case of Taihō 1, which corresponds to the year 701 A.D.

¹²The following discussion summarizes some basic concepts of Japanese studies relevant to the topic at hand. Additional facts can be found in the standard reference works.

¹³For more details on Japanese concepts of time, cf. Kracht 1989; Tanaka 1993.

Obviously, this concept of time results in a different view of history, in which history becomes a kind of ocean with individual events scattered across it like islands. In extreme cases, an event's historical distance from the present is of only secondary importance. In the context of religions, this fact results in a general indifference toward an objective historical chronology. Taken to the extreme, this can allow the age of myths to be directly linked to the present.

3. 1. 1. The power of genealogy

A further characteristic of Japanese culture that continues to be influential to this day is the fact that the country's history has always been shaped by large families, dynasties or clans. Whether for the imperial household, which proudly claims to have reigned without a change of dynasties since the mists of time (although this is viewed much more critically by historians), the important families of the court nobility (and above all, the Fujiwara clan), the military nobility (especially the Minamoto and Tokugawa houses) or merchants and farmers, the crucial factor determining one's position and reputation has always been one's genealogical family membership – that is, one's descent – which could also be attained by adoption. Stated in the extreme, the power of genealogy can be seen as the driving force in Japanese cultural history and is especially important in the religious legitimation of ruling power.

3. 1. 2. Outline of ancient history (before 1868)

The religiously justified genealogies are also of such great importance because they point directly to the problem of the origins of the Japanese people and state. In modern Japan, until the end of the Pacific War, State Shintô dogma held that the Japanese empire was founded by the mythical first emperor, Jinmu-tennô, who allegedly formed his government in the year corresponding to 660 B.C. This version of historical events can still be found today both in Japan and abroad, and the National Foundation Day (February 11) has even been made a national holiday again (see below).

Nevertheless, it has been archeologically and historically proven that the supposed founding of the empire by Jinmu-tennô is a legend that has nothing in common with the historical facts. Historical research has shown that the Japanese state, like the Japanese language, developed only gradually. Only about 1000 years after the fictitious date of 660 B.C. did the Japanese state begin to develop

out of several smaller principalities. This state took shape only after the 5th century through contact with China. (Cf. among others Antoni 2012a: 373ff.)

China was the source of Buddhism and Confucianism, and therefore also provided the methods for ruling over a central government. Following the Chinese model, Japanese rulers were now called »divine rulers« (*tennô*) and claimed sovereign power, supported by a host of magistrates. Unlike China, however, where the emperor's power was based on a divine mandate that could theoretically be taken away, the emperor based his and his family's power solely on his supposed divine origins as a direct descendant of the mythical heavenly deities – and in particular, of the sun goddess Amaterasu ômikami. This legitimation still applies to a large extent today. Although, under pressure from the allied forces, the emperor officially renounced his own divinity on January 1, 1946, the current emperor, Akihito, is still officially considered the 125th emperor in the direct line of descent leading back to the sun goddess (see chapter V: 3.). This is as clear a manifestation as any of the genealogical and religious mode of thinking.

3. 1. 3. *The modern era*

The history of modern Japan begins with a paradox. This period's axiomatic starting point, the year 1868, was marked by an event whose intentions appear anything but modern: the Meiji Restoration. In this year, the political and social order that had characterized Japan during the Tokugawa period came to an end. Although the Meiji Restoration of 1868 is said to be the beginning of modern Japan, it was based on the idea of restoring the supposedly ancient institution of divine imperial rule.

This apparent contradiction cannot be overlooked in any examination of the foundations of modern Japan and its concept of government. Along with the opening of the country, which was forced by the West, the Meiji Restoration also brought the backward-looking concept of a reconstruction of earlier models of governance. Over the course of the Meiji period, this traditionalist idea was implemented in the comprehensive, religiously and politically based concept of government that postulated a uniquely Japanese »national polity« (*kokutai*). Up until Japan's defeat in 1945, this concept of the *kokutai*, which was centered around the emperor and based on Shintô thought, formed the official and binding Japanese concept of the state.

The more modern Japan became after the Meiji Restoration in the fields of technology, science and the economy, the more influential the Shintô-based state ideology became for the nation's conception of itself. The worship of the emperor

was elevated to the level of a nationally mandatory religion, in which the emperor served as the metaphysical and mythical core of the national family.

Thus came about the peculiar circumstance that the triumph of rational thought in Japan was accompanied by increasing irrationality in regard to the foundations of culture, the state and society. This process, however, by no means occurred on an unconscious, spiritual level, but rather was consistently the result of careful planning and implementation. The fact that the creators of the new Empire of Japan – which was born in 1868 and took on its true form in the Constitution of 1889 – themselves took an extremely pragmatic position toward this issue can be seen, for example, in the official commentary to the Constitution by the statesman Itô Hirobumi, one of the fathers of the so-called Meiji Constitution (see chapter III: 3. 1. 1.).

Japan's religions play an important role in Itô's writings. Thus, in order to understand this development, we must briefly examine the essential elements of the three main strands of Japanese intellectual and religious history: Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintô.

3. 2. *Religion and values: syncretism rather than denomination*

Japanese intellectual and religious history is widely said to be characterized by a marked tolerance in regard to the relations between the country's various religions. Indeed, over the course of Japanese history, there have only seldom been phases of open religious intolerance, for example, from certain Buddhist sects (Nichiren) in the Japanese Middle Ages, or the »separation of gods and Buddhas« (*shinbutsu-bunri*) and dogmatic State Shintô during the modern era. Otherwise, the three intellectual and religious areas, each of which is itself remarkably heterogeneous, have usually existed peacefully alongside – and above all, along with – one another, and denominational fanaticism, as in European history, has generally not been common. Rather, the concept of syncretism, along with its various forms of acculturation, has consistently been Japan's fundamental approach to religion. Under this approach, Shintô deities were identified with the higher beings of Buddhism – often by way of tenuous constructions and speculations – and, on a higher level of thinking, the two were considered to be identical.¹⁴

Even today, Japan continues to be strongly influenced by syncretistic thought. This is especially apparent in the area of unorganized folk religions, along with

¹⁴ For an introduction to religious syncretism in the Japanese Middle Ages, cf. Kubota 1989; Matsunaga 1969; Naumann 1994; Scheid 2001; Teeuwen 1996.

their many local, regional and nationwide festivals that take place throughout the year, or in certain religious beliefs about individual saints and demons, which are the result of centuries of syncretism. The numerous new religions also make use of various forms of traditional spiritual culture, often creating new, sometimes seemingly bizarre religious systems that might include Buddha and the sun goddess Amaterasu just as well as Confucius, or even Jesus. This kind of religious thought is not the result of naivety or indifference toward religion, but rather simply the basic syncretistic belief that, on a higher level, everything is related and often interchangeable. In this sense, syncretism seems more alive today than ever.

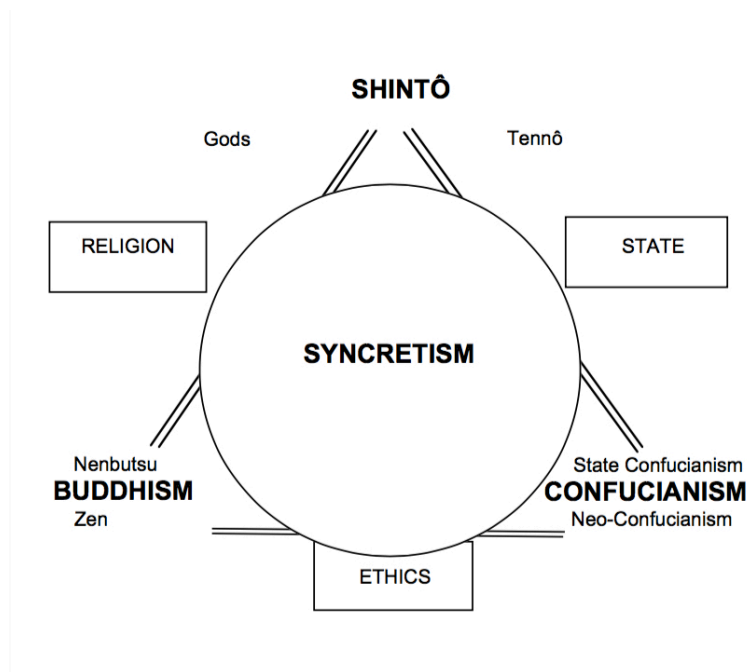
The »new« and »newest« religions in Japan, which have emerged in large numbers since the pre-modern era and continue to do so even today, generally take their teachings from the foundations of these three classic schools of Japanese intellectual and religious history.¹⁵

Only Christianity has not been able to become a determining factor in Japanese society and culture. The realization that in other parts of Asia Christian missionary work and political colonization by the European powers always went hand-in-hand was the reason behind the Tokugawa *bakufu*'s extremely severe suppression, and finally the prohibition, of Christianity already in the early 17th century. Even in modern Japan, the state continued to mistrust Christians until 1945. In post-war Japan Christian communities were free to develop, but today they play only a marginal role in society, regardless of the fact that the Japanese Christian community often voices its concerns over highly political questions, for example, the emperor's responsibility for the war.¹⁶

Thus, the three traditional systems – Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintô – play a key role in understanding Japan's spiritual foundations, since they are all to some degree a part of nearly every syncretistic system of beliefs. The overall relationship between these three systems of Japanese intellectual and religious history can be demonstrated in the form of a diagram, which shows that each of the three areas carries out certain functions within the entire value system of traditional Japanese culture.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the topic of »new religions« cannot be further pursued in the present study. For a thematic introduction to this complex area of research in modern Japanese religious history, cf. Inoue 1990, 1994b; Inoue, Laube 1995; Matsuno 1990; Staemmler, Dehn 2011, among others.

¹⁶ Cf. the case of the mayor of Nagasaki, who became a vocal participant in the debate over Japan's responsibility for the war (see chapter V: 3. 1).



As this model shows, Shintô connects the areas of religion and the state, and especially the institution of the emperor. Buddhism bridges religion and ethics, with Amida Buddhism and Zen as two poles. Finally, Confucianism completes the system, linking the areas of ethics and the state.

3. 2. 1. Buddhism

In the 6th century, Buddhism had already developed into a sophisticated, complex world religion and made its way from Korea to Japan. The ruler of the Korean kingdom of Paekche presented to the ruler of the Japanese state of Yamato a statue of Buddha as a gift, signifying the high regard for Buddhist teachings throughout known world at the time. Thus, this foreign religion embodied the prestige as well as the power of the foreign – the world outside Japan. And yet, over time, the formation of syncretistic systems became a specific characteristic of Japanese Buddhist theology. Tendai syncretism, for example, viewed Shintô gods as the manifestations of certain Buddhas or Bodhisattvas called *gongen* («temporary incarnations»). According to this belief, the manifestations of Buddha left their traces in Japan as Shintô gods (*honji-suijaku*). The syncretism of Shingon Buddhism, on the other hand, which was founded by Kûkai (Kôbô Daishi, 744-835), whose teachings emphasized the two virtues of the Buddha Vairocana (Japanese: Dainichi), saw the sun goddess Amaterasu as a manifestation of this

Buddha. Already the Monk Gyôki (668-749) consulted an oracle, according to which Amaterasu was declared the manifestation of Vairocana-Buddha.¹⁷

The basic structure of Buddhist-Shintôist syncretism remained largely unchanged up to the year 1868, when both areas were violently separated from one another under the modern Meiji state and artificially made into independent belief systems (*shinbutsu-bunri*; see chapter III: 2. 2). In popular belief, however, the old syncretistic connections between *kami* and Bodhisattvas, or Buddhas, has remained intact to this day.

This complexity has long been a characteristic of Buddhism in Japan; a number of varieties of Hînayâna (»Inferior Vehicle«), Mahâyâna (»Great Vehicle«), esotericism, and Nenbutsu (Amida Buddhism) have thrived as religions in Japan for ages. Today Buddhist places of worship, which, unlike Shintô shrines, are always called »temples« (*tera*, or *ji*), serve a more formalized religious function, especially for carrying out funeral ceremonies (while marriages are now usually carried out according to the modern Shintô ritual).¹⁸ Thus, essentially, the »final questions« of humanity relating to life after death are the domain of Buddhism, while the events of one's lifetime are influenced by Shintô deities.

In philosophically as well as theological terms, during the post-war era, it has been with considerable difficulty that Buddhism has been able to recover from the repression it suffered since the Meiji period, as well as from its earlier exploitation by the state during the Tokugawa period. Especially in the new religions – for example, the Sôka Gakkai – Buddhist thought has been updated and is often used for political purposes. These groups are also undertaking extensive efforts toward worldwide missionary activities.

3. 2. 2. Confucianism

Especially in the current debate over so-called »(East) Asian values,« Confucianism plays a dominant role. The ethical norms of Confucian philosophy are used to explain the cultural prerequisites for economic development in many countries in East Asia not only by various Western commentators, but also increasingly in East-Asian discourse. In particular, Confucian social ethics are seen as contrasting with the individualistic notion of society in the West. This problem

17 Cf. Kubota 1989; Matsunaga 1969; Murayama 1972; Naumann 1994: chapter A; Wata 1985.

¹⁸ Ôbayashi Taryô (1997) provides an introduction to this topic in his essay »The Origins of the Shintô Wedding,« in which the author demonstrates the historically recent character of these ceremonies. See also Antoni 2001b.

extends far into the area of political debate and touches on some sensitive topics, such as the universality of human rights.

Japan takes on a special position in this context. Since the country began to turn toward the West already since the middle of the 19th century and has modernized its social, political and economic structures, the debates on »East Asian values« cannot be directly applied to Japan. Although Confucianism was an extremely important influence over the course of Japanese history, modern Japan in particular has officially distanced itself from the context of Confucianism. In fact, however, there are areas in which the Confucian value system still plays an important role in contemporary Japan (cf. Antoni 1996).

3. 2. 2. 1. *The history of Confucianism in Japan*

The history of Confucianism in Japan¹⁹ can be divided into several periods, of which the two broadest ones are 1) State Confucianism in ancient times, and 2) Neo-Confucianism during the Japanese Middle Ages and the pre-modern era. Yet here, too, it was most often the syncretistic hybrid forms that determined spiritual and ethical practice in Japan, and rarely ever any one »pure« religion.

The State Confucianism of ancient times mostly applied to the modernization of government institutions and the establishment of a centralized government. Unlike the system in China, however, bureaucrats were recruited from the considerable ranks of the court nobility. The position of the emperor in particular was not determined by ability or personal virtue (important criteria for rulers in China), but rather solely on the basis of ancestry (see discussion below).

After a period of decline, Confucian thought experienced an exceptional renaissance during the Edo period. The ethical norms of what is known as Neo-Confucianism governed the social order to a large degree and determined even the smallest details of life in society (see chapter II: 2. 2. 1). Instrumental to this end were the Five Relationships (*gorin*), which continue to be an essential factor in the hierarchical nature of Japanese society to this day (see discussion below).

Already in the Edo period, Confucianism had become closely linked with Shintô, but after 1868 this symbiosis had become so inextricable that ultimately its foundation of Confucian ethics began to lose importance and threatened to slip into obscurity. Since then, it has become a widely held belief in Japan that the character of the country's basic system of ethics is the result of originally Japanese

¹⁹ For introductory literature on Japanese Confucianism, with an emphasis on pre-modern developments since the Edo period, cf. Boot 1992; Inoue 1897, 1918, 1945; Kracht 1986; Minamoto 1972; Nosco 1984; Ooms 1985; Smith 1973. See chapter II: 2. 2. 1.

values and has very little in common with Chinese Confucianism. This fact also adds considerably to the difficulty of debating so-called »Asian values« in Japan, since very few people there are conscious of the Asian – that is to say, originally Confucian – background of the country's own value system, which is often identified with Shintô (cf. Antoni 1996: 134ff., among others). Today's social values and norms in Japan (orderliness, diligence, hierarchy and harmony) have their roots in the school of Confucian thought that was so successfully made Japanese (in the sense of the principle of »perfection« discussed in chapter I: 2. 4. 5. 1) by the Meiji government and established within the national discourse.

3. 2. 3. *Shintô*

Setting aside all historical changes, which are the focus of this study, it is possible to determine some constant characteristics that are common to Shintô across its various schools and stages of development (see also Naumann 1985b).

The first of these is the fact that in Shintô a vast number of deities are worshipped (polytheism), while the common festivals (*matsuri*) serve a crucial role in religious practice. The shrine (*jinja* or *yashiro*) – the deity's »house« – serves as the place of worship in Shintô, and never the temple, which refers exclusively to Buddhist places of worship. The entrance to every shrine is marked by a gate (*torii*), usually made of wood, which separates the sacred space from the profane space around it.

The concept of purity forms the core ethical belief of Shintô and can be found in all areas of life. Sickness and death are thought to be fundamentally unclean and thus are subject to extensive rules of avoidance. Therefore, these areas also do not fall under the scope of Shintô theology and are usually covered by Buddhism.

Since the Edo period, the institution of the emperor has been the focus of Shintôist theories, resulting in the concept of the *kokutai* as the expression of a specifically Japanese, religiously and culturally based ethnocentrism. For this reason, this study will deal extensively with the emperor, the *kokutai* and nationalism, while other relevant areas, such as popular belief, sect Shintô or new religions, cannot be discussed in the same scope. Since the entire complex of Shintô in the past went through a clear pattern of development, it can only be understood diachronically. Static, ahistorical definitions would be misleading, rather than aiding our understanding.

For this reason, a historical excursus on the early development of Shintô is necessary in order to demonstrate that the core problems of the modern era were not historically isolated phenomena. Some of the basic aspects of its pre-modern and

ancient development will therefore be summarized in the following discussion, since they are essential to understanding events in the modern era (see also Antoni 1991: 11-29).

Since only a short overview can be offered here, see also both works by Nelly Naumann (1988 and 1994) from the *Handbook of Oriental Studies* series for a comprehensive discussion of the eras up to the beginning of the Edo period.

3. 2. 3. 1. *Historical development*

The Japanese scholar Ôbayashi Taryô (1982: 135) defines Japan's »indigenous religion,« Shintô, in the following manner: »generally speaking, the primeval religion of Japan; more precisely, a system that combined ancient forms of religion and Chinese elements for political purposes.« According to this definition, the term »Shintô« does not refer to a single religious system, but rather to a number of diverse belief systems that developed over the course of history.

This definition does not characterize Shintô as nature or ancestor worship, but simply calls it an »primeval religion,« and mentions certain »political purposes.« This poses two questions: 1) What is to be understood under the concept of a Japanese »primeval religion,« and 2) what does the author mean by »political purposes«?

Let us first go as far back as the written sources allow. The oldest written works in Japan, the *Kojiki* (»Records of Ancient Matters«) from the year 712 A.D. and the *Nihonshoki* (»Chronicles of Japan«) from the year 720 A.D., play a key role here. These works, which were conceived of as historical records, provide insight into the official conception of history at the time by describing the country's history from its mythical beginnings up to the time they were written. At the same time, these works, and especially the *Kojiki*, are viewed to a certain degree as »sacred books« of Shintô in traditional Shintô circles.²⁰

3. 2. 3. 1. 1. *The legitimation of the imperial household*

The first chapters of these works are of particular importance in this context, since they contain the country's mythical tradition and thus the religiously authoritative, and still current, foundations of the official Shintô doctrine. These include accounts of the creation of the world, the gods and their deeds, the origins of the imperial household and the basis for its power.

²⁰ For a general discussion and interpretation of the *Kojiki* as a historical source cf. Antoni 2012a: 273-479.

This reveals a characteristic trait of Japanese mythology: it serves to legitimate the power of the imperial household. This purpose is also the reason for one of the core points in the above definition of Shintô, the question of »political purposes.«

This question is closely related to the events that occurred in ancient Japan, particularly in the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries A.D. Up until this time, the Japanese archipelago was politically divided into many different local dominions, each of which was ruled by the most powerful family or clan (*uji*) in the region. The heads of these ruling families were not only the chief political figures, but also presided over religious aspects of the clan's territory. The genealogies of these families were recorded in myths, and of course the most politically powerful among them also played a prominent spiritual role.

By the 6th century, however, this situation changed drastically. Whether by their own will or not, the clans combined into ever expanding domains until finally one clan, the so-called »sun clan,« was able to exercise hegemony over Yamato, the central area of Japan around what is now Nara.

Naturally, the question of how to manage the state and maintain control over its territories, which were enormous by the standards of the day, represented a problem of existential importance for this newly formed and still very unstable political entity. The solution to this problem was found in China, the »Middle Kingdom,« with its highly developed culture and statesmanship. Everything that might guarantee the security of the state was then systematically brought to Japan. Bureaucratic structures were created according to the Chinese model that still appear feasible and sensible even by modern standards. The state was completely Sinicized, that is to say, opened to Chinese culture. And in this case Chinese culture means – besides Buddhism, which is of lesser importance in this context – in particular the teachings of Confucius and his successors.

The central part of this body of thought was the ideal state, led by an ideal ruler, the »Son of Heaven.« However, only a truly virtuous ruler could ensure the well-being of the state, since there was a deep mystical connection between the two. If the emperor lost his personal virtue and strayed from the correct path, then it was not only possible to depose him – it was his subjects' moral duty to overthrow this ruler who had become so dangerous to the country. This school of thought was led by the Confucian philosopher Mencius (*Mengzi*)²¹ and was brought to Japan as part of the spread of Chinese thought.

²¹ On Mencius cf. Bryan William Van Norden: *Mengzi. With selections from traditional commentaries*. Indianapolis: Hackett 2008; see also Antoni 2012a: 317.

Significantly, it was this very issue of the possibility of deposing the emperor that marked Japan's departure from the Chinese model. The entrenched interests of the ancient clan thinking were too strong for the ruling »Sun Dynasty« to accept the idea of a legal means of dethronement. The Japanese rulers, who had come to be called *tennô* (»divine ruler«), saw themselves as being equal, if not superior, to the Chinese emperors,²² and they systematically sought to establish their own means of legitimizing their power over the empire that were consciously differentiated from the Confucian model.

The source of these means of legitimation was found in the traditional myths about the imperial family, which told of the divine origins of the progenitor of the imperial family and proclaimed the living emperors to be the direct descendants of the sun goddess. They claimed that the sun goddess had given her grandson, the first human emperor, and his descendants a mandate to rule the country of Japan for all time as a single dynasty (*shinchoku*).²³ A change of dynasties, such as in China, was never to take place, nor was it possible to renounce this mandate to rule.

This is the »political purpose« that Ôbayashi refers to in his definition of Shintô. At its core was the Japanese concept of rule that was developed by Japanese court scholars in the 7th century, and which contrasted with the overwhelming influence of Chinese culture. The more the state was formally Sinicized – that is, influenced by Chinese cultural elements – the more clearly the Japanese emperor came to be characterized as the divine descendant of a heavenly being who was the source of all existence and meaning. This deification of the emperor, and ultimately of the entire country, is the essential meaning of the word *shintô*, as the »way of the gods of Japan.« Nelly Naumann (1970: 13) states in this context:

»The concrete meaning of the word *shintô* can be said to consist in the ideal of a divine emperor of Japan, which includes the divinity of the ruling emperors as well as their mandate to rule, which was issued by the sun goddess.«

This system, which is commonly called the »great tradition« of Shintô (this discussion does not cover the wide field of folk religion) was the result of the country's confrontation with a culture that was far more advanced than its own and was viewed as being superior, but whose accomplishments the Japanese nonethe-

²² This is already shown by the famous letter Empress Suikô wrote to the Chinese Emperor, addressing him as the Emperor of the West who respectfully is greeted by the Emperor of the East, i.e., Suiko-tennô counts herself as equal in value to the Chinese Son of Heaven. Cf. *Nihonshoki*, Suiko-tennô, 16/9 (NKBT, vol. 67: 192).

²³ Cf. *Nihonshoki* (NKBT, vol. 67: 147); *Kojiki* (NKBT, vol. 1: 126f.); *Kogoshûi* (GR, vol. 25: 5); Florenz 1919: 246 and Antoni 1998: 77, n. 48.

less sought to emulate. It was possible to adapt these foreign cultural elements without risk as long as the central issue – in this case, the emperor’s right to rule – remained intact. The rulers who advanced this process were themselves pious Buddhists. Shintô, on the other hand, provided them with a political and metaphysical justification to rule that did not fall under Chinese conceptions of the state. Thus, any effort to determine the essence of Shintô immediately reveals the religion’s fundamentally political orientation, the aim of which was to legitimate the power of the emperor.

Only in the Japanese Middle Ages did an independent Shintô theology begin to develop (cf. Naumann 1994). Although the emperors had lost their power of direct rule to the military nobility and the *bakufu*, which ruled in the name of the imperial family and maintained its authority for the most part until 1868, in the circles of Shintô theology, the idea of Japan as a land under the special protection of the gods, or *shinkoku* (»land of the gods«), began to develop. Based on the mythical tradition, radical proponents of this view concluded that not only the imperial family was divine, but also the entire nation of Japan. They saw Japan as a country that was set apart from all the other nations of the world by its unique, indigenous spirit, the *yamato-damashii*, or »spirit of Yamato.« This marked the birth of pre-modern and modern religious nationalism and traditionalism in Japan, which was based on – or rather, identical with – Shintô.

This formed the foundation upon which Shintô theology – beginning in the 18th century, at the latest – returned to the political sphere and began to influence the onset of Japan’s relations with the European powers, and with the United States in particular. These questions will be examined in depth over the course of this study.

3. 2. 3. 1. 2. The »primeval religion« of Japan

The second of the questions posed above, on the other hand, about Japan’s »primeval religion,« is much more difficult to answer than the question of the emergence of political Shintô. Of course, pre-Buddhist religions certainly existed in Japan, but it should not be overlooked that the sources do not offer us a clear picture of these religions. Rather, information on this topic must be carefully gathered from the sources of tradition, and the field of religious studies is still far from reaching a unified view on this area.

Alongside the few conclusions resulting from archaeological research – for example, certain beliefs about life after death can be inferred from burial methods – once again it is the myths of the ancient written sources, in particular the *Kojiki*

and *Nihonshoki*, that offer a key to understanding. Individual elements of these myths, which were organized into a coherent system by Japanese statesmen in the 7th and 8th centuries with the purpose of legitimating the rule of the emperor, allow valuable conclusions to be drawn about the earliest Japanese belief systems – the »primeval religion of Japan.«

The remains of ancient mythology can still be found in daily life in Japan today. This is due to the function that the myths served in Japan over the centuries. First recorded in the previously mentioned chronicles in the 8th century A.D., these myths served to legitimate the rule of the imperial dynasty in the Chinese-oriented imperial state in ancient Japan. Organized and recorded with the aid of scholars of the imperial court, they were intended to document this dynasty's eternal right to rule. However, along with the decline of imperial power in the Japanese Middle Ages, the ancient chronicles – and the myths they recorded – were largely forgotten. Only in the pre-modern era did Japan return to an intensive reception of the mythical tradition in the face of domestic problems as well as the aforementioned threat from abroad. The ancient sources were intended to help restore the construct of an »authentic« Japan, in the sense of nativism. The most important source in this context is the *Kojiki*. The preface by the work's author or compiler, Ô no Yasumaro, from March 9, 712 A.D., sheds some light on how it was written.²⁴

It becomes evident that the mythology of the *Kojiki*, which was later raised to the status of a sacred tradition by Shintô theologians and ideologues, was influenced from the beginning by the intentions of its compiler. That is, the work summarizes the (oral?) traditions and, in accordance with the imperial mandate, serves to prove the divine origins of the imperial house, and thus to legitimate its political power. A single »primeval religion,« however, such as was postulated by the Kokugaku school of the Edo period, cannot be deduced from the ancient writings. At the dawn of its history, Shintô appears in a dazzling array of forms; this work makes no mention of a unified thread of a homogenous primeval religion of Japan.

Shintô mythology was thus clearly politically motivated toward legitimating imperial rule from the beginning. And yet, these first written sources also show

²⁴ In the preface, Ô no Yasumaro laments that the ancient traditions were on the verge of being forgotten. For this reason, he continues, Emperor Tenmu, who died in 686, ordered the compilation of a national history in order to preserve these traditions. Yasumaro recorded everything from the origins of heaven and earth to the rule of Empress Suiko (592-628) according to an oral account by Hieda no Are. The historical existence of the compiler has been established by grave finds (cf. the article »Ô no Yasumaro« in MN XXXIV/2, 1979: 257). Cf. Antoni 2012a: 324-330.

the diverse origins of individual myths, which were first formed into a single, continuous tradition by the compilers of the *Kojiki*.

It is worth noting that in the second of these ancient sources, the *Nihonshoki*, the mythical content is presented in much more complexity than in the *Kojiki*. While the *Kojiki* tells a single, continuous story aimed at a certain purpose, the *Nihonshoki* usually offers several variants of a given story that differ from one another. The many variants contained in the *Nihonshoki* show that several branches of the traditional myths were indeed known, which often differed greatly from one another. The Shintô doctrine of a single, homogenous tradition solely based on the *Kojiki*, which was constructed by the Kokugaku school in the pre-modern era, thus represented an illusion from the very beginning – an artificial invention made for the purpose of political legitimation.

If one seeks to transcend this construct of political mythology and examine the work's religious content, however, it becomes apparent that there are significant barriers to understanding. And the more we seek to understand the question of the Japanese »primeval religion,« the more complex this question becomes. In order to shed new light on this topic, it makes sense to examine the details and individual elements of the mythological tradition as closely as possible.

3. 2. 3. 1. 3. *Modern mythological research*

This area of analytical and comparative mythological research has only been possible in Japan without limitations, however, since the end of World War II.²⁵ One of the founders of this area of research, Tsuda Sôkichi (1873-1961), experienced severe reprisals in the decades before the war due to the fact that he did not recognize the myths as accounts of the historical truth, contrary to the official dogma of the time.²⁶ He also rightly questioned the legend of the supposed founding of the empire by Jinmu-tennô in the year 660 B.C., a belief that is still widely taken as a fact to this day, and revealed the purely legendary character of these accounts.

Since the end of the war, however, Japanese mythological and Shintô research experienced an enormous boom; finally, the path was clear for an ideologically unbiased approach. The most important result of comparative mythological research may well be the recognition of the original heterogeneity of the entire mythological corpus, which was so well ordered in the literary tradition of the

²⁵ For this passage see also Antoni 2014. Recent research on Japanese mythologies is also provided by Isomae 2000.

²⁶ For Tsuda Sôkichi see below, note 367.

Kojiki. It was recognized that only in the rarest of cases are the Japanese myths unique and without parallels to the world outside of Japan. And it became apparent that certain mythological episodes, such as the accounts of the origin of death, at their core could also be found in neighboring cultures in China, Korea and the Malayo-Polynesian sphere.²⁷

Thus, although the organized myths as a whole can be characterized as »Japanese mythology,« their individual components are of diverse origins, and Shintô therefore cannot be truthfully called a homogenous primeval religion. Also, it once again becomes apparent how closely religion, politics and ideology are connected within this field. While the Shintô doctrine of the homogeneity and uniqueness of the Japanese people applied up to the end of the war (this is evident, among other things, in the Japanese mythology of the founding of the empire), in the post-war era, the various elements within the entire body of myths now revealed not only that the myths had diverse sources, but also the heterogeneous origins of the Japanese nation itself!

Research has been able to show that certain mythical motifs that were woven into the organized mythology in historical times originated in different population groups from the Asian continent, Southeast Asia and the South Sea who settled the Japanese islands during prehistoric times.²⁸

Therefore, the myths, and thus the question of the »primeval religion of Japan,« cannot be separated from the question of the ethnogenesis of the Japanese people. Today it is known that the inhabitants of the Japanese islands were originally made up of groups of very different origins that combined to a large extent over the course of millennia, finally resulting in the formation of the Japanese nation probably in the 4th century A.D.. All these groups contributed their own religious beliefs, and it is now the task of comparative mythological research to recognize individual mythical complexes as such and assign them to their original cultural realms.²⁹

Clearly, the revelation of foreign – that is, Korean, Southern Chinese or Indonesian – elements within Japanese mythology is not merely of academic interest, but also has implications for the core issues of modern Japan's traditional image of itself.

²⁷ Cf., among others, Matsumura 1954-58; Naumann 1971, 1996; Ôbayashi 1973, 1986; Antoni 1982, 2012a, 2014.

²⁸ For a recent and fundamental study on comparative mythology cf. Witzel 2012.

²⁹ Already Basil Hall Chamberlain (1883 (1982)), the first translator of the *Kojiki* into English, recognized the heterogeneous character of Japanese mythology and differentiated between three cycles: the Izumo cycle of myths, the Yamato cycle of myths and the Tsukushi cycle of myths. This cultural-historical division is upheld by current research.

The modern Japanese ideology of the absolute uniqueness of the national polity (*kokutai*) was based solely on the statements from the written sources of mythology from the 8th century that aimed to legitimate imperial rule. An objective scientific investigation of the myths, especially in the sense of comparative cultural history, necessarily conflicted with this concept of the state, which was viewed as being sacrosanct, as can be seen in a number of cases. Any proof of connections between the native mythology and the traditions of the continent or the islands of the South Pacific conflicted with the belief in the self-contained Japanese land of the gods.

Thus, the enlightening effect of unhindered academic research that began in the post-war era can hardly be overstated, and this study is also conceived as a part of this field of research. Without such critical, cultural-historical analysis of Japanese mythology, the dogmatic teachings of the pre-war era might remain unchecked to this day as the foundation of Japanese religion and culture. Such research paved the way for the recognition of the extraordinarily complex and historically widespread origins of the Japanese culture, freeing them from their artificially constructed, ideologically motivated isolation and placing them in the wider context of not only East-Asian history, but human history in general. The idea of the supposed homogeneity of Japan – less based on religion than ideology, and rooted in the traditionalist constructions of the pre-modern era – thus can no longer be maintained. Japan may be an island nation (*shimaguni*) in geographical terms, but not culturally!

4. CONCLUSION

It is already apparent from the brief outline of Japanese cultural and religious history given above that an ahistorical, static, »essentialist« approach cannot accurately portray the complex realities of pre-modern Shintô. Buddhism, Christianity and Confucianism do not represent clearly defined and unchanging entities and the same applies to the area of Shintô, a term that is understood here in the sense of a general category. However, a continuity of religion and ideology is apparent from the Edo period to the present day that appears not to have been so dramatically influenced by the often emphasized divisions of 1868 (the Meiji Restoration) and 1945 (Japan's defeat in the Pacific War). From this perspective, the contribution of the West to these transitional phases in Japan's recent history, which current theories of modernization emphasize with often unveiled culturalist pride, thus appear less important than they are often claimed to have been.

The modern era in Japan did not begin only in 1868. The country was not shrouded in the darkness of late-medieval feudalism up until the Meiji Restoration, waiting for enlightenment by the West. The intellectual structures of the modern era in Japan were drawn up in intellectual circles for the most part already during the Edo period and were merely applied in practice during the Meiji period, together with concepts imported from the West's own modern development. Without accounting for developments in the pre-modern era, the emergence of the modern Japanese empire would appear to be an incomprehensible miracle.

The world of Shintô played a critical role in this context. Without detracting from the importance of foreign influences in the 19th century and the universal factors of modernity, it must be recognized that the critical impetus and concepts for the development of the modern Japanese nation-state, which was centered around the emperor as its divine ruler, originated in the pre-modern era in Japan itself.

CHAPTER II
THE EDO PERIOD

1. HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE EDO PERIOD

In order to analyze historical processes, one must first organize historical facts that often appear confusingly heterogeneous. Yet any arrangement of historical material also brings with it the danger of reducing the course of history itself to categories of historiography and periodization. The more clearly the individual periods are outlined and defined, the less clear our understanding of formative phases in times of historical transition becomes.

This problem is also highly relevant to the investigation of Japanese history, since the commonly used period names such as »Nara period,« »Heian period,« etc., with their exact beginning and end dates, give the illusion of static, unchanging historical time periods.

In the case of the Edo period in particular, such an inflexible system proves to be problematic. Historians generally agree on a division of the period into two eras roughly before and after the year 1800.

Even more so than in the case of this division, however, the question of determining a historically reasonable beginning for the Edo period is fraught with problems. Historical studies have agreed that a strict division – at the year 1600 (the Battle of Sekigahara), for example – does not do justice to the complexity of the preceding transitional phase, and for this reason the second half of the 16th century (the Azuchi-Momoyama period) is increasingly included in discussions of the early Edo period.

John W. Hall (1991: 4f.), for example, makes the following remark on the question of chronologies in the introduction to the fourth volume of the *Cambridge History of Japan*, which covers the Azuchi-Momoyama period as well as the first two centuries of the Edo period (approximately 1550-1800):

»The origin of the Tokugawa hegemony and the formation of Edo polity cannot be explained without reference to the fundamental institutional changes that occurred under Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi.«

On the other hand, the author does not seek to question the independence of the Azuchi-Momoyama period, an era that saw the rise of the Daimyō as well as the arrival of the Europeans, until the Tokugawa shogunate's policy of national isolation (*sakoku*) resulted in the closing of nearly all portals to the outside world. According to Hall (1991: 5f.), the Tokugawa policy of isolation marked a depar-

ture from the spirit of openness of the previous era and brought on a »transition from military to civil government« in Japan.³⁰

In the case of the historical background of the study at hand, this circumstance means that our investigation ideally should begin not at the start of the Edo period, but rather should also include the formative decades of the preceding Azuchi-Momoyama period. The discussion of this period will be brief, however, since the last decades of the 16th century, which are of critical importance to this period, have already been covered by Nelly Naumann in the second volume of her work on Japan's indigenous religions (Naumann 1994). Therefore, the following investigation will be mostly limited to the Edo period, and events occurring before this period will only be discussed where absolutely necessary.

1. 1. *The early Edo period*

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) was the first to successfully create a lasting hegemony on Japanese soil after the turmoil of the Sengoku period. While publicly maintaining his loyalty to the late Hideyoshi, he gradually acquired power and legitimacy. Upon providing proof – though fabricated – of his descent from the Minamoto (see below), Ieyasu was appointed Shôgun on March 24, 1603.

Ieyasu thus took control of the political body that his predecessors had created, but succeeded in establishing a stable hegemony (Hall 1968: 161). The system that began under his rule was marked by the following basic characteristics: the permanent hegemony of the Tokugawa house, which ruled in a highly restrictive manner; the introduction of the *baku-han* system (Shôgun-Daimyô); the ceremonial position of the imperial house; the shifting of the warrior class to administrative functions; the establishment of the four-class system, along with the rise of a firmly bourgeois culture; and the policy of isolation from the outside world.

The late Edo period, on the other hand, is marked by signs of the decline of the Tokugawa shogunate, which are evident in social problems, in particular among the farmers and the Samurai, as well as in the rise of nationalism centered around the emperor. From the arrival of Commodore Perry on July 8, 1853, to the

³⁰ Herman Ooms also begins his discussion on Tokugawa ideology (1985) with the first half of the 16th century, a period marked by numerous wars and conflicts, a lack of overreaching power and the fragmentation of the country (cf. Ooms 1985: 18ff.). According to Ooms, however, the rise of Oda Nobunaga marked a new period in which »power« found a way to develop with the help of a new symbolic language that provided it with legitimation. »Power had to be converted into distorting speech,« (Ooms 1985: 21).

final abdication of the last Shôgun Yoshinobu in 1867, the »Pax Tokugawa« finally came to an end (cf. Dettmer 1985: 90).

1. 1. 1. *The political system*

The *baku-han* system of the Edo period was defined by what is often called a »feudal« relationship between the Shôgun and the Daimyô, in which the hereditary vassals (*fudai daimyô*), the largest group of Daimyô, played a critical role, even in the administration of religious matters (the office of the *jisha-bugyô*, among others; see discussion below). Thus, the power of the *bakufu* was established on all levels, at least in theory. The system was intended to develop a unified national policy and universal laws on the basis of broadly recognized principles (cf. Hall 1968: 177). Tokugawa law was based on the assumption that a natural metaphysical order existed: the »natural class hierarchy« necessarily resulted in the functional differentiation between four major classes, not including the court nobility above and the pariahs below. The four classes were: *shi* (Samurai/warriors), *nô* (farmers), *kô* (artisans), and *shô* (merchants), and relations between these classes were regulated by law. The Tokugawa government was marked overall by a strong, comprehensive administrative apparatus (Hall 1968: 171) that essentially represented the continuation of a military regime in times of peace. The Samurai were now recruited as bureaucrats in the administrative structure. This circumstance had a lasting influence on the area of religion in particular – both in terms of content and administration.³¹

1. 1. 2. *The involvement of the imperial household*

Among the extensive measures that served to secure the hegemony of the Tokugawa house, the involvement of the imperial household played an especially important role. The emperor was de facto prevented from exercising any political power, and he served an exclusively religious and ceremonial function. In exchange, the court, which during the Japanese Middle Ages had suffered serious financial problems, now received material support from the *bakufu*.³²

The Tokugawa policy sought to raise the prestige of the imperial court by transferring ceremonial duties to it, while at the same time keeping it under political control. Ieyasu's decree of the »Laws Governing the Imperial Court and

³¹ Cf. Hall 1968: 171, 177; on the *baku-han* system, see the studies by Asao 1967; Fujino 1962; Kitajima 1978; Yamaguchi 1975.

³² Cf. Hall 1968: 168; Meyer 1991.

Nobility« (*Kinchû narabini kugesohatto*) in 1615, which will be discussed later, provided the basic system of rules that strictly regulated the sphere of activity of the emperor and the court (cf. Meyer 1991, among others).

In the course of the unification, the emperorship was rediscovered as the highest official authority. The *bakufu* pursued a twofold objective regarding the court: on the one hand, the emperor was recognized as the highest (moral) authority and his prestige was ensured, while on the other hand, legal and political measures were taken to control and isolate him from the Daimyô. Although the imperial family and the court nobility (*kuge*) received estates to ensure their livelihood, the court was also subjected to strict surveillance, and all free participation in matters of state was prohibited. The central government was moved to Edo, the seat of the *bakufu*, meaning that the emperor and his household in Kyôto were now also geographically removed from the center of power. The *bakufu* was able to precisely monitor and control all matters that were brought before the emperor through its representative in Kyôto as well as the court officials, who served as intermediaries. Even contact with the Daimyô was carefully limited. Ieyasu's decree of 1615 strictly limited the activities of the emperor and the *kuge* to literary studies and ceremonial functions. It also required the advance agreement of the *bakufu* for the appointment of higher officials. Furthermore, it regulated the relationship between the imperial family and the main temples, and introduced a system specifying that certain imperial princes become monks. Thus, the imperial household was completely disempowered and did not at first represent a general threat to the Tokugawa system. This changed only toward the end of the Edo period, when the court became the focus of the anti-Tokugawa movement and ultimately of the efforts toward the restoration of the emperor.

1. 1. 3. *Economy and culture*

Regardless of all its ideal social constructions, the Edo period was also characterized by numerous problems, especially regarding the economy (cf. Asao 1988). The ideal, according to which the Samurai govern, the farmers produce, and the merchants distribute, was unable to be maintained in practice, due to the rise of trade. Contrary to this theory, the merchants increased their status in society, since trade became largely independent of the *bakufu* and the *han*, while the Samurai became economically dependent on the merchants. This social change – the real rise in importance of the urban bourgeoisie, also deeply influenced religion.

On the other end of the social hierarchy, the farmer revolts (*hyakushô-ikki*) during this era showed the real suffering of the farmers (cf. Walthall 1991), regardless of their supposedly high position in the four-class system.

Due to the social separation of the Edo period, the Samurai, farmers and *chônin* each developed their own culture (cf. Ehmcke, Shôno-Sladek 1994). Regardless of its often economically advantageous position, the bourgeoisie, and especially the merchants, did not acquire any political influence. Instead, an even more lively class-specific culture developed.

At the latest in the Genroku period (1688-1705)³³, an independent style of *chônin* culture, centered in Ôsaka, Kyôto and Edo, developed into a novel, vibrant element. The *chônin* were not allowed to participate in the government, and so they showed little interest in matters of state. Their world, which was characterized by enjoyment, was devoted to the ideal of the *ukiyo*. In addition to this, however, mandatory social values applied to the merchants, analogous to the *bushidô* of the Samurai, requiring loyalty in their business dealings, or simplicity, as in the rule of not wasting profits.

Regardless of whether the culture of the Genroku period appears, from a historical perspective, to have been much less defined by religion than any other culture before in Japan (cf. Hall 1968: 228), Engelbert Kaempfer's detailed contemporary reports (which are discussed below) show that this view, especially in regard to Shintô, is in need of revision.

1. 2. *The late Edo and bakumatsu periods*

1. 2. 1. *General development*

The *baku-han* system, which was intended by its founders to maintain stability, increasingly fell into the wake of political, social and economic crises starting from the end of the 18th century, which, combined with increasing external pressures, ultimately led to the collapse of the Tokugawa state. There was no lack of attempts by the *bakufu* to systematically renovate the country's broken social and economic structures. The statesman Matsudaira Sadanobu, for example, who was appointed guardian (*hosa*) of the young Shôgun Tokugawa Ienari (1773-1841) in 1788, introduced such measures which, however, did not lead to any positive results (cf. Dettmer 1985: 86ff.). Under the next Shôgun, Ieyoshi (1793-1853), Mizuno Tadakuni attempted to implement economic reforms, also unsuccessfully.

³³ For an introduction, cf. Ishida 1961; Kodama 1966; Ôishi 1992.

While the domestic crisis was mounting, pressure from abroad on the *bakufu* also grew to end the policy of national seclusion. Russians arrived in Hokkaidô via the Kurile Islands, and American ships entered the bay of Edo already in 1846. The Kanagawa Treaty of 1854 finally marked the end of the Japanese policy of *sakoku* with the opening of two harbors. The establishment of foreign offices in Edo led to fierce domestic conflicts. The assassination of Ii Naosuke, who had supported the treaty with the United States, and was thus in opposition to Kômei-tennô, was an early climax in the bloody conflicts over foreign policy at the time.³⁴

Generally, the emperor emerged as the unifying figurehead of the anti-Tokugawa movement. The court nobility in particular rejected all foreign culture as non-Japanese, along with the trade agreements and the foreign offices in Japan. The nationalist spirit was epitomized by the slogan *sonnô-jôi*, »Revere the emperor and expel the barbarians.« The spiritual, ideological and ultimately religious connotations of this slogan, which increasingly placed the emperor in the center of a spiritual and political restoration movement, lent the political process its crucial force. Under this continuing pressure, Tokugawa Keiki (Yoshinobu), who was appointed the new Shôgun in 1867, resigned in November of the same year but retained the office of prime minister as well as possession of his estates. On January 3 of the following year, coalition troops led by Saigô Takamori occupied Kyôto. The power of rule was officially »returned« to Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji-tennô). The Tokugawa were stripped of their power, and their resistance forces were defeated after the battle at Toba-Fushimi on January 27, 1868. The establishment of a new form of government in the name of the emperor took place under the motto of a »restoration of the past« (*fukko*), a slogan that was coined by the Kokugaku in the Edo period. Thus, the Meiji Restoration was an attempt to implement political and intellectual goals in reality that had already been developed in a lengthy process by Kokugaku and Mito School thinkers starting in the early Edo period.

³⁴ Cf. the detailed study of this topic by Eva-Maria Meyer (1997)

2. SHINTÔ AND GOVERNANCE IN THE EARLY EDO PERIOD

2. 1. *Shintô and the religious policy of the bakufu*

The fact that religion is largely determined by culture is a basic assumption of anthropological religious studies (cf. Antoni 1997b: 177, among others). According to Thomas Bargatzky (1985: 123), the theory of social systems states that it is »a well documented fact that there is a relationship between the type of 'supernatural background' of a culture (or of a sociocultural system) and the type of political organization of the people in this system.«

The validity of this general statement, especially in the case of Japan, is self-evident. Upon examining the individual eras of Japanese history, it becomes apparent that there is usually a direct relationship between religion(s) and the current social, political and cultural environment. The connection between religion and political power is a significant characteristic in this context. Be it the systematization of Japanese myths in ancient times or the construction of State Shintô in the modern era, the utilization of Zen monasteries under the Ashikaga in the Japanese Middle Ages or of the Buddhist clergy in the Tokugawa period, religion always also served to provide the ruling powers with spiritual legitimation. The Edo period is especially important in this context, and the effects of this era are clearly visible in present-day Japan.

It is generally recognized that the official ideology of the Tokugawa state was derived from Neo-Confucianism, i.e. the interpretation of the Confucian classics in the tradition of Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi, (1130-1200), Japanese: Shushi; see chapter II: 2. 2. 1). In scholarly research, however, justified doubts about the sole correctness of this view have been raised, and the exclusive position of Neo-Confucianism has been critically examined. The writings of Herman Ooms are particularly relevant in this context, whose main work of 1985 offers a fascinating reevaluation of the intellectual-historical foundations of this formative phase for the era. Samuel Hideo Yamashita (1996: 27) notes in an article on his general conclusions: »Ooms concedes that the *bakufu* did turn to Neo-Confucianism but that it was a mixture of Neo-Confucianism and Shinto, not Chu Hsi's philosophy or newly imported varieties of Neo-Confucianism.« Hermann Ooms's remarks thus deserve to be given special attention in the present investigation of the development of Shintô since the Edo period.

Ooms articulated the central points of his thesis already in an article from 1984 entitled »Neo-Confucianism and the Formation of Early Tokugawa Ideology: Contours of a Problem« (Ooms 1984), which can be summarized as follows: Traditionally, Neo-Confucianism is viewed as the official ideology of the *bakufu*. Historical facts, such as the financing of the school of Hayashi Razan by the *bakufu*, or the incorporation of Neo-Confucian scholars in the government, appear to support this view. According to Ooms, however, more recent insights have shown that this view represents an over-interpretation. Although Confucian thought doubtlessly influenced Tokugawa Japan on many levels, it is highly doubtful that they possessed a monopoly position and could have thus become the official state doctrine. The core statement of this view is that Neo-Confucianism in no way took on a primary importance at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, as opposed to the enormous contributions made by the state to Buddhism and Shintô. This assertion stands in stark contrast to the general theory that Ieyasu consciously sought to create a bridge to Neo-Confucianism by appointing Hayashi Razan to the civil service. According to Ooms, Razan spent his entire life fighting to secure his position as a teacher, and it was only in his biography, which was compiled by his sons, that his position was exaggerated and the fiction of the *bakufu*'s supposed support for Neo-Confucian ideology was created. This served, Ooms writes, to secure the position of the Hayashi family both retroactively and for the future, and was consistently continued by students of the Hayashi School.

However, Ooms states that the increasing importance of this ideology in the government cannot be denied, although its establishment was not »an event but a process,« (Ooms 1984: 36). Only one purely ideological document appears to have been commissioned directly by the *bakufu*: the so-called »testament« of Tokugawa Ieyasu.³⁵ Although this document portrays Ieyasu's rule as the embodiment of the Confucian concept of the Way of Heaven (*tendô*), he does not appear to be an absolute ruler, but rather, a person who acts with duty and loyalty to the *tendô*. The warriors support his rule, drawing their motivation from the Buddhist concept of »mercy« (*jihî*) and the Shintô concept of »straightforwardness, honesty« (*shôjiki*, see discussion below).

Ooms states that over the course of the social developments of the early Edo period, first the ruling class, then the social order and finally the people were accorded a cosmological and religious importance that consisted of various elements of Buddhism, Shintô and folk religion, as well as Neo-Confucianism. The

³⁵ *Tôshôgû goikun* = NKB 8, 1910-1911: 252-342; cf. Ooms 1985: 66.

latter, however, took on a position that was anything but dominant, and in fact this process represented the utilization of heterogeneous elements with the purpose of constructing a cohesive social system. The »social ideology« applied exclusively to the ruling class. According to Ooms, this was not merely a matter of exchanging one ideology for another, but rather of the first appearance of ideology in Japanese history, the »beginning of ideology.«

The goal of any ideology, Ooms states, is to obscure the true reasons for a given group's claim to power and to establish the aspired-to or already realized new order as a »natural« order. »Both Shinto and Neo-Confucianism made available a language that could perform this task,« (Ooms 1984: 57).

Thus, none of the spiritual systems enjoyed the exclusive support of the *bakufu* during the Tokugawa period. In order to avoid going underground, like the Christians, for example, many groups vied for the favor of the *bakufu*.

»From beginning to end, the *bakufu* was never at a loss for volunteers, ready to purvey teachings speaking eloquently about man and society (but keeping silent about power) in a way most inoffensive to its own interests.« (Ooms 1984: 61)

Without discussing Ooms's work in full detail, it can be noted that his research shows that Edo period Shintô plays a far greater role in understanding the Tokugawa state than the generally accepted opinion, which focussed nearly exclusively on Buddhism and Confucianism, as until recently suggested, without questioning the role of Shintô in this context.

2. 1. 1. *The deification of the »unifiers of Japan« and the Tôshôgû in Nikkô*

As Bitô Masahide (1991: 393-395) writes, the practice of deifying people as *kami*, which emerged in the late Muromachi period, represented a significant innovation in the world of religion. The enshrining of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1599 as Toyokuni daimyôjin in a shrine that was built in his honor in Kyôto can be seen as a key event in this development.³⁶ Before that time, historical figures (for example, Ôjin-tennô, Sugawara Michizane, etc.) were in fact worshipped at certain shrines. However, there was no precedent that a person who had died under normal circumstances, was deified according to his own wishes, and what is more, that this happened so soon after his death. According to Bitô, this event can be explained by the religious conditions of the time, which effectively recognized

³⁶ For an introduction to Toyokuni Shrine, cf. Hiraoka 1991: 195-221.

kami and Buddhas (*hotoke*) as ultimately being identical, regardless of their different names.

This view was shared by Ryôbu Shintô as well as its counterpart, Yoshida Shintô, which viewed Buddhist figures as being of secondary importance (see chapter II: 2. 1. 2. 3), and it was additionally supported by the fact that Buddhist priests often also performed tasks in shrine rituals. Thus, it could no longer be seen as especially unusual that a prominent figure was more likely to become a *kami* than a *hotoke* after death.

The teachings and rituals of Yoshida Shintô, which will be examined in the following, doubtlessly contributed to the fact that an only recently deceased person could be considered a *kami*. On the other hand, according to Bitô (l.c.), there are also convincing reasons from Hideyoshi's perspective why he should prefer to become a *kami* rather than a *hotoke* after his death. As the founder of a new house, it was crucially important to Hideyoshi to create his own house *ujigami*, comparable to Hachiman, who protected the Minamoto/Genji and the Ashikaga. Furthermore, he could more directly protect his new house, which was constantly under threat, as a *kami* than as a *hotoke*, whose power in this world would be very limited. According to Bitô, these circumstances led to the construction of a new shrine dedicated to the house of Toyotomi.

Ooms (1985: 45ff.) also points out the fact that Hideyoshi wanted to ensure that his power was secured through religious authority; he called Japan the »land of the gods« and institutionalized Shintô for the sake of elevating his power to a spiritual level. Shintô became an equivalent for what Nobunaga had found in the term *tenka* (Ooms 1985: 46). Hideyoshi accorded a high importance to visiting the shrines at Ise and gave the shrines financial support, making it possible to resume the traditional renovations of the shrine buildings every 20 years, which had not been able to be carried out for a period of 120 years due to wartime disturbances.³⁷ He also had a shrine built for himself posthumously in the vicinity of the Hôkôji, which was to serve as a symbol of his divine power.

According to Bitô (l.c.), the general religious attitudes of the time had advanced so much that the practice of deifying people could be accepted. The enshrining of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Tôshôgû in Nikkô³⁸, which will be discussed in the following, represented a high point of this religious trend, although since the 17th century not only important political figures, but also people of more

³⁷ On the cyclical renovations at Ise Shrine, cf. Bock 1974; Tokoro 1973, among others; cf. Ooms 1985: 49.

³⁸ For an introduction to the Tôshôgû in Nikkô and the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu, cf. Boot 1987; Schurhammer 1923: 117-194, among others.

modest station were worshipped as *kami*. Daimyô, Shintô theologians such as Yamazaki Ansai (see below), and people who had performed a noble deed were often deified after death, and even during their lifetime. In this area, links between religious and general social developments in the 17th century are apparent. For example, the practice of following one's master into death by committing suicide (*junshi*) became prevalent, and the wave of double-suicides (*shinjû*) among the bourgeoisie in the late 17th century are also relevant in this context. Both phenomena were based on the assumption that one could attain after death what one had been denied in life, a concept that also formed the basis of the practice of enshrining people as *kami*.

As was previously noted, the Tokugawa masterfully used the religious situation of the time to secure and legitimize their newly acquired power. The worship of the founder of the house, Tokugawa Ieyasu, is especially significant in this context. This practice was strongly influenced by Ieyasu's grandson Iemitsu.

Iemitsu had previously expanded the basis of his power by a significant measure: he bound the Daimyô even more tightly to himself through the *sankin-kôtai* system, and thus effectively gained control over them. Finally, he also effected the break with Kyôto and made the *bakufu* the sole autonomous center of power in Japan. He introduced the policy of isolation (*sakoku*) and ruled Japan like a king. As his most important measure, he forced the deification of Ieyasu as the »holy founder of Japan,« and thus justified his own authority as a direct descendant of this »holy founder.« In 1634 Iemitsu initiated the alteration of the shrine to Ieyasu in Nikkô into a grandiose mausoleum, the result of which was »that he converted his political mandate into a sacred one, linking his rule to that of an ancestral divine lord. It was from this time on that Ieyasu came to be referred to officially as *shinkun*, divine ruler,« (Ooms 1985: 57).³⁹

As Sugiyama Rinkei writes (Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 16; cf. Antoni 1997b: 179ff.), Ieyasu was first buried at Kunô-zan after his death in the year Genna 2 (1616), and a mausoleum was built in front of his grave. The burial ceremonies are said to have been arranged by the influential monk Bonshun (1553-1631) according to Yuiitsu-Shintô of the Yoshida School. Bonshun was also responsible for altering Ieyasu's genealogy while he was still alive, connecting his house to that of the Minamoto and thus genealogically qualifying him for the position of the Shôgun (cf. Kracht 1986: 143). Although Bonshun was a Buddhist monk, as the son of Yoshida Kanemigi and brother of Kanemi, then head of the Yoshida house as well as the tradition of Yuiitsu or Yoshida Shintô (see discussion below),

³⁹ See also Boot 1987 and 1991; Hiraoka 1991.

he was also well versed in the matters of Shintô.⁴⁰ Most of the editorial works of Bonshun can be found today in the collection of the Yoshida house, Yoshida-bunkô, Tenri Library (cf. Inoue 1994: 530). Together with Kanemi, he had previously built the shrine for the deceased Toyotomi Hideyoshi (Hôkoku-sha, or Tôyôkuni-jinja), which was designed in the tradition of Yoshida Shintô, and carried out his funeral according to the Yoshida Shintô ceremony.

Due to internal power struggles, however, a mausoleum for Ieyasu was built in Nikkô and his coffin was finally transferred there, with the Tendai monk Jigen Daishi Tenkai (1536-1643)⁴¹, who belonged to the Sannô (Ichijitsu) School of Shintô⁴², responsible for the burial rituals. As Seckel (1943: 66) writes, however, there were also »close personal connections between Yoshida and Nikkô,« despite the dominant position of the Tendai/Sannô priest Tenkai. This mausoleum to Ieyasu was ultimately given the »divine name« (*shingô*) of Tôshô-dai-gongen by the imperial household, and an imperial envoy was present at the solemn ceremony of the *shôsengû*, the ceremonial enshrining of the main shrine, in the fourth month of the year Genna 3 (1617).

Tenkai had reinterpreted the teachings of Buddhist Sannô Shintô into a doctrine that reversed the original relationship between Buddhist original reality (*honji*) and the manifested traces (*suijaku*; cf. Ooms 1985: 175). This axiomatic approach had already been taken by Yoshida Shintô since the beginning of the late Kamakura period. Tenkai, who had previously been an advisor to Ieyasu (cf. Kracht 1986: 121), now implemented this approach in the Sannô School and made Amaterasu a *honji*. Ieyasu was thus elevated to a reincarnation (*gongen*) of the ancestral deity of the imperial household. Ieyasu's posthumous divine name, Tôshô, meaning »(Ama) terasu of the East,« was also an indication of this.

2. 1. 1. 1. Sannô-Ichijitsu Shintô and Miwa (-ryû) Shintô

According to Sugahara Shinkai's research (1996), there is a clear distinction between the medieval school of Sannô Shintô and the school of Sannô Ichijitsu Shintô founded by Tenkai. As Bernhard Scheid remarks in his introduction to Sugahara's work (1996: 61f.),

⁴⁰ Cf. Taira 1972: 519-522; Itô Akira: »Bonshun« in: Inoue 1994: 530-531. On Yoshida Shintô in general cf. Scheid 2001.

⁴¹ On Tenkai, cf. Sugahara 1996: 64, note 2, among others.

⁴² On Sannô (Ichijitsu-) Shintô, cf. Naumann 1994: 10, 76, 99; Ômori 1992: 164-167. For a thorough discussion of the topic, cf. Sonehara 1991; see also Grapard 1983-86.

»Sannô Shinto developed out of the Tendai sect's efforts to integrate the Japanese *kami* into Buddhist worldview; [...] Sannô Ichijitsu Shinto, in contrast, was formulated in the early Edo period and was centered at Tôshôgû. [...] Although based on the same Tendai thought as Sannô Shinto, Sannô Ichijitsu Shinto was, Sugahara argues, a highly political religious system designed to legitimize and stabilize the rule of the Tokugawa house.«

In his writings, Sugahara traces the teachings of Sannô Ichijitsu Shintô particularly to the main work of Tenkai, *Tôshô daigongen engi* (*mana*), or *Mana engi*, which was compiled around the year 1635⁴³ and formulates this Shintô doctrine based on the teachings of Tendai. The goal of these teachings is clearly the religious legitimation of the power of the Tokugawa house (cf. Sugahara 1996: 74ff.). Like the worship of Fujiwara no Kamatari (614-669), the progenitor of the Fujiwara house who is worshipped at Tonomine Shrine, Ieyasu also became a divine protector of his house. Tenkai writes in the first section of his *Mana engi*:

»Tôshô Daigongen, [a deity] of the Proper First Court rank, reveals himself. He knows the way of peace and tranquility in this world and of enlightenment in the life to come. For the prosperity of the Tokugawa house and the eternal benefit of the people, you must by all means guard Sannô Shintô and not combine it with any other doctrine. Instead you must imitate the etiquette of Tô-no-mine, then your descendants will prosper.« (Sugahara 1996: 75; JDZ 1: 12).

Furthermore, a close analysis of the burial ceremonies for Ieyasu reveals a surprising reference to other forms of medieval Shintô-Buddhist syncretism, which would hardly be expected to appear in this context. Sugahara shows that the deceased Ieyasu was directly compared by ceremonial means to the figure of the emperor in order to religiously legitimate the rule of the Tokugawa house. Ritual elements play a central role in this context. Although there is no evidence of such elements within the Tendai Buddhist ritual tradition, they do exist within the Mikkyô School of Shingon Buddhism. Within syncretistic Shingon Ryôbu Shintô, Sugahara (1996: 81) sees the closest parallels in Miwa(ryû) Shintô, a school that dates back to ancient Japan. According to him, the arrangements for Ieyasu's burial thus show »a great familiarity on Tenkai's part with the Miwa-Ryû ritual. [...] That Sannô Shinto took an interest in the Miwa-ryû Shinto transmitted at the shrine of Ômiwa is certain.« This echoes medieval Shintô-Buddhist syncretism, extending beyond the narrow denominational borders of the Tendai and Shingon teachings. The syncretistic tradition of Mount Miwa in Yamato provides the best proof of this.

⁴³ For a discussion of the exact date of writing, cf. Sugahara 1996: 69f.

2. 1. 1. 2. *Excursus: on the history of the jingûji of Miwa*⁴⁴

Mount Miwa is up to the very day one of the holiest places all over Japan. At the spot where the Yamato plain suddenly turns into a gently rounded mountain range, a single, thickly forested mountain rises above the rest, standing out due to its nearly perfectly conical shape. This is Mount Miwa, also called Mimoro or Mimuro,⁴⁵ today part of the city of Sakurai in Nara Prefecture. Centers of worship have existed here since ancient times, as archeological studies have shown, although the details of their origins are lost in the darkness of prehistory (cf. Antoni 1993a, 1995c).⁴⁶ In the Japanese Middle Ages, this was the religious and theological center of the syncretistic teachings of Miwa, or Miwa(-ryû) Shintô. As a variant of Ryôbu Shintô, which is based on the Mikkyô School, i.e. Shingon Buddhism, Miwa theology identified the mountain and its deity with the sun goddess Amaterasu, calling the two »one body« (*ittai*). Together they represent manifestations of the Great Buddha of Light, Dainichinyorai (sk. Mahāvairocana), who is regarded as the main Buddha (*honzon*) according to Mikkyô doctrine. This idea is closely related to the teachings of Ise Shintô. Its dual aspects, the Diamond World (*kongôkai*) and the Womb Realm (*taizôkai*), were thus manifest in Mount Miwa as the *shintai* (-*yama*) of the Dainichinyorai: the *kongôkai* in the south side, and the *taizôkai* in the north side, while the geographic characteristics of the mountain were said to embody tantric ritual objects.⁴⁷

However, the history of Buddhism and the *jingûji* of Miwa does not begin with medieval Miwa Shintô, but rather stretches back to the early days of the Japanese state. As the history of the shrine published by Ômiwa-jinja states, the existence of the first »shrine temple«, *jingûji*, of Miwa, Ômiwa-dera, can be confirmed by first-hand accounts as well as archaeological finds dating back to the early Nara period (cf. OJ 1975: 223f.). This temple still existed during the Heian period, but it appears to have declined in the early Kamakura period. The re-founding of the temple is accredited to the famous monk Eison (1201-1290), posthumously called Kôshô-bosatsu, who is said to have been responsible for many (re-) foundings of temples in Yamato. In the year Kôan 8 (1285), he renamed the

⁴⁴ For this section see also Antoni 1993a and 1995c.

⁴⁵ Cf. OJ 1975: 75-80, 650, with analysis of the *Manyôshû* verses 2472 (Mimuro) and 2512 (Mimoro); see also the article by Kanda Hideo: »'Mimuro' to 'Mimoro'« in OJ 1968-91, Volume 3: 852-855; Antoni 1988: 79.

⁴⁶ Cf. OJ 1975, chapter 1: 3-30; OJ 1968-91, Volume 3, chapter 3: 727-923, with a total of 23 articles on Miwa archaeology.

⁴⁷ Sources on Miwa Shintô in OJ 1968-91, Volumes 2, 5, 6, 10 (cf. OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 131-144); Ueda 1989: 93-134 (Chapter II: »*Miwa-ryû Shintô ki*«). See also OJ 1968-91, Volume 3, chapter 4 (p. 925-1026); Abe 1984-85; Kubota 1968-91; OJ 1975: 232-244 and chapters 7 and 8 *passim*.

temple Daigorinji. Accounts of the founding of the temple can be found in the Kamakura-period work *Miwa daimyôjin engi* from the year Bumpô 2 (1318).⁴⁸

However, such legends were still based on Buddhist teachings at the time. According to this tradition, the crown prince Shôtoku once found the statue of the eleven-headed Kannon in the main building, which has been the temple's *honzon* ever since (cf. OJ 1975: 225). Although this legend has no claim to historic factuality, it provides a religious explanation of the origin of the first *jingûji* of Miwa.

The same Eison who is said to be responsible for the re-founding of the temple studied at the temples of Kôya-san, Tôdaiji (Nara), Daigoji (Kyôto), and finally Saidaiji (Nara).⁴⁹ Eison spent long periods of his later life in Miwa, which explains his deep connection to the place.⁵⁰ According to the legend of the shrine, he finally came to the realization of the unity of Amaterasu ômikami and the deity of Miwa while on a pilgrimage to Ise-jingû.⁵¹ Eison is said to be the founder of the Ritsu school of Shingon (Shingon Risshû), and he re-founded the Saidaiji, which was once one of the »seven temples of Nara« (cf. Kaneko 1987: passim), as its main temple. As a result of this, the Daigorinji was also incorporated into this school and remained a branch temple (*matsuji*) of the Saidaiji until the Meiji Restoration.

The history of the *jingûji* of Miwa is made considerably more complicated by the fact that nearly simultaneously to Eison, a further important Buddhist teacher was active who had a lasting influence on the syncretistic development of Miwa: Kyôen (?-1223), the »Saint of Miwa,« Miwa shônin.⁵² The earliest accounts of Kyôen are found in a work compiled by one of his students in the year Kenchô 7 (1255), the *Miwa shônin gyôjô*, shortly after Kyôen's death (cf. OJ 1975: 226f.). All later accounts of Kyôen are based on this source.⁵³

⁴⁸ See the text in OJ 1968-91, Volume 2: 1133-1138; Ueda 1989: 95-103; OJ 1928: 12-21. Cf. Kubota 1968-91: 974, 980.

⁴⁹ On the life and work of Eison, cf. Kaneko 1987: 75-192.

⁵⁰ Cf. OJ 1975: 225; Kubota 1968-91: 975f. In the biography of Eison by Kaneko (1987), however, which reflects the current view of the Saidaiji, this fact is astonishingly nowhere to be found.

⁵¹ Cf. *Miwa-Daimyôjin engi* (Ueda et al. 1989: 95ff.); OJ 1975: 230.

⁵² On Kyôen, cf. Kubota 1968-91: 972ff.; OJ 1975: 226ff. OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 10. The fact that Ponsoby-Fane mixes up the mythologies of Eison and Kyôen and accredits them entirely to Eison and the Daigorinji, for example, shows how confusing the situation can be even to those familiar with the material. This may have merely been a mistake, but due to the reasons outlined below, it cannot be ruled out that the author, an eminent expert on both historical and contemporary Shintô, intentionally combined the two branches of the mythology in order to wipe out all memory of the Byôdôji.

⁵³ Cf. the work *Miwa-san Byôdôji chûkôso Kyôen-shônin betsuden* (OJ 1968-91, Volume 6: 652-666) from the year Genroku 15 (1702).

Kyôen is said to have come from Chinzei (i.e. Kyûshû). His date of birth is unknown, but it is estimated to lie between 1140 and 1150, based on various sources. After traveling through Yamato for many years, during which time he studied the Daihannyakyô, he arrived at Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine and finally in Miwa, where he found enlightenment (*reikô*) and developed his own teachings. Kyôen is considered by many specialists to be the true founder of Miwa Shintô.⁵⁴ He built a Buddhist seminary and monastery (*dôjô*) in order to spread his syncretistic teachings, which were based on Mikkyô-Shingon. The monastery was given the name Miwa-besshō, which was recorded in 1233, but was soon also known by the name Byôdôji, first mentioned in 1236. The temple flourished and surpassed the Daigorinji around the end of the Kamakura period. In the Muromachi period the temple fell under the control of the Kôfukuji in Nara, but also maintained close ties to the Daigoji in Kyôto (cf. OJ 1975: 229-229; Yoshida 1991: 36.).

This double alignment finally led to a split among the temple's priests into two groups, one aligned with the Kôfukuji (*gakushû*), and the other (*zenshû*) with the Daigoji, or, more precisely the Sampôin, a sub-temple of the Daigoji. Beginning in the middle of the Muromachi period, the *zenshû* side became increasingly influential. This fact is of great importance in the present discussion, since the Daigoji, the main temple of the Shingon-Daigo School and the eleventh station on the pilgrimage route of western Japan (Kami Daigoji)⁵⁵, was a religious center for the movement that was later subjected to intense persecution during the Meiji period, namely the religion of the mountain ascetics, or *shugendô*. For this reason, aside from its connection to the Kôfukuji, the Byôdôji of Miwa has also been known primarily as the center of *shugendô*. It was here, on the holy Mount Miwa, that the Yamabushi performed their rituals on their way to the mountain regions in the south (Ômine, Kimpusen).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Cf. Abe 1984-85; OJ 1968-91, Volume 3: 1000. Kubota (1968-91: 975f.) argues more cautiously.

⁵⁵ Cf. the remarks to this temple in Hirakata 1992: 82-87.

⁵⁶ Cf. OJ 1975: 229; Maruko (undated); Yoshida 1991: 36. The Byôdôji, a Sôtô Zen temple that was re-founded in 1977, emphasizes this aspect in the history of the historical Byôdôji above all others. The former *honzon* of the Byôdôji, an impressive Fudô myôdô statue, is especially significant in this context in order to understand this once largest *jingûji* of Miwa that, however, seems to have fallen completely out of favor over the course of history. In no other religious group is the tradition of the Fudô myôdô of greater importance than in *shugendô*. The first Christian missionaries saw the Yamabushi as »followers of the devil,« an expression that was likely inspired by their fearsome Fudô statues. En no Gyôja, the legendary father of *shugendô*, was considered by his followers to be an incarnation of the Fudô myôdô. Since the Kamakura period, two schools have existed: one group close to the Tendai sect (*konzanryû*), and the other close to the Shingon sect (*tôzanryû*), which worshipped in the mountains of Yamato and Kii. The Yamabushi, who dealt with healing the sick, exorcism and other magical practices, suffered greatly under the religious policy of the Meiji period, since their syncretistic beliefs and practices, which were largely based on Shingon,

As the »History of Ômiwa-jinja« (OJ 1975) states in a single sentence, the Byôdôji separated from the Kôfukuji in Nara during the Edo period, turned to the teachings of Shingon and practiced the way of *shugendô* (OJ 1975: 229). This statement, which could not be more succinct, tells us that the temple was from then on no less than a center of *shugendô*.

This appears to be the true key to understanding the question of why the Byôdôji, which was once the largest *jinguji* of Miwa, was so completely wiped out in the course of the destruction wrought during the *shinbutsu-bunri* period of the early Meiji era (see discussion below). While the philosophical Miwa Shintô of the Japanese Middle Ages, which is symbolized in the statue of the eleven-headed Kannon at the Daigorinji, is a focus of great interest even in current studies, there is hardly any mention of the other side of the syncretism of Miwa, namely, mountain worship, Yamabushi and organized *shugendô*, as can be seen in the terrifying figure of Fudô myôdô.

A study published in 1984 by Allan G. Grapard shows the far-reaching effects that the *shinbutsu-bunri* decree of the Meiji Restoration had on this former center of *shugendô* in the case of Tônomine (Tanzan Shrine; see chapter III: 2. 2). Since close historical and intellectual ties between Miwa and Tônomine existed, this aspect is of great importance in the present context of the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu. As became evident in the previously discussed writings of Tenkai, the relationship to Tônomine played an important role already in his thoughts on the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu, just as important as the equating of Ieyasu with Amaterasu, the ancestor and patron saint of the imperial house. These Shintô-Buddhist speculations, which can be traced back to the religious thought of the Japanese Middle Ages, can hardly be forced into dogmatic categories of religious denomination. All too often, such religious speculations served the greater purpose of legitimating the right to rule, as was the case of the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu postulated by Tenkai. Nikkô, as the site of the deified ancestor of the Tokugawa shoguns, served a similar purpose to that of Ise, the resting place of the divine ancestors of the imperial family. The gradual replacement of Ise by Nikkô took place in the mid-1640s, and in 1645 the highest rank of *gû* was awarded to the shrine by the emperor, which placed it on the same level as the shrines at Ise, and imperial visits to Nikkô became a regular occasion. Thus a new center of religious authority emerged that was seen as a visible sign of the legiti-

Taoism and folk religion, did not coincide with organized state worship. In 1870 *shugendô* was legally classified under Buddhism, and on October 17 (Gregorian calendar: September 15), 1872, it was finally forbidden as an independent religious group by state decree. According to the decree, the schools of *shugendô* were »returned to the two main sects of Tendai and Shingon by the highest orders,« (cf. Lokowandt 1978: 297-298, Document 59). Cf. Antoni 1993 a: 37f.

mation of the Tokugawa. Ritual was the most important means by which the Tokugawa sought to legitimize their rule.⁵⁷

Thus, two of the most important Shintô schools of medieval syncretism, Sannô Ichijitsu Shintô and Yoshida (or Yuiitsu) Shintô (see discussion below), stood at the beginning of the formation of the system of rule that was specific to the Edo period. And despite the fact that Shintô at the time was deeply rooted in the world of Buddhist syncretism, the various schools of Shintô now also turned toward the doctrine that later became part of the religious and ideological foundation of the Tokugawa system: Neo-Confucianism. Before further examining the content and theology of this connection, however, we will first discuss a few important points about the political, social and organizational reality of Shintô in the early Edo period.

2. 1. 2. *The system of shrines and priests*

In the early Edo period, a general shift from Buddhist to Confucian principles and education took place in Japan, though not to the exclusion of Buddhism and Shintô (cf. Hall 1968: 180f.; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994). While Shintô supported local connections among the people, the state found Buddhism to be an ideal means for monitoring the people. At new temples in Edo (e.g. the Kan'ei-ji in Ueno) and in the castle towns of the Daimyô, Buddhism was mainly responsible for carrying out the rites of passage associated with births, marriages and burials. This exclusive support was a result of the *bakufu's* anti-Christian policy, the central point of which was the universal duty to register (*terauke*) at a temple (*dannaji*). In 1640 an edict was issued that made registration at a temple as well as an annual test of belief (*shûmon-aratame*) mandatory, ensuring the formal dependence of the Japanese people on Buddhist rituals. Shintô fit seamlessly into this system. The connections between individuals and the community were strengthened by a hierarchical network of shrines, headed by the emperor, who, as the highest Shintô priest, carried out the worship of the ancestral deity of the imperial house in Ise. Similarly, the Samurai worshipped their ancestors at their local shrines, and the lower classes worshipped at their own local tutelary shrines.

Bitô Masahide (1991: 387) illuminates some basic characteristics of the religious development of the shrine system in the late Japanese Middle Ages. He sees the rise of the local tutelary deities (*ujigami*) as the focus of religious life in small

⁵⁷ »The ritual and religious devices the Tokugawa manipulated exacted a religious awe, an experience of the sublime,« (Ooms 1985: 185).

regional communities, such as agricultural towns, as the most important feature of this development. *Ujigami* protected the members of these communities.

The local *ujigami*, which emerged in the 15th and 16th centuries, thus differed from those of ancient times in the fact that they were independent of specific familial groups and functioned solely as the tutelary deities of territorial groups (Bitô 1991: 388). However, according to Bitô, it is still unclear why a term that originally referred to the deity of a blood-related group could now be used for a locally or regionally worshipped deity.⁵⁸ The *ujigami*'s community was made up of various *ujiko* (Bitô 1991: 390), a connection that is strongly reminiscent of the parent-child relationship and lays the foundation for the concept of the exclusive connection between *ujigami* and *ujiko*.

Ujigami were enshrined in a *yashiro*, a word that originally meant a place with a temporary altar for the worship of the *kami*, since the deities' permanent place of residence was not in the town, but rather usually in the mountains, and they were only occasionally summoned into the town.

According to Bitô, it is difficult to determine when the towns began to build shrines as permanent residences for the *kami*. It is possible that this occurred during times of economic hardship. Permanent shrines were built on a large scale probably over the course of the 16th century, and even earlier in the Kinki region. Large communities called *sôsho* existed there, which often encompassed an entire *shôen* and emerged as early as the 13th century.

Permanent shrines were built at an early date for the *sôsho-ujigami* (Bitô 1991: 391). Furthermore, groups of *bushi* and small landowners who worshipped at the shrine, called *miyaza*, were connected to these shrines.⁵⁹

Although the *sôsho* disappeared in the 16th century as a result of the end of the *shôen* system, the town remained the fundamental unit of social organization. This political development influenced the area of religion by shifting the sphere of the *ujigami* and the *miyaza* from the *sôsho* communities to the villages.

This same development also occurred in the major urban areas. Instead of a communal structure that encompassed the entire city, neighborhoods (*chô* or *machi*) emerged as the centers of social life, and several of these *chô* worshipped a common *ujigami*.

In many ways, the development of the *ujigami* resembled that of Buddhist temples. However, each temple required a head priest, while it was the *miyaza* who organized ceremonies at the shrines. Even the position of the *kannushi* often

⁵⁸ See also the discussion on *ujigami* in Naumann 1994: 161f., 172f.

⁵⁹ Cf. Naumann (1994: 155f., 161, 206f., 231) on the medieval *miyaza*.

rotated among members of the community, and only in the case of shrines of a certain size and complexity were head priests employed.

However, the emergence of head priests across Japan brought with it the need for a superior authority to control them (cf. Bitô 1991: 392). The Yoshida family, whose main stronghold was Yoshida Shrine in Kyôto, provided a convenient doctrine in this context, namely Yoshida or Yuiitsu Shintô (see chapter II: 2. 1. 2. 3), and thus achieved a significant measure of influence over the administration of shrines throughout the country. Founded by Yoshida Kanetomo (1453-1511), Yoshida Shintô functioned as an authority in questions of the correct execution of shrine ceremonies as well as the appointment of priests. The Yoshida awarded titles and ranks to shrines, and were thus able to bring the majority of shrine authorities throughout the country under their control between the 16th and 17th centuries.

Though they originally lacked any special characteristics, beginning in the 18th century it became common for the local *ujigami* shrines to be seen as branch shrines of a few large, national shrines, for example, the Hachiman, Inari and Tenjin shrines. In most cases, however, this connection had little effect on the actual worship of *ujigami*.

2. 1. 2. 1. *The administration of shrines under the baku-han system*

The Kanbun era (1661-73) during the rule of the fourth Shôgun, Ietsuna, is particularly remarkable in regard to the administration of the shrines (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 15). The »Decree on Shrines and Priests« (*Shosha negi kannushi hatto*)⁶⁰, which was issued in July of the year Kanbun 5 (1665), is especially relevant in this context, and states:

»1. The priests (*negi* and *kannushi*) of the various shrines are to study (*manabu*) exclusively the way of the gods of heaven and earth (*jingidô*) and gain true knowledge of their honorable heavenly being (»divine body,« *shintai*). They are to carry out the traditional holy ceremonies (*shinji*) and festival rituals (*sairai*). Whoever shows himself to be neglectful of these regulations will be divested of his position as priest.

2. Hereditary families of priests of noble rank, that is, those families who have served as *densô* [also: *tensô*⁶¹] since ancient times, are to be promoted in rank and are responsible for carrying out [these rules].

⁶⁰ Text in Ishii 1959: 6-7 (= *Tokugawa kinrei kô*, Volume 5, chapter 40/44, Number 2545); Itô Akira provides an annotated transcription in modern Japanese (in: Inoue 1994: 116-117); cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 15.

⁶¹ Noblemen who, among other things, maintained relations between the court and the shrines; cf. Meyer 1998.

3. Shrine priests (*shajin*) without rank are to wear white robes. All others may wear the official robes only with the written permission of the Yoshida.⁶²

4. Shrine estates may neither be sold nor purchased. Furthermore, they also may not be mortgaged.

5. In the case of minor damage to the shrines, the appropriate repairs are always to be carried out according to custom. Furthermore, the shrines are to always be kept clean.

The above paragraphs are to be strictly followed. Violations are to be reported according to the severity of the case.«

This directive was sent to every shrine in the country as well as the individual domains (*han*). It was also given to the Yoshida family, to whom the *bakufu* had awarded the position of governor of shrine affairs (*jingi kanrei shiki*).⁶³

On the other hand, there were also significant movements against these measures in several domains (*han*).⁶⁴ In 1666 (Kanbun 6) Tokugawa Mitsukuni subsequently called for the destruction of all newly built Buddhist temples – 997 in all – in his territories, but ordered the older temples to be renovated. Long before the Meiji government took similar measures in 1868, he enforced the separation of shrines and temples (*shinbutsu-bunri*) in his domain and decreed that only one tutelary shrine per town be allowed (*ichigô issha* system). In Aizu-han a *Jisha engi* totaling 24 volumes was compiled in the year Kanbun 4 (1664), four volumes of which were devoted to the shrines. The reorganization of the temples and shrines in this domain was carried out based on this registry (*jisha-seiri*). As was the case in Mito, here too temples built in the previous twenty years were torn down in 1666. The influential feudal lord Hoshina Masayuki (1611-1672) was a central figure in these measures. In Okayama-han (domain) too, Ikeda Mitsumasa decreed that shrines and temples with »questionable beliefs« (*inshi*) be destroyed in the fifth month of the same year. In the year Kanbun 7 (1667), more than 10,000 shrines were reportedly torn down in the entire region in the wake of the »one town, one shrine« (*ichigô-issha*) rule, with only 601 shrines remaining. By enforcing the *ichigô-issha* system and thus revoking the custom of Buddhist temple registration (*terauke*) in his domain, he also allowed the mandatory »confirmations of

⁶² This means that the Yoshida themselves awarded the rank, since the robe was a symbol of this rank.

⁶³ This so-called »shrine regulation« (*jinja no jômoku*) was first given to the Yoshida Family by the *bakufu* as a »written confirmation with the red seal of the shôgun« (*shuinjô*) together with the »confirmation of the *bakufu* regarding the estates (fiefs) of the Yoshida family« (*Yoshida-ke ryôchi shuinjô*) in the year Jôkyô 2 (1685) and again in the years Kyôhō 4 (1719), Enkyô 4 (1747), Hôreki 12 (1762), Temmei 8 (1788), Tempô 10 (1839) and Ansei 2 (1855). Cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 15.

⁶⁴ In Mito-han, for example, a »Registry of temple foundings in Mito« (*Mito-kaiki-chô*) in 15 volumes was compiled, two volumes of which were dedicated to the local tutelary deities (*chinju-kaiki-chô*).

belief,« which were otherwise administered by Buddhist priests, to be given by Shintô priests. Furthermore, he recommended Shintô burials. In the year Kanbun 9 (1669), for example, a total of 97.5% of the deceased in this *han* were reportedly buried according to the Shintô tradition. However, these movements only had a temporary influence on the neighboring domains. Hoshina Masayuki died in 1672, and Mito (Tokugawa) Mitsukuni as well as Mitsumasa stepped down. This meant that the *terauke* system once again applied as required by the *bakufu*.

However, the *shinbutsu-bunri* policy of the Kanbun era (1661-1673) also continued to be upheld at some shrines, such as Kitsuki Shrine in Izumo (today: Izumo-taisha), as well as Sata Shrine and Miho Shrine in the domain of Matsue, among others. The number of shrines and temples also declined due to the financial state of the *han*.

While the *terauke* system in several influential *han*, such as Okayama, was temporarily suspended, as described above, over the course of the Genroku period (1688-1704), the *bakufu* generally strengthened its support of the Buddhist temples (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994).

2. 1. 2. 2. *The control of the shrine priests by the Yoshida family*

The Yoshida family, which was responsible for administering Yuiitsu (Yoshida) Shintô, had issued confirmations and appointments to the regional shrine priests (*shinshoku*) since the Japanese Middle Ages (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 16). During the Edo period, the Yoshida strove to form this rule into a monopoly by virtue of the authority of the *bakufu*, but was always rebuffed by the family's opponents, such as the Shirakawa family and other families of the court nobility (*kuge*).⁶⁵

The means used by the Yoshida for maintaining control over the individual regions included, for example, periodic visits (*kaison*, »traveling through the villages«) to the local shrines (*kunikakari-yaku*) of the provinces by a representative of the Yoshida house. Additionally, priests underwent practical training under the direction of the Yoshida during their stays in Kyôto regarding their duties at the shrines. Finally, in the year Kansei 3 (1792), the Yoshida family also established a

⁶⁵ As Naumann (1994: 71 and 72) points out, Yoshida Kanetomo had strengthened his family's power and prestige »primarily at the expense of the Shirakawa family, who were still responsible for the actual administration of the Office of Shintô Worship (*jingikan*). Therefore, Kanetomo began to appoint regional shrine officials, award the shrines ranks, and to allow certain robes to be worn. [...] Ultimately, in 1596 the Yoshida succeeded in gaining permission – in competition with the Shirakawa – to build the *hasshinden*, the hall for the eight gods of the Office of Shintô Worship, on the grounds of their shrine.« On Yoshida Kanetomo cf. Scheid 2001: 108ff.

branch of their office in Edo in order to process applications for the appointment of priests from the eastern provinces. Additionally, the »Office of Theology« (*shingaku-shitsu*) was also opened in Edo, which employed a total of 40 officials at the time of the Tempô reform in 1842. Among others, there was another such office in Ôsaka.

Unlike the Yoshida family, the Shirakawa family, which belonged to the nobility, appears not to have dealt intensively with the regional shrines and priests at the beginning of the Tokugawa period. Rather, the Shirakawa appear to have maintained contact with the priests associated with the *jingikan*, the focus of which were the »twenty-two shrines« (*nijûni-sha*)⁶⁶, and played their role as noblemen with close ties to the emperor. However, the Shirakawa also attempted, through the practice of *kaison*, to gain control at least of the priests in Yamato Province, thus expanding their area of rule compared to the Yoshida.

Furthermore, there was yet another family, the Tsuchimikado, who awarded licenses to local priests, and some large regional shrines also awarded letters of appointment to their priests. Shrines such as the two Ise shrines, Kashima Shrine and Katori Shrine, among others, were governed by a total of nearly 100 hereditary priest families (*shake*), and these shrines regulated their own systems over many generations.

2. 1. 2. 3. *The further development of Yoshida Shintô*

As the above discussion has shown, Yuiitsu Shintô of the Yoshida house played the dominant role among Shintô schools in the 17th century in Japan. This was the starting point of most syncretistic doctrines. Since the teachings of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511) have already been discussed in detail by Nelly Naumann (1994) and Bernhard Scheid (2001)⁶⁷, only a brief overview will be given in the present context. Kanetomo, the most important thinker of this school, was particularly strongly influenced by Buddhism. For this reason, his esoteric teachings included various rituals that were originally borrowed from Shingon Buddhism (cf. Naumann 1994: 71).

⁶⁶ On the system of the »twenty-two shrines,« cf. Naumann 1988: 230f.; on the position of the Ômiwa-jinja within this system, cf. OJ 1975: 145ff.

⁶⁷ Medieval Yoshida (Yuiitsu) Shintô as well as Yoshida Kanetomo and his teachings have been extensively covered both in Japanese and in Western languages (in particular, cf. Ishibashi and Dumoulin 1940; Seckel 1943). For an introduction, cf. Scheid 2001; Naumann 1994: 57-74; Picken 1994: 302-305; Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 37-44; Ômori 1992: 156-159, among others. Allan Grapard provides translations and studies on this topic in the journal MN (MN 47, 1992), which, however, hardly extend beyond the earlier work by Ishibashi and Dumoulin (1940) and Seckel (1943) in the same journal, and furthermore, does not contain any mention of these previous studies.

The Yoshida achieved their influence over Shintô during the Edo period due to their position of power in the system of Shintô shrines at the time as well as their ability to gain the favor of the rulers of the new system, the Tokugawa house. The previously discussed »Decree on Shrines and Priests« (*Shosha negi kannushi hatto*) from the year Kanbun 5 (1665) is especially important in this context. This law, which consists of a total of five paragraphs, also explicitly institutionalized the dominant position of the Yoshida house in this context. As is stated in the third paragraph of the decree quoted above, »Shrine priests (*shajin*) without rank are to wear white robes. All others may wear the official robes only with the written permission of the Yoshida.« Thus, the Yoshida were responsible for awarding ranks, since the robes functioned as a symbol of rank. Despite the fact that other institutions during the Edo period, such as the Shirakawa and Tsuchimikado houses, as well as some of the most important shrines, also came to appoint local shrine priests, this law provided the legal basis for continuing the practice that had been in place since the Japanese Middle Ages, in which the Yoshida house issued formal letters of appointment for shrine priests.

In addition to these bureaucratic functions performed for the *bakufu*, the Yoshida also had a critical influence on the worship of the imperial house. Already Yoshida Kanetomo won, as Naumann (1994: 71) writes, »great influence at the court, where he gave lectures on the *Nihongi*.« As Seckel (1943: 62) writes, »in the turmoil of the Sengoku period, [...] the *jingikan* also became sympathetic, and the responsibility for these especially important shrines, and thus the cultic, magical protection of the emperor was entrusted to the Yoshida house, which appeared to be the most qualified for this responsibility due to its dominant position in Shintô matters.« Under Kanetomo's successor Kanemi, the *saijôsho*, the most important place of worship of the Yoshida house in Kyôto, finally took with the newly established »deputy *jingikan*« (*jingikandai*) on the basic ritual functions of the Imperial Office of Shintô Worship, the *jingikan*.⁶⁸

Thus, in the early Edo period, the Yoshida had acquired an incomparable measure of power in the area of Shintô, both on the level of the Shôgun as well as

⁶⁸ Since the year 1590, or 1596 (Naumann 1994: 72), the tutelary deities of the *hasshinden* of the Office of Shintô Worship (*jingikan*) in the main shrine of the Yoshida in Kyôto (Yoshida Saijôsho) were ritually worshipped. It was Kanetomo who founded this highest of sacred places for the gods of heaven and earth, according to the teachings of Yoshida, at Kaguraoka in Kyôto (cf. Seckel 1943; Grapard 1992). In his detailed study on this topic, Seckel (1943: 62f.) points out that, contrary to the generally accepted opinion, the eight small shrines for the worship of the imperial tutelary deities (*hasshinden*) of the *jingikan* were not moved from the *jingikan* to the Yoshida Saijôsho around the end of the 16th century. He writes decidedly: »[...] that Kanetomo also knew to ensure the priority of his place of worship in this important regard above all other *jinja* by taking on the responsibility for the personal tutelary deities of the emperor and the strong clerical position of power this provided in relation to the emperor and the court.« Cf. Scheid 2001: passim.

with the emperor. And this superior position applied not only to the area of the newly won control of the Shintô priests or of official rituals.

The Yoshida's influence on the development of Shintô of the early Edo period was closely dependent on the new social and political structures, and consequently, the doctrine of Yoshida Shintô underwent an extensive development, the result of which was modern Shintô, influenced by Neo-Confucianism, which hardly bore any resemblance to the original ideas of Yoshida Kanetomo.

Among the previously discussed Confucians of the time, the Shintô teachings of Hayashi Razan in particular were influenced to a large extent by the Yoshida doctrine, regardless of his criticism of Yuiitsu Shintô of the Yoshida house (cf. Naumann 1994: 72; see chapter II: 2. 2. 2). However, before Hayashi's teachings can be examined in detail, a few general points about Confucian Shintô in the Edo period must be established.

2. 2. *Shintô and Confucianism in the early Edo period*

The following sections will attempt to illuminate the theological and ideological spheres of religious thought that formed the basis for religious practice in the early Edo period (cf. Antoni 1997b). As discussed above, the widespread interpretation of the sole dominance of pure Neo-Confucian thought during the Edo period cannot be supported in light of recent studies. Besides Buddhism, which, due to the aforementioned *terauke* system, expanded its influence into all areas of Japanese society, Shintô is especially relevant in this context. The contribution of Shintô thought to the Neo-Confucian, metaphysical legitimation of the *bakufu*'s rule, as well as that of the imperial household in the later phases of the Edo period, has only recently been fully recognized. This is where the present discussion will begin. Shintô-Confucian discourse laid the ground for the success of the *Kokugaku*, and it is here that the roots of the Japanese debate on modernization can be found, which continued into the Meiji Restoration and the Japanese modern era.

2. 2. 1. Basic characteristics of Japanese Confucianism

Confucianism has always been viewed as a central element of the originally foreign cultural heritage that was adapted to Japan to a large extent over the course of history, and is comparable only with Buddhism in terms of its impact.

Already the first written documents, which according to the legendary tradition came to Japan from China by way of Korea, were copies of Confucian classics. In ancient Japan, so-called state or Han Confucianism influenced all matters of the Japanese state, which was formed according to the example of Tang-period China. Unlike the idealized Chinese meritocracy, however, which formed the basis of Confucianism in China, in Japan Confucianism was always influenced by the tribal structures of an aristocracy oriented toward clan interests. The basic Confucian, egalitarian primacy of individual virtue over aristocratic descent was never able to establish itself in Japan. This represents a crucial difference between Japanese and Chinese Confucianism, both varieties nonetheless being part of a common system of thought and values. The principle of a government based on its own moral quality was never able to gain acceptance within the genealogically oriented thought in Japan, whose most important criterion is the question of descent. The emperor as well as the Shôgun ruled based on their own genealogical legitimation, the emperor due to his immanently divine ancestry, and the Shôgun due to his membership in the house of the Minamoto – specifically, Seiwa-Genji, a former secondary line of the imperial family. However, the organization of the state, both in ancient Japan and under the feudal system of the Edo period, largely followed the maxims of contemporary Confucian thought on government.

After the centuries of government disorganization and disintegration during the late Muromachi period, the Tokugawa house, which was able to gain hegemony over all of Japan, created a strict system of domestic organization and control. The Confucian values and relationships played a major role in this system. The Five Relationships (*gorin*) and Five Virtues (*gojô*) determined all aspects of state and social life (see chapter I: 3. 2. 2). Even the paths of individual professions and social classes strictly followed these moral laws. The basis for this was Neo-Confucianism, as interpreted by the Sung-period Chinese scholar Chu Hsi (1120-1200; Zhu Xi, Japanese: Shushi), whose commentaries on the Confucian classics

had previously been studied and spread during the Japanese Middle Ages – interestingly, by Zen Buddhist monks.⁶⁹

The circles of originally Buddhist clerics were also the source of the school that later went on to influence religious and state life in the Edo period: *shushigaku* according to the interpretation of the Hayashi family. The founder of this school and personal advisor to the first Tokugawa Shōgun Ieyasu, Hayashi Razan (1583-1657), formed a state ideology out of the social and ethical aspects of Chu Hsi Confucianism that was perfectly suited to the needs of the Tokugawa and officially remained in effect until the middle of the 19th century, but that, in a different form, also continued to influence modern Japan after 1868.

The syncretistic union of Confucianism and Shintō was already, as previously discussed, the focus of this most important Tokugawa scholar and ideologue. In his view, the three sacred treasures of Shintō, the imperial regalia (*sanshū no jingi*), were in their true meaning the manifestations of cardinal Confucian virtues:

»The mirror is knowledge, the jewels are humanity and the sword is courage. It is justice that preserves the virtues of knowledge, humanity and courage in the heart. If these virtues are alive in the heart, they are knowledge, humanity and courage. If they appear as symbols, they become jewels, mirror and sword. They are necessary for governing and protecting the state. [...] The way of kings and the way of the gods is but one.«

This is how Razan describes the relationship between Confucianism and Shintō in his work *Shintō denju* (1644-48).⁷⁰ It is especially apparent that, according to this Confucian thinker, the Confucian system of values play the primary role, while the sacred treasures are brought into a subordinate, symbolic position.

Shintō-Confucian syncretism, or Confucian Shintō (*juka shintō*)⁷¹, largely replaced Buddhist-influenced Shintō in theoretical and theological discourse, and thus also syncretistic *shinbutsu-shūgō* thought, during the early Edo period.⁷² Nonetheless, the Shintō-Buddhist »shrine-temple complexes« (*jingūji*)⁷³ remained

⁶⁹ On Chu Hsi Confucianism, cf. Chan 1973: 588-653; texts from the Japanese Shushi school in: Tsunoda 1964, Volume I: 335-368; de Bary, Volume 2, 2005: 29ff. Smith 1973 provides a historical overview.

⁷⁰ Quoted and translated from Benl, Hammitzsch 1956: 218, Document no. 121.

⁷¹ Cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994; Abe 1972; Boot 1992; Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 47-69 and Kracht 1986. Collected source materials: Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 9-262; *Kojiruien* (1977), *Jingi-bu* II/44, Shintō 2: 1359-1455.

⁷² On Shintō-Buddhist syncretism (*shinbutsu-shūgō*) cf. Kawane 1986, chapter 1; Kubota 1989; Matsunaga 1969; Naumann 1988: 221-237; Naumann 1994; Ono 1985; Ōmori 1992, among others.

⁷³ On the *jingūji* of the Edo period, cf. Seckel 1985: 29f., 74-77, among others.

in existence at the ceremonial level and at local shrines throughout the Edo period until they were officially separated (*shinbutsu-bunri*) during the Meiji Restoration.

Confucian interpretations of Shintô can be found already in the medieval doctrines of Ise or Yoshida Shintô, although they continued to be largely influenced by Buddhism. On the other hand, the Confucian Shintô of the modern era – that is, the concept of a unity of Shintô and Confucianism (*shinju-itchi*)⁷⁴ – was based on (Neo-) Confucianism at its spiritual core and a hostile attitude toward Buddhism (*haibutsu*). Thus, Shintô was reinterpreted from the point of view of the philosophy that came to dominate official thought, *shushigaku* – a classic case of ideologically motivated traditionalism.

The new, Confucian-oriented Shintô philosophers included the most influential *shushigakusha* of the time, such as Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619), Hayashi Razan (1583-1657) and Yamazaki Ansai (1619-1682). The doctrines of Watarai (Ise) Shintô and Yoshida Shintô were also reinterpreted according to Confucianism during the Edo period and thus developed in accordance with the new balance of power, especially by the influential scholars Watarai Nobuyoshi (1615-1690) and Yoshikawa Koretari (Koretaru; 1616-1694).

2. 2. 2. Hayashi Razan's Confucian Shintô

As was discussed above, the work of Hayashi Razan is especially influential in this context. In his most important work on the relationship between Shintô and Confucianism, *Shintô denju*, Razan illustrates the common basic principles of the two belief systems.⁷⁵ Among others, Klaus Kracht (1986) has focussed in depth on the work of Hayashi Razan, and his study also examines general aspects of Shintô-Confucian discourse at the time.

Kracht's study attempts, as he states, »to more closely understand Neo-Confucian thought in Japan from the 17th to the 19th centuries by examining one aspect of its concept of gods, the Neo-Confucian concept of the spirit according to the tradition of Chu Hsi.« One remarkable characteristic of this study is Kracht's translation of the native Japanese word *kami* with the term *Geist* (»spirit«) in German. He also refers to *shintô* as the *Geist-Weg* (»spirit way«) and *shinkoku*, tra-

⁷⁴ Cf. Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 49-58; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 16.

⁷⁵ On the Shintô-Confucian synthesis of Hayashi Razan and especially his work *Shintô denju* (ca. 1644-1648, on date cf. Kracht 1986: 116) cf. Kracht 1986: passim; Boot 1992: passim; vgl. Taira 1972: 507-518; Abe 1972: 502-503; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 11-57; Yamamoto 1993 (1911): 14-46.

ditionally »land of the gods«⁷⁶, is rendered as »land of the spirits.« In my view, this represents an indifference for the religious element, which fails to comprehend the numinous character of a term such as *kami* (»god, deity«). On the other hand, Kracht's study represents a well founded introduction to the field of Shintô-Confucian discourse in the early Edo period, and for this reason its main conclusions will be discussed in the following.

First the author outlines the term »spirit discourse,« which is of central importance to his study, as »a reproduction of the Chinese *kuei-shen lun*, or the Japanese *kishinron*. In Confucianism, talking about spirits and the spirit means pursuing the basic questions of the cosmos and the order of nature, man and society. Spirit discourses open the possibility [...] of asking concretely: What are spirits? What is the spirit?« (Kracht 1986: 1). According to Kracht, such an investigation is especially important in Japan, a country that, »according to its traditional understanding of itself, is the 'land of the spirits' (*shinkoku, kami no kuni*) and the 'spirit way' (*shintô, kami no michi*),« (Kracht 1986: 2).

The study focuses on three Confucian scholars of the Tokugawa period. Besides Hayashi Razan, these include the philosophers Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725) and Yamagata Bantô (1748-1821). Kracht justifies his choice of these three thinkers in particular with the fact that they 1) all emerged from the same Confucian background, and thus are comparable; 2) each belonged to a different era within the Tokugawa period; and 3) all three wrote extensively about the »spirit.« Finally, Kracht writes, all three had »something very basic in common: their spirit discourses were written as the products of private or secret speculation not intended for publication,« even though all three were prominent public figures.

Although Chu Hsi (1130-1200), whose discourses form the foundation of Kracht's study, did not organize his own thoughts on the subject of the »spirit,« his thought reveals an understanding of the canonical spirits *shen*, *kuei* and *ch'i* as three kinds of what is actually »one spirit« (*shen*). However, Kracht writes, the use of the term »spirit« is to be understood both concretely and abstractly, referring to the »spirit« as well as »spirits« (Kracht 1986: 83). One of Chu Hsi's main goals was to »oppose 'common superstitions.'« He saw the popular practice of worshipping spirits as being wrong. Later in his study, Kracht discusses this essential aspect of his argumentation, which is rooted in the vagueness of the word »spirit.« The German word *Geist* (»spirit«) is understood as a »translated word« (Hartmut Buchner, cf. Kracht 1986: 109) that is accordingly inconsistent in its

⁷⁶ The designation *shinkoku* (»land of the gods«) for Japan can be found already in the *Nihonshoki* (Jingû-kôgô, Chûai-tennô 9/10/3 = NKBT 67: 338). For the *shinkoku* ideology in Japanese intellectual history cf. Nawrocki 1998: 21-86.

meaning. »It can encompass all the basic meanings of *kuei-shen* in its variants without imposing its own linguistic complexities.«

Kracht's discussion of the three Japanese Chu Hsi Confucian scholars mentioned above begins with Hayashi Razan's Neo-Confucian Shintô, based on the text of the *Shintô denju*, which was compiled between 1644 and 1648. Confucian Shintô (*juka shintô*), Kracht writes, represents an »attempt to reconcile the beliefs of the native mythology with Chinese Confucianism. It brings two heterogeneous written traditions into harmony with one another as different expressions of the same truth.« (Kracht 1986: 117) Razan's Shintô is rooted in Yuiitsu Shintô (»the way of the one and only Shintô«) in the tradition of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511). Thus, it is not surprising that even the *Shintô denju* was based on Kanetomo's main work, *Yuiitsu shintô myôbô yôshû* (»Outline of the notable law of the Solitary Shintô«).⁷⁷ Similarly, W. J. Boot (1992: 148) remarks:

»The kind of Shintô Razan propagates in his Shintô writings is the so-called Ritôshinchi shintô. He developed it himself, under the influence of the medieval Shintô of the Yoshida and of Neo-Confucianism.«

Hayashi Razan's teachings themselves are a conglomeration of Japanese mythology as well as Buddhist, Confucianist and Taoist elements. In this context, the equation of the Confucian *kishin* with the native mythological *kami* is of »fundamental importance to Hayashi Razan's thought.« In his teachings, the deity (or as Kracht writes, the »spirit«) Kuninotokotachi no Mikoto of Japanese mythology is particularly important: this deity is understood to be the »original spirit,« or the »entire body« of all *kami*, »symbolically equal to the *t'ai-chi* of Sung Confucianism.«⁷⁸

According to this conception, Buddhism takes the rank of a subordinate doctrine whose roots lie in Shintô (which marks the absolute opposite to the position of Kuroda Toshio, see below). The emphasis on Shintô implies that the problem of legitimating rule in the Tokugawa state was of particular importance. Based on the genealogical speculations of a priest of the Yoshida School, Bonshun (1553-1632), the supposed proof was provided that the Tokugawa belonged to the house of the Seiwa Genji and therefore were descendants of the imperial line. Thus, Hayashi Razan also included the Tokugawa in Amaterasu's divine mandate to rule (*shinchoku*).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ On Kanetomo's *Yuiitsu shintô myôbô yôshû* cf. Scheid 2001.

⁷⁸ See also Boot 1992: 151.

⁷⁹ Cf. note 21. The divine mandate to rule (*shinchoku*) is recorded in the *Nihonshoki* (NKBT 67: 147; Aston 1956: 76f.), the *Kojiki* (NKBT 1: 126/127; Antoni 2012a: 77) and in the *Kogoshûi* (*Gunsho ruijû*

While Hayashi Razan propagated an ethnocentric form of Shintô Confucianism whose basic material was found in the native Japanese traditions, the thinking of the second of the theoreticians under discussion was of a completely different intention. In Arai Hakuseki's (1657-1725) »Neo-Confucian demonology,« Japanese mythology is not accorded any importance of its own. His work *Kishinron*⁸⁰ draws its material entirely from Chinese sources. Arai Hakuseki subscribes to the maxim that »the traditional [i.e. Chinese] texts are the basis for Confucian discourse on spirits.«

Hakuseki distinguishes between the spheres of the »ordinary« and the »extraordinary.« While the »ordinary« state means the balance of »powers« (*rei*) and the orderliness of »material« (*ki*), the »strange« and »extraordinary« is defined as the »result of a loss of this balance and order.« Among the causes of this state are the actions of free-floating ghosts of the deceased (*onryô*), free-floating »life energy,« and expanding »powder energy« (cf. Kracht 1986: 179ff.). According to this doctrine, Buddha belongs to the sphere of the »extraordinary« and is considered an extremely dangerous demon from the region of the ghosts of the deceased.

The third of the Confucian philosophers discussed by Kracht (1986: 200ff.), Yamagata Bantô (1748-1821), finally exceeds the limits of purely Confucian thought, and Kracht characterizes his thought as »trans-Confucian speculation.«

The core elements of the teachings of Yamagata Bantô, expressed in his private work *Yume no shiro* (»Instead of Dreams«)⁸¹, which was written between 1802 and 1820, are based on modern Western astronomy, which offered an alternative to the traditional cosmologies of Japan, China and India. He views the concept of the *shinkoku/kami no kuni* in particular, as professed by the school of National Learning (Kokugaku), as an »expression of the greatest stupidity and ignorance.« In Bantô's view, the nonexistence of spirits is an incontrovertible fact. However, he reveals his Confucian foundations by stating that one must serve the spirits of the ancestors as if they existed, as an act of piety toward one's deceased parents.

Finally, Kracht (1986: 256, 265) states that there was a historical shift in Japanese thought between the 17th and 19th centuries, along with »elements of continuity.« He sees two circumstances as contributing to the »indigenization of academic discourse«: the integration of the native Japanese mythology into academic discourse, and the expansion of discourse on Japanese spoken language. This

25: 5; Florenz 1919: 246). However, an essential detail of this myth is not mentioned in the commentaries; only one version, which appears in just one variant of the *Nihonshoki*, tells of a mandate for the eternal rule of the imperial line. All other variants only mention the direct mandate of Amaterasu to her grandson Ninigi. Cf. Antoni 2012a: 558.

⁸⁰ Arai Hakuseki: *Kishinron*, ed. NST 35.

⁸¹ Yamagata Bantô: *Yume no shiro*, ed. NST 43; cf. Kracht 1986: 201ff.

leads to an »expansion of the academic concept of experience through the integration of mythology and everyday life, indigenous scholarship and Western science, into the Chu Hsi Confucian debate.«

Among the reactions to this development, besides that of Ishida Baigan, the main representative of the *shingaku* (»mind and heart learning«), Kracht draws particular attention to the arguments of Aizawa Seishisai in his programmatic work of the late Mito School, *Shinron* (»New Discourse«). Regarding the term »spirit« in the late Mito School – in the tradition of Yamazaki Ansai – Kracht (1986: 268) remarks in summary that this is »a unification of native mythology and Confucian canon, by way of the Chu Hsi exegesis, that is distinguished from Razan’s Confucian Shintô particularly by its stronger abstinence from obviously Buddhist speculation.«

At the same time, this school, which had become so important to scholars in the Japanese modern age, was inspired by National Learning, with its »exaggeration of the national concept of the ‘spirit country’ [*shinkoku*: ‘land of the gods’],« which is apparent in Aizawa Seishisai’s statement: »Our country has the rank of head of the earth« (see chapter II: 5. 2. 2).

According to Kracht, the general teachings of Chu Hsi Confucianism were »provincialized« in Japanese thought, meaning »a certain form of appropriation.« In conclusion, he states that the causes of this »provincialization« of Japanese thought lie »in the latency of the disregarded, not historically analyzed native mythology.« Boot (1992: 173) reaches a similar conclusion in his concise statement:

»In regard to Shintô Razan’s position is that Shintô is of autochthonic Japanese origin, that it is been denatured by Buddhism which obliterated certain of its essential features, and that in final analysis it is identical with Confucianism.«

Just as there is no doubt about Hayashi Razan’s importance for the »Confucianization« of Shintô in the early Edo period, the shift to the final adaptation to the new system was carried out most effectively in the thought of a scholar who made an important impact on Yoshida Shintô during this period: Yoshikawa Koretari, also known as Koretaru (cf. Antoni 1997c).

2. 2. 3. *Yoshikawa Shintô*

Yoshikawa Koretari (1616-1694)⁸², also known as Yoshikawa Koretaru or Kikawa Koretari, entered the service of the head of the Yoshida house, Hagiwara Kaneyori, the first son of Yoshida Kaneharu, in 1653 as a student, and was introduced to the teachings of Yoshida Shintô by him. Later, Koretari even became a *shintô-dôtô*, or a keeper of the teachings of the Yoshida, and was made head of the Yoshida house itself.⁸³

Under the rule of Shôgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709), Koretari also attained the position of *shintôkata* (»director of Shintô affairs«) for the *bakufu*,⁸⁴ meaning that he was a civil servant of the Tokugawa. This influential administrative division of the Edo *bakufu* belonged to the office of the *jisha-bugyô* (»commissioners of temples and shrines«).⁸⁵ The office of the *shintôkata* was established after the issuing of the aforementioned decree on the appointment of shrine priests (*Shosha negi kannushi hatto*) in 1665 (Kanbun 5), but it was not until Tenna 2 (1682) that Yoshikawa Koretari became the first person to assume this position. After his death, the position was given to his son Tsugunaga, and it remained within the Yoshikawa family until the Meiji Restoration.⁸⁶

Koretari, and later his son Tsugunaga, developed Yoshida Shintô into the »new Yoshida Shintô« (*shin Yoshida shintô*, cf. Ômori 1992: 170), also known as Yoshikawa Shintô. Particularly the virtues represented by the imperial regalia

⁸² On Yoshikawa Koretari, also known as Koretaru, cf. Taira 1972: 519-528; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Ômori 1992: 170-171; *Kojiruien* (1977), *Jingi-bu* II/44, Shintô 2: 1405-1414; Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 59-75 and 77-83 (Yoshikawa Tsugunaga); Yamamoto 1993 (1911): 141-147.

⁸³ As Taira (1972: 520f.) writes, the doctrine of Yoshida Shintô was passed on from generation to generation within a hierarchy of four levels of secrecy. The bearer of the highest level of secrecy (*himorogi iwasaka den*) was appointed *shintô dôtô* and thus bestowed not only with the highest authority as a scholar, but also within the world of Edo period Shintô. On this topic, see also the most important work of Yoshikawa Shintô, written by Yoshikawa Tsugunaga, *Himorogi iwasaka no daiji* (Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 77-83). Taira sees the reasons for Kaneyori's choice of Koretari as his successor, who was not a descendant of the Yoshida family, as being his outstanding scholarship as well as the fact that there was no appropriate successor in the Yoshida family itself. According to Ômori (1992: 171), after this time, the right of succession to this highest rank remained within the Yoshikawa family. Only in the year Meiji 21 (1888) was it returned to the Yoshida family – long after Yoshida Shintô had lost its dominant position.

⁸⁴ Cf., among others, Itô Akira's article »Shintôkata« in Inoue 1994: 118.

⁸⁵ On the office of the *jisha-bugyô*, cf. Totman 1988: 40ff., 174-176, 181f., 195-197, among others.

⁸⁶ On the role of Yoshikawa Tsugunaga, cf. Inoue 1994: 444f.

(*sanshû no jingi*) were of fundamental importance to Koretari, as well as for other leading figures of Shintô-Confucian *jûka shintô*.⁸⁷

Koretari's doctrine was based on complicated speculations on the derivation of morality from the Chinese Confucian doctrine of the elements,⁸⁸ in which the relationship of the elements »earth« (*tsuchi, do*) and »metal/gold« (*kane, kon*) were of central importance as the basis of morality. In this context, *dokon* is considered the root of the central ethical category of »reverence, obedience« (*tsutsushimi*).

The remaining core points of Yoshikawa Koretari's teachings can be summarized as follows (cf. Taira 1972: 522-528): The world in its entirety was created by the gods of Japan. The laws are made according to the way of Shintô. Both Confucianism and Buddhism are teachings that were derived from Shintô and developed differently according to location and human factors. The Shintô of the »original source« (*sôgen shintô*⁸⁹), i.e. Yoshida Shintô, on the other hand, is the successor of the true way and thus is supreme over all other religions. Neo-Confucianism (*sôgaku*, Sung Confucianism) is used in order to rationalize the teachings of Shintô, and therefore it is a *rigaku shintô*,⁹⁰ or »scientific Shintô« (Naumann 1994: 73), or »Shintô of the study of the principle [of reason].«⁹¹

The deity Kuninotokotachi no mikoto, god of the creation of the world, is also a central figure in this context, and he existed as an original deity before the creation of heaven and earth, and of *yin* and *yang*.⁹² This god, which is without form or name, is identical to the formless chaos that is called the »nothingness« (*kyomu*) in Taoism and »peaklessness and highest peak« (*mukyoku-ji-taikyoku*; Chinese: *wu-chi-t'ai-chi*) in Confucianism.⁹³ Regarding the relationship between god and man, Koretari holds that all creatures were formed out of the movement of chaos of the *taikyoku* (Chinese: *t'ai-chi*). People also originated from the combination of the »principle« (*ri*) of *taikyoku* (*taikyoku no ri*) and the »spirit« (*ki*) of *yin* and *yang* (*onmyô no ki*) – a core principle of Neo-Confucian cosmology. Thus, the original

⁸⁷ Cf., among others, the chapter »Shintô to sanshû-jingi-kan« in Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 185-191, especially 189f.

⁸⁸ Cf. Taira 1972: 522-525; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 58-60; text sources: *Kojiruien* (1977), *Jingi-bu* II/44, *Shintô* 2: 1405-1414; Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 59-83.

⁸⁹ Cf. Kracht 1986: 125; Naumann 1994: 66, 68ff.

⁹⁰ Cf., among others, the chapter »Rigaku shintô« in Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 58-60.

⁹¹ Picken 1994: 32: »Rigaku (the Study of Rational Principles)«, Kracht 1986: 120: »Geist-Weg des Studiums des [Vernunft]prinzips.«

⁹² Just one variant in the report of the *Nihonshoki* forms the basis for this statement; cf. *Nihonshoki, Jindaiki* I, var. 5 = NKBT 67: 78/79; Florenz 1919: 125.

⁹³ *Mukyoku* »germ. Gipfellosigkeit« (cf. Kracht 1986: 122, 123, Chin. *wu-chi*); *taikyoku* »highest peak« (also: 122, 123, Chin. *t'ai-chi*).

»principle« (*kongen no ri*) is always manifest in mankind. This is the justification for the »unity of god and man« (*shinjin-gôitsu*).

If human beings call the divine light back into their hearts, they can return to the original state of the cosmos. On the path to the »unity of god and man,« divine work is manifested in the virtues of »straightforwardness« (*shôjiki*)⁹⁴ and »truth« (*makoto*).⁹⁵ Man reaches this goal by way of »modesty« (*tsutsushimi*, also »seriousness«) and »reverence« (*uyamai*). *Tsutsushimi*⁹⁶ is attained through »inner and outer« – that is, bodily and spiritual – purification (*harae*). Man attains his unity with the gods through prayer (*kitô*) and worship.

Man's way is defined by the Five Relationships and the Five Virtues (*gorin-gojô*). The ethical relationship between lord and vassal (*kunshin*) is particularly important in this context. Once again, Koretari's Confucian principles are apparent, and in this point he shows the highest degree of agreement with Razan.

Koretari introduced important Daimyô to his Shintô teachings, especially the influential ruler of Aizu-*han*, Hoshina Masayuki, who was previously discussed in regard to the regional shrine reforms. Masayuki was among the elite leadership of the Tokugawa state. He was the younger brother of Tokugawa Iemitsu and guardian of Ietsuna, and he made essential contributions to the establishment of the *baku-han* system.⁹⁷ In his Shintô studies with Koretari, he reached the fourth and highest level of secrecy and was buried in the Shintô tradition after his death (Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Taira 1972: 521), for which he received the explicit approval of the *bakufu* (Taira 1972: 521). It was Koretari who had made the strongest attempts to raise Shintô to the status of a religious doctrine (*kyôgaku*), and he thus contributed much to the modern development of Shintô-Confucian syncretism as the head of the Yoshida house and successor of Yoshida Shintô.

⁹⁴ On *shôjiki* (Chin. *cheng-chih*) cf. the chapter »Shintô to *shôjiki* no toku« in Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 181-185; Kracht 1986: 137, 295, 313, (see *cheng-chih*); Ooms 1985: 66, 68, 92, 98, 100-101, 103 (*shôjiki*, »straightforwardness«), among others. *Shôjiki* is an ethical form of *harae* in Ise Shintô: cf. Kishimoto 1972, chapter 3.

⁹⁵ Cf. Kracht 1986: 56, 205, 258.

⁹⁶ The meaning of the term *tsutsushimi* (cf. Morohashi 1989: nr. 13303) in the context of Shintô-Confucian syncretism is unclear. Ooms (1985: 225f.) remarks on the use of this important term by Yamazaki Ansai that the way, the teachings and nature are the three fundamental categories within the Confucian tradition. Human nature, which is characterized by the Five Relationships and Virtues, is based primarily on *kei*, »reverence, respect« (*tsutsushimi*). Pörtner, Heise (1995: 422): »*kei*, *ching*, germ. (konf.) Reverenz, Ehrerbietung«; Chan (1973: 606f.): »Holding Fast to Seriousness (*ching*)«; Kracht, Leinss (1988: 374): germ. *kei* »Achtung,« »Aufmerksamkeit« (Chinese: *ching*).

⁹⁷ Cf. Ômori 1992: 171; Taira 1972: 521; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17.

2. 2. 4. Yamazaki Ansai's Suika Shintô

In this context, it is also helpful to outline the further development of Confucian-influenced Shintô in the early Edo period, which in various ways connects Yoshida Shintô with the world of Neo-Confucianism.⁹⁸

Yamazaki Ansai (1618-1682)⁹⁹ is especially noteworthy in this development, since he marks a high point of Confucian Shintô in the Edo period as a prominent *shushigakusha* as well as a Shintô scholar. Ansai had attended lectures by Koretari on Shintô with the aforementioned Hoshina Masayuki, the Daimyô of Aizu-*han*, and it was Koretari who awarded him the title of »Suika« in the year Kanbun 11 (1671), i.e. during his lifetime (Taira 1972: 544).

On the other hand, Ansai was influenced to a large extent by Watarai Nobuyoshi's (1615-1690) reinterpretation of Ise Shintô, which emphasizes the Shintô taught in Japan, with Confucianism serving merely a supporting, explanatory role. It was Watarai Nobuyoshi who lent medieval Ise Shintô its Confucian character. According to Nobuyoshi's beliefs on the relationship between Shintô and Confucianism, both belief systems emerged independently of each other, but still exist in harmony together, since they are both based on the same rational principle of the cosmos and nature (*tenchi shizen no ri*; Taira 1972: 540).

Yamazaki Ansai took his own path, relative to many Neo-Confucians of his time. Originally an ordained Buddhist monk at the Myôshinji, one of the leading Zen monasteries, he returned to life as a layman in 1646 in order to study the Confucian teachings of Chu Hsi. Finally, he lived as a teacher in the house of Hoshina Masayuki, the influential Daimyô of Aizu. Already at the age of twenty, he had developed a serious interest in Shintô.¹⁰⁰

Yamazaki Ansai's theories became what is known as Suika (also Suiga) Shintô. The term *suika*, which according to Yamazaki represents the essence of

⁹⁸ »A century after Kanetomo, Yuiitsu Shintô, [...] which he helped spread, prevailed over other Shintô schools,« remarks Klaus Kracht (1986: 120). He continues: »As an 'academic Shintô' (kyôha shintô) it takes on new forms in developments such as ... Razan's Ritô shinchi shintô, [...] Yamazaki Ansai's Suika shintô, or ... Yoshikawa Koretaru's Rigaku shintô. They all stem from Yoshida Kanetomo.« (l.c.)

⁹⁹ There is a comprehensive body of research on Yamazaki Ansai and Suika Shintô; for an introduction, cf. Taira 1972: 541-550; Sujiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Ômori 1992: 172-173; Earl 1964: 52-65; Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 64-67; Picken 1994: 311; Okada 1979; Ooms 1985: 194-286. Source materials: *Kojiruien* (1977), *Jingi-bu* II/44, Shintô 2: 1414-1424; Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 119-188; cf. Biallas 1989, Weinstein 1983-86c; Tsunoda et al. 1964, Volume 1: 354-362.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Biallas 1989; Weinstein 1983-86c.

Shintô, is taken from a passage of the *Yamatohime no mikoto seiki* (one of the five works of Watarai Shintô¹⁰¹, *Shintô gobusho*), which states:

»Divine mercy (*shin-sui*) requires prayer. Divine protection (*myô-ga*) is rooted in honesty.«¹⁰²

Thus, the term *suika* is a combination of the words »mercy« (*sui*) and »protection« (*ga*, or *ka*). At its most basic level, *Suika Shintô* is a combination of Neo-Confucian metaphysics and the cosmology and ethical ideas of the classic schools of Shintô.

Yamazaki Ansai justified the basic unity of gods and man, and thus also of the emperor and his subjects, with the »principle« (*ri*). Thus, *Suika Shintô* also sought to secure Shintô's place among the religions of Japan. Besides *shintô* (»way of the gods«), terms such as *shinnô* (»divine ruler«) and *shinkoku* (»land of the gods«) also gained importance.

From Neo-Confucianism Yamazaki borrowed the Chinese idea of *ching* (Japanese: *kei*; »reverence«), which in his view represented the basis for all human activity. He also adopted the Neo-Confucian concept of *li*, the »all-encompassing and unifying principle« (Japanese: *ri*), in order to justify the fundamental unity of the gods of Shintô and man as well as that of the emperor and his subjects. Yamazaki emphasized the uniqueness and divinity of the imperial line, which he believed must be preserved and protected above all else, despite his references to Chinese ideas in his interpretation of the Japanese creation myths. It is worth noting that Yamazaki Ansai was deeply involved with Shintô, as befits his reputation as a thorough scholar. He visited Ise Shrine no fewer than six times (in 1657, 1658, 1659, 1663, 1668 and 1669) for his studies. In Ansai's view, Shintô and Confucianism were fundamentally of the same origin. He held that the original god was a deity in human form. This deity was the progenitor of the imperial family. Thus, *kami* and man were one. Although this approach is purely based on Shintô, Yamazaki Ansai saw a parallel to Confucianism, which also states that heaven and man are one. On this basis, he concluded that both belief systems were based on the same principle. For this reason, Okada Takehiko supposes that Yamazaki Ansai came to Shintô while he was searching for the origins of the Shushi doctrine, which led him to Shintô as the only possible approach (Okada 1979: 249).

¹⁰¹ On Watarai Shintô generally cf. Teeuwen 1996.

¹⁰² Cf. *Yamato-hime no mikoto seiki*, Section: »Yûryaku-tennô«, 23rd year, 2nd month (NST 19: 30). In his work *Suika-shagyô*, Yamazaki Ansai draws this connection himself; cf. NST 39 (*Kinsei-shintôron*; *Zenki-kokugaku*. Taira Shigemichi (ed.) 1972: 120); see also Shimonaka 1937-40 (repr.): 816; Hammitzsch 1937: 39.

Yamazaki Ansai's Suika Shintô is also based on the theory of earth (*tsuchi*) and metal (*kane*). He sees these elements as signifying the virtues of devotion and honesty, which govern everything. Ansai traced this doctrine back to the *Nihon-shoki*, which describes how Izanagi split Kagutsuchi, the god of fire, into five pieces. Thus, fire is the origin of all existence. From fire comes earth, although fire is associated with the spirit, or heart (*kokoro*), which is a manifestation of the *kami*.¹⁰³

Yamazaki Ansai's frequent use of etymological wordplay is striking. One example of this is his analysis of the name of the god Omoikane. According to Ansai, the name contains two parts: *omoi* (»thought,« but also »heavy«) and *kane* (»metal«), thus meaning »thinking or heavy metal.« Yamazaki Ansai associated the word *kami* (神, »god,« »deity«) with *kami* (上, »over,« »above«), *kagami* (»mirror«), *kangamiru* (»to consider,« but also »to take an example«) and *kami miru* (»to look down from above«).

Suika Shintô was especially concerned with practical ethics. At its most basic level, this meant the unity of heaven and man (*tenjin-yuiitsu*) and the inseparable connection between ethics and the existence of the universe. This resulted in two fundamental principles of metaphysics and ethics.

The term of reverence from Confucian theory, which Yamazaki Ansai emphasizes time and again, forms the basis of the ethical principle. Yamazaki explains this by stating that the position of the emperor is derived from the metaphysical and ethical principle. The »three divine instruments« (*sanshû no jingi*) of sword, mirror and jewel, which function as the imperial regalia, also possess spiritual powers according to Suika Shintô. The jewels represent the divine spirit, the mirror represents the wisdom of this spirit, and the sword represents its power. The jewels, which symbolize the heart of Amaterasu ômikami, the ancestral deity of the imperial household, are of the highest importance. They contain all the other symbols. From them came the power to create all life, and after the creation of the world, the divine virtues of Amaterasu were given to the people. Thus, deity and man are one.¹⁰⁴

According to the Suika theory, the power lies not in the person of the emperor, but in the divine instruments. Not the person of the greatest virtue be-

¹⁰³ Ansai refers to the tale of *Dokon no den* (also: *Tsuchigane no tsutae*; cf. NST 39: 143, 458). Cf. Ooms 1985: 238f.; deBary 1964: 358f. See also Tsunoda et al. 1964, Volume 1: 358-360.

¹⁰⁴ In his work *Sahshû shinpô gokuhiden*, Yamazaki Ansai refers to Amaterasu ômikami as the virtuous goddess of nature and also of the sun. The ruler of Japan was called to rule by her divine mandate. Virtue as the responsibility of the ruler is symbolized in the three sacred treasures of the imperial regalia (*sanshû no jingi*). Amaterasu is thus understood to be the founder of ethics in Japan (cf. Taira 1972: 547).

comes emperor, as is the case in the Chinese theory, but rather, the emperor is destined to possess these absolute virtues conveyed by the instruments, even if he was not virtuous before ascending to the throne. Thus, the »three divine instruments« do not symbolize the virtue of the emperor – they are virtue.

Thus, the emperor is the highest expression of the unity of heaven and man. While according to Chinese thought, the emperor is the son of and receiver of orders from heaven, in Suika Shintô, he himself is heaven and all other people are the receivers of his orders. This is how Yamazaki Ansai differentiates China from Japan.

As a Confucian, Ansai teaches that one must show the emperor the utmost obedience (*taigi*). As a believer in Shintô, he also emphasizes the worship of the gods. In other words, obedience to the emperor and worship of the gods are two aspects of the same thing. In this way, Suika Shintô solidified and awakened Yamazaki Ansai's loyalty to Japan and his patriotism. He taught that trust in divine mercy (*sui*) and protection (*ka*), and thus also trust in the mercy and protection of the emperor, were the requirements of his philosophy (Earl 1964 (1981): 54f.).

Despite his efforts, Yamazaki Ansai never achieved a full synthesis of Confucianism and Shintô. Disregarding the question of whether such a synthesis is even possible, it must be noted that this interpretation and his attempt to integrate Shintô appear strained. Ooms writes:

»Ansai had achieved a highly personal synthesis of Shinto and Neo-Confucianism; a synthesis based on unshakable belief in the degree to which the Way is embedded in man as inborn norms and relationships, which rested on a pervasive, non-objectified, fearful reverence as a basic human disposition. The single truth enunciated in this synthesis, however, was reached in quite different ways in Shinto and Neo-Confucianism. Although faith and certainty gained Ansai's exploration of that truth in both traditions, two different epistemologies were involved.« (Ooms 1985: 263)

The fundamental problem lay in bringing the true way of Japan into agreement with the way of China. Not least due to this, he also had heated arguments with other scholars of the Tokugawa period, such as Fujiwara Seika, Hayashi Razan, Hayashi Gahô (1618-1680), and even with Yamazaki Ansai's own teachers, Nonaka Kenzan, Watarai Nobuyoshi and Yoshikawa Koretari. Even some of his best students, Satô Naokata (1650-1719) and Asami Keisai, criticized Yamazaki Ansai (Ooms 1985: 264f.).

Specifically, these arguments stemmed from Ansai's interpretation of various terms in the classical Japanese sources, which were an essential part of his Shintô

teachings. Furthermore, many scholars accused him of being too uncritical, respectful and even naïve in his research on the origins of Shintô.

A further point of criticism was the fact that Yamazaki Ansai's reverence for his own school of Shintô was so extreme that, from 1673 on, he had his students pray to him in front of a shrine that he himself had consecrated. In the last ten years of his life, he saw himself as a »living god,« and his students either worshipped him, or left. Satô Naokata and Asami Keisai both did the latter around 1680. It must be noted, however, that the criticism of Yamazaki Ansai was limited to the Shintô area of his teachings. He continued to be highly regarded as a master of Confucianism.

After Yamazaki's death, his followers, who numbered in the thousands, spread these teachings throughout Japan. Although Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), the most important National Learning (Kokugaku) scholar, criticized Suika Shintô due to its philological unreliability, Ansai's ideas still had a great influence on the later Mito School, as well as on Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), the foremost representative of Restoration (Fukko) Shintô. In turn, the Mito School and Atsutane played a large part in the movement that later led to the deification of the emperor and the fall of the shogunate, as will be discussed in the following (Ooms 1985: 195).

2. 2. 5. *The further development of Ise Shintô by Watarai Nobuyoshi*

Like Yamazaki Ansai's Suika Shintô, Watarai Nobuyoshi's (1615-1690)¹⁰⁵ Ise Shintô also attempted to harmonize the worldviews of Neo-Confucianism and Shintô (cf. Nosco 1984: 174f., among others).

Nobuyoshi attempted, through lectures and commentaries on the five »classics« of Shintô (*Shintô gobusho*; cf. Naumann 1994: 30, 32, 37, 46), to draw interest to this system of religious beliefs. In his main work, *Yôfukuki* (»The Return to [the Principle of] Yang«) of 1650¹⁰⁶, which also contains elements of the cosmology of Chu Hsi, he formulates an extract from the »battery of traditional and native Japanese virtues« (Nosco 1984: 175). In regard to the inborn virtues, however, he does not focus on the concept of *makoto*, as Koretari does, but rather concentrates on the concept of *shôjiki* (see above).

¹⁰⁵ For an introduction to the teachings of Watarai Nobuyoshi, cf. Taira 1972: 528-541; Taira, Abe (ed.) 1972: 85-117; Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17; Picken 1994: 310; Ooms 1985: 237. Source materials: *Kojiruien* (1977), *Jingi-bu* II/44, Shintô 2: 1434-1438; Yamamoto 1993 (1911): 126-138 (Deguchi Nobuyoshi).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Yôfukuki*, ed. NST 39: 85-117; cf. Taira 1972: 537ff.

In his works, Watarai (also known as Deguchi) Nobuyoshi thus carried forward one of the most important medieval schools of theological Shintô: Ise or Gekû Shintô.¹⁰⁷ This school of Shintô was founded and spread by the Watarai family, which maintained the hereditary priesthood of the Outer Shrine (Gekû). The imbalance between the two shrines at Ise came to be questioned due to the influence of Ryôbu Shintô, and already Watarai Yukitada (1236-1305), the first significant representative of this school, postulated that both shrines were equal and dependent upon each other, and even that the Outer Shrine was superior, comparing it to the relationship between the sun and the moon or heaven and earth. By the 13th century, Watarai Shintô had produced a body of sacred books, the *Shintô gobusho* (»The Five Books of Shintô«), and it was the Watarai scholars who finally developed a complex theology that proclaimed the ultimate superiority of the goddess of the Gekû, Toyouke, over all other deities, including Amaterasu ômikami. Scholars of the Watarai School also dismissed the widely held belief that the gods of Shintô were essentially Japanese manifestations of Buddhist deities. Rather, they claimed that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were merely manifestations of the original Shintô deities. Although Watarai Shintô strongly influenced other schools of Shintô, such as Yoshida and Suika Shintô, it relied heavily on Buddhist concepts in formulating its own doctrine, and for this reason it was strongly criticized during the Edo period.

In the Muromachi period, Ise Shintô continued to spread, but it was the Yoshida family that determined Shintô thought as the main school during this period. Thus, Watarai Nobuyoshi had the responsibility of modernizing Ise Shintô (Taira 1972: 528ff.).¹⁰⁸

The *Yôfukuki* can be seen as an introduction to Nobuyoshi's Shintô. This work represented an approach to modernizing Ise Shintô by turning away from medieval, Buddhist Shintô and toward the Confucian-oriented Shintô of the modern era. Shintô was now seen as the common way of the universe, that is, as a manifestation of the same principle (or the way) of the cosmos and nature (*tenchi shizen no michi*), thus showing strong similarities to Confucianism.

In this context, Inoue (1994: 17) states that Watarai Nobuyoshi criticized the widespread theory supported by scholars of Ise Shintô of a concurrence of Shintô and Confucianism (*shinju-shûgô*) to the effect that, although the two areas show

¹⁰⁷ For an introduction to medieval Watarai Shintô, cf., among others, Teeuwen 1993, 1996, Naumann 1994: 29-56; Picken 1994: 306-310; Kishimoto 1972 (1993): 31-37.

¹⁰⁸ The founding of the *Toyomiyazaki bunko* library is traced back to him. It contains among other things secret revelations of Shintô; it was here that the priests of Ise jingû studied and debated, as well as other Shintô scholars, and thus contributed to the further development of Ise Shintô. Cf. Taira 1972: 538.

similarities in their basic teachings, they were shaped differently according to human institutions, opinions and deeds in Japan and other countries (*ikoku to wagakuni no seidobun'i*; cf. Taira 1972: 539). This new interpretation of Ise Shintô by Nobuyoshi (cf. Picken 1994: 310, among others), which focuses on Shintô as practiced in Japan, while Confucianism serves only to explain Shintô, also influenced Yamazaki Ansai and began a new era for the development of Confucian Shintô.

In this way, Hayashi Razan, Yoshikawa Koretari, Watarai Nobuyoshi and others finally set aside the syncretistic concept of the unity of Shintô and Buddhism (*shinbutsu-shûgô*) and developed modern Shintô using the concept of a harmony of Shintô and Confucianism.

Although the fundamental relationship between Shintô and Buddhism was still recognized at the time, far more similarities were believed to exist between Shintô and Confucianism. This is apparent, for example, in Nobuyoshi's reference to the three Confucian virtues of »wisdom, benevolence, righteousness« (*chi-jin-yû*) as expressed by the imperial regalia (*sanshû no jingi*), a subject that was a part of Confucian Shintô (or Shintôist Confucianism) throughout the early Edo period, as was previously shown (cf. Taira 1972: 526).

However, Nobuyoshi rejects the traditional view, which uses the similarities between Shintô and Confucianism to claim that Shintô emerged only through the influence of Confucianism. Nobuyoshi's theory states that both areas emerged independently of each other, but corresponded because they are based on the principle of cosmos and nature (*tenchi shizen no ri*). Therefore, certain shortcomings in Shintô theory should be filled in using Confucian theories.

Another significant work by Nobuyoshi is the *Daijingû shintô wakumon* (1666), in which he differentiates between the Shintô of the people and the Shintô of the priests (*negi* and *kannushi*; cf. Taira 1972: 532f.). According to Nobuyoshi, the former is the natural path for daily practice among the people and can be followed without religious instruction by the clergy. This work also contains a general critique of syncretism (*shûgô*) that, however, does not represent a rejection of Buddhism or Confucianism, but rather states that Shintô is the foundation of all other religions. According to this theory, Buddhism and Confucianism function as branches of Shintô. Overall, however, the theology of this school recognizes Confucianism as showing the greatest similarities to Shintô.

As for the laws governing the state, this work aims to provide religious and genealogical legitimation for rule, according to which the emperor and the Shôgun are the descendants of the deities Kuninotokotachi no mikoto and Amaterasu ômikami. According to this view, there is no other state in which the blood of the ruler is so pure and the relationship between lord and vassal (*kun-*

shin) remains as stable as in Japan. Special attention is given to defending the holy ceremonies and institutions of Ise Shintô, such as the *daijôsai*, the institution of the shrine princess (*Ise-saigû*), the regular renovations of the shrine buildings (*sengû*) etc. On the relationship between the Naikû and the Gekû, Nobuyoshi remarks both carefully and clearly that the view that the deity of the Naikû (Amaterasu ômikami) is nobler than the deity of the Gekû, and thus that the Naikû is superior to the Gekû, is merely a common assumption (Taira 1972: 535). In his view, Shintô is ultimately also a system of ethics for everyday use. Thus, man studies Shintô not only through the traditional customs and practices (*kojitsu*) or names and titles (*meimoku*), but by practicing the path of moderation (*chûdô*), straightforwardness (*shôjiki*), purity (*seiketsu*) and a heart as pure as a mirror. Every social class has its own duty (*shokubun*), as evident in the *gorin no michi* of the people. In this way, man returns to the ancient customs of the land of the gods (*shinkoku toyoashihara nakatsukuni*).

A further important work is the *Jingû hiden mondô*, written in 1660 (cf. Taira 1972: 532f.). In this work, Nobuyoshi expands upon his discussion of the relationship between the Outer and Inner Shrines. He proposes that the Gekû is the father and the Naikû is the mother. *Shôjiki* is the most important virtue for the common man (*bonbu*) in order to enter the realm of heavenly light.

2. 2. 6. Conclusion

To return to the original question of the relationship between religion and politics in the constantly changing sociocultural environment of Japan during the early Edo period, the development of Shintô during this period appears to closely reflect the political, social and cultural changes of the time.

In all major areas of religious life – ritual, administrative, philosophical and theological – Shintô was shaped by the new conditions. While this is often characterized as a Confucianization of Shintô, perhaps it were the Confucians who discovered and utilized elements of Shintô for political reasons in order to legitimate the new power structures. Which is more accurate: Confucian Shintô or Shintô Confucianism? Klaus Kracht (1986: 117) calls this question the »*problem of the identity of Confucian Shintô*.« Without pursuing a definitive answer to this question, which in some ways is reminiscent of the numerous Japanese theories of *honji-suijaku*, it seems more likely that Shintô accepted and integrated the challenge of Confucianism, rather than that Confucianism merely made use of elements of Shintô. It was the Yuiitsu, Watarai and other schools of Shintô, which had existed

since the Japanese Middle Ages, that integrated current schools of thought and thus gave Shintô access to the new power structures.

The Yoshida School in particular offers a clear picture of this development. Originally deeply rooted in the syncretistic thought of the Japanese Middle Ages, and above all in Shingon Buddhism, this school and its immediate followers – especially Yoshikawa Koretari – turned with astonishing speed toward the new structures and the ruling elite of the emerging *baku-han* system.

This is a remarkable example of traditionalism as an intellectual and religious system of legitimation for new social and political structures. Just as in the Meiji-period State Shintô combined the basic beliefs of the Kokugaku with modern nationalism into a religiously tinged ideology, 250 years earlier medieval Shintô used Neo-Confucianism as a means for claiming its part of the ruling power at the time. Thus, it can be concluded that the rituals and doctrine of Shintô-Confucian syncretism in the early Edo period offer a nearly perfect example of the emergence of a religious and ideological traditionalism that served the new power structures as an ideal system of legitimation.

Thus, I can only agree with Herman Ooms's emphasis on the importance of the development of Shintô for the genesis of early Edo period thought. Research in this area is only beginning to recognize the Shintô schools of the Edo period as independent intellectual, religious and ideological powers that cannot be understood merely as mythological and historical appendages of Japanese Neo-Confucianism. This perspective also offers an explanation for further developments in the course of the late Edo period, leading up to the ethnocentric discourse of the Kokugaku. Without the concept of the *shinkoku* and the position of the emperor as established by the Shintô-Confucian schools of the 17th century, the teachings of Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) would not have been the same.

However, before this area, which belongs to the late Edo period, can be covered in detail, it is first necessary to examine some important aspects of popular religious practice at the time.

3. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

It is remarkable that the peasants who participated in pilgrimages to Ise, which were immensely popular at the time, primarily worshipped the deity of the Outer Shrine (Gekû), the goddess of agriculture called Toyouke no kami. This circumstance was strongly criticized by no less than the great Kokugaku scholar Motoori Norinaga¹⁰⁹ in the late Edo period. The fierce conflicts between the priests of the Inner and Outer Shrines over superiority in the popular Ise School clearly show that a deep divide existed within the supposedly homogenous theological concept of the Daijingû of Ise. Mark Teeuwen (1995: 6) writes that pilgrims were even deterred by blockades on roads to the Inner Shrine. Since the Outer Shrine was not only dedicated to the worship of Toyouke no kami, but also represented the theological center of syncretistic Watarai or Ise Shintô as the headquarters of the Watarai family of priests, general religious practice and theological and philosophical Shintô came into close contact there. Especially through the influence of the teachings of Watarai Nobuyoshi, this school underwent a remarkable renewal and was repositioned toward Confucianism, which, as discussed above, marked a clear break with the medieval, syncretistic tradition of conventional Ise Shintô. Norinaga's vehement polemical work against the dominance of the Outer Shrine in the popular Ise school of his time includes clear references to the theological and ideological content of pilgrimages to Ise, for example, in his evaluation of the main written works of Watarai Shintô, the *Shintô gobusho* (cf. Teeuwen 1995: 38, note 117). This represents a clear point of connection between theory and practice in Edo period Shintô.

3. 1. *Pilgrimages to Ise in the Edo period*

There is no doubt that shrines in the Edo period primarily served to strengthen local and regional social connections between individuals, but in this context it is important not to overlook the few large nationally worshipped shrines that did not serve this purpose. These shrines played a central role in the extraordinarily popular pilgrimages during the Tokugawa period.

For the common people during the Edo period, nearly the only way to go beyond the borders of one's own locality, though only for a short time, was to par-

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Norinaga's work *Ise Naikû sakitake no ben* (Teeuwen 1995).

ticipate in pilgrimages to holy places worshiped on the national level. These pilgrimages, which were organized at the community level, functioned as an outlet for the administrative pressure of the strict social rules of the Tokugawa state. Religious as well as the most »worldly« of motives played a role in this practice. Furthermore, pilgrimages to the large, nationally worshipped shrines, of which Ise was the most prominent, strengthened the general consciousness of cultural similarities among the Japanese people that were not otherwise apparent due to the political, social and cultural restrictions of the time.

Pilgrimages to Ise were part of a larger tradition of pilgrimages in Edo period society that extended beyond the borders of individual territories and ultimately connected them with one another.¹¹⁰ However, the innovation of the Tokugawa period was not the pilgrimage routes themselves, but their general popularization; pilgrimages became popular among social classes that previously did not often taken part in them. »Edo pilgrimage was the modification and adaption of the pilgrimage of the ascetic holy men to commoners' needs, goals and aspirations,« (Shanti 1986: 260). Among the many pilgrimage routes¹¹¹, the following four were the most important (cf. Shanti 1986: 256ff.): Kumano,¹¹² Saikoku,¹¹³ Shikoku,¹¹⁴ and Ise. Pilgrimages to Ise became a part of the originally Buddhist tradition of pilgrimages in the Muromachi period; Deva Shanti (1986: 256) considers this an example »of the way Shintô gradually attained its own definition and doctrine in imitation of and competition with Buddhism.« The practice of worshipping at Ise became popular toward the end of the 16th century among the lower *bushi* and finally among the general population, due to the intensive missionary work by the »religious messengers« (Naumann 1994: 164), the *oshi* or *onshi*.¹¹⁵

These pilgrimages, of which the pilgrimage to Ise was the most popular from the end of the 17th century on, usually took the form of so-called »circular tours«

¹¹⁰ Cf. Antoni 1997c.

¹¹¹ Besides the places of pilgrimage mentioned in the text, Kōpira Shrine (cf. Shanti 1986: passim), Zenkōji Temple in Nagano, Mount Ōyama, and Enoshima, home of the god of fortune, were especially popular among the people of Edo (cf. »Historical Sketches – Processions and Pilgrimages. On the Road in Tokugawa Japan« in: *The East*, 23/1, March 1987: 15-19; Ehmcke 1994: 63ff., among others).

¹¹² On the relationship between the destinations of Kumano and Ise, cf. Nishigaki 1983: 53-68 (»Kumano to Ise«); Ehmcke (1994: 57) calls the popularity of Kumano »a classic example of successful marketing, to put it in modern terms,« since the *oshi* priests of Kumano were successful in drawing large numbers of pilgrims to their distant village thanks to their outstanding organization.

¹¹³ Cf. James H Foard's (1982) excellent study on the 33 stations of the Saikoku pilgrimage route (*Saikoku sanjūsan reijō*).

¹¹⁴ On the Shikoku pilgrimage route, cf. Pye 1987, Reader 2006.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Nishigaki 1983: 149-164 (»Kinsei no mura to oshi«).

(*junrei*), whose participants were chosen by their communities and were only allowed to take part in the trip with the express permission of the local officials. This official permission allowed them to cross territorial borders. The allowed length of travel was also regulated by the officials and could not be exceeded, in the interest of maintaining agricultural production and work-force availability. Thus, in *Saga-han* (Kyûshû) there were detailed lists for the allowed duration of each trip. The following restrictions existed for Ise, which was usually part of a circular tour involving several places of worship (cf. Shanti 1986: 267):

<i>Destinations</i>	<i>Allowed duration of travel</i>
Only Ise	100-120 days
Ise and Mount Kôya	120 days
Ise and Saikoku	120-150 days
Ise and Shikoku	180 days
Ise, Mount Kôya and Saikoku	150-180 days
Ise, Saikoku and Kompira	150-180 days
Ise, Saikoku, Mount Kôya and Kompira	150-180 days
Ise and Zenkôji	150 days
Ise, Saikoku and Zenkôji	150 days
Ise, Saikoku, Zenkôji, Shikoku, Nikkô and Enoshima	280 days

Such lists do not reveal to what extent the regulations were actually enforced, but they at least give us an idea of how long these long-distance pilgrimages actually took.

3. 1. 1. *The »confraternities« (kô)*

The organization of the trips fell to the so-called »confraternities« (*kô*), which spread mostly in villages, rather than in larger cities. Unlike the medieval *miyaza* or *tôya*, the »shrine guilds« controlled by the wealthy members of individual towns, »confraternities were voluntary associations to which peasants of all levels of village society could belong.« (Shanti 1986: 263) The town confraternities, which resulted from the missionary work of the oshi religious messengers, were responsible for organizing and especially financing the pilgrimage for one or sev-

eral members. Like community savings organizations – Franziska Ehmcke aptly calls them »organizations for financing travel« (Ehmcke 1994: 62) – money was collected from members over a long period of time and finally (usually in the form of a lottery) paid to the lucky few who were allowed to take part in the pilgrimage on behalf of the community. The possibility of winning was offered only once, in order to ensure that every member had an opportunity to travel. The purpose of the trip was to collect amulets from places along the pilgrimage route and bring them back to the village, where they were incorporated into the local shrine or temple. The amulets were seen as the property of the divinity of their respective holy places, thus ensuring the transfer of numinous power to the community.

Among the confraternities, the Ise confraternity (*Ise-kô*) was the most widespread. Bitô (1991) states in this context that the spread of the practice of worshipping at Ise among the population had far-reaching effects on local religious life. The missionary work of the *oshi* of Ise was originally only aimed at the upper classes, but starting in the late 16th century, they began to enlist common people as *danna* (*danka*, »supporter,« »community member«), and subsequently the numbers of both groups – the *oshi* as well as the *danna* – increased sharply. The number of *oshi* of the Outer Shrine grew, according to Bitô (1991: 392), from a total of 150 at the end of the 16th century to approximately 550 at the end of the 18th century, plus around 140 *oshi* of the Inner Shrine.¹¹⁶ According to a document from 1777, the *oshi* of the Outer Shrine alone had registered 4,961,370 households as *danna*, a number that would have been nearly the same as the entire population of Japan at the time. This fact shows that the Outer Shrine had a remarkably strong position¹¹⁷, which will be discussed in the following. Helen Hardacre (1989: 15) remarks that the network organized by the *oshi* extended across Japan:

»Between 80 and 90 percent of the nation maintained a confraternity membership, and thus powerful *oshi* might have as many as four to ten thousand households in their control.«

¹¹⁶ The numbers cited by Naumann (1994: 164), some of which differ from the above, offer a comparison: »At the end of the 16th century there were 145 *o-shi* families just at the Outer Shrine, but their numbers grew rapidly along with the growing enthusiasm for pilgrimages to Ise during the Edo period: between 1711 and 1716, there were already 504 *o-shi* families at the Outer Shrine, and at the Inner Shrine there were 241.«

¹¹⁷ On the relationship between Naikû and Gekû in the context of pilgrimages to Ise see also Nishigaki 1983: 69ff.

The *oshi* visited their confraternities one to two times a year in order to sell amulets, almanacs and other devotional objects. They were paid in kind, based on the price of rice.

3. 1. 2. *The Ise shrines during the Edo period*

The practice of worshipping at the Great Shrine of Ise (*daijingû*) gained importance during the Tokugawa period in several ways. First of all, the *bakufu* chose the arrangement and function of the two shrines as a pattern for the design of the Tôshôgû in Nikkô, the new »ancestral shrine« of the Tokugawa house. Just as Ise guaranteed the spiritual protection of the imperial household and the imperial capital of Kyôto, the new mausoleum for the founder of the Tokugawa dynasty, located to the northeast of Edo, was to become responsible for protecting the ruling house and city. This shows that the shrine was clearly based on the example of the imperial ancestral shrine – the intention of which was to elevate the Tokugawa house through spiritual legitimation. This gradual replacement of the Ise shrines by Nikkô was completed in the 1640s; in 1645 the emperor awarded the highest rank of *gû* to the Tôshôgû, placing it on the same level as Ise, and visits by the imperial family became a regular occurrence (cf. Ooms 1985: 182ff.).

But this was not the only way in which Ise gained significance within the religious policy of the *bakufu*. With the reinstatement of rituals relating to the imperial house that had mostly been forgotten since the Ônin War, which the *bakufu* carried out clearly for political reasons, the Great Shrine and the related ceremonial duties again became a matter of political interest.

As Seckel (1943: 62) writes, the central place of worship of the Yoshida house in Kyôto (*saijôsho*), took on the essential ceremonial functions of the Imperial Office of Divinities (*jingikan*), along with the newly established »deputy *jingikan*« (*jingikandai*).¹¹⁸ In 1609 (Keichô 14) an imperial ritual that was also important at Ise (*Ise issa hôbei*) was performed there for the first time (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 14).

Similar to the *daijôsai*, the ceremonial rebuilding (*shikinen sengû*) of the two Ise shrines had not taken place since the rebuilding of the Toyouke-daijingû (Gekû) in 1434 (Eikyô 6) and of the Kôtai-jingû (Naikû) in 1462 (Kansei 3), a period of more than 120 years. In 1563 (Eiroku 6) the ceremonial rebuilding of the Outer Shrine was once again able to be carried out due to a collection of offerings carried out by the Buddhist clergy. In the year 1609 (Keichô 14) the ceremonial re-

¹¹⁸ Cf. Naumann 1994: 72; Antoni 1997b: 184.

building of both Ise shrines was completed, a practice that continued every 20 years (13 times in all) until 1869.

Thus, the policy of the *bakufu*, which sought to ceremonially strengthen the imperial household while at the same time disempowering it politically, markedly raised the position of the Ise shrines – a change that also appears to have occurred among the common people. Along with the institutional reinstatement of the ceremonial position of Ise, the sect experienced an unprecedented rise in popularity and spread among very diverse sections of the population. This is the third important aspect regarding the position of Ise in the Edo period.

Bitô writes that, as opposed to the communal worship of the *ujigami*, the practice of worshipping at Ise was based on the individual belief of each person or household. This, he states, represents a new development in the popular religion of the *kami*, and the parallels between two kinds of *kami* worship – at the community level and at the level of individuals or households – came to define the period (Bitô 1991: 393). According to Bitô, worship at Ise is the most representative case of this latter group.

This assertion cannot remain uncontested. Although especially various outgrowths of the pilgrimages to Ise, such as the so-called *nuke-mairi* (»pilgrimage by slipping away,« cf. Ehmcke 1994: 62), solitary pilgrimages to Ise by individuals undertaken without permission, show signs of an expressive individualism, the phenomenon of popular pilgrimages to Ise exhibit strongly community-centered aspects. Deva Shanti (1986: 262) states as much in her impressive study on pilgrimages in the Edo period:

»Pilgrimage by the masses in the Edo period was both a result of their increased standard of living and of the typical social organization of the rural village. Like most other practices, rituals and ceremonies of popular religion, pilgrimage was not an individual or solitary practice. The function of pilgrimage was to benefit the social group as a whole.«

Disregarding mass-pilgrimages, such as the one that took place in 1830, which were an unusual occurrence, pilgrimages by the common people from the countryside generally followed a uniform pattern.

3. 1. 3. *The procedure of pilgrimages to Ise*

The monks Zôga and Kokan Shiren (1278-1347) are two examples of Buddhist clergymen who sought to establish a Buddhist interpretation of the most important place of worship in the country, Ise Shrine, especially pertaining to the rela-

tionship between the sun goddess and the Buddha of Light. This is reminiscent of Ryôbu Shintô, which postulates a unity of the two belief systems within Shingon Buddhist thought and theology. According to the core beliefs of this syncretistic religion, Amaterasu ômikami (the sun goddess worshipped at the Inner Shrine of Ise) is the Japanese manifestation of Dainichinyorai (Mahāvairocana), the »Great Sun« or »Light Buddha« in Shingon Buddhism. The pilgrimage to Ise is of great importance in this context; »from the beginning of the 12th century on, the pilgrimage to Ise became nearly a fashion« (Naumann 1994: 21).

Aside from the clearly Buddhist background of medieval pilgrimages, it is also significant that most of these pilgrimages were undertaken by individuals.¹¹⁹ For example, the monk Zôga set out alone for Ise, and the atmospheric description of Ise by Kokan Shiren as a place of complete silence and utter simplicity coincides with the image of the lone pilgrim:

»I visited the shrine of the gods in the province of Ise. High mountains loom all around. A small stream winds along the way, through a dense forest of high cedars. Many of the trees have a circumference of ten fathoms. They are more than one hundred feet high. Not a bird sings. All is dark and silent. The hall is ancient and simple in design, decorated with reed and bramble and is without any carvings. The people standing before it hold their breath. They enter with cautious steps. Their hearts are already full of awe.« (*Genkô shakusho* XVIII = Naumann, Wolfram 1989b: 331)

Reading this description by a contemplative pilgrim to Ise from the Japanese Middle Ages, the report of another pilgrimage provided by Winston Davis (1983) and vividly described according to a contemporary source, appears almost unbelievable. Only a few excerpts of note from the entire account are presented here:

»So many pilgrims were on the road that many, unable to find lodging at the end of the day, were forced to sleep in the fields. Others trudged along through the dark only to fall into the clutches of thieves. Those lucky enough to find a place in an inn were forced to share their mat with three or four others. [...] Some pilgrims (especially those who had taken French leave) starved to death after the almsgivers lost their initial enthusiasm. [...] Pregnant women sometimes gave birth in tea shops or inns along the way. [...] Some went mad when they lost their children in the crowds. With the roads so crowded, mothers who could not find a place to change their children were

¹¹⁹ There appears to be a wide selection of sources on medieval and modern pilgrimages to Ise. The catalogue *Kokusho sômokuroku* (1963-1976) alone lists more than 50 titles on the topic of Ise-sangû (Volume 1: 202f.); the categorized collection of texts *Kojiruien* dedicates an entire section to this topic (*sangû*; cf. *Kojiruien*, Volume *Jingi-bu* 3: 631-680). The collection *Gunsho ruijû* contains several relevant medieval sources (cf. *Gunsho kaidai*, Volume 3 (p. 324, 363, 391, 392), Volume 6 (p. 322, 324), Volume 8 (pp. 326, 457)).

forced to walk on and on while the infants on their backs stank and squalled.« (Davis 1983: 107)

A different account tells of a quite special procession to the Great Shrine of Ise:

»[...] led by the aged but apparently successful master of a brothel in Shizuoka. [...] At each side marched an entourage of about twenty prostitutes all in the same costume. Following them came more than thirty porters and coolies, also in livery, with the bags. Over their heads fluttered an enormous banner with the words, 'Our Second Pilgrimage.'« (Davis 1983: 102-103)

It is difficult to believe that this account and the one by the medieval monk refer to the same basic subject, pilgrimages to Ise. Apparently there are almost unimaginably stark contrasts in the coordination and atmosphere of the pilgrimages. A difference of no less than 500 years separates Kokan Shiren's account and the descriptions from the source interpreted by Davis, a written work from the late 1840s called *Ukiyo no arisama*.¹²⁰ The chaotic conditions of pilgrimages in the early 19th century have nothing in common with the contemplative quiet pilgrimages in earlier centuries. They are the result of a long, continual historical process that brought about a drastic change in religious practice in the wake of changes in the country's social, cultural, political and economic conditions.

»The place of pilgrimage, of mercy, is a kind of second home,« the religious historian Gerardus van der Leeuw remarks in his study of the phenomenology of religion. He continues: »It is said to provide wealth, offspring, the fulfillment of wishes, redemption from sin, admittance to the world of the gods and eternal happiness - nearly every power one could wish for.« (van der Leeuw 1997: 456)

Allowing for certain cultural limitations, this general statement can also be applied to pilgrimages in Japan. However, in this case, unlike Bitô, the collective aspect of the pilgrimage experience must be emphasized. An instructive example of this collective mentality of pilgrimages can be found, for example, in a Japanese folk tale that begins with a call for a collective pilgrimage to Ise. The story, »The Father in the Mirror,« which originated in Hanamaki in Iwate Prefecture, is told by a man who is mourning the death of his father. In order to cheer him up, the others invite him to take part in a collective pilgrimage to Ise:

¹²⁰ Davis (1983: 105, note 26) refers to the printed editions of the source in the series *Kokushi sôsho* (1917-20) and *Nihon shômin seikatsu shiryô shûsei*, Volume 11, (Tôkyô: San'ichi shobô), 1971 (complete edition). A partial edition can be found in the series *Nihon shisô taikai* (cf. Shôji 1985: 307-371).

»Then, finally, a neighbor came to him and said that all the inhabitants of the village planned to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Ise (*Ise-mairi*), and that rather than sit in his house and cry, he too should go along on the pilgrimage to Ise, for this would surely improve his mood. And so the man decided to make the pilgrimage, in memory of his father.« (Antoni 1989: 5)

This portrayal shows rural pilgrimages as a collective undertaking by the entire village in which everyone could (and should) take part. However, aside from the times when mass pilgrimages were common, this was not the usual form of pilgrimage undertaken by the rural population. Primarily due to financial reasons, only chosen members of such rural communities were sent on the journey, with the express purpose of carrying out the religious ceremonies as a representative of the entire community and to bring the amulet of the place of pilgrimage back home to ensure the entire community's protection.

3. 1. 4. *Ise-mairi and the beginnings of mass tourism*

Clearly the pilgrims, especially the »representatives« chosen by communities, also had worldly motives for traveling on pilgrimages beyond purely religious reasons. Under the *baku-han* system, with its enforced immobility, clearly defined roles for the individual within society and strict control over the people, pilgrimages were the only possibility for commoners to escape the limitations and social controls of their local environment, even if only for a short time. Aside from the ecstatic mass pilgrimages, in which case the usual rules appear not to have applied, pilgrimages in general also appear to have been strictly organized and their success supervised. Even so, the journey offered a degree of freedom that would be unthinkable under normal circumstances. Thus, the concept of religious pilgrimages and early forms of mass tourism came together in a fascinating, specifically Japanese way.

Many of the aspects of Japanese travel customs that many non-Japanese find to be peculiar to the country, such as the duty of the individual to bring back »souvenirs« (*miyage*) for members of their family or organization, originated in the pilgrimages of the Edo period. In this context, Franziska Ehmcke (1994: 65) remarks that at the time,

»*miyage* meant 'something brought from the shrine,' an amulet or some other holy object. Thus, the pilgrims brought back a concrete piece of the religious experience undertaken as a representative of the entire community. The 'parting gift,' or *sembetsu*, allowed those who stayed behind to participate in the pilgrimage both in symbolic and real terms, and they were included in the result in the same way through the *miyage*, the 'gift from the shrine.'«

Pilgrimages showed similar characteristics to modern mass tourism in other ways as well. Vast entertainment districts offering every kind of diversion and amusement were established around the places of pilgrimage. In Ise, the entertainment district of Furuichi between the Inner and Outer Shrines became nationally famous. At its peak, this district supposedly housed no less than 70 brothels. Whether the following disillusioned remark on the motives of pilgrims to Ise is true can hardly be proven: »In actuality, the pleasures of the Furuichi were the principal motive for the pilgrimages of many men.«¹²¹ However, Davis (1983: 108) offers some perspective in his reference to the significance of prostitution in Japanese tradition.

3. 1. 4. 1. *Travel guidebooks*

As travel became increasingly popular during the course of the Edo period (not only in the religious context), travel guidebooks were published in great numbers.¹²² Among these, the illustrated guidebooks to famous places, the so-called *Meisho zue* published beginning in 1780, are also of great cultural-historical value.¹²³ The illustrated travel guidebook for pilgrims to Ise, the *Ise-sangû meisho zue*, published in 1797,¹²⁴ is especially significant in this context. This was the sixth volume in the series of illustrated guidebooks,¹²⁵ a visual representation of famous places on the pilgrimage route from Kyôto to Ise, which also included commentaries. Illustrated and written by Shitomi Kangetsu (1747-1797) and published in eight *maki*, the illustrations in this work are its most striking feature, as Rose Hempel (1963: 114) points out. Rolls 1 to 5 describe famous places on the road from Kyôto to Ise, as well as the Ise shrines themselves and the surrounding area. The sixth volume focuses on the region around Lake Biwa. Toda (1931: 333) distinguishes between three kinds of illustrations in the work: historical pictures, landscapes, and illustrations of daily life. The compilation on the *Meisho zue* of the Edo period edited by Dufey and Laube (1995) reprints a genre picture of a pil-

¹²¹ »Historical Sketches – Processions and Pilgrimages. On the Road in Tokugawa Japan.« In: *The East*, 23/1, March 1987: 18.

¹²² Cf. Nishigaki 1983: 165-190 (»Ise he no michi«); Foard 1982: 241ff., Ehmcke 1994: 66ff.; »Historical Sketches [...]« (cf. note 119) 1987: 18.

¹²³ Cf. Toda 1931; Dufey, Laube (ed.) 1995; Hempel 1963.

¹²⁴ For information on dates, cf. Toda 1931: 333; Dufey, Laube (ed.) 1995: 323. Some commentators hold that the work was published in 1796; cf. Ehmcke 1994: 67; Hempel 1963: 113.

¹²⁵ Cf. Hempel 1963: 113; for a list of important *Meisho zue*, cf. Dufey, Laube (ed.) 1995: 323-324.

grimage to Ise that corresponds to the third category of Toda's classification.¹²⁶ Kanji Kurumizawa writes:

»The picture shows pilgrims on way to Ise spending the night in the guest-house district of Nakagawahara. On the lefthand side of the picture, *oshi* are shown picking up pilgrims from the journey. In the guest house (*ryôkan*), there is a sign from a group of pilgrims from the area with the inscription *kô* (pilgrimage savings organization, or confraternity).«

Thus, many of the elements that characterized pilgrimages to Ise can be found in this single illustration.¹²⁷

This makes the *Ise-sangû meisho zue* one of the most important sources for understanding the reality of pilgrimages to Ise. Its landscapes and genre pictures, together with commentaries and accounts of historical events, offer insight into the procedure and atmosphere of the most popular pilgrimage route of the time. However, it should be taken into account that this is a relatively late work pertaining to the situation in the late Edo period. For instance, the festival aspect of large-scale pilgrimages only developed after the mass pilgrimage of 1771 (Davis 1983: 102), and it did not take long for the chaotic events of 1830 to come about. This means that one must be cautious when applying the impressions contained in the *Ise-sangû meisho zue* from 1797 to the *Ise-mairi* of the early Edo period, which had not yet developed into the mass *okage-mairi* (»thanksgiving pilgrimages«) of later years.

These *okage-mairi*, mass pilgrimages to the shrines at Ise, formed the peak of the general popularization of worship at Ise during the time of national seclusion.¹²⁸ Although mass pilgrimages to Ise »broke out« in a roughly sixty-year cy-

¹²⁶ Dufey, Laube 1995: 256, illustration 128 »Wallfahrt nach Ise« (»Pilgrimage to Ise«)

¹²⁷ The rest of Kurumizawa's commentary is also worth quoting here, since he gives a concise overview of the basic characteristics of *Ise-mairi*: »In Japan, pilgrimages have been made to certain temples and shrines since ancient times. In the Edo period, they became even more popular. Especially the journey with a group of pilgrims to Ise Shrine, called *Ise-mairi*, was to be taken at least once in one's lifetime. Perhaps this place of Shintô worship was thought to offer the most divine mercy because the clan deity of the emperor and the god of agriculture are worshipped there. At Ise Shrine, priests called *oshi* (»honorable teacher«) took care of the travelers. Each was responsible for a certain region. They visited the worshipers at home, sold them *ofuda*, talismans for worship at home altars, and invited them to take part in pilgrimages. They were paid for these activities. Their job was seen as a privilege and soon became subject to inheritance and could be bought and sold.« (l.c.)

¹²⁸ On the phenomenon of *okage-mairi*, cf. Nishigaki 1983: 191-206 (»Okage-mairi no hitobito«); Nishigaki 1984: 145-242. Davis 1983: passim. Franziska Ehmcke (1994: 62f.) remarks in this context: »All pilgrims wore white pilgrim robes, had a ladle (*hishaku*) for drawing the ritual purifying water at the shrines and sang: 'Okage de sa, sururi to na, nuketa to sa' ('Thanks to your help, I secretly slipped away.'). For this reason, pilgrimages to Ise were called 'Thanks-to-your-help pil-

cle, the pilgrimages of 1705, 1771 and 1830 corresponded most closely to this idea. The source cited by Davis comments critically on the most famous (perhaps also the most infamous) pilgrimage among these three, which took place in the third month of the year Bunsei 13 (1830) and began in Shikoku.¹²⁹ Even though the mass pilgrimage had not yet become a phenomenon in all regions of Japan (Kantô, Tôhoku and Kyûshû were apparently not affected; cf. Davis 1983: 101), in this year nearly five million people made the journey to Ise, compared to the average of 300,000 to 400,000 pilgrims in »normal« years. The reason for this pilgrimage, which bordered on mass hysteria, was the supposed raining of amulets from Ise, which, beginning in Shikoku, spread across the entire country and inspired large numbers of people to make the pilgrimage. Raining amulets, along with the ecstatic dance cults (*odori*) of the time, are a fascinating example of Japanese folk religion in the Edo and *bakumatsu* periods; their genesis and popularization are the subject of extensive studies by Reinhard Zöllner (2003). In 1830 the *Ise-odori* or *okage-odori*, which had broken out in various parts of the country, were among the most obligatory events of the mass pilgrimage.¹³⁰

However, the »pilgrimages of thanks« (*okage-mairi*) represented only the peak of a development brought about by the practice of worshipping at Ise¹³¹ and the related popularization of the pilgrimages (*Ise-mairi*) over the course of the Edo period.¹³²

3. 1. 5. Engelbert Kaempfer as a chronicler of the pilgrimage to Ise

In order to understand pilgrimages in earlier times, it is worth considering a source that has hardly received any attention until now, but offers an extremely valuable account of this phenomenon: the report from Japan by the doctor and researcher Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), who served the Dutch. His travel accounts from Japan during the Genroku period (1688-1703), which tell of his voyages to Edo with the Dutch mission (Feb. 13, 1691 to May 8, 1691 and Mar. 2, 1692 to May 25, 1692; cf. Beck 1966: 10), are doubtlessly well known. They also contain

grimages,' *okage-mairi*, since the pilgrims could travel on ships and ferries and cross bridges for free, received free straw sandals and were sometimes even given money.«

¹²⁹ Yano Yoshiko's (1984) thorough study gives a detailed account of this mass pilgrimage.

¹³⁰ Davis (1983: 101, note 11) points to the fact that the Ise dances were documented throughout the Tokugawa period, especially in the years 1614, 1621, 1624, 1653, 1678 and 1714.

¹³¹ On the development of worship (or religion) at Ise in the Edo period, cf. the collection by Nishigaki 1984; especially the section »Kinsei-Ise-shinkô to minzoku,« which contains various articles (p. 245-332); see also Fukuya 1988: 109f.; Tokoro 1973.

¹³² Niiki 1984 offers a thorough statistical analysis of the number and size of pilgrimages to Ise during the Edo period, as well as the geographical origin of their participants.

vivid accounts of the travelers' encounters with pilgrims to Ise on the long road from Nagasaki to Edo.¹³³

And yet, however vivid each of these accounts may be, they provide only momentary glimpses and fleeting impressions of the journey. Kaempfer's systematic treatise on the pilgrimages to Ise, on the other hand, which is part of the third book of his main work (cf. Kaempfer 1727) *History of Japan* (HoJ) is of great academic interest.¹³⁴ Despite the discussions of Kaempfer's work that have emerged in recent years, it can be said that this work represents a historically authentic, generally well-founded and systematic discussion of the religions of Japan during the Genroku period. As will be discussed in the following, this work represents an important source for our knowledge of the culture of this period, and it is regrettable that his systematic remarks on contemporary religions have received far too little attention in the past.

In the context of the change in the function of the *Ise-mairi*, one of Kaempfer's remarks is particularly important. He writes:

»Orthodox *Sintoists* go in Pilgrimage to *Isje* once a year, or at least once in their life. Nay 'tis thought a duty incumbent on every true Patriot, whatever sect or religion he otherwise adheres to, and a publick mark of respect and gratitude, which every one ought to pay to *Tensio Dai Sin*, if not, as to the God and Protector of the Nation, at least, as to its founder and first parent.«(HoJ III/4 = Kaempfer 1727: 226)

This account clearly highlights the »overall Japanese« intentions that were already associated with pilgrimages to Ise at the end of the 17th century. As is evident from other parts of the work, »orthodox *Sintoists*« means the disciples of Yuiitsu Shintô of the house of Yoshida. One can see how far the ideas of this school, which anticipated the national-political concepts of the Kokugaku, had apparently already spread among the people at this early time, since »every true Patriot, whatever sect or religion he otherwise adheres to« was expected to undertake a pilgrimage for this reason. This indirectly confirms a theory by James H. Foard, which states that pilgrimages in the Edo period (even purely Buddhist ones) particularly served to form communities across the nation:

»As Japan became both a cognitive and functional region for more and more Japanese, pilgrimage contributed its vision of national communitas.« (Foard 1982: 247)

¹³³ Cf. Scuria (ed.) 1969: 103-105, 165-166, 168, 172, 226.

¹³⁴ For a historical critical edition of Kaempfer's original manuscripts cf. Kaempfer 2001.

This suggests certain aspects of the subject that will be discussed later. The relationship between the two Ise shrines is particularly significant in this context. This is evident, for example, in the previously mentioned warning by the Kōkugaku scholar Motoori Norinaga, who, at the turn of the 19th century, ultimately demanded a turning away from the worship of the Gekū in favor of the Inner Shrine – that is, to the ancestral deity of the imperial house. The era described by Kaempfer also apparently represents a transitional period for the increasingly nationwide importance of the practice of worshipping at Ise.

In his account of pilgrimages to Ise, Kaempfer offers great insights into religious life in the early Edo period. Kaempfer's descriptions and analyses are far more important than mere travel reports. He was the first to demonstrate a »Japanological« view by relating the religious, cultural, social and political conditions of his time to one another. For this reason, our investigation of religious life in the early Edo period will continue with a closer examination of Kaempfer's work (see also Antoni 1997d).

4. ENGELBERT KAEMPFER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF EDO PERIOD SHINTÔ

With few exceptions, European observers of Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries paint a picture of the country's religions that is deeply influenced by their own basic concept of religion. Even when they attempt to provide an objective account of Japanese culture overall, they generally lack this intercultural generosity when it comes to the area of religion. Even Luis Frois (1532-1597), who otherwise strives for a balanced representation of Japanese culture, cannot escape his own shadow on this subject. Frois's basic attitude is apparent in his outraged remark:

»In our society, a man who changes religions is said to be a renegade and an apostate; in Japan one can switch sects as often as one likes without the slightest scandal.«¹³⁵

As Peter Kapitza justly remarks, only when it comes to religious institutions does Frois fall into overly simplistic categories, »because he abandons the principle of the objective, critical view in favor of Christianity and its contemporary view of non-Christian religions.« (Kapitza 1990: 133)

If even such an intelligent and prudent observer left the path of objectivity in the area of religion, then it is not surprising that less well-educated Europeans took an even more ignorant position. One example, cited here *pars pro toto*, is a certain Eberhard Werner Happel, who compiled his *Thesaurus Exoticorum* in 1688 in Hamburg, which contained »foreign rarities and stories.« His bizarre writings on »the Japanese religion« reach their peak in his remark:

»Their outward worship is very brutish / and consists of satanic images / their highest idols are Xaca / with three heads under one hat / Canon, Amida's son, with seven heads on his chest.«¹³⁶

Still further testimonies by European reporters could be cited, which vary in their assessment of the Japanese religions, yet are largely negative, such as those of Jorge Alvarez (1547), Francisco de Xavier (1549), Cosme de Torres (1557), Bal-

¹³⁵ Quoted from Kapitza 1990: 136; on Luis Frois, cf. Jorissen 1988; Schurhammer, Voretzsch 1926.

¹³⁶ Kapitza (1990: 883) cites Happel's depiction »as an example of this kind of fashion and entertainment writing.« Original: »Ihr eusserlicher Gottesdienst ist sehr Viehisch / und bestehet in einem teuffelschen Bilder=Dienst / ihre vornehmste Abgötter seind Xaca / mit 3 Köpfen unter einer Mütze / Canon des Amida Sohn mit 7 Köpfen auf der Brust.«

tasar Gago (1562), Gaspar Vilela (1571), François Caron (1645), Arnold Montanus (1669), Pierre Bayle (1702/1742), Johann Christoph Gottsched (1725)¹³⁷ and others, but this would not change the general fact that the European view of the foreign Japanese religion, was deeply distorted by its own perspective.

4. 1. *The academic reception of the work*

As Detlef Haberland (1990 b: 27) justly remarks, Kaempfer was »the first to give a detailed account of Shintô.« However, his account has left behind no apparent traces in the field. The criticism and disdain expressed by such authorities as Aston (1902) and Schurhammer (1923) have led to the fact that, up until now, Kaempfer's description and analysis of Shintô have not been paid enough attention in historical Shintô studies.¹³⁸ I do not know of a single work that has done justice to Kaempfer's writings as a serious, historically valuable, ethnographic and ethnological source on Shintô during the Edo period. Therefore, it is necessary to take a fresh look at this otherwise well-known source.¹³⁹

4. 1. 1. *Religions in Kaempfer's History of Japan*

The third book of the first volume of Kaempfer's main work, *History of Japan* (HoJ), contains a description and systematic analysis of the Japanese religions, and of Shintô in particular. The whole work, being based on notes from the years 1690 to 1692, was published in 1727 as Kaempfer's masterwork on Japan, which had been completed in German but not yet published during Kaempfer's lifetime.

¹³⁷ Cf. Kapitza (1990) in this context on Jorge Alvarez (p. 65f.), Francisco de Xavier (p. 80-84), Cosme de Torres (p. 103-104), Baltasar Gago (p. 117), Gaspar Vilela (p. 129-130), François Caron (p. 546-558, 559), Arnold Montanus (p. 690, 701, 708), Pierre Bayle (p. 47), Johann Christoph Gottsched (p. 172); see also the notes on Japanese religions in Th. Salomon and M. van Goch (1729, Kapitza 1990: 298-300), as well as Johann Jacob Brucker (1744), who, as Kapitza remarks (1990: 412), »refuses to admit that there is any kind of philosophical meaning in Shintô mythologies,« which is to be seen as »a sign of the limits of the Enlightenment.« (l.c.)

¹³⁸ An example in this regard may be seen in an essay by J. A. G. Roberts (1989), which discusses contemporary European reports on the intellectual development of the Edo period. In this context, it is remarkable that the author devotes a section to »Shintô« (p. 157-161) in which positions and definitions are cited that clearly can be traced back to Kaempfer, without citing their true source. Kaempfer is only mentioned in summary (p. 151f.).

¹³⁹ The general »rediscovery« of Kaempfer in academic research has been documented in a whole series of conferences and symposiums on the subject of his life and work; cf. Bodart-Bailey, Masarella 1995; Haberland 1993; Kreiner 1992; already in 1966, a memorial work on Kaempfer and Siebold was published by the OAG (cf. OAG-Tokyo 1966). Besides geographical and historical details, Kaempfer also provides information on the botany (cf. Muntschik 1993b, 1995; Werger-Klein 1993), cartography, (Sternstein 1993; also Schmeißer 1995) and the Japanese language (cf. Michel 1993). For recent research cf. Kaempfer 2001.

The English translation was done by J. Caspar Scheuchzer and finally published under the title *The History of Japan*. Only in 1777 and 1779 was a German edition published by Christian Wilhelm Dohm in two volumes, which was comparable to the English edition and was reprinted in its original form in 1964 (Kaempfer 1964). In 2001 a complete edition of his original version in German was published for the first time under the original title *Heutiges Japan* (»Today's Japan«). (Cf. Kaempfer 2001)

The third book, »Of the state of Religion in Japan,« is found in the first of the two volumes of the 1727 print, and contains a total of seven chapters (HoJ III/1-7 = Kaempfer 1727: 203-252):

Chap. I. Of the Religions of this Empire in general, and of the *Sintos*-Religion in particular (203)

Chap. II Of the *Sintos* Temples, belief and worship (208)

Chap. III Of the *Sintos Rebi*, that is, their fortunate and holidays, and the celebration thereof (215)

Chap. IV. Of the *Sanga*, or Pilgimage to *Isje* (225)

Chap. V. Of the *Jammabos*, or Mountain-priests, and other religious orders (232)

Chap. VI. Of the *Budsdo*, or foreign Pagan Worship, and its founder (241)

Chap. VII. Of the *Siuto*, that is, the doctrine and way of life of their Moralists and Philosophers.

In the first four chapters of this book, Kaempfer provides a systematic discussion of Shintô. Although references and comments with valuable information on this topic are also scattered throughout the entire work, the author's systematic discussion on this subject is mainly concentrated in these sections.

4. 1. 1. 1. »Of the Religions of this Empire in general, and of the *Sintos*-Religion in particular«

The first chapter (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 203-208) begins with a remarkable, programmatic statement on religious freedom, which Kaempfer – on the eve of the European Enlightenment¹⁴⁰ – surely placed at the beginning of his discussion of the religions of Japan not without further intentions:

»Liberty of Conscience, so far as it doth not interfere with the Interest of the secular Government, or affect the peace and tranquility of the Empire, hath been at all times allow'd in *Japan*, as it is in most other Countries of *Asia*. Hence it is,

¹⁴⁰ Kaempfer's relationship to the Enlightenment is discussed in Kapitzka 1980 and Klueping 1993. Of note in this context is the high esteem for Kaempfer's work held by none other than Voltaire, who called Kaempfer a »freedom-loving and well educated traveler« (cf. Kapitzka 1990: 466).

that foreign Religions were introduc'd with ease, and propagated with success, to the great prejudice of that, which was establish'd in the country from remotest antiquity.« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 203)

Directly after this general statement, the author lists the most important religious schools of thought in Japan:

»In this last hundred years there were chiefly four Religions, considerable for the number of their adherents, to wit.

1. *Sinto*, the old Religion, or Idol-worship, of the Japanese.
2. *Budsdô*, The worship of foreign Idols, which were brought over into *Japan*, from the Kingdom of *Siam*, and the Empire of *China*.
3. *Siuto*, The Doctrine of their Moralists and Philosophers.
4. *Deivus*, or *Kiristando*, is as much as to say, the way of God and Christ, whereby must be understood the Christian Religion.« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 203)

Kaempfer also examines Christianity and its downfall in Japan, which, as the author asserts, was the fault of the Jesuit mission.¹⁴¹ Among contemporary religions, it is Shintô that, according to Kaempfer, is the most important:

»Of the three chief Religions, which now flourish and are tolerated in *Japan*, the SINTOS. must be considered in the first place, more for its antiquity and long standing, than for the number of its adherents.« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 204)

After a detailed explanation of the word Sinto (shintô), the author discusses in detail various aspects of the history, theology and metaphysics of this religion, about whose independence as a religion he does not raise the slightest doubt, given that he was a contemporary of the Genroku period (1688-1704). As is typical for the time he lived in, Kaempfer consistently makes more or less serious factual errors, a fact that Aston (1902) rightly criticizes. For example, Kaempfer's attempts to trace »This Religion [which] seems to be nearly as ancient as the nation itself« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 205) back to biblical and Babylonian roots appear rather obscure to present-day readers. But in this context, it is at least worth noting that Kaempfer constructs a kind of evolutionary model for religion(s) that

¹⁴¹ It is Kaempfer who blames the missionaries themselves for the persecution of Christians during the Edo period, as evidenced by this statement: »Considering what a vast progress it had made till then, even amidst the many storms and difficulties it had been exposed to, there was very good reason to hope, that within a short compass of time the whole Empire would have been converted to the faith of our Saviour, had not the ambitious views, and impatient endeavours of, these Fathers, to reap the temporal, as well as the spiritual fruits of their care and labour, so provoked the supreme Majesty of the Empire as to raise, against themselves and their converts, a persecution, which hath not its parallel in History, whereby the Religion, they preach'd, and all those that profess'd it, were in a few years time entirely exterminated.« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 204)

includes Japanese Shintô. Furthermore, especially the most recent research points to close cultural-historical contacts between Mesopotamia and ancient Japanese religion.¹⁴²

The position of the Japanese emperor is especially important in this context, whom Kaempfer, who regards him as a kind of pope, characterizes as a living god:

»This Japanese Pope assumes also to himself, the sole power and authority of deifying and canonizing others.« (HoJ III / 1 = Kaempfer 1727: 206)

The author also appears to be surprisingly well informed about the mythological background of the imperial genealogy in detail:

»[...] The *Tensin Sitz Dai*, or *seven great Celestial Spirits*, who are said to have existed in the most antient times of the Sun, long before the existence of men and heaven, and to have inhabited the Japanese world (the only country in their opinion then existing) many millions of years.« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 206)

Finally, as a further important criterion, Kaempfer states that »this religion [...] is so closely connected with the political life that it exists almost exclusively in the outward customs of the people.«¹⁴³ This is reminiscent of much later, so-called State Shintô concepts from the modern era, which officially define Shintô as a kind of conglomeration of Japanese folklore and ritual. However, Kaempfer clearly states that this is not the whole picture; rather, a theology that was passed down by priests does indeed exist, but it is not generally accessible: »They will teach their system of divinity to others for a proper consideration, and under an obligation of secrecy;« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 207). Following a loose quotation on the creation of the world apparently taken from the *Nihonshoki*, Kaempfer continues in the German version of the text with an astonishingly learned excursus on the term *ki*, the »anima universi,« in the context of Shintô theology.¹⁴⁴ But

¹⁴² For further details, cf. Antoni 1988: 206-209, among others.

¹⁴³ This quotation follows Dohm's German translation of Kaempfer's/Scheuchzer's text (GBJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1777-79 repr. 1964: 255), which reads: »Diese Religion hängt mit dem politischen Leben dadurch genau zusammen, daß sie fast nur in äußern bürgerlichen Gebräuchen besteht«. Scheuchzer's English version is slightly different (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 207); but since the original text is in accordance with the German version and reads: »Es ist diese Religion mit der Policeij also verbunden, ...« (Kaempfer 2001, vol. I: 175) it is correct to use the phrase »political life« here.

¹⁴⁴ English translation of the passage in Kaempfer (1777-79 repr. 1964: 256): »This *ki*, however, means: 1) the highest essence of the gods, 2) the souls of humans, and 3) the souls of the animals. No specific place is given to the most subtle light-essence of the gods, besides the *tensho dai shin*, which should be in the heart of any well-meaning, pure soul. The pure beings or souls, however, are strictly separated and differentiated from the impure beings or souls.«

it remains unclear if this is an additional note by the translator Dohm, dating from 1777, since the topic is missing also in the recently discovered original version of the text (Kaempfer 2001)

4. 1. 1. 2. »Of the Sintos Temples, belief and worship«

After discussing the basic foundations of Japanese religions and establishing the prominent position of Shintô in the first chapter, the following sections focus on various aspects and topics relevant in this context. The second chapter (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 208-215) is entitled »Of the *Sintos* Temples, belief and worship.« The first sentences of this chapter demonstrate that Kaempfer was also knowledgeable about the linguistic aspects of his subject:

»The *Sinsju*, that is, the adherents of the *Sintos* Religion, call their Temples, or Churches, *Mia*, which word, as I have observ'd, signifies dwelling places of immortal Souls. They come nearest to the *Fana* of the ancient Romans, as they are generally speaking so many lasting monuments erected to the memory of great men. They call them also *Jasijro*, and *Sia*, or *Sinsja*, which last takes in the whole Court of the *Mia*, with all other buildings and dependencies belonging to the same. The Gods, who are the subject of their worship, they call *Sin* and *Cami*, which signifies Souls or Spirits. Sometimes also they honour them with the epithet of *Miosin*, sublime, illustrious, holy; and *Gongen*, just, severe, jealous. The adherents of other religions call the convents of their religious men, and the places of their worship, *Sisia Tira*, that is, temples, and the Gods themselves, which they adore, *Fotoge*. All other foreign Idols, the worship of whom was brought into Japan from beyond Sea, are comprehended under one general name of *Bosatz*, or *Budz*.« (HoJ III /2 = Kaempfer 1727: 208)

Following these introductory words, the author turns to a detailed description of a typical Shintô shrine. The general layout and structure are discussed, as well as the significance of various details, such as *torii* and bells. Once again, Kaempfer's critical view is apparent in his remark on the bells:

»Over the Temple-door hangs sometimes a wide flat bell, and a strong, long, knotted rope, wherewith those that come to worship, strike the bell, as it were, to give notice to the Gods of their presence. This custom however is not very ancient, nor did it originally belong to the *Sintos* Religion, for it was borrow'd from the *Budsdo*, or foreign Idol-worship.« (HoJ III /2 = Kaempfer 1727: 209)

Kaempfer describes further aspects of shrine architecture and of the most important objects in great detail. He discusses the special aspects of the *hongû*

(Fongu) as well as the function of various relics. The author also proves to be knowledgeable about the ranks of the priesthood, the differences between *negi*, *kannushi* and *shanin*, and their clothing. Finally, Kaempfer shows a deep understanding of the administrative structures of contemporary religious policy in a paragraph in which he discusses the position of the *jisha-bugyô* (cf. chapter II: 2. 2. 3), the highest position in the *bakufu* for regulating the country's religious institutions.¹⁴⁵

Kaempfer remarks that the Shintô priests are »haughty and proud, beyond expression, fancying themselves to be of a far better make, and nobler extraction than other people.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 211) Their behavior contrasts with what he sees as their rather simple theology (»the whole Sintos Religion is so mean and simple«, (l.c.). In his view, the simplicity of Shintô is also the reason why Shintô and Buddhism entered into such a close relationship with one another. Kaempfer proceeds to give a thorough discussion of theology and syncretism, in which he differentiates between the two main schools, which he calls the »Juitz« (*yuiitsu*) or »Orthodox Adherents«, and the »Riobu« (*ryôbu*), or »Syncretists.« Clearly this means Yuiitsu Shintô and Ryôbu Shintô.

»The first of these Sects is call'd *Juitz*. The Orthodox Adherents of this, continued so firm and constant in the religion and customs of their ancestors, that they would not yield in any the least point, how insignificant soever. But they are so very inconsiderable in number, that the *Canusi's*, or Priests themselves make up the best part. The other Sect is that of the *Riobu's* : These are a sort of Syncretists, who for their own satisfaction and for the sake of a more extensive knowledge in religious matters, particularly with regard to the future state of our Souls, endeavour'd to reconcile, if possible' the foreign Pagan Religion, with that of their ancestors. In order to this they suppose, that the Soul of *Amida* whom the *Budsdoists* adore as their Saviour, dwelt by transmigration in the greatest of their Gods *Ten Sio Dai Sin*, the essence, as they call him, of light and sun. Most *Sintoists* confess themselves to this Sect.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 212)

Kaempfer then moves on to an excursus on the Shintô teachings on the soul, which he finds unusual, since they do not include the »transmigration of Souls,« nor any kind of hell. Here, too, he divides the basic teachings of Shintô theology into five points, each of which he then discusses:

¹⁴⁵ »In Spiritual Affairs, they are under the absolute jurisdiction of the Mikaddo, but in Temporalities, they, and all other Ecclesiastical Persons in the Empire, stand under the command of two *Dsi Sin Bugios*, as they call them, or *Imperial Temple-Judges*, appointed by the Secular Monarch.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 211) For an introduction to this office, cf. Totman 1988: 181-182, 195-196; Steenstrup 1991: 115f.

»The chief points of the *Sintos* Religion (and those, the observation whereof its adherents believe, makes them agreeable to the Gods, and worthy to obtain from their divine mercy an immediate admission into the stations of happiness after their death, or what is more commonly aim'd at, a train of temporal blessings in this life) are, 1. The inward purity of the heart. 2. A religious abstinence from whatever makes a man impure. 3. A diligent observation of the solemn festival and holy days. 4. Pilgrimages to the holy places at *Isie*. Of these, to which by some very religious people is added, 5. Chastizing and mortifying their bodies, I proceed now to treat severally.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 213)

Kaempfer then proceeds to discuss the prime importance of external purity in Shintô doctrine, as well as the related rules requiring the avoidance of impure things, especially blood:

»[...] external purity, the observance whereof tho' less material in it self, hath yet been more strictly commanded, it consists in abstaining from blood, from eating of flesh, and from dead bodies.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 214)

The author ends the second chapter with an illustration of the religious overzealousness and hypocrisy that also exist in Japan, in which he discusses one of his acquaintances:

»An acquaintance of mine at *Nagasaki* was so exceedingly nice and scrupulous on this head, that when he received but a visit of one, whom he had reason to suspect of being a *Fusio*, he caused his house to be wash'd and cleaned with water and salt from top to bottom, and yet, all this superstitious care notwithstanding the wiser of his Countrymen look upon him as a downright Hypocrite.« (HoJ III/2 = Kaempfer 1727: 215)

4. 1. 1. 3. »Of the *Sintos* Rebi, that is, their fortunate and holidays, and the celebration thereof«

Following his systematization of the five main points of Shintô, Kaempfer then turns to Shintô rituals (HoJ III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 215-225): »The Celebration of solemn Festivals and Holidays, which is the third essential point of the *Sintos* Religion, consists in what they call *Majiru*, that is, in going to the *Mias* and Temples of the Gods and deceased great Men.« (HoJ III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 215). The author first discusses the general rules for private visits to shrines, followed by a discussion of the most important national and local festivals. To recount all of these would go beyond the scope of the present discussion, but these descriptions offer valuable authentic material for understanding Japanese festivals of the

Genroku period. Once again, Kaempfer's assessment of the festivals as a kind of national folklore is worth noting. He remarks:

»It is observable in general, that their Festivals and Holidays are days sacred rather to mutual compliments and civilities, than to acts of holiness and devotion, for which reason also they call them *Rebi's*, which implies as much as *Visiting-days*. Tis true indeed, that they think it a duty incumbent on them on those days, to go to the Temple of *Tensio Daisin*, the first and principal object of their worship, and the Temples of their other Gods and deceased great men.« (Hoj III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 217)

Once again, the argument that Shintô festivals are a kind of (national) custom makes an appearance – something that was actually far more common in much later times. His subsequent extensive descriptions of the nationwide monthly and annual festivals show that Kaempfer is indeed describing a pan-Japanese custom. Fully six pages of this chapter focus on the five annual festivals, which are discussed in great detail. The author focuses especially on New Year (*shôgatsu*), when writing: »*Songuat*z [sic!]¹⁴⁶, or New-years-day, which is celebrated in Japan with the utmost solemnity, preferably to all other Holidays« (Hoj III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 218).

However, as Kaempfer (Hoj III / 3 = Kaempfer 1727: 222) goes on to state, there are »many more Holidays observ'd in Japan, of less note indeed, and sacred to particular Gods and Idols, in whose honour they are celebrated.« Kaempfer names no fewer than sixteen of these festivals and offers descriptions of some of them, starting with the festival of »*Tensio Dai Sin* [...] the supreme of all the Gods of the Japanese, and acknowledg'd as Patron and Protector of the whole Empire.« (l.c.), dedicated to Amaterasu ômikami, the high god of Ise, whom Kaempfer mistakenly assumes to be male.

Even Izumo is mentioned in his account, where Kaempfer states:

»*Idsumo no O Jasijro*, that is, *O Jasijro* of the Province *Idsumo*, is another God, for whom they have a great respect. Amongst several glorious exploits, he kill'd a mischievous terrible Dragon. He is call'd also *Osjuwo ni no Mikotto*.« (Hoj III / 3 = Kaempfer 1727: 223)

But Kaempfer's analysis of the Japanese festival calendar does not end here. At the end of this section, he mentions further deities that are worshipped throughout the country:

¹⁴⁶ *Songuat*z is a misspelling; some lines above Kaempfer uses the more correct term *Soguat*z.

»There are many more saints and great men, whose memory is celebrated on particular days, because of their noble actions, and great services done to their country. But as they are confined to particular places, being call'd the Saints of such or such a place, and besides, as they were never canoniz'd by the *Mikaddo*, who alone can make Saints, nor honour'd with an *Okurina*, as they call it, or illustrious title, which is usually given to new Gods and Saints, I did not think it worth while to make any Enquiries about them.« (HoJ III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 224f.)

Kaempfer ends the chapter with references to related Japanese sources.¹⁴⁷ Once again, it is apparent that the author, despite his modesty, is not merely a travel writer, but rather a true forerunner of philological and ethnological Japanese studies:

»Thus far, what an attentive traveller can learn in the Country, concerning the *Sintos* Religion, and the Gods, who are the objects of its worship. A more extensive and accurate account of both is contain'd in two Japanese Books, one of which is call'd *Nippon Odaiki*, being an Historical and Chronological account of their *Kintsju*, or great men, and their memorable actions ; the other *Sin Dai Ki*,¹⁴⁸ that is, the History and Actions of their great Gods.« (HoJ III/3 = Kaempfer 1727: 225)

4. 1. 1. 4. »Of the Sanga or Pilgrimage to Isje«

Despite his concluding remarks at the end of the previous chapter, which appears to bring the topic to a close, in the fourth section (HoJ III/4 = Kaempfer 1727: 225-231) of the third book, Kaempfer turns to a further fundamental aspect of Japanese religiosity, and thus also of Shintô according to Kaempfer's account: the custom of pilgrimages, especially to Ise.

»The Japanese are very much addicted to Pilgrimages. They make several, and to different places. The first and chief goes to *Isje*, the second to the 33 chief *Quanwon* Temples of the Empire, the third to some of the most eminent *Sin*, or *Cami*, and *Fotoge* or *Buds* Temples, famous for the great miracles wrought there, and the help and benefit, Pilgrims found by going to worship there.« (HoJ III / 4 = Kaempfer 1727: 225)«

Fortunately for the historiography of Edo-period Shintô, Kaempfer devotes this chapter, after an introduction, to a detailed discussion of pilgrimages to Ise. Together with his comments about pilgrims to Ise interspersed with his travel ac-

¹⁴⁷ For a discussion of these and other Japanese sources consulted by Kaempfer, cf. Imai 1980: 102ff., chapter III; cf. Imai 1973.

¹⁴⁸ By this the first sections (*Jindaiki*) of the *Nihonshoki* were meant.

counts on the court of the Shôgun in Edo, this discussion offers what is probably the earliest coherent account of pilgrimages to Ise in the Edo period.

This account of pilgrimages to Ise marks the conclusion of the author's remarks on contemporary Shintô. Although the subsequent chapters of this third book on religions (HoJ III / 5-7 = Kaempfer 1727: 232-252) focus on topics that are closely related to the system of Shintô discussed in the present study – namely, the *yamabushi*, contemporary Buddhism, Confucianism and ethics – to cover these topics would go beyond the scope of the present study.

4. 2. Conclusion

Obviously Kaempfer's account does not merely offer a cursory, sensationalist picture of pagan cults intended for the amusement of a Christian audience in Europe. On the contrary, Kaempfer was the first European author to attempt an academically serious, systematic and analytical investigation of Japanese religions. The factual errors it contains are perhaps bearable in light of this intellectually pioneering achievement. It is the responsibility of Japanese studies to clarify these misinterpretations using an exact historical and philological analysis. To condemn the work outright for these errors, as Aston has done, or to ignore it, as Schurhammer chose to do, means putting pettiness and ideological aversion above the goal of understanding. Only today does acceptance appear to be growing for the academic value of Kaempfer's work as a source for our understanding of the religions in Japan during the 17th century.

Furthermore, this source contains other astonishing insights on this topic. In light of research from Japan and Japanese studies, it appears that the topic of a single Edo-period Shintô must be handled with extreme care. Is it even possible to speak of one form of Shintô for this period, due to the clearly documented and apparently dominant syncretism of the Edo period in the context of Confucianism as well as Buddhism? The more intense the intellectual-historical discussion of this topic becomes, the more scrupulous the prudent observer must be when dealing with the term »Shintô« in the context of the Edo period. And in the midst of all this restraint and historiographic care, Kaempfer represents a contemporary source which states: »Of the three chief Religions, which now flourish and are tolerated in *Japan*, the SINTOS. must be considered in the first place [...].« (HoJ III/1 = Kaempfer 1727: 204)

For Kaempfer as a contemporary witness, and thus implicitly also his Japanese informants who supplied him with the necessary material, there was appar-

ently no question that Shintô was not only an independent religion, but that it was even the most important one in Japan. Although Kaempfer's discussion also shows that he did not conceive of Shintô as a monolithic block in terms of theology or ritual, this does not change the fact that, despite all syncretism and heterogeneity, the author himself chooses »Shintô« as an overarching term.

In his discussion of the schools of Shintô, Kaempfer contrasts the dominant school of Ryôbu syncretism with a school that was influential among the priesthood, the so-called »orthodox,« which he calls »Juitz« (*yuiitsu*). Clearly this refers to Yuiitsu Shintô, the Yoshida School, which was widely influential among Shintô priests at the time. As the name indicates, this school was based on the idea of a supposedly pure Shintô, long before Motoori Norinaga and others developed their ideas of the Shintô school of National Learning. It appears that Kaempfer's work was strongly influenced by these ideas, which he himself described as »orthodox.« His idea of Shintô as the ancient Japanese religion appears to support this interpretation, as well as the fact that Kaempfer refers specifically to a written Japanese source in this context, which he calls »*Shindai ki*.« This of course refers to the introductory chapter of the *Nihonshoki* from the year 720 on the »Age of the Gods« (*Jindaiki*), which covers Japanese mythology and the ruling dates of the earliest Japanese emperors (cf. Imai 1980: 103, among others). The *Nihonshoki*, however, was also the main written work of Yuiitsu Shintô,¹⁴⁹ which was often referred to as *Nihongi* Shintô for this same reason. Only after the emergence of the Kokugaku was the supposedly more authentically Japanese *Kojiki* (712) emphasized, while the *Nihonshoki* was rejected as a source.

¹⁴⁹Yoshida Kanetomo already achieved, as Naumann (1994: 71) explains, »great influence at the court, where he gave lectures on the *Nihongi*.« On the importance of the *Nihonshoki* (*Nihongi*) in the teachings of Yoshida Shintô, see also Ooms 1985, Scheid 2001: passim.

5. THE KOKUGAKU AND MITOGAKU: FUKKO SHINTÔ AND THE RESTORATION

The examples from the previous discussion of pilgrimages to Ise and Kaempfer's writings on pan-Japanese patriotism have shown that, aside from regional variations during the Edo period, Shintô of the time was already determined by a nationwide perspective. While this is true for the aforementioned visible areas, it applies even more so to the theological and ideological development of Shintô during this period, which finally led to the pugnacious concept of »Restoration Shintô,« which provided the spiritual basis for the Meiji Restoration. The center of this complex area is the so-called Kokugaku, the Japanese school of National Learning, which will be the focus of the following discussion.

5. 1. *The Kokugaku*

On the one hand, Confucian Shintô, the main school of which was Suika-Shintô, and which rose to prominence together with modern Confucianism, became the main branch of Shintô during the Edo period (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 17). On the other hand, a new interpretation of Shintô in the context of the Kokugaku gradually took shape in the middle of the Edo period. The Kokugaku primarily took the indigenous, classical literatures of Japan as its area of study. Studies on ancient Japanese literature, especially on the *Kojiki*, by Motoori Norinaga, a student of Kamo Mabuchi, had the effect that both of the previous syncretistic interpretations and belief systems of Shintô – the syntheses of Shintô and Buddhism and Shintô and Confucianism – were designated as not authentically Japanese and thus pushed aside. Thus emerged an interpretation of Shintô that was supposedly independent of Buddhism and Confucianism (in reality, this was much more complicated) that later competed with Confucian Shintô as the nativist school of National Learning.

This novel interpretation of Shintô was the result of studies on ancient Japan, and it reached its intellectual and philological peak with Motoori Norinaga and his studies on the *Kojiki*. In these studies, Norinaga differentiated Shintô not only from Buddhism and Confucianism, but also from Taoism (i.e. the teachings of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu), which his teacher Mabuchi still considered approximately congruent with Shintô. Norinaga defined Shintô as the process of development of all beings that was begun by Izanagi and Izanami with the *mitama* of the deity Takamimusubi, and which was then taken over and passed down by

Amaterasu (cf. his programmatical essay *Naobi no mitama*, see below). Based on this idea, he theorized that everything on earth was based on the accomplishments of the Japanese gods, and that no human being could judge or understand the nature of these gods by way of knowledge and an understanding. According to his teachings, Shintô is different from Confucianism and Buddhism in that man is unable to convey or learn its teachings by intellectual means, but rather, he can set his life on the right path with the help of the gods. Thus, Norinaga taught that man can only intuitively understand Shintô if he rules out those interpretations of the gods that are based on human knowledge and understanding, and in their place – without relying on the false »Chinese rationalism« (*karagokoro*, see below) – studies the authentic works of ancient Japan.

While Norinaga swept aside all interpretations of Shintô that were influenced by »foreign« religions and belief systems, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, he considered the accounts of the gods found in the *Kojiki* to be the absolute historical truth. According to Sakamoto Koremaru (cf. Sugiyama, Sakamoto 1994: 18), this was directly responsible for the »shallowness« of the Shintô religion. Norinaga offered a new perspective for understanding Shintô by rejecting the Confucian and Buddhist interpretations of Shintô as far-fetched.

Based on their philological and theological studies, from the late 18th century on, the Kokugaku also strove to implement their theories in the political sphere by increasingly emphasizing a renaissance of the Japanese emperorship in accordance with the Shintô beliefs on the genealogical origins of the imperial family. Ultimately, the Kokugaku played a large spiritual part in the abolition of the shogunate as a form of government in the middle of the 19th century. As befitted their high regard for the myths and legends of the *Kojiki*, the social ideals of the Kokugaku were firmly rooted in the distant past and were epitomized in ancient Japan, which, according to their view of history, was an era of ethical, religious and political rule by the emperor.

In the view of the Kokugaku, which is based on the interpretation of ancient written sources – especially the *Kojiki* (»Record of Ancient Matters«) from the year 712 A.D. and the *Nihonshoki* (»Chronicle of Japan«) from the year 720 – Japan was a »land of the gods,« or *shinkoku*. This formed the spiritual basis for the metaphysical elevation of the entire Japanese nation.

The theoretical axiom of the Kokugaku was their belief in the historical truth and reality of the ancient historical annals, including the chapter on the »Age of the Gods« in the *Kojiki*. The annals were literally understood to be facts (*jijitsu*); their accounts of the creation of the world, the divine and human spheres, the beginnings of the emperorship, the origins of the powerful clans – all these mythical

and legendary events from the earliest times were declared by the scholars of National Learning to be accounts of a historically accurate reality. When, for example, an extremely influential theoretician and ideologue of the late Kokugaku such as Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) refers to Japan as the »land of the gods,« he is following the literal interpretation (whether calculatingly or naïvely) of the ancient written works according to a fundamentalist view of Shintô. In Atsutane's case, this view led to a fanatical nationalism and his belief in the fundamental superiority of Japan over all other nations. In his view, the gods are »the very beginning of all humanity, and just as the gods created the world, at the same time they also created man.« To Atsutane, the path of the »decent man in reality is the way of the gods.« In another place he writes of the nature of the Japanese people that »we all are without a doubt the descendants of the gods.«¹⁵⁰

These examples give a vivid picture of the developments in intellectual history that ultimately, in the Meiji period, led to the formation of an ideologically influenced conception of man in which the Japanese subjects were given divine status, regardless of their inferior position in the state. But these events occurred only after the developments of the middle of the Edo period, when the theological and ideological worldview of pan-Japanese, nationalist Shintô was first formed.

Thus, before the Kokugaku can be discussed, it is first necessary to examine Japanese ideas about the founding of the empire and the related concept of the emperor. As a descendant of the gods, the emperor secures the identity and the continued existence of the empire, and as a descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu, he rules over an empire that is protected by the gods.

Aside from the aforementioned ancient historical annals, works from the early Japanese Middle Ages also functioned as sources for this view. An important work in this context is the *Jinnô shôtôki* (»Chronicles of the Authentic Lineages of the Divine Emperors,« from 1339, expanded in 1343¹⁵¹) written by Kitabatake Chikafusa. This work dealt with the uniqueness of Japan as the land of the gods (*shinkoku*) and the divine descent of the emperor.¹⁵²

Criticizing the mistakes of the old imperial state, Kitabatake advocated the creation of a new, better government under which civil and military power would again be united in the hands of one ruler, the emperor. At first this work had little influence, but it later became a »work of fundamental importance for

¹⁵⁰ Hirata Atsutane: *Kodô taii*, edition: KGS; 10: 1; Hammitzsch 1936: 20ff.; cf. Antoni 1991a: 66.

¹⁵¹ *Jinnô shôtôki*, editions: KGS 6.; NKBT 87; cf. Naumann 1994: 47-58; Göbel 1987.

¹⁵² *Jinnô shôtôki* = KGS 6: 1; Benl, Hammitzsch 1956: 133f., 206, 216, 231, 234ff.

the conception of the Japanese nation and for modern nationalism,« (Goch 1981: 399).

The Kokugaku emerged as a countermovement to the increasing influence of China in Japan. As Peter Nosco (1984) remarks in his study on Masuho Zankô (1655-1742), the question of how the Kokugaku emerged as an alternative to Confucianism in the Tokugawa period remains unanswered. Some of the similarities between the two schools include an emphasis on classical texts based on the idea that they provide a more exact understanding of the values and customs of ancient times, and the interpretation of the Japanese classics as a means to finding the ancient Japanese way (*kodô*). Other theories on the emergence of the Kokugaku emphasize a certain »emotionalism« and point to the social climate of the late 17th century as the reason for the school's development, in which emotionality and sensuality sought a different, »Japanese« release rather than puritan, orthodox Neo-Confucianism. According to yet another explanation, National Learning formed as a countermovement to the then dominant school of intellectual rationalism, celebrating the irrational and placing itself in opposition to the idea of a totally rational understanding of the world, which Neo-Confucianism claimed to offer. Finally, Nosco offers an explanation that is closely related to the previously mentioned theories, and which emphasizes the existence of an ideological nativism that is deeply rooted in Japanese tradition and developed in various ways since the 17th century.

Represented by its main figures, Kada Azumamaro (1668-1736)¹⁵³, Kamo Mabuchi (1697-1769), Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and finally Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843), over the course of the Edo period, this school developed from a primarily philological and literary school of thought into a conscious, politically antagonistic, ultranationalistic and xenophobic ideology. Buddhism and Confucianism were not only rejected as »non-Japanese« but were actually seen as the very cause of Japan's decline.

Among the first leaders of the movement, besides Motoori Norinaga, were especially his teacher Kamo Mabuchi, as well as his successor Hirata Atsutane, an extreme ultranationalist and xenophobe whose writings found a large audience in the late Edo period. The following discussion will examine these three figures in order to understand, at least in broad terms, the development of the Kokugaku from a philological school to the Shintô school of National Learning.

¹⁵³ On Kada Azumamaro, cf. Dumoulin (translation) 1940; Nakamura 1984.

5. 1. 1. *Kamo Mabuchi*

Kamo Mabuchi¹⁵⁴ came from an established family of Shintô priests that served at Kamo Shrine near Kyôto.¹⁵⁵ His father served as a priest at Okabe Shrine in Hamamatsu. This is especially worthy of note, since the place was home to an active intellectual scene at the time. This group focussed on Chinese and Japanese literature, and in contrast to the richly decorated temples, around the shrines there lived men who held similar views to the Kokugaku scholars of later times (cf. Dumoulin 1943 b. 52). Kamo Mabuchi grew up in an environment that offered him a comprehensive education in Chinese as well as Japanese thought. He was first introduced to Kada Azumamaro, whose student he later became, by the shrine priest Sugiura Kuniakira.

In 1733 he left his second wife and their family, who ran a guest house on the Tôkaidô, to pursue his studies in Kyôto. He stayed for three years, during which time Mabuchi became a favorite student of Azumamaro (cf. Dumoulin 1943 b: 63). In 1736 his teacher died, and one year later Mabuchi left for Edo.

Upon arriving in Edo, he met old friends from his Kokugaku days in Kyôto and attempted to analyze difficult passages of Japanese literature with them in literary circles. In 1746 he entered the service of Tayasu Munetaka (the son of Tokugawa Yoshimune), a great admirer of the *Manyôshû* and a talented poet himself (cf. Dumoulin 1943 b: 63).

During his service he began to study in detail and write a commentary on the *Manyôshû*, partly within his capacity under his employer, but largely due to his own interest. He saw this work as the embodiment of the pure Japanese spirit that was free of foreign influences and represented the purest expression of ancient Japan. In his view, in ancient times the *yamato-gokoro*, the Japanese spirit, still existed. Later eras came under the influence of the *karagokoro*, meaning Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. He blamed these schools in particular for the supposed decline of Japan.

Mabuchi reserved special criticism for Confucianism, the »way of *ju*.« In his work *Kokuikô*, he examines individual Chinese emperors and dismisses their rule, with only a few exceptions. He continually criticizes the change of dynasties, discussing it on seven occasions in this work alone.¹⁵⁶ He sees the lack of a continu-

¹⁵⁴ On the life and work of Kamo Mabuchi, cf. the works of Heinrich Dumoulin 1939, 1941a and b, 1943 a and b, 1953, 1955, 1956a and b; see also Suzuki 1986/87.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Dumoulin 1943b: 41; Dumoulin 1939b; Göbel 1987.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kamo Mabuchi: *Kokuikô*, edition NST 39; Dumoulin 1943b: 118.

ally ruling dynasty as the main cause of social unrest and all other turmoil in China. The fact that upstarts, and even »barbarians,« came to power and were then worshipped as emperors was incomprehensible to him:

»Then the upstarts of lower standing came, killed the ruler, and when they called themselves the emperor, every subject in the land bowed their head, obeyed and served him. What's more, even those who are called barbarians, who come from the lands of the four points of the compass, lower people, came from their barbaric countries, and when they became emperor of the Chinese nation, once again everyone bowed down and obeyed them. Should one therefore not call barbarians low and coarse?«¹⁵⁷

Since in Confucianism all non-Chinese were called »barbarians,« this also applied to the Japanese. And despite this, according to Mabuchi, the Japanese Confucians lowered themselves so far as to call themselves »barbarians,« thus proving the »disgracefulness« of the Japanese *ju* scholars.

Mabuchi generally criticizes the rationalist position of the Chinese scholars, who could no longer recognize the clear, simple path due to their obedience to reason. One example Mabuchi gives is the use of Chinese characters (he also calls China the land of many thousands of characters), which he calls a manifestation of complicated Chinese thought. This he contrasts with an intuitive form of understanding:

»When, for example, a doctor also knows the Chinese writings well, he can only seldom heal his patients. On the other hand, the uncontrived, non-theoretical medicines of this country, which have been passed down on their own (*onozukara*), are certain to heal sickness, without the need to understand any theoretical explanations. It is enough to understand things with one's own heart.«¹⁵⁸

Mabuchi contrasts the supposed complicatedness of the Chinese with the idealized simplicity of the Japanese. This applies to the example of written characters¹⁵⁹ as well as to systems of rule. In China, Mabuchi writes, there is a need to separate power from authority. The virtues that are so expressly invoked in China already existed in Japan, without needing to be named specifically. The naming of virtues and the tendency toward theory can only lead to extremes and imbalance.

¹⁵⁷ Dumoulin 1943b: 274; cf. 1939b: 170-171; NST 39: 376.

¹⁵⁸ Dumoulin 1943b: 278; cf. 1939b: 173; NST 39: 378.

¹⁵⁹ Dumoulin 1939b: 176f.; NST 39: 380ff.

In Mabuchi's view, Chinese scholarliness was something constructed by humans, thus making it artificial and foreign to mankind at its core:

»It forces the heart of heaven and earth and makes it small. It is made by man.«¹⁶⁰

Kamo Mabuchi's attempts to characterize all things Chinese in this way reveal an almost missionary quality. They are meant to convert the Japanese away from the culture that is foreign and unfitting to them and back toward the original Japanese sources. To whomever cannot or will not follow his arguments, he proposes the following treatment:

»The incorrigible should be sent to China so that they can see the country. They would feel the same as Urashima no Ko upon returning home.«¹⁶¹

5. 1. 2. Motoori Norinaga

Motoori Norinaga¹⁶² was one of the leading figures in National Learning during the Edo period. The Kokugaku and the doctrine of Restoration Shintô (Fukko Shintô) that resulted from it attempted to illuminate an original form of Shintô in ancient Japan – a time when the foreign teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism had not yet been introduced to the country. The scholars of this deeply nativist school believed that foreign ideologies distorted and corrupted the true meaning of Shintô. Especially in its later phase, the movement of Fukko Shintô turned violently against Buddhism and Chinese thought and advocated a return to the *kodô* (»the ancient way«) – an idealistically exaggerated, pre-Buddhist Japan that was seen as a golden age. Norinaga in particular attempted, through his philologically exact, source-critical research, not only to clarify the literary tradition, but also the political institutions and the ancient Japanese religion, and thus to reach an understanding of what he regarded to be the true spirit of ancient Japan.

Norinaga, who was born near Ise Shrine, emphasized the absolute superiority of the sun goddess Amaterasu ômikami, the main deity of the Inner Shrine of Ise (Naikû), over all other indigenous gods, as the core of his programmatic writings.

¹⁶⁰ Dumoulin 1943b: 128; 1939b: 165f.; NST 39: 374.

¹⁶¹ Dumoulin 1943b: 275; 1939b: 171; NST 39: 374.

¹⁶² On Motoori Norinaga, cf. Brownlee 1988; Allessandro 1964; Dumoulin 1939a; Hino 1983; Matsumoto 1970; Motoori Norinaga: *Kojikiden*, (MNZ), Tôkyô, 1919-27; Nishimura 1987 and 1991; Satô-Diesner 1977; Stolte 1939; Wehmeyer 1997, among others.

Since the emperor was believed to be a direct descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu, Motoori claimed that the emperor shared her divinity and was thus worthy of being worshipped by the entire nation as the highest religious symbol.

Motoori Norinaga was born in 1730 in Matsuzaka, in the province of Ise. His family ran a cotton business there, but he was not interested in entering this profession. For this reason, he went to Kyôto in 1752 to continue his education. After studying Chu Hsi Confucianism (*shushigaku*), which was the dominant school of the time, as well as medicine, he began to work as a doctor in his home town. His interest in the Japanese classics finally led him to the works of Kamo Mabuchi, and two years after meeting him, Motoori Norinaga became his student. With Mabuchi's help he began his enormous commentary on the *Kojiki* (*Kojikiden*) in 1764, comprising 48 volumes in all, which he completed three years before his death, and later became famous. Norinaga spent the following ten years of his life as a personal physician to Tokugawa Harusada, the Daimyô of Kii. However, this position did not prevent him from continuing his studies and teaching.

One detail in particular is worth mentioning here: although Motoori belonged to the lowest class in Tokugawa society, he was able to overcome this hurdle. To a certain extent, this fact explains the unusual mix of his students in his later life. They were a varied group of merchants, farmers, noblemen, as well as Buddhist and Shintô priests, thus representing many different classes of society. Furthermore, representatives of nearly every religion in Japan were included (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 69). These two aspects surely offer an explanation for the wide appeal and spread of Motoori Norinaga's teachings.

5. 1. 2. 1. Naobi no mitama

One significant work in Motoori Norinaga's large oeuvre is a text from 1771, *Naobi no mitama* (»The spirit of Renewal«), which the »universally educated early nationalist and reviver of Japanese antiquity« (W. Naumann 1997: 204) wrote as the conclusion to the first book of the *Kojikiden*.¹⁶³ Despite its brevity, it is considered one of the main works of political and theological theory in the late Tokugawa period and is perhaps the clearest example of Norinaga's thought (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 73).

This work of commentary is based on the *Kojiki*. The events described in the *Kojiki* are seen as historical facts and are not subjected to any critical examination, but rather, Norinaga offers his own commentary. It is clear that his arguments are

¹⁶³ Cf. *Naobi no mitama*, MNZ 9-12; for translations and commentaries cf. Stolte 1939; Nishimura 1991; Wehmeyer 1997; Antoni 2012a: 426-429.

intended as a legitimation of the uniqueness of Japan and the Japanese. Based on the special role of the emperor as a successor and representative of the sun goddess Amaterasu, the author regards the age of the *kami* as a concrete model for reorganizing Japan. At that time, he writes, the empire was in an ideal condition. The evil in this world is solely due to the negative influence of China and Korea in Japan.

The first chapters of *Naobi no mitama* deal with the myth of the creation of Japan, the emperor and the *kannagara no michi*, the »way of the gods« (Shintô), as portrayed in the *Kojiki*. Norinaga makes the categorical argument that »The Imperial Country [Japan] is the land of the birth of the awesome goddess Ama-terasu-ô-mi-kami, ancestor of the gods (*kamu mi-oya*).«¹⁶⁴ Following this, Norinaga claims that it was Amaterasu's intention that the throne of the successor of the heavenly sun should be as unshakable as heaven and earth (l.c.). He writes that the unbroken lineage of the ruling house is the defining characteristic elevating Japan above all other countries, and that especially in comparison to China, Japan's special characteristics shine. These theories made a lasting impression on the core theological and ideological tenets of the Kokugaku.

In foreign countries (*adashi kuni*), which means in particular China, Motoori writes, there is no one ruling family, since China is not the country of Amaterasu ômikami.¹⁶⁵ Anyone who is powerful enough to take over the government can rule the country. Since these rulers would even violate their own way of the »sages« (*shen-jen*) in order to rule, their teachings are nothing more than »a stratagem to draw and pacify the people.«¹⁶⁶ These rulers can by no means be compared to the Japanese emperors or *kami* of the «Age of the Gods«, since these are legitimated for all time by their direct descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu. In China, such a line of descent does not exist. Therefore, there can be no direct path comparable to the *kamunagara* (*kannagara*) in Japan, which the *Nihonshoki* described as »to follow the Way of the Gods, or again to possess in oneself the Way of the Gods.«¹⁶⁷ Motoori Norinaga sees the Chinese emphasis on the existence of a way as merely an illusion aimed at winning over the people and gaining power. By contrast, Japan has a true way that, due to its evidence, does not need to be constantly emphasized. In earlier times, he writes, there were no normative rules of behavior, since they were not needed. Virtues existed a priori. Only in later times were they overlaid and replaced by foreign influences.

¹⁶⁴ *Naobi no mitama* (MNZ 9): 49; Wehmeyer 1997: 213 (cf. Stolte 1939: 193)

¹⁶⁵ *Naobi no mitama* (MNZ 9): 50; Wehmeyer 1997: 216 (cf. Stolte 1939: 195).

¹⁶⁶ *Naobi no mitama* (MNZ 9): 52; Wehmeyer 1997: 218 (cf. Stolte 1939: 197).

¹⁶⁷ *Naobi no mitama* (MNZ 9): 53; Wehmeyer 1997: 229 (cf. Stolte 1939: 204).

Motoori Norinaga continually refers to the lineage of the emperor, whose right to divine rule was granted directly by the heavenly ancestors who created the empire.¹⁶⁸ This is the first time he makes the conclusion that the emperor himself is a god, due to his direct lineage. Therefore, the true way is to worship him as a god (cf. Beasley 1972: 144).

The fact that the *Naobi no mitama* was a part of Norinaga's masterwork *Kojikiden*, shows the central role that fell to the *Kojiki* in his thinking. Of particular importance in this context was the Japanese language, in contrast to Chinese and the Kanji writing system. Therefore it seems appropriate to focus on Norinaga's *Kojiki* studies in the following sections of this study.

5. 1. 2. 2. *Norinaga's Kojiki studies*

The importance of reconstructing the allegedly archaic *kun*-reading of the *Kojiki* text in Motoori Norinaga's monumental work *Kojikiden*, in which he declared the Chinese characters constituting the text as actually being absolutely unimportant for its real meaning, became a topic for recent academic research.¹⁶⁹ As Norinaga stated, the Chinese »characters themselves are makeshift items which were simply attached to the text; what possible sort of deep reality could they represent?«¹⁷⁰ Ann Wehmeyer (1997: 10) points out in this context that in Norinaga's understanding, the Chinese characters were nothing more than »ornamentation,« attached to the text by its compiler, Ô no Yasumaro.

With this statement we reach a pivotal problem, in philological as well as ideological terms. At its center stands the question, if there really existed an archaic narrative, which we can call the *Kojiki*, or if this narrative was a mere (re-) construction of later times, created by philologists following in the legacy of Motoori Norinaga. Norinaga's work stands in accordance with a beginning anti-Chinese ideological paradigm. Creating a purely »Japanese« text of the *Kojiki*, without any hint to its Chinese implications, would fit exactly into such a matrix, which itself exists since the works of Motoori Norinaga and his fundamental critique of the »Chinese way of thinking,« *karagokoro*.

¹⁶⁸ *Naobi no mitama* (MNZ 9): 56; Wehmeyer 1997: 225 (cf. Stolte 1939: 202).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Wehmeyer 1997: passim; Antoni 2011, 2012b.

¹⁷⁰ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 145. Wehmeyer (1997: 14, n. 29) points to a study of Kobayashi Yoshinori (»The *Kun* Readings of the *Kojiki*« (in: *Acta Asiatica*, vol. 46, 1983)) in the context of *kun* reading of the *Kojiki*.

5. 1. 2. 2. 1. *Excursus: on the textuality of the Kojiki*

In contrast to the *Nihonshoki*, the *Kojiki* itself provides material on the formation of the text, being absolutely invaluable for historical research.¹⁷¹ This information is given in the »Foreword« by the *Kojiki*'s compiler, Ô no Yasumaro. His personal existence was finally proven by the accidental discovery of his grave on January 20th, 1979, which verified the *Shoku Nihongi*'s record on his death in the year 723.¹⁷² We may therefore regard Ô no Yasumaro as a historical figure and thus his »Foreword« as a trustworthy source¹⁷³ as well.

In his Foreword, the author, or compiler of the text, informs the reader about his difficulties in writing down the narrative. As is well known, Tenmu-tennô (631-686 A.D.) had already ordered a certain person, whether male or female is still debated, of the Hieda-*uji* clan, with the personal name of Are, to »learn,« or »memorize« the old traditions, because they were in danger of getting lost or interpreted »wrongly« (cf. NKBT 1: 46/47). The text states (following Chamberlain's translation):

»He was twenty-eight years old, and of so intelligent a disposition that he could repeat with his mouth whatever met his eyes, and record in his heart whatever struck his ears. Forthwith Are was commanded to learn by heart the genealogies of the emperors, and likewise the words of former ages.«

But it was not before the days of Empress Genmei (661-721 A.D.) that Hieda no Are's record was actually written down. Yasumaro states that the Empress »commanded me Yasumaro to select and record the old words learnt by heart by Hiyeda no Are according to the Imperial Decree, and dutifully to lift them up to Her.«

Since Hirata Atsutane's (see below), and later Yanagita Kunio's speculations, the gender of Hieda no Are had been a matter of dispute. In his essay on »*Kojiki* as Literature,« Donald Keene (1983: 104ff.) discusses this point at length, giving some arguments that regard Hieda no Are as a woman, probably an early shaman in the tradition of the *sarume* ancestress. Keene mentions Saigô Nobutsuna's interpretation that »Are's learning did not consist of reading the manuscripts but

¹⁷¹ The *Nihonshoki* just mentions under the date of Tenmu 29/3/16 a command to »writing a chronicle of the Emperors, and also of matters of high antiquity.« But Aston (1975: 350, n. 2) interprets this as the command which »led ultimately to the compilation of the *Kojiki*,« not the *Nihonshoki*.

¹⁷² Cf. the report on »O no Yasumaro« in: MN, vol. 34/2, Summer 1979: 257.

¹⁷³ For a discussion of this topic cf. Lurie 2011: 406, n. 5.15.

of reciting them with the proper intonation so as to retain their magical properties.«¹⁷⁴ Although there is no final proof for the question of Hieda no Are's gender, we arrive at the problem of Are's »learning« at a crucial point in understanding the textuality of the *Kojiki* itself. As Keene (1983: 107) again mentions in this context, »the preface to the *Kojiki* by Ô no Yasumaro is almost ostentatious in its fluent use of Chinese rhetoric.« We know, for example, that even parts of the command by Emperor Tenmu, cited in the Foreword, were literally taken from a Tang document, dating from the year 653 and citing originally a command of the Chinese emperor Tai Zong.¹⁷⁵ Rendering such a wholly Chinese text in an allegedly archaic »pure Japanese« form comes close to the absurd. As Keene (1983: 107, n. 25) points out, this is proof »(if proof were needed) that it is possible to translate almost *any* Chinese text into ancient Japanese.«

So, the main question remains: what did Hieda no Are actually »learn«? As Yasumaro cites the command of emperor Tenmu,¹⁷⁶ there obviously did exist written documents as sources, which are described as *teiki* (»Imperial Chronicles«), and *honji* (»Fundamental Dicta«), apparently interchangeable with *kuji* (»Old Matters«), which were also mentioned.¹⁷⁷ Robert Ellwood (1973: 498) leaves this question open when declaring: »These chronicles of the imperial line and national events are lost, or were never other than oral tradition.« If we look at the actual text of the Foreword, it remains unclear whether Hieda no Are has simply learned and memorized those texts, which of course must have been written in Chinese characters too, or if he/she, as the female shaman theory says, chanted magical words coming from the oral tradition of the remote past. Yasumaro describes the enormous problems he faced when writing down Hieda no Are's recital,¹⁷⁸ and decided not to produce an ordinary text in Chinese, despite being

¹⁷⁴ Keene 1983: 105.

¹⁷⁵ Brownlee 1991:10.

¹⁷⁶ »Hereupon the Heavenly Sovereign commanded, saying: 'I hear that the chronicles of the emperors and likewise the original words in the possession of the various families deviate from exact truth, and are mostly amplified by empty falsehoods. If at the present time these imperfections be not amended, ere many years shall have elapsed, the purport of this, the great basis of the country, the grand foundation of the monarchy, will be destroyed. So now I desire to have the chronicles of the emperors selected and recorded, and the old words examined and ascertained, falsehoods being erased and the truth determined, in order to transmit [the latter] to after ages.'« (Chamberlain 1883 (1982): 3, 4).

¹⁷⁷ Philippi 1968: 41, cf. Keene 1983: 103, n. 9.

¹⁷⁸ »In reverent obedience to the contents of the Decree, I have made a careful choice. But in high antiquity both speech and thought were so simple, that it would be difficult to arrange phrases and compose periods in the characters. To relate everything in an ideographic transcription would entail an inadequate expression of the meaning; to write altogether according to the phonetic method would make the story of events unduly lengthy. For this reason have I sometimes in the same sentence used the phonetic and ideographic systems conjointly, and have sometimes in

very well versed in this style of writing, as his Foreword proves, but to instead use a mixed form of phonetic and semantic usage of Chinese characters.¹⁷⁹ So, finally it remains unclear up to this very day if the *Kojiki* text is mainly based on earlier written sources, which would have been previously laid down in Chinese, and were »learned« by Hieda no Are, or based on oral tradition, simply having been »memorized« by him or her, probably with the aid of those sources. On the basis of available source material this question can no longer be solved. But we can realize that this very problem marks the starting point for the controversy in modern times around the *Kojiki* as the allegedly first Japanese holy scripture.

5. 1. 2. 2. 2. *Reading the Kojiki: Motoori Norinaga*

As is very well known, the question of language marks Motoori Norinaga's intellectual focus interpreting the *Kojiki* more than a thousand years after it was written down. During the Heian and medieval periods, it was the *Nihonshoki* that had served as the authoritative source for the Japanese past. This work matched the expectations of the times much better by presenting an imperial history of an adequate standard by comparison to official Chinese sources. The *Nihonshoki* was completely written in Chinese, in contrast to the *Kojiki*'s mixed style, which had become quite unreadable even shortly after its compilation. It was the Edo period nativists, starting with Kada no Azumamaro (1706-1751) and Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769),¹⁸⁰ who (re-) discovered the forgotten predecessor of the *Nihonshoki* in accordance with their project of founding a genuinely national philology. It was Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) who finally devoted himself to this work, the *Kojiki*. At the center of his scholarship stands his monumental work on the *Kojiki*, the *Kojikiden*. As already pointed out, Norinaga had adopted philological methods from Confucianism in spite of his fundamental critique of Chinese thinking (*karagokoro*). Therefore, Confucianism may bear indirect responsibility for the appearance of the nativist national learning schools, since the concept of an idealized past is common to all schools of Confucianism. The Confucian philosopher Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) and the »Classical School« (*kogaku*) of Edo Confucianism in particular had a deep impact on nativist thinking. Referring to the works of

one matter used the ideographic record exclusively. Moreover where the drift of the words was obscure, I have by comments elucidated their signification; but need it be said that I have nowhere commented on what was easy?» (Chamberlain 1883 (1982): 5).

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion of the language of the *Kojiki* cf. Lurie 2011: 225-250.

¹⁸⁰ Years before Motoori Norinaga's work *Kojikiden*, Kamo Mabuchi had presented studies on the *Kojiki*, for example his *Kojiki kashiragaki* (1757; cf. Nosco 1990: 122). Philippi in the introduction to his translation discusses the history of manuscripts and textual criticism of the *Kojiki* (Philippi 1968: 30- 33).

Maruyama Masao, J. Victor Koschmann points out that »Ogyû Sorai's rejection of Sung neo-Confucianism in favor of a fundamentalist insistence on direct readings of the Chinese classics was extended by the eighteenth-century nativists like Motoori Norinaga to a renewed interest in Japanese mythohistories, particularly the *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters)«. ¹⁸¹ Ann Wehmeyer states in regard to Norinaga's borrowing from Ogyû Sorai:

»Motoori appears to have written down Ogyû's theories and studied them... In his view, the 'words' represented the actual 'facts' of the way of the Sages. The same notion that facts or events (*kotogara*) may be revealed through language (*kotoba*) is stated.« ¹⁸²

In general, nativist thinking was highly motivated by the conviction that »historical 'fact' may be revealed through the archaic 'word,'« ¹⁸³ as Norinaga's axiomatic conviction of the Chinese characters of the *Kojiki* as nothing more than »ornamentations« to archaic words definitely states. Only the Japanese words contain truth, not the Chinese characters. And only by declaring the *Kojiki* as a whole to be a purely Japanese narrative can this truth of the words may be revealed.

Norinaga mentions in the first book of his *Kojikiden* that »... in the *Kojiki* meaning, event, and word are in accord with one another, and what is represented there is the true nature of ancient age.« ¹⁸⁴ So he comes to the only consequent solution in his eyes when declaring: »I have determined, therefore, that in the *Kojiki*, we have the best work among the ancient works, and that the *Nihonshoki* should be placed secondary in importance after the *Kojiki*.« ¹⁸⁵ From his comments it becomes apparent that his *kun*-readings of the *Kojiki* script should not be taken too literally, since Norinaga does not try to find a correct »reading« for the Chinese characters of the text, but more or less intuitively seeks an archaic wording adequate to the script:

»...Therefore, if one is to read the text in ancient Japanese which is true to form and meaning, the only choice is not to stick too literally to the style and the characters, but rather to assign a reading based on the language of the *Ko-*

¹⁸¹ Koschmann 1987: 39.

¹⁸² Wehmeyer 1997: 3; unfortunately there are many misprints in Wehmeyer's text, so on p. 3, where she confuses the year 1751 with 1851 three times.

¹⁸³ Wehmeyer 1997: 8.

¹⁸⁴ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 22.

¹⁸⁵ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 24.

jiki and the *Manyôshû* after one has thought carefully about the general sense of the passage as a whole.«¹⁸⁶

But even Norinaga cannot manipulate the textual facts completely and has to admit that »all of the sentences of the *Kojiki* are written in the style of classical Chinese.«¹⁸⁷ His solution for this obvious problem seems quite an elegant and lofty one. He simply declares that »the compiler [Ô no Yasumaro] did not direct much attention to classical Chinese,«¹⁸⁸ which is a remarkable argument when taking into account the fact that Ô no Yasumaro's foreword was coined after Chinese models, as we have seen above. Norinaga speculates about Yasumaro's intentions, remarking »... we can see that his true desire must have been to write it all down in syllabic script.«¹⁸⁹ On Hieda no Are's memory, Norinaga declares: »The Emperor [then] commanded directly a person named Hieda no Are to recite the Sumera-mikoto no hitsugi [The Imperial Sun Lineage] and the Saki no yo no furukoto and commit them to memory...«¹⁹⁰ Consequently, Norinaga states on the textual body written down by Yasumaro: »... the reason why he is to record the Kuji which Are recited by imperial command is because the language of antiquity was viewed as essential.«¹⁹¹

Here we have found the link between Norinaga the ideologist and Norinaga the philologist. He nearly shouts out when giving advice to the reader of the *Kojiki*: »... read the text seeking the pure language of antiquity, without any contamination by the Chinese style«!¹⁹² This is the Norinaga we know from his *karagokoro* pamphlets, and here lies his motivation to declare the *Kojiki* a text of purely Japanese origin and language. Norinaga elsewhere elucidates his concept of *mono no aware* and the intuitive character of Japanese understanding of the world. So we are not astonished when finally reading his advice for a correct understanding of the *Kojiki*'s language - in the sense of an archaic Japanese narrative - when he declares: »... one must determine the *teniwoha* through intuition.«¹⁹³

This is the very core and main essence of Norinaga's teaching about the *Kojiki*: the real facts are hidden in the words, and the ancient words can in the last consequence only be grasped by intuition. This clearly reveals that the *kun*-readings

¹⁸⁶ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 48.

¹⁸⁷ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 75.

¹⁸⁸ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 79.

¹⁸⁹ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 80.

¹⁹⁰ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 141.

¹⁹¹ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 141, 142.

¹⁹² *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 145.

¹⁹³ *Kojikiden* 1 (MNZ 9, 1976), cf. Wehmeyer 1997: 156.

of the *Kojiki* are not meant as philologically and historically correct readings of the eighth century Kanji text corpus, but more as a kind of separate, nearly independent narrative, running parallel to the existing body of the text. And this separate *kun*-narrative rests mainly on the intuitive speculations of philologists who pretend to know the ancient words. The historian Kônoshi Takamitsu (2000) too sees the core of Motoori Norinaga's thinking in »what he saw as the exclusive purity of primeval Japan, most particularly in the 'ancient words' (*furukoto*) that had been spoken by the Japanese. This position required the expunging of all elements of the Chinese language, including the obfuscating veil of written characters and literary conventions.«¹⁹⁴ »Language becomes the basis for canonizing the *Kojiki*...« The world Norinaga envisions is the world of *sumera mikuni* (»land of the emperor«), »it is a world identified by allegiance to the emperor and by opposing to outside lands, most specifically China.«¹⁹⁵

5. 1. 2. 2. 3. Motoori Norinaga and the *Kojiki* as kotodama

In Norinaga's view the reconstruction of the spoken language of antiquity in its last consequence represents the most important, even the only means of access to the thought of the days of archaic, i.e. »authentic«, Japan, which could serve also as a model for the future. In the *Kojiki*, which in his view had originally been based on the oral report of the mentioned Hieda no Are, he saw a means for direct access to the authentic language of antiquity. This also included the hope of bringing back to life the spirit of ancient times itself through the words of the old language. This is a concept that influenced the entire movement of romanticism in Europe too, although no connection between the Japanese and European spheres has been proven.

To Norinaga the story of creation and the myths of the *Kojiki* were the expression of an inner connection between the ancient Japanese people and the deities of indigenous mythology, of which they could intuitively become aware with a »pure« and »true heart« (*magokoro*), and which still resonated deeply. In the language of antiquity he saw the direct and concrete expression of this specifically Japanese spirit. For him, as well as for other leaders of the Kokugaku, the reconstruction of the old Japanese language of the ancient sources, including especially the *Man'yôshû* in addition to the *Kojiki*, offered a direct means to accessing the

¹⁹⁴ Kônoshi 2000: 62.

¹⁹⁵ Kônoshi 2000: 64.

language and »soul« of ancient times, that is the Age of the Gods itself. Here a very ancient concept, that of the »word soul« (*kotodama*), becomes visible.¹⁹⁶

Norinaga's understanding of the ancient Japanese language expresses all aspects of the concept of *kotodama*, even if the term itself seems to be rarely mentioned in his writings. But like his teacher Kamo Mabuchi, Norinaga, too, refers directly to the *kotodama* or *kotoage* verses of the *Man'yôshû* in his work, namely in his introductory essay to the *Kojikiden*, the already discussed *Naobi no Mitama* (cf. Stolte 1939: 195, note 8). Thereby the importance of this aspect for Norinaga's understanding of the *Kojiki* is shown. David Pollack (1986: 49) emphasizes the general importance of the concept of *kotodama* in Motoori Norinaga's work. And Mark Morris¹⁹⁷ remarks:

»Hence the centrality of *kotodama*, 'word power', to Norinaga's utopic rewriting-in-unwriting of the *Kojiki*: 'because there was no separation between the words (*koto*) and the things (*koto*) they named, to utter the word was to give rise to the reality itself'«.

In Norinaga's *Kojikiden*, the language of the Age of the Gods itself appears as the mystical core of Japanese identity. Without going into detail on this topic here, the following thought is worth considering: In light of Norinaga's linguistic and mystical tendencies, which are evident throughout the *Kojikiden*, is it possible to state that his obsessive involvement with the *Kojiki* and its language could be understood and explained by the concept of *kotodama* itself? Norinaga's stated goal was to use the linguistic reconstruction of the *Kojiki* to reawaken the ancient divine spirit contained in it. Thus, it does not appear out of line to see this as the actual motivation of his work. After Norinaga's philological work had stripped the *Kojiki* of its »foreign«, i.e. Chinese aspects, contained in the Kanji, the original, that is Japanese, words could be »set free«. These words of the Age of the Gods however were thought to contain magical powers, as we now know from the teachings of *kotodama*, based on an ontological and semiotic identity of the signi-

¹⁹⁶ The idea of the »word soul« is considered an important mental and spiritual concept of Japanese antiquity. It is based on a concept originating in sympathetic magic, according to which no essential difference exists between a thing and its naming. Semiotically spoken there is an identity of signifier and signified. In Japan this idea expresses itself in the compound term of *kotodama*, consisting of the two words *koto* and *tama*. *Tama* means »soul«, while *koto* has the dual meaning of »word« and »thing«. Usually this term is translated as »word soul«. Historically the earliest reference to this concept is found in songs of the lyric collection *Manyôshû* from the eighth century in which Japan is called a country of *kotodama*. Almost forgotten in the Japanese Middle Ages, this idea became a sort of conceptual general key to the national philology of the Edo period (1600-1868) and the *kokutai*-nationalism of the modern age to postulate basic specific features of Japan and its language, seemingly originating in high antiquity and the Age of the Gods. See also Antoni 2012b.

¹⁹⁷ Mark Morris in his review of Pollack 1986 (*JJS*, vol 15/1: 283).

fier and signified. With the ancient language the corresponding reality could also be brought back into being.

Against this background Norinaga's academic duality as philologist and Shintô theologian, which is otherwise often puzzling, becomes surprisingly understandable in my view: the reconstruction of the ancient »words« (*koto*) would lead to an evocation of the corresponding identical »thing« (*koto*), that is the conditions of antiquity. This means that a historical text such as the *Kojiki* could become a religious »holy text« through the linguistic 'archeological' work of philologists. The qualitative transformation of the text from a profane document into a sacred, even magical, reality would be perfect. These interpretations cannot yet be proven beyond doubt, since clear textual references remain to be found in Norinaga's work. But the *kotodama* approach appears to offer a plausible hypothesis as to why Norinaga sought to reconstruct the authentic Japanese language of the work with such obsession through decades of work. In this way the ancient deities would directly come back into the world, as the word and the thing are identical. And this was without a doubt the intention of Norinaga's theological - and political! - program. The *Kojiki*, as the supposedly authentic history of the gods and ancient emperors, would be a medium for the evocation of these higher beings of antiquity, and thus truly a »holy work« for the new concept of Shintô as a national religion propagated by Norinaga. In this way the linguistic reconstruction of the *Kojiki* could truly be understood as a kind of magical act, which could be used to transfer not only the words, but also the entire reality of ancient times to the present.

5. 1. 2. 2. 4. *Patterns of ideology*

The already mentioned scholar Kônoshi Takamitsu stresses the importance of Motoori Norinaga's *Kojiki* studies for the emergence of the modern nation state in Japan. »But it would be a mistake,« he points out, »to see Norinaga's opinions as the basis for the canonization of the *Kojiki* in the modern period. Instead, it was the modern's state's need for a national canon that caused it to discover Norinaga.«¹⁹⁸

As is well known in the history of the modern world, the idea of the nation state puts high value on the question of a particular national language. In this context, Kônoshi quotes Ueda Kazutoshi's famous lecture dating from 1894, *Ko-*

¹⁹⁸ Kônoshi 2000: 64.

kugo to Kokka to (»National Language and the Nation«), »which stated that the nation-state needs to be founded on a common language.«¹⁹⁹ This, by the way, is a position very well known from the writings of the Romantic School, especially in Germany.

Let us quote Kônoshi again, who puts this whole process in a nutshell:

»It was in this context that the *wabun* (vernacular)-centered corpus of Japanese 'classics' was constructed and that the *Kojiki* assumed a privileged status over the *Nihonshoki* as a national classic and as the repository of the oldest and most ancient folk tradition.«²⁰⁰

In a parallel process, the *Manyôshû* was canonized as a »national poetry anthology.«²⁰¹ Kônoshi elucidates the idea of the *kokutai* (see below) and the importance of Amaterasu's »Divine Mandate« (*shinchoku*)²⁰² in this context, but cannot provide the answer to an intriguing detail problem: why is the crucial decree for eternal rule over the land of Japan to be found in the *Nihonshoki* only, and not in the *Kojiki*? Both texts together build up the modern Japanese canon of idealized antiquity. But it was the *Kojiki* that, since the historic »decision« of Motoori Norinaga, was regarded first in rank among these twins.²⁰³

5. 1. 2. 2. 5. *Kojiki – the Holy Book of (modern) Shintô?*

Let us finally turn to the most difficult problem within this context: Must the *Kojiki* be regarded as a, or even the, »Holy Book of Shintô«? This question deserves a full-scale study on its own, so only a few arguments can be discussed here.

Marco Frenschkowski (2007: 33) states that holy texts frequently are the oldest written sources we know from a certain culture. And in the preface to another study on understanding »texts as sources« in comparative religious history, its author, Kurt Rudolph (1988), discusses at length the methodology of research on holy texts of world religions. He points out that in many cases holy scriptures are based on earlier, orally transmitted narratives.²⁰⁴ A central point in his argumen-

¹⁹⁹ Kônoshi 2000: 64.

²⁰⁰ Kônoshi 2000: 65.

²⁰¹ Cf. in this context the highly valuable study of Shinada Yoshikazu in the same volume (Shirane 2000) as Kônoshi's essay: »*Man'yôshû*: The Invention of a National Poetry Anthology« (Shinada 2000).

²⁰² Kônoshi 2000: 66.

²⁰³ On reading the *Kojiki* see also Kônoshi Takamitsu's more recent book on this subject (Kônoshi 2007).

²⁰⁴ Rudolph 1988: 44.

tation is, as he says, the »old struggle« between the two antagonistic methods, that of literary studies and that of religious histories studies' approaches has dialectally faded away, giving room to work done in concert.²⁰⁵ This is true for *Kojiki* studies as well. In his essay on »The *Kojiki* as Literature,« Donald Keene (1983) makes some extraordinary remarks on the religious functions of the *Kojiki* in modern times:

»The *Kojiki* is of great importance in the history of Japanese culture not only because of its antiquity but because it has served, especially since the eighteenth century, as the sacred book of the Shinto religion, and because it is our best source of information about the beliefs of the Japanese at the dawn of their civilization.«²⁰⁶

Isomae Jun'ichi, in his study on Motoori Norinaga and the creation myths of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, points to the progress of publishing technology during the early Edo period in this respect²⁰⁷ and adds a new and fascinating aspect to the discussion, arguing that the *Nihonshoki* had articulated the world views of the ruling classes, whilst Motoori Norinaga's *Kojiki* stood in accordance with the ordinary folk's view of the world.

The Chinese style of the *Nihonshoki* was the symbol of the Chinese educationism of the ruling classes represented by Confucian studies. Moreover, classical Chinese was not conducive to the emotional expression that Norinaga desired. By designating the *Kojiki* as the essential tradition of Japan, Norinaga denied the cultural traditions of the ruling classes who comprised the constituency of the *Nihonshoki* as historically extraneous. In doing so, he succeeded in asserting the legitimacy of his own worldview.²⁰⁸

With this argumentation, the *Kojiki* becomes a mere product of an individual, Motoori Norinaga's, interpretation of the »original past,« based on his concept of *mono no aware* and the culture of the non-ruling classes.²⁰⁹ Isomae, by pointing out

²⁰⁵ Rudolph 1988: 50.

²⁰⁶ Keene 1983: 99.

²⁰⁷ »It was the publishing technology created in the Kan'ei period (1624-1644) that effectively linked the myths and the people of the non-ruling classes. [...] Together with the establishment of book lenders (*kashihon'ya* 貸本屋), the large-scale production of written texts made it possible for anyone to take the *Kojiki* or *Nihonshoki* in his own hands and read it. [...] Even if an individual did not belong to a particular group such as the court or a Shinto religious association, he could freely read the *Kojiki* or *Nihonshoki* and their commentaries.« (Isomae 2000: 29).

²⁰⁸ Isomae 2000: 33.

²⁰⁹ Isomae 2000: 32.

»the contemporaneity« of interpretation of texts, therefore questions the interpreter's general »search for an original past.«²¹⁰

In any case, we may conclude that there would be no *Kojiki* as a sacred book for Shintô in general or for the non-ruling classes since the Edo period in particular, without the philological, and religiously motivated ideological work of Motoori Norinaga. His main motivation clearly can be seen in his rejection of everything Chinese, his fundamental and more and more fanatic hatred of the *karagokoro*. As it was true for the German Romanticists of the same age, astonishingly without any visible relationship between the two intellectual worlds, in the center of this nativist project stood the concept of the national language. Motoori found his archaic and »pure« Japanese in the narrative of the *Kojiki*, and he made this the base of a whole worldview. State Shintô of the Meiji and early Shôwa periods as well as Imperial Shintô up to this very day could never have existed if Norinaga had not declared the *Kojiki* the central text *and* narrative of the Japanese canon.

Later critical research since the end of the nineteenth century, i.e. the days of Chamberlain, Aston and Florenz, as well as Tsuda Sôkichi,²¹¹ had already and unmistakably pointed to the historical facts. So the story of the *Kojiki* as a holy text is not just the story of religious content, as our best »source of information about the beliefs of the Japanese at the dawn of their civilization,« as Donald Keene holds it, but is much more the story of a text, its construction, interpretation, reception and translation. Textual critique has to stand at the beginning of our research, and without such a critical approach, we are condemned just to believe, what others have written down. Whether the *Kojiki* should be regarded from this point of view as a kind of »invented tradition« or a product of »traditionalisms« (see below) is an extremely complicated topic, since the text itself is, without any question, a very old one.

But it is also true that the *Kojiki's* impact on the Japanese society is limited to the epochs since the early modern era; and it was none other than Motoori Norinaga who opened this way and therefore made the »modern Shintô« of Meiji times and later thinkable and historically possible.

²¹⁰ Isomae 2000: 34.

²¹¹ Cf. Tsuda 1967. On the general importance of early translators and Tsuda Sôkichi cf. Naumann 1996: 18ff.

5. 1. 3. Hirata Atsutane

These were the core tenets of the Kokugaku, or Fukko Shintô, which were later applied in practical political terms during the Meiji period, and which had a lasting influence on the ideological development of Japan up until its defeat in 1945. But our analysis would not be complete without mentioning a further scholar and ideologue in the context, whose school became extremely important in implementing the nativist thought in modern Shintô: Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843).

Hirata Atsutane,²¹² the last of the great *kokugakusha* of the Edo period, was born on October 7, 1776, under the name Owada Masakichi as the fourth son of a low-ranking Samurai from Satake-*han* in the castle town of Kubota in the province of Dewa (cf. Odronic 1967; Göbel 1987; Miki 1990). At the age of seven, he began to study the Chinese classics in *kanbun* as a student of the Confucian scholar and Daimyô of Akita Nakayama Seiga (1728-1805). As Miki Shôtarô writes in his comprehensive study on Hirata Atsutane from 1990, as a boy he was already influenced by the Yamazaki Ansai School of Chinese studies, which he later also praised for its patriotic spirit (cf. Miki 1990: 12, 102), while he strongly criticized the Sorai School and its leader, Dazai Shundai. At the age of ten he was also taught basic principles of medicine by his uncle. At the same time, he also developed an interest in Japanese literature. At the age of 19, he returned to Edo as a *ronin* in order to continue his studies. In his first years in Edo, he worked various jobs (cf. Odronic 1967: 23) and had only limited opportunities to pursue his studies. But in 1800 his life took a crucial turn: he was adopted by Hirata Tobei Atsuyasu, a Samurai from Matsuyama in Bichû and a teacher of the Yamaga Sokô School of *bushidô*, and changed his name to Hirata Atsutane.

In 1801 he first encountered the writings of Motoori Norinaga, which influenced him so strongly that he immediately applied to join the Matsuzaka School (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 77). This happened shortly after Norinaga's death, and so he never had the opportunity to be taught by Norinaga directly. Nonetheless, this contact with Norinaga's teachings became a crucial point in Atsutane's intellectual development. From then on, he dedicated himself to the study of Norinaga's writings and gradually developed into one of the school's leading students.

²¹² On the life, work and political influence of Hirata Atsutane, cf. Miki 1990; Tahara 1990 (1963); Watanabe 1978; Keene 1953 and 1978; Schiffer 1939; Hammitzsch 1936; Devine 1981; Odronic 1967, among others. For more recent studies on Hirata Atsutane cf. McNally 1998, 2002.

Around 1808 he was appointed as a teacher, and he was even invited to read before the priests of the Hakke School of the Shirakawa family. Atsutane then became an instructor to the priests of Shirakawa Shintô, a position that until then had been hereditary (cf. Odronic 1967: 27). This led to the final loss of influence for Ryôbu or Hakke Shintô (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 77). In the following productive years, which reflect Hirata's wide array of interests, his life was shaken by the death of his wife and two sons.

In 1823, in what was probably his greatest triumph, the Yoshida family accepted his theories, and Atsutane became responsible for the education of the priests of Yuiitsu Shintô. This meant that the responsibility for educating the priests was from then on solely under the control of the *jingikan*, which resulted in a simplification of the teachings of Shintô. At the same time, it brought about a reconciliation between the Shirakawa and Yoshida families, which had feuded since the 15th century. Also, in 1823 Hirata's writings were presented to Emperor Kôkaku (cf. Odronic 1967: 28), and Hirata's attempt to free the teachings of Shintô of Shingon elements (Hakke Shintô), as well as Buddhist, Confucian and Chinese influences (Yuiitsu Shintô), marks the true turning point from syncretistic Shintô to the »pure« Shintô of the modern age.

In 1824 Hirata adopted Hekizen Atsutane, who was later known as Hirata Kanetane, and who carried on his teachings into the early Meiji period (cf. Odronic 1967: 29). Through his activities in the name of Shintô, he increasingly became a thorn in the side of the supporters of the orthodoxy, who placed him under surveillance and submitted a report to the Shôgun in 1834. Hirata was first censored when the Shôgun removed his work *Daifusokoku kô* (written in 1828 and published in 1836) from circulation. After a further incident, Hirata was exiled to his birthplace in 1841.

By this point the number of followers of Atsutane's Kokugaku had grown enormously throughout the country (cf. Odronic 1967: 30). At the time of his death in 1843, his own students numbered 553; a further 1330 registered as students after his death. His posthumous title of *kamu tama no mi-hashira*, »illustrious pillar of the divine soul,« which was given to him by the Shirakawa, was a tribute to his life's work in studying the *kodô* (»way of antiquity«).

5. 1. 3. 1. Hirata Atsutane's Kokugaku

Hirata Atsutane continued for the most part on the path of his predecessors, although he was less interested in the interpretation of ancient literary works, focusing instead on the study of the *kodô*, the ancient way, and proving the superi-

ority of Japan and the inferiority of other nations (cf. Blacker 1988: 72). According to this view, Japan was the ruling country that other nations were obliged to follow as subjects.

He strongly criticized the Neo-Confucians and generally opposed Chinese influences. Although he often defended Lao Tzu and Confucius, he accused the Confucians of not correctly studying the written works. He shared Motoori's view that China was morally inferior due to the change of dynasties there. For example, in his work *Taidô Wakumon*, he criticized China for the fact that one could not only turn away from the ruler, but it was even deemed possible to assassinate him.²¹³ Furthermore, he found fault with the lack of academic methods in Chinese writings, which – remarkably – he saw evidenced in Dutch works (Odrönic 1967: 24). Due to his comprehensive education and his knowledge of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, as well as Western thought and Christianity, which he cited as complementary examples in his lectures and commentaries, his written works were better founded and more detailed, from the perspective of comparative education, than those of Motoori Norinaga (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 78).

Hirata Atsutane's influence lay in the further development, and especially the politicization of, the ideas of the Kokugaku, as well as the emphasis on Shintô as a national religion. Hirata saw the Japanese *kokutai* as the embodiment of the »true way of the *kami*« (*makoto no shintô*; Schiffer 1939: 227):

»There are also several different ways of the *kami*. The first is the true way of the *kami*. As previously mentioned, knowledge of the illustrious *kokutai* of the land of the *kami*, the study of the deeds of the *kami* and the practice of the way of righteous men are the true way of the *kami*. [...] The way of the *kami* that is commonly referred to alongside the way of the *ju* and the Buddha, however, is something very vile: the *kami* are usually portrayed as capable of simply being bought off. Such people covet gold and silver and know nothing of the illustrious *kokutai*.«²¹⁴

The more Atsutane pursues the question of the essence of what is truly Japanese, the more important the emperor became in his thinking, and thus also the concept of absolute loyalty to the emperor, based on the genealogy of the imperial family extending back to the sun goddess Amaterasu ômikami. These ideas resulted in a chauvinistic worldview that placed the old concept of Japan as the »land of the gods« in the middle of the world and also made claims on surrounding countries. On the basis of the ancient Japanese sources, Atsutane expressed

²¹³ This theme represents one of the main arguments of the Hirata school against China see also Schiffer 1939: 233ff.; cf. Braun 1989: passim.

²¹⁴ Hirata Atsutane: *Taidô wakumon*, III = Schiffer 1939: 227.

his position on the Korean peninsula, for example, in which he writes about the war against the »three great Han« (i.e. Korea) in the context of Jingû Kôgô's »expedition« to Korea:

»But I believe, most respectfully, the great *kami* hated them in their illustrious hearts, the actual subjects of *Sumera mi Kuni*, who, rather than serve as subjects, acted proud and insolent. And for this reason, they were punished by the gods with the illustrious punitive expedition.«²¹⁵

He continues:

»Thus, there is among all the nations of the world not a single one that is not the emperor's own, and no people that are not the emperor's own.« (l.c.)

The above quotations demonstrate the potential for aggression contained in Hirata Atsutane's religious nationalism. It is not difficult to arrive at a justification for rights over neighboring countries and acts of war using Atsutane's arguments.

Atsutane also criticized Confucianism, thereby aggravating the Samurai class, since this belief system was particularly important to them. Although he himself was not a revolutionary figure, he provided the theoretical ammunition for opposition groups. Accordingly, the followers of his teachings included rich farmers and merchants who were close to these groups and saw more personal gain in supporting the advocates of the emperor than the weakened *bakufu*. This promised the chance of reaching a higher social position without belonging to the Samurai class.

But Hirata Atsutane's elevation of the position of the emperor was not only met with support. Statements such as the following brought about increasing resistance from the *bakufu*:

»And, most respectfully, whether it is called a *sesshō*, *kampaku* or *daijūkō*, the emperor gave him this right and transferred his office to him, and therefore it is quite naturally the case that he is the emperor's illustrious subject.«²¹⁶

The consequences of such statements can be seen, as previously mentioned, in Hirata's exile from Edo and the banning of his writings by the shogunate.

As Odrionic (1967) writes, however, Hirata's position on Western learning was not clear. On the one hand, he showed true admiration – for example, in his ac-

²¹⁵ Hirata Atsutane: *Taidō wakumon*, I = Schiffer 1939: 218.

²¹⁶ Hirata Atsutane: *Taidō wakumon*, I = Schiffer 1939: 219.

ceptance of Copernican theory – while on the other hand, he discounted the »in-significant« achievements of Western science in comparison with the study of the ancient way of Japan. His knowledge of Christianity (cf. Odronic 1967: 33) was evident in his work of 1806, *Honkyô gaihen* (»An Introduction to the Teachings of Our Country«), among others.²¹⁷ Hirata adopted some aspects of Christian thought and adapted them to Shintô, for example, by citing passages while simply adding the word »Shintô« (cf. Odronic 1967: 34). Thus, he saw Adam and Eve as an equivalent to Izanagi and Izanami, and it was possibly also Christian writings that brought about his visions of life after death, the counterpart to the visible world,²¹⁸ ruled over by the Izumo deity Okuninushi. Hirata declared Shintô the religion that is superior to all others and the deity Musubi no kami (i.e. Takamimusubi) the creator of all things. In his view, the main deities of other religions were nothing more than local manifestations of this Japanese god of creation (Odronic 1967: 35). This deity was responsible for the creation of all things and was the source of all existence, both human and divine. Furthermore, he expanded his worldview to include the concept of the salvation of souls after death; eternal happiness awaited those who achieved merits in this world.

In his attempt to enrich Shintô, Hirata elevated the position of the creator god Takamimusubi in particular to that of the central deity of the world. According to the written tradition, especially the *Nihonshoki*, his divine sons Omoikane and Sukuna-bikona, as well as his daughters, played important roles in mythology. His grandchild Ninigi no mikoto descended to earth in order to rule over Japan, and his great grandson, Jinmu-tennô, became the first emperor of Japan. Atsutane considered this elevation of Takamimusubi not to be an arbitrary choice, but justified by his role in Japanese mythology. This choice is striking, because the central figure of Shintô thought at the time was the sun goddess Amaterasu. Before this reassessment of Musubi no kami, Amaterasu was seen as the most important deity, especially due to the theological ideas of Motoori Norinaga. One reason for Norinaga's high regard for a female deity could perhaps be the fact that he felt especially close to the female sensitivity of the *magokoro*.

In this context, Sigmara Sato-Dienser quotes from Motoori Norinaga's work *Shibun yôryô*:

»[...] man's true feeling is gentle and simple, like that of children and women. To be male, composed and intelligent is not this true feeling. It is merely ex-

²¹⁷ Written in the year Bunka 3 (1806); edition: Hirata Atsutane zenshû (Hirata-gakkai), Volume 2; cf. KSSMR 7: 374.

²¹⁸ On Hirata Atsutane's attitude toward Christianity, see also Richard Devine's study »Hirata Atsutane and Christian Sources« (Devine 1981).

ternal and unimportant. If one searches for the true nature of the heart, however, one finds that intelligent men are all like women and children. The only difference is that some hide it out of shame, while others do not.«²¹⁹

However, Hirata Atsutane not only exaggerated the position of the god Musubi no kami, but also the position of Japan in general by calling it a nation above all others that was created before all other nations and was also the birthplace of the sun goddess. Therefore, he saw Japan as superior to all other nations. As a radical proponent of the Kokugaku, he believed that the Japanese were different from other nations especially in their spirit, their politeness and their courage, and that therefore these qualities must be promoted (l.c.).

Hirata Atsutane was also responsible for the idea of the extension of the divinity of the empire and its ruling family to the Japanese people as a whole. In his work *Kodô taii* (»Fundamental Ideas of the Ancient Way«) from 1824, he clearly states:

»Our illustrious country is truly the land of the gods, from the simple man up to us, we are all certainly descendants of the gods.«²²⁰

Not only the character traits of the Japanese are exceptional, according to Hirata, but also the Japanese themselves are a very special race, superior to all others in stature and health. The only reason the Japanese people at the time did not correspond to this ideal, according to Atsutane, was that they had endured lasting damages through their contact with China! (Cf. Blacker 1988: 72-73.)

Hirata's further dogmatic claims also sought to prove the superiority of the Japanese people, who were the first to come about at the creation of the world. However, Odronic (1967: 38) suspects that Hirata Atsutane's emphasis on the superiority of the Japanese is probably best understood as a spurious response to the apparent inferiority and slow national development of Japan at the time. In his emphasis of the greatness of Japan, Hirata attempted to compensate for the cultural and material dependency on foreign nations by postulating the spiritual superiority of Japan, or by demonstrating that the Japanese spirit, *yamato-gokoro*, was the defining characteristic that distinguishes Japan from other nations (cf. Odronic 1967: 39).

²¹⁹ Sato-Diesner 1977: 85; cf. Motoori Norinaga: *Shibun yôryô*, edition MNZ 10, 1927: 305.

²²⁰ Hirata Atsutane: *Kodô taii*, edition: KGS 10: 1.

5. 1. 3. 2. *The Hirata School and Fukko Shintô*

In Inoue Nobutaka's work (1994: 442f.) on Fukko Shintô – also called *junshintô*, («pure Shintô»), *kodô-shintô* («Shintô of the ancient way»), *Kokugaku-shintô*, *shintô-fukkoha* («Shintô restoration school») – the author writes that this school epitomized Edo period Kokugaku thought. This school was based on the ideal of a «pure» Shintô that was not influenced by Buddhism or Confucianism. More specifically, however, the term Fukko Shintô usually refers to the school of Shintô that emerged from Hirata Atsutane's theories. As was previously mentioned, Hirata emphasized the religious character of Shintô particularly through his systematization of his concept of the afterlife, which was centered around the deity Ôkuninushi. Ultimately, the movement for the restoration of the emperorship (*ôseifukko*) during the *bakumatsu* period emerged from this theological and political body of thought. However, the word «Fukko Shintô» only came into official use in March of 1868 (Keiô 4).

Over the course of this movement, the Shirakawa family adopted the interpretation of the Kokugaku in the interpretation of the Hirata School and was thus able to expand the reach of its power. In light of this situation, the Yoshida family saw it necessary, in order to win the support of the shrine priests, to appoint the Hirata student Yano Harumichi and thus show that the Yoshida had also returned (*fukko*) to the «ancient, pure way» (*junsui-kodô*). In this case, *fukko* does not refer to the way before the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism in ancient times, but rather, the «ancient, pure way» before the establishment of medieval syncretism by the Yoshida and Shirakawa Schools. One of the main goals of this movement was the restoration of the powerful position of the *ritsuryô-jingikan* system by Kokugaku scholars of the Hirata School. As for its theology, this school propagated especially the unity of religion and rule, or politics, (*saisei-itchi*), which was centered around the concept of Jinmu-tennô as the founder of the Japanese state. In the Meiji period, these Kokugaku scholars of the Hirata School were seen as followers of the Fukko School.

Hirata Atsutane's successors, including Yano Harumichi (1823-87)²²¹, put the concepts of this school into practice as practical ideology during the *bakumatsu* period (cf. Inoue 1994: 537). Born as the first son of a Samurai from Ôzu-han in the province of Iyô, Yano first studied philology under Ban Nobutomo, before joining

²²¹ Kishimoto (1956: 46) cites Yano Gendô, whom he calls a «great leader of the Hirata School.» For Yano Harumichi cf. Wachutka 2013: passim.

the Hirata School. In 1862 he became a teacher of Shintô priests in the Shirakawa family, and in 1867 he became the head of the Yoshida School. He wrote the programmatic work *Kenkin sengo*²²² as a theoretical basis for the restoration of the ancient imperial political system and thus provided the most comprehensive and systematic plan for the state from the perspective of the Hirata Kokugaku scholars. After the Meiji Restoration, Yano Harumichi attempted to organize the education system around the principles of the Kokugaku, but was arrested in March of 1871 (Meiji 4), along with Tsunoda Tadayuki, Gonda Naosuke and others, on accusations of treason. After completing his sentence, he dedicated his life primarily to editorial work up until his death in 1887.

5. 1. 4. *Conclusion: criticism of Confucianism in the Kokugaku
and the image of China*

To summarize, it can be said that criticism of Confucianism and the resulting rejection of China came to play a critical role in Kokugaku thought. Paradoxically, however, Confucianism itself can also be credited for the rise of the Kokugaku, since this school, whose goal was the restoration of a romanticized version of ancient Japan, was formed as a countermovement to the organizing principle of government in the Tokugawa period, *shushi* Confucianism. It is especially interesting that the academic methods of the Kokugaku, who argued emphatically against Confucianism, ironically operated based on the categories and axioms of Confucian thought. Just as in classical Confucianism the idea of historical progress is negated and instead a picture of idealized antiquity is painted that is to serve as a model for the present, so too did the *kokugakusha* («national scholars») formulate a similarly idealized version of antiquity for Japan that was meant to serve as a model for a better future.²²³

But the Kokugaku's interpretation of this past golden age is dwarfed by the works of Japanese Confucianism that accumulated over the previous centuries. The scholars of National Learning saw their own culture as being rooted in the distant past, before Japan came into contact with Chinese culture and thus had not yet been influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism. The early *kokugakusha*, especially Kamo Mabuchi and his successor Motoori Norinaga, dedicated themselves to the goal of bringing to light the facts (*jijitsu*) about their own ancient cul-

²²² Cf. KSSMR 3: 103. A first edition of this work from 1867 can be found in the library of Kyûshû University (publisher and place of publication not indicated).

²²³ The role of the Kokugaku for the formation of a modern Japanese identity is also emphasized by Nelly Naumann (1987: 182ff.).

tural heritage before Japan's contact with China and its supposed contamination through foreign influences. Finally adopting the methods of Confucianism as well as its goals, the *kokugakusha* thus turned to their own past and strove for a philological reconstruction of the ancient written works of the Japanese tradition, which were no longer easily readable. The verses of the *Manyôshû*, the »Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves« from the eighth century, played an especially important role in these efforts. Kamo Mabuchi dedicated a significant part of his life's work to the interpretation of this work of lyric verse written in Old Japanese using phonetic Chinese characters. Mabuchi saw this work as the pure expression of Japanese poetry, which was not yet clouded by Chinese influence, and was thus a reflection of the golden age at the beginning of Japanese history. For the philologists of National Learning, philology was not only the means, but also the object of academic study, since a pure language that is free of Chinese influence, as was believed to be evident in the *Manyôshû* and other ancient works, like the *Kojiki*,²²⁴ represented the only means for achieving the idealized conditions of antiquity.²²⁵

Under Motoori Norinaga, Mabuchi's successor, the ideological reach of the Kokugaku was strengthened, but it had not yet taken on the fanatical character of Hirata Atsutane's ideas in the 19th century. Motoori considered not the *Manyôshû*, but the *Kojiki* of 712 to be the most important ancient written work. (Cf. Antoni 2012a: 412ff.) This work, the oldest history of the Japanese empire, which was compiled in the late seventh century at the imperial court, completed the link between religion and literature, mythology and history. Norinaga saw the myths of the *Kojiki*, which he analyzed over the course of decades of philological studies, as accounts of the true beginning, the most ancient times, long before any outside influence. Based on this idea, Norinaga developed not only the concept of a Japan-centered religious »original revelation,« but also traced the concept of Japan's superiority over China back to the myths of the *Kojiki*.

Confucianism forms the focus of his fundamental criticism of China. He saw its teachings as the expression of a presumptuous rationalism that blatantly disregards the fundamental truths of human existence with its purely meritocratic teachings of virtue. In Norinaga's view, the truth is found in the *Kojiki* and its mythical accounts of the »Age of the Gods«. He sees the story of creation as an expression of the deep connection of the ancient Japanese to the indigenous deities – a connection that the inhabitants of the outside world, especially the Chinese, lack. And Norinaga leaves no doubt that the Japanese deities are universal,

²²⁴ For the importance of language for the ideology of the Kokugaku cf. Antoni 2012b.

²²⁵ Incidentally, one can easily draw some striking comparisons between this field and European romanticism of that era – a subject that deserves further study.

since there can be no two truths. This construction, which is typical of religious ethnocentrism²²⁶, finally leads him, by deduction, to an outright condemnation of China.

Only in China, which in his view had fallen from the truth of the gods, was there any necessity for the creation of a philosophy of human making such as Confucianism. Since the »godless« Chinese no longer intuitively carried within themselves the way of virtue, Norinaga writes, they needed an elaborate system of moral standards in order to control negative human powers. In this way, Norinaga's criticism of Confucianism, which began with the limits of a rationalist worldview, suddenly becomes an intensely xenophobic reckoning with China. The overarching term in this context is *karagokoro*, the »Chinese spirit« or »Chinese heart.«²²⁷ In his view, *karagokoro* is the matrix of negative development and corruption.²²⁸ While Mabuchi's rejection of Confucianism was still largely free of such chauvinistic overtones (he merely rejected Confucianism as a belief system, while at the same time praising Taoism²²⁹, which is also of Chinese origin), Norinaga represents the transition from a purely political and ideological criticism of Confucianism to the political and ideological rejection of China in the late *Kokugaku*.

The school's main proponent, Hirata Atsutane, preached a glowing reverence for the emperor and the idea of the religiously justified superiority of Japan over all other nations. In his view, China in particular was the seat of corruption, since Chinese history was marked by treason and usurpation, the opposite of the Confucian ideal of holiness.

In this context, it is pertinent to mention the importance of the legitimation of rule in *Kokugaku* thought. According to the beliefs of all *kokugakusha*, the Japanese imperial family took the highest rank among all the rulers of the world, since they alone were directly descended from the deities of (Japanese) mythology according to the *Kojiki*. The apparent importance of tribal or genealogical thinking forms the basis for this belief. According to the beliefs of the *Kokugaku*, because the imperial family is directly descended from the gods, it has been called upon to rule eternally. The importance of this concept in the *Kokugaku* and, after the

²²⁶ On ethnocentrism, cf. the collection edited by Manfred Brocker and Heino Nau (1997).

²²⁷ Cf. the sections on *karagokoro* in Norinaga's work *Tamakotsuma* (MNZ 1, Tôkyô 1976: 48-50). On Norinaga's view of *karagokoro* see also Antoni 2004.

²²⁸ Cf. *Naobi no mitama* (Motoori (1922): 4 = Stolte 1939: 195). Here Norinaga describes China as a country in which »the people's hearts are corrupted and their customs are savage.« Cf. Wehmeyer 1997: passim.

²²⁹ In his work *Kokuikô* Kamo Mabuchi refers to the teachings of Lao-tsu, and thus Taoism, as the oldest belief system in China and states that only with Confucianism did the moral decline of China begin (cf. Dumoulin 1939: 180, among others).

Meiji Restoration, in the state doctrine of modern Japan up to the end of World War II, cannot be emphasized enough. For the *kokugakusha*, and especially the proponents of the later school of Hirata Atsutane, the value of a country was decided almost exclusively on the basis of this question.

In 1861, at a time of great political upheaval, a student of the Hirata School by the name of Takeo Masatane wrote a comprehensive work on the situation in world politics at the time.²³⁰ As discussed in a study by Kim Braun, Masatane, displaying an astonishing knowledge of history and geography, critically compares the histories of the major powers at the time recognized by him as »empires« and discusses in great detail the »German empire« (this, however, does not refer to the unification of 1871), the Ottoman empire, Russia, France, early civilizations and China. The author recounts page after page of examples of usurpations, assassinations and illegitimate rule in all of these empires in astonishing detail, while always arriving at the same conclusion, namely that only the Japanese ruling house, due to its direct line of divine descent, can claim to rule legitimately. This is almost a caricature of the standard Kokugaku argument against China, now expanded to the entire world, that only the Japanese dynasty is justified to rule due to its legitimation in ancient times. He regards China in particular, with its history of constant dynastic change and especially the centuries-long rule by the foreign Qing (Manchu), as a perfect example of »worthless« rule. (Cf. Braun 1989)

Thus, at the beginning of modern Japan during the Meiji period, a self-contained worldview was established that, based on the beliefs of the Kokugaku, combined an extremely negative view of Confucianism with a related antagonism toward China. The hated rationalism of Confucian thought was, to the *kokugakusha*, merely a sign that China had fallen from the teachings of the gods as contained in the *Kojiki*. According to this extremely ethnocentric view, China's »godlessness« was the original cause of the apparently presumptuous rationalism of Confucian thought. While in China virtue and morality by way of philosophical justification had to be created for this reason, the *kokugakusha* believed, such a supporting construction was unnecessary in Japan, since that country once again recognized its own numinous roots. According to this view, Japan possessed an indigenous, metaphysically justified morality, and the virtues that Confucianism propagated through philosophy were already present in Japan. Therefore, the true origin of the virtues of Confucianism was also in Japan, since the necessity of

²³⁰ Takeo Masatane: *Dai teikoku-ron* (NST 20); cf. Braun 1989 and 1992.

their philosophical formulation in Chinese intellectual history was merely a sign of China's moral decline.

The fact that the early enthusiasm for the Kokugaku's glorification of ancient Shintô was followed by a countermovement of liberal, Western-oriented intellectuals like Fukuzawa Yukichi actually brought about an intensification of the anti-Chinese aspects of the new government.²³¹ While the liberals considered China and Confucianism a cautionary example of social underdevelopment, and thus a motivation to orient the country increasingly toward Western progress, Meiji-period Shintô conservatism reached its negative position on China based on the beliefs of the Kokugaku. The enormous importance of the Kokugaku view of Japan and the world, and of China in particular, which ultimately grew in the 1930s and '40s, is well known. Without this deep belief in Japan's cultural mission and the implied inferiority of the rest of Asia, supported by the previously discussed intellectual and religious sources, the military expansionism of that time would have been unthinkable. But before this is discussed in greater detail, it is necessary to turn back to the late Edo period.

5. 2. *The Mito School*

In his work on the culture and intellectual history of the late Edo period, Harry D. Harootunian (1995) demonstrates that the culture of this period began not in the *bakumatsu* period, but around the year 1800: »The special culture of late Tokugawa culture did not begin in the 1830s, or even later, but probably in the late eighteenth century or the early 1800s,« (Harootunian 1995: 53). He sees the period as being characterized by a sense of decline and the search for solutions to the social, political and economic crisis. »Virtually all of the new discourses of the late Tokugawa period – Mitogaku (Mito learning), national learning, Western learning, and the new religions – tried to unite a concept of culture with politics.« All these groups saw their suggestions as ways to reform the whole, and »all of these new discourses were formulated in the early nineteenth century,« (Harootunian 1995: 67).

The Mito School, which saw reforms in the *han* as a model for the reorganization of the entire Japanese system of government, is especially important in this context.²³² Generations of Samurai intellectuals from Mito-*han*, such as Fujita

²³¹ On Fukuzawa cf. among others Craig 2009.

²³² On the Mito school cf. Bellah 1985; Brüll 1989; Earl 1981 (1964); Hammitzsch 1939 (repr. New York, 1965); Hammitzsch 1940; Harootunian 1988; Imai 1972; Ishida Ichirô 1991 (1963);

Yûkoku (1774-1826), his son Tôko (1806-1855), Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1863), the Daimyô Tokugawa Nariaki (1800-1861) and others, contributed to the development of this specific body of thought of Mito (Harootunian 1995: 67). In particular, they strove for a synthesis of (Neo-) Confucian ethics and the religious beliefs of the indigenous tradition, thus, in a way, continuing the Shintô-Confucian discourse of the early Edo period, but with with different emphases.

5. 2. 1. *The development of the Mito School*

In strict opposition to the dominant *shushigaku*, this Confucian school of thought – which at first was purely philosophical and historiographical and later became intensely political and revolutionary – increasingly gained ground around the end of the Edo period and ultimately worked toward eliminating the *bakufu*. In its place, this school advocated the reinstatement of an idealized ancient system of rule, headed by the divine emperor as an autocratic monarch. The Mito School, which was named after the territory of Mito (located in what is today Ibaraki Prefecture), which developed over the course of the Edo period into a center of opposition to the *bakufu*, postulated the combination of Shintô and Confucianism (*shinju-itchi*) as the basis for a new Japanese empire. The central point of Mito discourse was the concept of the (Japanese) »national polity« (*kokutai*), which became the basis for a powerful religious and political ideology. In Mito School thought at the end of the Edo period, the relationship between Shintô and Confucianism went through a remarkable transformation. According to the concept of *shinju-itchi*, the »unity of Shintô and Confucianism« as formulated by the influential scholar of the late Mito School, Fujita Tôko (1806-1855), among others, the relationship between and significance of the two sides were reversed. According to a specialist in this area (Kracht 1975: 51) it is apparent »how consistently the Mito School unites Confucian and Shintô elements in its teachings,« whereas henceforth Confucianism only played a secondary role in supporting the »divine mandate« of Shintô.²³³ The spiritual principles of the Meiji Restoration, and thus of the modern, Meiji-period nation-state of Japan, were developed and shaped into a powerful political ideology by the scholars of this important national school at the end of the Edo period. The syncretistic reversal of the relationship

Koschmann 1987; Kracht 1975; Kracht, Leinss 1988; Minamoto 1992 (1973); Nosco 1990; Stanzel 1982; Suzuki 1987; Wakabayashi 1986; Webb 1958, among others. See also Antoni 1987: 266-282.

²³³ Already a successor to Yamazaki Ansai, Atobe Yoshiakira (1658-1729), remarked on the relationship between Confucianism and Shintô: »Shintô is the only Way in the universe. Confucianism assists Shintô when its principles are consistent with Shintô.« (Okada 1979: 248)

between Confucianism and Shintô in the Mito School represented the crucial step toward a final acculturation of Confucianism.

The over two hundred-year-long history of the Mito School can be divided into three periods, each of which are closely connected to one of the Daimyô of Mito: Tokugawa Mitsukuni in the founding era, Tokugawa Harumori (1751-1823; ruled 1766-1805) during the middle period, and Tokugawa Nariaki during the final period of the Mito School before the Meiji Restoration.

The Mito School²³⁴ was created along with the establishment of the Office of Historiography (*shikyoku*)²³⁵, and consisted of a council of historians of varied academic and geographic backgrounds. Among them were the Chinese Confucian Scholar Chu Shun-shui (Chu Chih-yu; known in Japan as Shu Shunsui; 1600-1682); the Chinese Zen master Xin Yue (1639-1695); the Taoist scholar Hitomi Bokuyûken (1598-1670); the Buddhist monk Sassa Jitchiku (1640-1698); the proponent of a synthesis of Confucianism and Buddhism, Mori Genjuku (1653-1721); Ukai Shinshô (1647-1693), a student of Yamazaki Ansai; Kuriyama Sempô (1671-1706), also a student of the Kimon School; Miyake Kanran (1673-1718); and Asaka Tanpaku (1656-1737), who had been educated as a student of Shu Shunsui in Mito (cf. Hammitzsch 1939: 17-22; Kracht 1975: 84).

It was Tokugawa Mitsukuni's intention to compile a historical work based on the Chinese model (Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shi Chi*), the *Dainihonshi*, which was finally completed only at the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Earl 1964 (1981): 83). One of the main responsibilities of this work was to provide historiographical proof of the legitimacy of the Southern Court during the imperial schism of the *Namboku* period (1336-1392). The criteria for determining a line of rule were established by Kuriyama Sempô. According to him, the only legitimate court was the one in possession of the imperial regalia (*sanshû no jingi*) – the symbols of divine rule as descendants of Amaterasu ômikami – which in this case was the Southern Court. This concept of the imperial regalia representing a direct line of legitimate rule resulted in a fusion with the religious beliefs of Shintô that became typical of the Mito School.

In this context, it is worth noting that the ideas of the Mito School in this early phase were not intended as an opposition to the *bakufu*. According to their theories, the Shôgun should act as a loyal minister under the emperor. They propagated the idea of *sonnô* (»reverence for the emperor«) as well as *sonnô-keifu* (»Re-

²³⁴ In Mitsukuni's time, this cannot yet be called a »school«; cf. Hammitzsch 1939: 8-13, and Kracht 1975: 6.

²³⁵ After moving from the ancillary residence in Mito to the main residence in Edo in 1672 and the corresponding enlargement, the Office of Historiography was called *Shôkôkan* (»Institute for Enlightenment [of the Past] and Study [of the Future]«); cf. Kracht 1975: 153.

vere the emperor, respect the *bakufu*«; cf. Benl, Hammitzsch 1956: 355). Thus, this was not a contradiction of the ruling system of the Tokugawa. The crucial factors for the school's political power were its place in the historical constellation and its emphasis on legitimacy through an unbroken line of rule.

In the period from 1740 to 1800, the Mitogaku more or less reached a point of stasis. Only after the country's intellectual and political structures changed did the school also experience a renewal. Japan's feudal society had slipped into an increasingly serious crisis, and pressure from the West was growing. This situation caused the syncretism of the Mito scholars to spread at a breathtaking pace. The idea of the *kokutai*, which will be examined in more detail below, emerged and remained the key concept of the Japanese national consciousness on into the 1940s.

After decades of inactivity, work on the *Dainihonshi* was continued under Tokugawa Harumori. Only after the previous dean of the Office of Historiography (which was located at Mitsukuni's residence in Edo under the name Shôkôkan since 1672, and was later moved to Mito²³⁶), Tachihara Suiken (1744-1823), was disgraced by a legal affair in 1800, was his most gifted student, Fujita Yûkoku, appointed by Harumori to continue compiling the work (cf. Kracht 1975: 91).

Under his leadership, the Mito School was transformed from a purely historiographical school into a political one. This is also apparent in the establishment of the Kôdôkan²³⁷ by Tokugawa Nariaki in 1841, the territorial academy in Mito that became the center of the late Mito School.

Besides Yûkoku, his son Fujita Tôko (1806-1855) and his student Aizawa Seishisai also played a large part in shaping the thought of the late Mitogaku. The basis for their theories was their definition of the term »way« (*michi, dô*). According to the Mito School, this term refers to a principle of virtue laid down by the gods that requires man to act in a manner that is virtuous and appropriate to his station. This principle is based on the »Five Relationships« (*gorin*) of Confucianism and the »obligation to behave in accordance with one's social status« (*taigi-meibun*; cf. Kracht 1976).

In practice, this means that the basic principles of the school's teachings were the following: returning to the old values of the land of the gods (*shinshû* in the Sino-Japanese reading), the unity of Shintô and Confucianism (*shinju-itchi*), pen and sword (*bunbu-fugi*), loyalty and piety (*chûkô-muni*) and the inseparability of science, or study, and practical application (*gakumon jigyô fusho*).

²³⁶ Cf. »Shôkôkan« in KEJ 7: 164, among others.

²³⁷ »Institute for the Propagation of the Way,« founded in 1841 by Tokugawa Nariaki. Its purpose and goals are described in its manifesto and the corresponding commentary; cf. Kracht 1975.

Following the principle of the unity of study and practical application, the Mitogaku scholars applied their ideas in practice, participated in current political events and saw it as their duty to point out the mistakes of the *bakufu*. In their writings they demanded the reinstatement of the emperor, the removal of the *bakufu* and the expulsion of foreigners, resulting in difficulties with the *bakufu*.

Fujita Tōko's »Kōdōkan manifesto« (1838) outlined the goals and intentions of the school (cf. Kracht 1975). The return to the past and the corresponding stabilization of domestic affairs were to protect against being subordinated by the Western »barbarians.« The motto *sonnō-jōi* (»Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians«) epitomizes this combative phase of the Mitogaku. The ideas of the Mito School formed the basis for the later spiritual conflict with the *bakufu* in the *bakumatsu* period, which led to the Meiji Restoration (cf. Hammitzsch 1939: 29). A break with the *bakufu* could no longer be avoided, and ultimately the regime collapsed in 1867.

5. 2. 2. Aizawa Seishisai's »New Discourse« (Shinron)

Aizawa Seishisai, the author of the *Shinron* (»New Discourse«) from 1825, was one of the most prominent thinkers of the Mito School, and his ideas directly influenced the later Meiji Restoration.

5. 2. 2. 1. Aizawa's biography

Aizawa Seishisai was born on July 5, 1782, in Mito.²³⁸ At the age of nine, his father sent him (cf. Stanzel 1982: 60)²³⁹ to the private school of Fujita Yūkoku, who himself was only 17 years old at the time but had already been a member of the Shōkōkan for two years and was relatively well known. Fujita had the greatest influence on Aizawa's thought, and many of Aizawa's theories appear to be a continuation of his teacher's thought.

In 1799 he was appointed as a writer at the Shōkōkan, and in 1803 he went with Yūkoku to the Shōkōkan department at the Mito residence in Edo in order to work on the compilation of the *Dainihonshi*. In 1804 he was appointed as teacher

²³⁸ Hammitzsch indicates the town of Morosawa as Aizawa's birthplace in his essay. Stanzel, on the other hand, mentions the quarter of Shitaya in Mito; cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 63; Stanzel 1982: 61.

²³⁹ His ancestors worked as *ezashi*, catchers of live food for the falcons belonging to the territorial ruler of Mito. His father Yasutaka (1746-1804) was entrusted with various smaller positions and was finally elevated to the position of a low-ranking samurai. Therefore, Aizawa, who became a high-ranking samurai, was a »social climber.« This is an interesting biographical detail, since Edo period society was generally rigid and it was relatively unusual to rise to a higher social class.

to the children of the Daimyô Harumori, in which position he taught Nariaki, who later became Daimyô himself, and whose thought he crucially influenced. In 1820 he returned to the Shôkôkan and opened a private school at his home. Beginning in 1826, the year of Fujita Yûkoku's death, he also served as vice-dean, and from 1831 to 1839 as dean, of the Shôkôkan and continued to work on the *Dainihonshi* (cf. Kracht 1979: 353).

The good relations between Aizawa and Nariaki remained intact, even after Nariaki became Daimyô of Mito in 1830 (cf. Harootunian 1970: 90). Many of the reforms that were carried out by Nariaki in Mito can be traced back to the initiative of his advisor Aizawa. The goals of these reforms, which later also became the model for the Tempô reforms of the *bakufu*, were the economic security of the people, effective administration of the territory, improvement of military equipment, abatement of luxury, replacing the Buddhist festivals with Shintô festivals, and the reform of the education system (cf. Stanzel 1982: 66). The reform of the education system led to, among other things, the establishment of the territorial academy of the Kôdôkan, in whose planning Aizawa played a significant role. The Kôdôkan was opened in 1841, and Aizawa was appointed dean along with Aoyama Sessai (1776-1843).²⁴⁰

At that time, Nariaki increasingly came into conflict with the *bakufu*, and he was ultimately forced to abdicate in 1844. The opponents of the reform policies now gained power in Mito, and in 1845 Aizawa left his position as dean of the Kôdôkan. He spent the following years in seclusion, but returned as dean of the Kôdôkan in 1855 and retained the position until his death in 1863.

Aizawa Seishisai was honored posthumously, documenting his importance to the Meiji Restoration, as Meiji-tennô accepted a hand-written edition of the *Shinron* on the occasion of his visit to Mito in 1890, and Aizawa was even awarded a rank of nobility (cf. Stanzel 1982: 70ff.).

The basic topics of his works can be divided into the following groups:

- »1. The idea of »unity of loyalty and piety« (*chûkô-muni*), from which the concept of the »great duty to act according to one's station« (*taigi-meibun*) is derived
2. The study of the »way« (*dô*) in order to establish the necessity of returning to the ideal society of the past
3. The study of history in order to establish the theory of the »national polity« (*kokutai*)
4. The concept of the »unity of religion and government« (*saisei-itchi*) as the basic requirement for correctness in politics

²⁴⁰ Student of Tachihara Suiken, who was dean of the Shôkôkan from 1823 to 1830, and dean of the Kôdôkan from 1840 until his death. Cf. Kracht 1979a: 388.

5. The study of world politics in order to understand Japan's position in an international context
6. The idea of practical application in all areas of study« (*gakumon-jigyô*; cf. Stanzel 1982: 64)

5. 2. 2. 2. Aizawa's *Shinron*

The *Shinron* (»New Theses«), written in 1825, is Aizawa Seisisai's most important and well-known work. He wrote it in 1825, probably in reaction to the *bakufu*'s edict to »drive away foreign ships.« Aizawa believed that Japan could only allow contact with the outside world if the country was prepared for foreign influences (cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 67). He describes the political measures necessary for achieving this in the *Shinron*.

This work, which is written in *kanbun*, was not originally intended for a public readership, but rather as a kind of memorandum for the territorial ruler Tokugawa Narinobu (1800-1829, ruled 1816-1829). Narinobu prohibited it from being published, however, in fear of the reaction from the *bakufu*. Only under the rule of Nariaki (1800-1860, ruled 1829-1844) were copies of the work disseminated. In the 1850s a Japanese (*wabun*) edition was published, and the work was widely distributed. It became well known, especially under the imperial loyalists (*shishi*), but it was only allowed to be published after 1857 (cf. Wakabayashi 1986: 9).

The work is made up of two volumes containing a total of seven chapters²⁴¹:

Volume 1: »The National Polity« (*kokutai*), containing chapters I-III, »The State of the World« (*keisei*), »On Barbarians« (*ryojô*); and Volume 2, »Protection and Defense« (*shugyô*), »A Far-Reaching Plan« (*chôkei*). The first three chapters, which are devoted to the *kokutai*, are the core of the *Shinron* (Hammitzsch 1940: 69). The first chapter establishes the lineage of the emperor and his divine status. It states that his position as a worldly ruler is justified by his possession of the imperial regalia.

Aizawa particularly emphasizes the importance of the divine justification of the order through the deeds of Amaterasu ômikami, the ancestral deity of the imperial household. Time and again the author refers to this point. Already in the beginning of his remarks on the Japanese *kokutai*, he points out programmatically:

»In antiquity, the Heavenly Progenitress, [Amaterasu]²⁴², set down the precepts on which to base this nation. Her Imperial Throne was divinely or-

²⁴¹ NST 53: 49-159; cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 67; Stanzel 1982; Wakabayashi 1986.

dained, Her virtue was divinely bestowed, and through these, She carried out the Processes of Heaven. All of Her achievements were the work of Heaven itself. She incorporated Her virtue in the Jewel, Her wisdom in the Mirror, and her Majesty in the Sword. Being the embodiment of Heavenly Beneficence and possessed of Heavenly Majesty, She ruled over all nations according to the dictates of Heavenly Wisdom.« (Wakabayashi 1986: 152; NST 53: 52)

In the past, he states, an ideal condition of society was reached through the divine position of the emperor, which, due to changes over time and various false doctrines, however, was destroyed. The virtues of piety (*kô*) and loyalty (*chû*) are the basis of human relationships and thus also of the state. Their absolute bindingness was stripped by Buddhism and Christianity. It is especially the release of the individual from his duties to the state that Aizawa abhors in Christianity and Buddhism.²⁴³

The second of the three chapters on the »national polity« deals with the reorganization of the military, or the reestablishment of military strength in accordance with the ideal condition of the past. He claims that this is the will of the gods, since such a restoration of the military would make it possible to expand the area that is ruled by »divine virtue.« According to Aizawa, however, military strength slipped out of the realm of the emperor's power – that is, divine influence. The warriors became weak and no longer offered the country protection, and the country was even threatened by an invasion from abroad. In order to protect against this danger, Aizawa wrote, the ideal condition of military strength must be reestablished.²⁴⁴

The third chapter on the *kokutai* deals with a problem that at first appears to be a very practical matter, the unequal distribution of rice. Aizawa states that rice is a gift from the gods, and therefore, the original owner of the entire country is the emperor as a representative of the gods. The ideal condition of the past was destroyed because the owners of great amounts of rice wallowed in luxury while the other classes lived in poverty. The right to possession of the rice must therefore be reformed.²⁴⁵

In the chapter on the state of the world, Aizawa takes position on the general political topics of the time. He argues that even in Japan it is important to know

²⁴² The original text does not name the goddess directly, but instead refers to the »heavenly ancestor« (*tenso*). Nonetheless, it is clear from the context that this means Amaterasu; cf. commentary NST 53: 52.

²⁴³ NST 53: 52-70; Wakabayashi 1986: 152-171; cf. Stanzel 1982: 77.

²⁴⁴ NST 53: 70-80; Wakabayashi 1986: 172-183; cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 71f.

²⁴⁵ NST 53: 81-88; Wakabayashi 1986: 184-192; cf. Stanzel 1982: 78.

about world events in order to defend the country against possible attacks. In his view, China is the only possible ally of Japan, since only there do the people know about the will of the heavens. The Islamic countries are not aggressive and do not represent a threat. Only the Christian countries are dangerous, since they seek to expand their rule.²⁴⁶

In the following chapter, »On Barbarians,« Aizawa argues that it is Christianity that makes the West so dangerous. He alleges that spies disguised as merchants enter the countries that are to be conquered and convert their people to Christianity in order to weaken them from the inside. In his view, Christianity is especially dangerous because most people are too easily swayed by it. Therefore, clear measures must be taken in this area.²⁴⁷

In the chapter »Protection and Defense,« Aizawa makes detailed suggestions for domestic reforms. He states that the military must be revived, luxury must be avoided, and the social discrepancies between the classes must be leveled. He proposes a reorganization of the country's defenses by settling farmer-warriors in remote areas, establishing surveillance posts on the coasts, as well as a navy and a modern, powerful artillery. Furthermore, the obligation of the Daimyō to regularly reside in Edo should be abolished, since this results in excess costs.²⁴⁸

In the last chapter, »A Far-Reaching Plan,« Aizawa summarizes the core points of his program: strengthening general welfare and the military, winning the trust of the people, establishing loyalty and piety as virtues for all people, uniting heaven and earth in the worship of the emperor, and civilizing the barbarians once and for all. This plan, Aizawa states, must extend from the time of the creation of Japan to the saving of all nations of the earth by Japan.²⁴⁹

5. 2. 3. *The concept of the kokutai*

The fundamental concept of the late Mito School therefore is the idea of the »national polity« (*kokutai*; cf. Antoni 1987, 1991, among others)²⁵⁰. The national polity of a country refers to the essential characteristics that differentiate it from all other nations, giving it its special position among these countries. In the case of Japan, the national polity justifies its unique position relative to other nations,

²⁴⁶ NST 53: 88-94; Wakabayashi 1986: 193-199; cf. Stanzel 1982: 79.

²⁴⁷ NST 53: 94-106; Wakabayashi 1986: 200-213; cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 73.

²⁴⁸ NST 53: 107-134; Wakabayashi 1986: 214-244; cf. Stanzel 1982: 80.

²⁴⁹ NST 53: 134-158; Wakabayashi 1986: 245-277; cf. Stanzel 1982: 81.

²⁵⁰ Material on certain periods of the *kokutai* concept can be found in, among others, Bellah 1985; Lokowandt 1978; Benl, Hammitzsch 1956; Earl 1981 (1964); Kracht 1975; Maruyama 1971 and 1988; see also Worm 1981.

since Japan is the »land of the gods,« having been founded by the sun goddess Amaterasu and ruled over by her descendants. This made the emperor the embodiment of the Japanese *kokutai* (cf. Stanzel 1982: 53-55).

However, the term *kokutai* itself is extremely vague and difficult to translate directly. An etymological analysis (cf. Antoni 1991a: 32ff.) shows that the original Chinese term *kuo-t'i*, or *kokutai* in Japanese, can have many different meanings when translated directly, but becomes increasingly difficult to define. In China at the end of the 19th century – the time when the concept of the *kokutai* experienced its final blossoming in Japan – the pair of opposing terms *t'i* and *yung*, or »essential body [of China]« (i.e. Confucianism) and »practice« (i.e. Western technology), was known (cf. Bauer 1974: 383, 413, 465, 468, 470-72), but *kokutai* as a term of state philosophy in the sense of a »national polity« and »national identity« originated in the Japanese tradition of thought.

The term *kokutai* appears not to have played a major role in Japan until the late Tokugawa period. In 1856 the scholar Yamagata Taika remarked that the term *kokutai* was totally unknown in Japan and was probably first used by scholars of the Mito School.²⁵¹ However, this generally held opinion is contradicted by the remarkable fact that the term *kokutai* most likely played a prominent role in the intense entanglements with foreign nations in the *bakumatsu* period. According to Meyer (1998), in December of 1853, Kōmei-tennō explicitly stated to the *ba-kufu* that the question of the written exchange with the American president on the opening of the country »is an extraordinary circumstance for the land of the gods, and he, Kōmei-tennō, does not wish to cause chaos in the country through such a provocation and to dishonor the *kokutai*,« (Meyer 1998: 127). Past research has assumed that the term *kokutai* had until that time been exclusive to the speculations of the national philosophers. This point must now be reconsidered (cf. Meyer 1998: 126, note 17). At least at the court, the term *kokutai* was apparently used as a synonym for Japan itself at the time, and the reader will recall that already Hirata Atsutane saw the »true way of the *kami*« as being embodied by the *kokutai* (see chapter II: 5. 1. 3. 1). However, the spread of this concept to further sections of the population did not occur until the Meiji Restoration.

It was the mentioned Mito scholar Aizawa Seishisai who established the term *kokutai* in discourse on the theory of government and determined its essential meaning, thus determining the foundation for *kokutai* thought (*kokutai-shisō*) in later times.

²⁵¹ Yamagata Taika (1781-1866) was one of the leading theoreticians of the Meiji Restoration and a comrade of Yoshida Shōin; cf. Earl 1981 (1964): 236 and *passim*.

In this context, the term ceased to mean the »body, essence« or the »condition« of any nation²⁵², but rather specifically and exclusively the inner being, the essence, the defining, immutable and eternal characteristics and values of the Japanese nation – everything that supposedly distinguished Japan from other nations and made it superior to them. These meanings, whose origins are heterogeneous, had long been known to nationally oriented thinkers, but specifically their summarization and subsumption into a concise, overarching term appears to have been a new development.

Upon examining the development of this term's meaning in later times, three distinct phases of *kokutai* thought seem evident: the formative phase (around 1825-1890), the classical phase (1890-1937) and the hubristic phase (1937-1945).

The formative phase began in the early 19th century, as documented in the previously discussed work *Shinron* by Aizawa Seishisai of 1825. This period ends in 1890, the year the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued, which influenced the later development of the concept and marked the beginning of the second, classical phase (see chapter III: 3. 1.).

As is evident from the dates of these periods, the classical phase took place during the greatest upheaval in Japanese history: the fall of the Tokugawa state, the opening of the country, and the establishment of the modern empire of Japan, with the emperor as its sacred head of state, who was above the Constitution and who was seen as an incarnation of the state.

The thinkers of the Mito School played a significant role in this development, both in intellectual and political terms. Beginning with their originally purely historical studies on the imperial family of Japan, this school developed increasingly practical and political as well as religious and ideological intentions that, in opposition to the so-called representative regime of the feudal state in Edo, fought for the reinstatement of a direct imperial government.

Their theoretical foundation was formed by two originally independent systems of thought that were synthesized by the Mito scholars. The first of these was the centuries-old nationalist Shintô concept of Japan as a nation superior to all others and a sacred land of the gods whose divine emperors were called to rule in a single, eternal dynasty.

The Mito School differed from the Kokugaku, which also emphasized this aspect at its central tenet, essentially only in the conscious addition of a further

²⁵² The term *kokutai* is used in this sense by the Kokugaku scholar Ôkuni (Nonoguchi) Takamasa (1792-1874): »There are, however, nations whose state essence (*kokutai*) is inferior, whose customs are bad and where disloyalty is common,« (*Hongaku koyô*, NST 50, 1973: 407; Brüll 1966: 61).

spiritual element, the ethical maxims of the Edo period *shushigaku*. Interestingly, the Mito School considered these Confucian rules for organizing public life and managing vertical relationships of dependency to be the second immutable characteristic of the essence of Japan. And the more this spiritual synthesis was advanced, the more the consciousness of the actually foreign – that is, Chinese – origin of this ethical system was lost, until it was finally understood to be Japanese around the end of the 19th century.

As will be shown in the following discussion, State Shintô in the Meiji period postulated that the virtues were not of Confucian origin, but »introduced by the imperial ancestors« before the arrival of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan (Lokowandt 1978: 240). *Kokugaku* scholars such as Ôkuni Takamasa claimed that »a true relationship to the ruler, to one's parents, to one's spouse, to society, to the people etc. only exists in Shintô, even though the names of the virtues that correspond to these relationships – loyalty among vassals, obedience, benevolence, lawfulness etc. – are written in the books of Confucianism,« (Stolte 1939: 196f. note 12).

This spiritual amalgam of Shintô in the sense of National Learning – based on the concept of the divine ruler – and Confucianism, which was understood as a catalog of moral norms, was considered by the Mito scholars to be the core of the *kokutai*, the defining and unique essence of the Japanese nation.

The Mito scholars expanded the Shintô ideology of the land of the gods in the interpretation of National Learning to encompass the canon of Confucian ethical maxims that were dominant in Japan at the time. This is the actual difference between the Mito School and the puristic National Learning, which strictly rejected all things Chinese (cf. Antoni 1991a: 41, note 39). The doctrine of the »Five Virtues« of the individual (*go-jo*, Chinese: *wu-ch'ang*) and the »Five Relationships« (*gorin*, Chinese: *wu-lun*) in society represented – independent of the nascent idea of direct rule by the emperor – the ethical foundation of feudal Japan in the Edo period (see above).

The first two of these relationships were especially important: the relationship between vassal/official and master, and the relationship of filial piety (*kô*, Chinese: *hsiao*) between father and son, or children and parents. Two aspects proved unique to the Japanese interpretation of these teachings: the concept of the original unity of these two ideal relationships in the term *chûkô-itchi*, (»unity of loyalty and filial piety«), and the requirement that »loyalty,« defined as »filial piety,« was

no longer to be paid to the feudal ruler, but to the only legitimate ruler of Japan, the divine emperor.²⁵³

Later, after the Meiji Restoration, this equating of »filial piety« and »loyalty« inevitably led to the concept of the state as a family, and loyalty toward the one true ruler was compared to a child's love for its father. Combined with the National Learning ideology of the land of the gods, this led to a familistic conception of the *kokutai*, which viewed the Japanese nation as an actual family of common, divine ancestry, with the emperor as its natural ruler.²⁵⁴ Mito School thought thus did not remain merely a theoretical exercise, but went on to become the true spiritual basis of the new Japanese empire after the Meiji Restoration and the final victory of the conservative powers in the late 1880s.

5. 2. 4. Further developments

The Shintô aspects of this doctrine were also of central importance to a later Mito scholar and activist, Maki Izumi (1813-64), »an enthusiastic follower of the Mito discourse,« (Harootunian 1995: 77). He became politically active in the early 1860s and was imprisoned due to his political activism in *Kurume-han*. A letter to the emperor from 1861 describes the goals of the Restoration. He considered the emperorship in ancient times to be ideal, and stated that it was none other than Jinmu-tennô himself who established the teachings of Shintô (Harootunian 1995: 82):

»[...] For Maki the whole purpose of the imperial campaign was to destroy the *bakufu*, he recommended a return to an antiquity before the Shôgun and military estates had appeared as a model for the present.« (Harootunian 1995: 83)

A failed attempt at a restoration in 1864 later served as a model for the events of 1868. Harootunian remarks in summary (l.c.):

»In Maki, the Mito discourse, which had begun with Confucian statecraft for domain reform, had gone on to provide the validations of Shinto mythology for the organization of efforts for nationwide reforms and emperor-central revolution.«

²⁵³ The importance of this concept for the *kokutai* ideology of the Shôwa period can be seen in the commentary by Fujii (Tôkyô 2600 (1940): 54; cf. Antoni 1991: 42, note 40.)

²⁵⁴ A comparison of the relationship between lord and vassal, father and child can be found already in the *Nihonshoki* (Yûryaku 23/8/7). The actual equating of the two relationships, however, first took place in the 19th century in the ideology of the *kokutai*; cf. Lokowandt 1978: 60ff.; Tsurumi 1970: 103-109; Fridell 1970: 828-833; Bellah 1985: 104; van Straelen 1952: 83.

Between 1860 and 1863, there was widespread unrest throughout the country, including acts of terror by extremist groups (Göbel 1987). These groups were composed primarily of relatively young men (*shishi*, »men of high ideals«) from throughout the country who had received a military education at home or were involved with National Learning. Many of them, especially the most talented, went to Edo in order to complete further studies. There they often came into contact with the Mito scholar Fujita Tôko, one of the men who had gathered around Tokugawa Nariaki and supported a philosophy of national unity and military preparedness (cf. Hall 1968: 253). Besides being politicized, they were also taught that the emperor was the symbol of all that Japan should represent. The fact that the West aggressively sought to impose its influence on Japan at that time was a source of resentment for these men, whose views were both sympathetic to the emperor and xenophobic (*sonnô-jôi*). Their political power reached its greatest peak after they returned to their home territories. There they occupied newly created positions, became advisors to the Daimyô, and attempted to influence politics through direct initiatives. Later, the assassins of Ii Naosuke and Townsend Harris's translator also came from their ranks.

The Western reaction to these terrorist attacks consisted of acts of violence that further destabilized the *bakufu*. Conflicts within the *bakufu* also did not help promote any new trust in the regime. A request for help from Tokugawa Nariaki to the emperor in order to put an end to the dispute over the successor to the deceased Shôgun Iesada resulted in increased prestige for the emperor. In 1864, when even the new Shôgun Yoshinobu personally travelled to Kyôto at the request of the emperor, he also implicitly underlined the new importance of the imperial court (cf. Meyer 1998). The Western powers realized this and ceased sending their delegations to Edo in favor of the imperial court in Kyôto.

Upon Emperor Kômei's death in 1867, his 14-year-old son took office as his successor, and the struggle for political dominance continued. Shôgun Yoshinobu was still attempting to reinstate the old system of power with the help of reforms. But this proved unsuccessful, and he was also unable to form a coalition of the Daimyô. In turn, the so-called »Tosa Memorandum« was issued, in which he was asked to step down in favor of a council of Daimyô under the authority of the emperor. He finally accepted in November 1867, thus »returning« power to the emperor

CHAPTER III

MEIJI RESTORATION AND MEIJI PERIOD

As Japan was finally forced by the United States and the European powers to open its ports in the middle of the 19th century, a pessimistic prognosis for the country's future would have been logical, considering the realities of the time. Other Asian countries had been too weak to resist the imperial onslaught of the West, and it seemed that Japan's fate was similarly sealed.

But Japan did not become a colony, or even a dependent territory, but instead strove, after a short time, to become an imperial hegemon itself in the East-Asian hemisphere. There are many interpretations, explanations and analyses of the reasons that allowed Japan to undergo this incredible development. It would be beside the point to discuss them in detail here. However, there is consensus on the fact that one of the primary requirements for Japan to exist within the global framework of power was not just technological transformation, but also a transformation of ideas – a revolution in the country's intellectual foundation.

The new government saw the solution to these problems not in the mere adoption of Western technologies and instruments of power, but rather in their intellectual foundations. The key terms in this context were »unity« and »nation.« The United States and the nations of Europe had already demonstrated the instruments of power of modern nation-states, and this was Japan's only chance to catch up with these nations in this area quickly and without compromise.

Finally, the fruits of a more or less hidden development that had taken place during the era of national seclusion came to bear. Although Japan was still far from being a unified nation at the time of the Meiji Restoration, the most important members of the country's intellectual leadership already envisioned, and possessed the means for, establishing a modern Japanese nation and nation-state. Thus, the country was also surprisingly well prepared for its encounter with the West on an intellectual level.

The institution of the emperor was chosen as the unifying factor that was to overcome the historical differences of geography and class in Tokugawa-period society. Statesmen such as Itô Hirobumi openly declared that only the emperor was capable of providing spiritual guidance as a replacement for religion for the not yet unified Japanese nation. This view referred back to the Edo period schools of National Learning (Kokugaku) and Mitogaku. These schools had already demanded the reinstatement of the emperor's supposedly ancient rights during the 18th and early 19th centuries – the Kokugaku arguing on the basis of nationalistic Shintô and the Mito School with the addition of the ethical maxims of Neo-Confucian social ethics to this foundation.

The image of Japan that was propagated under this state ideology reached its peak in the postulation of a single, unique Japanese »national polity,« or *kokutai*, that supposedly distinguished Japan from all other nations.

As for domestic policy, the *kokutai* ideology, which was created, as we have seen, around the end of the Edo period by scholars of the Mito School, provided a guideline at the beginning of the Meiji period for the spiritual maxims of an ethnically and socially homogenous nation, with the goal of transforming the fragmented population into a united people loyal to the state. It was hoped that this unified nation-state would scare off potential enemies from the outside and create the basis for expanding the new Japanese empire. The ideological means for these aspirations to unity were the creation of a Japanese »family state,« in which all citizens or subjects were united by their common lineage, and which oriented this mythically founded nation toward the emperor as the father of the entire national family.

The Meiji Restoration of 1868, in which the shogunate as a form of government came to an end, can thus only partially be attributed to the influence of the West that is so often emphasized in theories of modernization. Without the deep intellectual opposition that developed within the country during the years of national seclusion, as well as this opposition's preparations for change – that is to say, without the efforts of the imperial loyalists of the Kokugaku and Mitogaku already during the Tokugawa period – Japan would not have been able to transform itself into a modern nation state in the sense of the 19th-century concept of government.

Therefore, it was only natural that the spiritual beliefs and goals of these early national schools in Japan during the Meiji period should be translated into practical policies. Over the course of this development, Shintô became a »supra-religious« state religion to which every citizen was required to adhere, regardless of his personal religious beliefs.²⁵⁵ The central role in this process of national unification was played by the imperial household, whose position was now officially – no longer only among the small numbers of Shintô and imperial loyalists – designated as unique and unequalled, since its origins were documented in the ancient myths.

Thus, an extraordinary wave of national self-glorification swept through Japan during the beginning of the modern era, while Western learning and technology flowed into the country. Modern Japan saw its chance to stake its claim on the world stage in the combination of two opposing principles: the adoption of Western technology and the simultaneous emphasis of the »Japanese spirit.«

²⁵⁵ For highly valuable recent research on this topic cf. Isomae 2104, Josephson 2012, Maxey 2014.

1. THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Tokugawa Yoshinobu (also known as Tokugawa Keiki; 1837-1913), the 15th and last Shôgun of the Tokugawa house, yielding to both internal and external pressures, officially declared his resignation on November 9, 1867, (Keiô 3/10/14) and thus »returned« the power of government to the emperor (cf. KEJ 5: 159 b), though he at first claimed the post of prime minister as well as the extensive land holdings of the Tokugawa house. The ensuing doubts about the seriousness of his resignation caused the domains of Chôshû, Satsuma and others to mobilize forces against the Tokugawa. The *bakufu* as a political institution was abolished and a »restoration« of imperial rule was declared. On April 6, 1868, (4/3/14) Sanjô Sanetomi read the »Charter Oath in Five Articles« (*gokajô no goseimon*) that later became the basis for the national program of renewal.²⁵⁶ The charter secured not only the rule of the emperor, but was also written so that a majority within the imperial movement would support it. Its vague phrasing permitted a wide array of interpretations and allowed the government great flexibility in its actions (cf. Weber-Schäfer 1971: 637).

After the clear victory of the revolutionary forces from the *tozama-han* Satsuma and Chôshû in the civil war, which lasted until July of 1869, the new government acted decisively to transform Japan into a modern state. The young leaders of the Meiji Restoration, some of whom had already spent time abroad, believed that a government that was determined by the interests of hundreds of rulers could hardly compete with the leading European powers and the United States. With the awkward position of China in mind, they sought to save their country from a similar fate. Furthermore, they recognized that the policy of national seclusion could not be continued. Thus, they advocated emulating the leading world powers of the time: the United States, Great Britain, Germany (Prussia) and France. Knowledge brought back from throughout the world was to form the basis for imperial rule. The goal of *fukoku-kyôhei* (»enrich the country, strengthen the military«) was modeled after Western imperialism, and in order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to eliminate the last vestiges of feudalism.

For this reason, the government forced all Daimyô to »return« their territorial lands to the emperor. Prefectures (*ken*) based on the French model replaced the approximately 200 *han*. The imperial residence was moved from Kyôto to Edo, which was renamed Tôkyô, and a fully centralized government was created. As

²⁵⁶ Text in: Fujii Jintarô and Moriya Hidesuke: *Meiji jidai shi*. (SNT 12). Tôkyô 1939: 216; cf. Weber-Schäfer 1971: 635.

especially revolutionary changes, mandatory military service and compulsory education were introduced. Despite difficulties at first, mandatory military service was established relatively quickly. The former Samurai were given the ranks of officers based on the Prussian model, and the generals came mostly from Satsuma and Chôshû. However, many lower-class families protested against compulsory education at first, since they could not afford to pay for schooling. It was also difficult for them to understand why girls should be taken from their duties at home to go to school. Only in 1910 did the four-year system of compulsory education achieve widespread acceptance.

The adoption of Western culture and lifestyles was not greeted exclusively with enthusiasm; there were also numerous disturbances. In 1877 Saigô Takamori (1828-1877) – a politician from Satsuma who played a significant role in the Meiji Restoration, but who later became dissatisfied with the scope of the reforms, and particularly with the impoverishment of the Samurai – attempted to carry out a coup. However, after an intense battle, the government forces prevailed. In 1889 the minister of education, Mori Arinori (1847-1889), who was seen as a strong proponent of westernization, was assassinated by a discontented nationalist.

When it became apparent, in the years following the Meiji Restoration, that only a few politicians from Satsuma and Chôshû were capable of ruling over their territories and would not tolerate a weakening of their position, bitterness spread among the remaining anti-*bakufu* forces who failed to gain influence after the Restoration. In January of 1874, some politicians from Tosa submitted a petition to the government demanding the creation of a parliament. This group's activities eventually led to the later human rights movement (*minken-undô*). European thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill provided the ideological basis for the movement, which was led by Itagaki Taisuke (1836-1919). Although most people in Japan had no concept of the terms »liberalism« and »democracy,« the movement spread quickly throughout the entire country. The government's attempts to suppress this movement, including limiting the freedom of assembly, proved unsuccessful. Originally made up of former Samurai, the movement increasingly caught on among the upper classes – that is, wealthy farmers and merchants. In 1880 more than 240,000 people signed a petition for the establishment of a representative legislative body. And in the wake of a corruption scandal, the government saw no other option than to promise to work out a Constitution by 1890. A delegation led by Itô Hirobumi (1841-1909), one of the leading politicians of the Meiji period, was sent to Europe to study the various constitutional models there. Influenced by conservative scholars of constitutional law such as Rudolf von Gneist and Lorenz von Stein, they decided on a Constitu-

tion based on the Prussian model. On February 11, 1889, the Meiji Constitution was promulgated by the emperor. This meant that the emperor's position of power was now also guaranteed by law.

In foreign affairs, a peaceful course was taken at first, since the country was still weak in comparison to the Western powers. In 1855 an agreement was reached with Russia stating that the southern Kuril Islands up to Etorofu (Iturup) belonged to Japan and that the Island of Sakhalin was an area of influence for both powers, without determining the exact borders. Then, in 1875 a treaty was reached stating that Sakhalin belonged to Russia and the thirty mostly unsettled Kuril Islands up to the Kamchatka Peninsula belonged to Japan. In the same year, claims on the Bônin Islands were made against Britain and the United States. In the south and on the continent, where the adversary was believed to be weaker, it was decided to use military force. After some Ryûkyû fishermen were captured and killed by inhabitants of the island of Taiwan, which belonged to China, Japan sent a punitive expedition to Taiwan. The Chinese government then agreed to compensatory payments for the affected families, thus indirectly recognizing Japan's rights to the Ryûkyû or Okinawa Islands, which were claimed by both governments.

But Japan was especially interested in Korea. Already in 1873 the idea of conquering Korea discussed openly for the first time, though it ultimately did not have enough support in the government. Just three years later, a Japanese punitive expedition was successful in »opening« the country. Korea was recognized by Japan as an independent kingdom, resulting in access for Japan to a number of harbors and an agreement on diplomatic trade relations. Since Korea had been a vassal state of China for centuries, the Korean people were split into two groups: the pro-Chinese, oriented toward the conservative politics of China, and the pro-Japanese, who wanted to modernize Korea based on the Japanese model. After incidents in 1882 and 1884, which nearly led to conflicts between Chinese and Japanese troops, both governments decided to remove their troops from Korea. In 1894, against treaty agreements with Japan, Chinese soldiers arrived in Korea in order to help suppress an anti-government movement. For Japan, which was confident in its military power, this was a welcome opportunity to declare war on China. Japan won the war within six months. According to the peace accords of Shimonoseki in April of 1895, China was required to surrender Taiwan to Japan, give up control of Liadong Peninsula, recognize Korea's independence and pay heavy reparations. Throughout the world, Japan's influence now came to be feared.

2. SHINTÔ AS A »STATE RELIGION« IN THE EARLY MEIJI PERIOD?

The Meiji Restoration marked not only the change of the ruling power from the Shôgun to the emperor, but also brought about important changes particularly in the areas of religion and philosophy. Buddhism, which had previously been supported by the *bakufu*, lost its favored position to Shintô.²⁵⁷ The *jisha-bugyô*, the highest office of the *bakufu* for controlling the country's religious institutions, which had monitored relations between the government and religious institutions since the reign of Tokugawa Iemitsu (1623-1650), was abolished. Buddhism was divested of its state recognition and large parts of its property were confiscated by the government (cf. Holtom 1922: 11).

The central ideological and intellectual tenet of the restoration movement was the so-called »pure« Shintô (Fukko Shintô) of the Hirata School. Atsutane's followers advocated returning to an idealized form of government: the imperial rule by the supposed first emperor, Jinmu-tennô, according to the mythological tradition. The core tenets of this ideology were the direct descent of the imperial household from the sun goddess Amaterasu and the uniqueness and supremacy of the Japanese *kokutai*. The first four years of the Meiji period (1868-1872) were marked by the attempt of the Meiji oligarchy to integrate a form of Shintô into the state that had been radically cleansed of Buddhist influences.

Thus, the Meiji government drew its legitimation from the existence of an early, historically undocumented emperor whose rule was nonetheless to serve as the model for the modern state. The cult of Jinmu in the Meiji period reveals the deep irrationality underlying the early state structures of modern Japan. Various edicts issued by the emperor and the government document this intention.

Already in 1868, the Meiji government proclaimed as its next goal not the separation, but the unity of religion and state (*saisei-itchi*). According to this concept, the details of which are relatively vague, the business of government is to be conducted in the same spirit in which the gods of the land are worshipped. However, the concept's actual significance lies in the religiously based legitimation of rule. Ernst Lokowandt (1989: 14) writes on the meaning of the concept of *saisei-itchi*:

²⁵⁷ This subject is covered in a wide range of literature, a selection of which includes Murakami 1986 and 1990; in Western languages: Gluck 1985; Hardacre 1989; Hori, Toda 1956; Lokowandt 1978; Antoni 1991; more recently Maxey 2014, Isomae 2014.

»This concept is based on the belief in the divinity of Japan and of the imperial household and on the belief in the eternal influence of the gods, whose protection and aid must be secured. It demonstrates the basis for the state in the religious context.«²⁵⁸

In order to propagate and enforce this ideology, in February of 1868 the Shintô Worship Bureau (*jingi jimukyoku*) was established as one of eight bureaus of the Grand Council of State (*dajôkan*). Only a short time later, the *dajôkan* gave the order to separate Shintô and Buddhism (*Shinbutsu-bunri no rei*). Objects of Shintô worship were to be removed from Buddhist temples, and Buddhist statues, images and other materials removed from Shintô shrines. Shrines with Buddhist names were renamed.

Thus, with the proclamation of the return to imperial rule in January 1868, the new emperor, Mutsuhito, designated himself a direct descendant of Jinmu-tennô. In a Shintô ritual on April 6, 1868, the emperor declared on behalf of the government that, from that point on, governance and religion would be one, as specified in the »Charter Oath in Five Articles« (*Gokajô no goseimon*), which enumerates the fundamental principles of the future empire (cf. Lokowandt 1989: 11ff.).

The Charter Oath did indeed contain some constitutionally applicable principles, and the first four clauses were apparently strongly influenced by liberal thinking, which still existed alongside *kokutai* thought at the beginning of the Meiji period. However, the fifth and now most famous clause specifies what later became the official program of the new era. This section states:

»Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.«

This passage is strongly reminiscent of the view – widely held at the time – described by the term *wakon-yôsai* (see chapter III: 4.), a concept being based on the premise that the technological achievements from the outside world – that is, the West – could be used to benefit the spiritual core of Japan, its imperial household and the state.

In practice, principles of Shintô were introduced into politics through the establishment of government offices responsible for this task. In direct analogy to the *Taihô Code*, as contained in the *Yôro Code* of the 8th century, the *jingikan* was once again to occupy the highest position in the hierarchy of government. Nowhere else are the idealistic and nativistic characteristics of the Meiji Restoration

²⁵⁸ »Dieses Konzept beruht auf dem Glauben an die Göttlichkeit Japans und des Kaiserhauses und auf dem Glauben an das fortwährende Wirken der Götter, deren Schutz und Hilfe man sich vergewissern muß. Es demonstriert die Grundlagen des Staates im Religiösen.«

more apparent than here (cf. Lokowandt 1989: 12). Thus, in April 1868, the Shintô Worship Bureau (*jingi jimukyoku*) was transformed into the Office of Divinities (*jingikan*). At first, this office was given the highest rank of any state institution, according to the ancient system – higher even than the Grand Council of State. However, in the beginning its responsibilities were purely of a ritual nature: the performing of ceremonies for the souls of the imperial ancestors, harvest and New Year's rituals, maintenance of the imperial burial places, as well as the worship of the deities of heaven and earth and the eight protective deities of the imperial household.

Further measures were aimed at strengthening the new system. For example, the establishment of numerous imperial shrines was intended to strengthen the emperor's popularity. A new Shintô calendar of festivals replaced the traditional Buddhist festivals of the Edo period. Mutsuhito's birthday, the mythological enthronement of Jinmu-tennô, and other festivals related to the imperial household strengthened the support among the people for the national imperial dynasty. With the help of a hierarchical organization of the shrines, at the peak of which was Ise Shrine, the »Mecca« of imperial Shintô, and the base of which was made up of the innumerable village shrines, the religion of Shintô was centralized and oriented toward the imperial household. Religious rites, priests' clothing and the gods to be worshipped were standardized based on the model of the Ise.

After reforming the shrines, the focus turned to the people, who were to be organized as parishioners (*ujiko*) of individual shrines. Instead of the system of mandatory registration at Buddhist temples, which had been common policy until then, registration at shrines (*ujiko-shirabe*) was introduced. Every Japanese became a »shrine parishioner« by receiving a talisman from the local shrine. Upon changing residence, parishioners were obliged to register at the new place of residence, and when an *ujiko* died, the talisman was finally returned to the shrine.²⁵⁹

A third measure was aimed at the priesthood. In 1871 the Grand Council of State declared that shrine ceremonies were to be considered state rites (*kokka no sôshi*). Thus, the heritable nature of the priesthood came to an end. From then on, all priests were appointed by the state.²⁶⁰ Shintô priests were thus elevated to the position of government officials and were subject to the authority of the *jingikan*.

²⁵⁹ This early form of census, however, which was the responsibility of the Buddhist temples during the Tokugawa period, was not systematically applied and quickly lost its importance; cf. Hardacre 1989: 29.

²⁶⁰ In 1875 this framework was expanded by the government's designation of rituals and ceremonies for use in officially recognized shrines. They were given precise instructions, even regarding

The shrines also took over the function of registration and census offices from the Buddhist temples (Hardacre 1989: 83f.). Newborn babies were given a talisman from Ise, and private households were required to worship statuettes of the main deities of Ise Shrine (Hardacre 1989: 86ff.). Even the Imperial Palace was »cleansed« of Buddhist influence: Buddhist altars were brought into temples, Buddhist court ceremonies relating to the seasons were discontinued, and members of the imperial family who were Buddhist monks were required to give up this function. The cleansing of Shintô from Buddhist influence proceeded without control or direction. First, the Meiji government issued a decree in April of 1868 dismissing all Buddhist priests who served at shrines, which was common practice in the time of Ryôbu Shintô. The removal of Buddhist symbols from Shintô shrines and the prohibition against Buddhist burials were intended to bring about a »gentle separation« of Buddhism and Shintô.

However, the execution of the government decision fell under the responsibility of the regional authorities, which worked to the disadvantage of Buddhism. Buddhist temples were burned down, images, sutras and objects of worship were destroyed or sold, bells were melted down, and valuable art and cultural objects were lost (Hardacre 1989: 27f. Lokowandt 1989: 13ff.).

However, the *jingikan* only retained its special status for a short time. In August of 1871, the office was incorporated into the government apparatus as a normal ministry under the title of *jingishô*. Like the other ministries, it was now subject to the authority of the Council of the State (*dajôkan*).

According to Holtom (1922: 17ff.), the time between 1871 and 1872 marked the beginning of a new era for Japan. He states that the unusually close relationship between Shintô and the state was especially apparent in the government's efforts to gain full control over the shrines (Holtom 1922: 18). It was thought that the main reason for the confusion at the time was the heritable nature of the priesthood, which had the effect of making the shrines practically the property of the priests and their income private. The law abolishing the heritability of the priesthood²⁶¹ was followed by a similar decree requiring the separation of public and private worship in Shintô (Holtom 1922: 20).

Simultaneously with these reforms of the priesthood, a new system of classifying all shrines according to specific ranks was implemented – yet another measure revealing the government's desire to expand its control over the shrines. According to this new classification, there were now various official ranks such as

the pronunciation of words. Exceptions were only allowed through special permission; cf. Creemers 1968: 214, Appendix B.

²⁶¹ *Fukoku* no. 234 of the *dajôkan* of May 14, 1871, cf. Lokowandt 1978: 270 doc. 29.

kanpei-taisha (»first-class imperial shrine«), *kanpei-chûsha*, *kanpei-shôsha* etc.²⁶² As Lokowandt writes, the »entire policy on Shintô [served] to religiously ensure the divine honor of the emperor,« (Lokowandt 1978: 43). The new classification of the shrines, with Ise at its peak, followed by the shrines for the worship of the emperor (*chokusaisha*²⁶³), state shrines (*kansha*), and the special imperial shrines (*bekkaku-kanpeisha*), strengthened the people's connection to Shintô and the imperial household (cf. Lokowandt 1978: 44ff.). Especially Ise, which had been closely connected with the imperial household since ancient times (the Naikû housed the mirror as one of the three imperial regalia), was able to benefit from its great popularity during the Edo period, when practice of *Ise-mairi* was highly fashionable (see chapter II: 3. 1.). This religious belief was now transferred onto the imperial household.

Furthermore, on April 13, 1871, standardized rituals and ceremonies for all Shintô shrines were specified by decree, as well as for all the important Shintô festivals (Holtom 1922: 21/22).

The government, which aimed to use religion for political purposes, strove to bring order and clarity to religious practice. At the same time, an aggressive policy of repression was undertaken, which was first directed against Buddhism. But Christians throughout the country were also subject to severe measures. The prohibition against Christianity from the Edo period was extended on April 7, 1868 (Lokowandt 1978: 24; cf. Maull 1993). The Urakami Christians who were discovered near Nagasaki in 1867 were forced under threat of torture and deportation to renounce their religion, and some of their leaders were beheaded. On the »three permanent display panels« in Tôkyô, Christianity was branded as an »evil religion« (Lokowandt 1978: 24f.).²⁶⁴ The Christians' situation improved after the return of the Iwakura mission in 1873. The delegation had left for Europe and the United States in 1872 to revise the Unequal Treaties of 1853 (cf. Hall 1968: 238ff.). The members of the delegation were constantly confronted by diplomats and the public abroad regarding the persecution of Christians in Japan. After their return, the members of this mission had the text of the Tôkyô display panels changed and officially brought an end to the persecution of Christians (Lokowandt 1978: 26f.).

Although in the beginning of the Meiji period Shintô was spread by radical and – as can be seen in the example of Buddhism and Christianity – intolerant means, it lacked the theological force of Buddhism, which, due to its simple tenets

²⁶² Cf. Holtom 1922: 20; Lokowandt 1978: passim.

²⁶³ Originally these were the so-called »22 shrines« (cf. Naumann 1988). »The old system was renewed by a visit by Meiji-tennô to the *Hikawa* shrine of *Omiya* at *Tôkyô*« (Lokowandt 1978: 44).

²⁶⁴ On the topic of Christianity as an evil religion cf. the new study by Maxey 2014: passim.

and well-educated theologians, remained very popular among the Japanese people. In 1872 the government acknowledged this fact as well as the demands from abroad for religious freedom. In April of that year the government transformed the *jingikan* into the Ministry of Religion (*kyôbushô*), which was also responsible for Buddhism. Buddhism was once again recognized by the state, although this recognition also included a comprehensive regimentation of Buddhist doctrine. Buddhism was given a position that was clearly subordinate to Shintô. Ernst Lokowandt (1978: 24) pointedly remarks on the *kyôbushô* that »the attempt was made to integrate Buddhism into Shintô.«

2. 1. *The spiritual upheaval: Meiji Restoration and haibutsu-kishaku*

Already during the Edo period, criticisms of the degenerate and privileged life of the Buddhist priesthood and Buddhism's orientation toward the afterlife were leveled by Confucians and Kokugaku scholars.²⁶⁵ The latter primarily advocated a restoration of Shintô, studied Japan's past and demanded the reinstatement of the emperor as the country's ruler and highest priest. Even before the Meiji government decreed the separation of Buddhism and Shintô in 1868, thus beginning the campaign against Buddhism (*haibutsu-kishaku*, »abolish the Buddha, destroy Sakyamuni«), anti-Buddhist measures had already surfaced in isolated areas such as Satsuma and Oki. There were plans to dissolve Buddhist temples, defrock monks and use the taxes paid to the temples for military expenses. However, these precursors were overlooked.

Originally, it was not the intention of the Meiji government to abolish Buddhism, but the edict of 1868 mandating its separation from Shintô included measures that came very close to abolition. The early Meiji period was marked by destructive attacks against Buddhism and a subsequent »Buddhist awakening.«

Shintô and Buddhism had existed in parallel for centuries. Shintô deities were viewed as incarnations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and were worshipped with statues of the Buddha; likewise, Buddhist priests appointed by the Tokugawa government (*bettô*, *shasô*) were responsible for managing shrines. Therefore, according to the Kokugaku, it was necessary to cleanse Shintô, the new state religion, of all elements that were believed to be »non-Japanese,« meaning Buddhist and also Confucian influences. The Mito School, which argued for the instate-

²⁶⁵ On the following cf. Alles 1979; Fischer (ed.): *passim* 1979; Kishimoto 1956; Kitagawa 1966; Chantepie de la Saussaye 1925; Yasumaru 1979 and 1984-85b, among others. In his recent study Michael Wachutka (2013) explicitly explores the role of Kokugaku in Meiji-period Japan.

ment of the emperor as a political ruler, also urged at least a reduction in the number of Buddhist temples. With the government's decrees in 1868 to separate »gods and Buddhas« and the defrocking of Buddhist priests serving at shrines (this meant removing all priests, rituals and religious objects from the shrines), a five-year period of suppression of Buddhism began throughout Japan. This movement was widely supported in some *han*, such as Satsuma and Oki,²⁶⁶ since Buddhism had not earned much sympathy during the Tokugawa period due to high taxes, the privileged life led by its priests, and its role in surveillance.

The result was the destruction of Buddhist temples and religious objects, as well as the dissolution of the temples' land holdings. Demands by the government to quell the violence were unsuccessful. Anti-Buddhist sentiment from the Tokugawa period as well as the desire for the reinstatement of the unity of religion and government created a climate in which the destruction of Buddhism quickly gathered momentum.

This development was neither exclusively motivated by ideology nor by religion, but rather contained elements of both areas, amplified by the characteristic desire of the early Meiji period to destroy everything that was old. Thus, *haibutsu-kishaku* became a national movement. In the fall of 1870, Toyama-*han* without warning issued a call to abolish Buddhist temples, resulting in a dramatic reduction in their numbers. Contact between religious believers and the sect leaders was forbidden under threat of the death penalty. Toyama's harsh policy resulted in widespread criticism, but not all of the *han* that still existed at the time interpreted the decree for separation so radically.

However, one element shared by all of these movements was the strong influence of the Hirata and Mito Schools, which provided the ideology for the persecution of Buddhism. The Hirata School advocated the complete abolition of Buddhism, the »return« to Shintô and the complete destruction and abolition of all Buddhist elements and influences (cf. chapter II: 5. 1. 3. 2.). These were to be replaced with Shintô. The Hirata School was most influential in Satsuma, Oki, Mino and Tosa. The Mito School, on the other hand, did not support a direct rejection of Buddhism, but rather advocated closing »unnecessary« temples and dismissing any priests not strictly needed. In Toyama, for example, »the number of temples was reduced from 1,630 to 7,« (Lokowandt 1978: 19). On the island of Oki, Buddhism was subjected to extreme persecution. This tense situation was gradually defused by the reorganization of the *han* into prefectures in 1871 and the influx of modern Western thought in Japan, and the persecution of Buddhism

²⁶⁶ Cf. Tamamuro 1977: 228f.; Alles 1979: 2.

subsided. At this time, a few conscientious priests began to explore the traditional spirit of Buddhism.

2. 2. *Shinbutsu-bunri, the »separation of gods and Buddhas«*

The true beginning of the state's propagation of Shintô after 1868 was heralded by the decree of March 28, 1868, in which the new government called for the »separation of gods and Buddhas« at Shintô shrines. This decree (*Shinbutsu-bunrei no rei*, or *Shinbutsu-hanzen rei*²⁶⁷), which was based on the maxims of the Hirata and Mito Schools of Fukko Shintô²⁶⁸, was immediately made known throughout the country by the government bureaucracy and implemented at the local level, sometimes involving terrifying outbreaks of violence against Buddhist institutions. Thus, over one thousand years of shared traditions between »gods and Buddhas« (*shinbutsu-shûgô*) abruptly came to an end.

As Allan Grapard writes in his 1984 study, which introduced the topic of *shinbutsu-bunri* to the West, these measures by the Japanese government began a series of events that were not limited to the suppression of Buddhism (*haibutsu-kishaku*). However, this topic has so far only seldom been mentioned in discussions of Japan's religious history, despite its importance for the country's religious, political and social development in the modern era. Only a small number of Japanese scholars (Grapard 1984: 241)²⁶⁹ have covered this area in recent years, and their findings have not widely influenced the general view of the situation.

According to Grapard, the view held by the overwhelming majority of scholars is clearly based on their total ignorance of the degree of interaction between Shintô and Buddhism over the centuries. In his view, if this interaction had been taken into account, they would not have seen the events of the years surrounding the Meiji Restoration as a »restoration,« but rather as a cultural »revolution« with far-reaching consequences for the development of modern Japan. He states that most scholars, and especially those in the West, were or still are under the influ-

²⁶⁷ The text of the decree can be found in Kumagaya 1902: 1, no. I/1; German translation in Lokowandt 1978: 250, document 7. My use of the term »separation of gods and Buddhas« follows Grapard's (1984: 241) example.

²⁶⁸ Hori and Toda (1956: 39-41) in particular emphasize the influence of the Kokugaku (Hirata Shintô), while Tamamuro (1977) sees the Mito school as the most influential group. On the relationship between the Kokugaku and the Mitogaku, see also Antoni 1991.

²⁶⁹ For an introduction to this topic, cf. Coville 1948: 7ff.; Grapard 1984; Hardacre 1989: 27f.; Hori, Toda 1956: 47- 52; Iwai 1984; Lokowandt 1978: 13-22 and doc. 7, 8, 10, 15-17; Murakami 1990: 59ff.; Nara-kenritsu Nara-toshokan 1992; Ômori 1992: 184-186; Ono 1985: 63f.; Tamamuro 1977; Tsuji, Murakami 1926; Yasumaru 1984-85a.

ence of the Meiji ideology (Grapard 1984: 242) and continue to view Shintô as independent from Buddhism.²⁷⁰ Scholars have continued to uphold this separation by specializing in either Shintô or Buddhism, thus marginalizing the culture of Japanese syncretism.

If any doubt remains about the connection between the gods of Shintô and Buddhism, Grapard continues, the texts on the origins, symbols and myths of the shrine-temple complexes (*jisha engi*) provide exhaustive details, and it only makes sense to recognize the emergence, development and history of these cultural centers as a fundamental aspect of Japanese religiosity and culture. For this reason, he states, the separation of Shintô and Buddhism by the Meiji government was a destructive act that appeared to be aimed at these centers, but in fact primarily sought to change the country's religious consciousness. In his view, this would not have been possible without an ideology based on the total disregard of history (Grapard 1984: 245).

The decrees of 1868 allowed the Meiji ideologues to sever all connections between the deities of Shintô and Buddhism, and in their place to create numerous gods of their own, either by renaming old ones or inventing new ones, that were to become part of the new state religion. Thousands of monks and nuns were forced to live as laymen, and innumerable Buddhist works of art were destroyed, sold, stolen, burned or covered with excrement. The degree of the destruction of syncretistic writings and works of art was beyond all imagination, but no one recognized the fact that, in reality, this represented a denial of the country's true cultural history. By bringing about the separation and allowing such destruction, the new government claimed to return to the true source of Japanese identity and religious consciousness. In truth, however, these measures constituted the falsification of their own culture and the rewriting of Japan's history (Grapard 1984: 245).

For this reason, the early Meiji period is a prime example of Hobsbawm and Rothermund's theories on »invented traditions« and religiously justified »traditionalism.« (see below) The ideologues in the tradition of the Hirata and Mito Schools created supposedly ancient institutions and rituals,²⁷¹ used popular piety whenever this served their aims, and shifted the main object of worship in Ise from the god of agriculture enshrined at the Outer Shrine (i.e. Watarai Shintô) to

²⁷⁰ This interpretation by Grapard is worth considering, since it points to one of the main problems in intellectual-historical Japanese studies: the question of whether its findings generally only reflect the theories of the Japanese Kokugaku and present them as objective facts.

²⁷¹ Among other things, the establishment of »Shintô weddings«; cf. Ôbayashi 1997.

the sun goddess of the Inner Shrine (i.e. the Kokugaku) as a symbol of the state (Grapard 1984: 246).

2. 2. 1. A case study: shinbutsu-bunri at Ômiwa Shrine

One ancient center of religion in Japan is particularly instructive in illuminating the details and the dramatic development of this separation of Buddhism and Shintô at the beginning of the Meiji period: Ômiwa Shrine, located at the base of Mount Miwa, which was previously discussed in the context of Miwa (-ryû) Shintô (see also Antoni 1993a, 1995c).

Mount Miwa played a significant role already in the tradition of Shintô mythology. The *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* tell of the fate of the deity of this mountain, Ômononushi no mikoto, a manifestation of the Great Deity of Izumo, Ôkuninushi no kami (cf. Antoni 1988: passim; Naumann 1988: 122f.). This main deity of the Izumo tradition of Japanese mythology is worshipped at one of the most important Shintô shrines in the country, Ômiwa-jinja. This »Shrine of the Great Deity« claims to be the oldest shrine in all of Japan, according to ancient Japanese myths.²⁷² Although the historical truth of such claims is disputed – and in actuality, they are doubtful – Ômiwa-jinja (henceforth referred to as »OJ«) demonstrates a number of qualities that make it unusual as a Shintô place of worship. For example, the main shrine of the precinct has no *honden*, the central shrine building that houses the *shintai* (»divine body«) of the enshrined deity, but only a *haiden*, the »hall of worship« in which religious services are performed. Since *Miwa-yama* is considered to be a divine mountain, and thus is holy and inviolable as the body of the deity, the mountain itself is worshipped as the *shintai* of the god Ômononushi. This demonstrates the extraordinary importance of this mountain in the religious thinking of Miwa.

Around the central shrine building, there is a group of various so-called *sessha* and *massha*, branch shrines whose deities have a special, traditional relationship to the main deity of Ômiwa-jinja.

These include smaller compounds such as Himuka-jinja²⁷³ and Kuebiko-jinja²⁷⁴, but also larger ones such as Sai-jinja²⁷⁵ and Hiraba-jinja.²⁷⁶ The last of

²⁷² This assumption, which is based on the assumed veracity of the mythical chronology, can be found in the form of a concrete statement in the shrine's own publications (OJ 1977: preface, among others). Even the only English-language discussion of the shrine to date (Ponsonby-Fane 1968-91: 57 [original: 1939]) which, however, contains serious errors, supports this claim.

²⁷³ On Himuka-jinja, cf. Shiga 1968-91: 157-158.

²⁷⁴ On Kuebiko-jinja, cf. OJ 1975: 396; 1977: 18; 1968-91, vol. 4: 551

these shrines is particularly important. Hibara-jinja is also known by the name of Yamato no Kasanui no mura. According to the *Nihonshoki*, it was here that Toyosuki-iri-hime worshipped the sun goddess and ancestral deity of the imperial household during the reign of the legendary emperor Sujin, before the mirror was finally transferred to Ise as her »divine body« or *shintai* (*Nihonshoki*, Sujin 6 (no month, no day) = *Shinten* 1982: 291). Therefore, this shrine is also called Moto-Ise (»the original Ise«).²⁷⁷

This legend, whose historical veracity will not be examined here, illuminates an aspect that was of central importance to the history of Ômiwa-jinja: the shrine's extremely close connection to the imperial household. The shrine at Miwa has always been one of the greatest shrines in the country, whose national importance stemmed from their proximity to the religious and political position of the imperial household. Thus, in times when the emperorship was strong, the shrine's influence and prestige grew, while in eras of imperial decline, its position was similarly affected. Accordingly, since the Ritsuryô period, Ômiwa-jinja has been among the most important shrines in the empire and was also included in the list of the »twenty-two shrines« that have been famous on a national scale since the Heian period.

Only in the modern era (i.e. after the Meiji Restoration) did Ômiwa-jinja once again attain a similarly elevated position. As a consequence of the »reinstatement« of imperial rule after 1868 and the consequent efforts to make Shintô the state religion of the new Japan, Miwa also regained its importance. Already in May of 1871, Ômiwa-jinja was elevated to the highest of the newly created categories for Shintô shrines: *kanpei-taisha*, »first-class imperial shrine.«²⁷⁸ The shrine lost this position only upon the official abolition of State Shintô through the »Shintô Directive« of December 15, 1945, issued by the American occupation authorities.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ On Sai-jinja [Sainimasu Ômiwa Aramitama Jinja], the largest branch shrine at the Miwa complex, cf. OJ 1975: 149, 157, 257, 619; Shiga 1968-91: 153; Yoshida 1989: 19, among others.

²⁷⁶ On Hibara-jinja, cf. Higuchi Kiyoshi: »Hibara-jinja fukugen no igi« in: OJ 1968-91, Vol. 3: 648-652. Cf. OJ 1977: 20; Yoshida 1989: 30. Since November 5, 1987, Hibara-jinja has been expanded to include a further small shrine, Toyosuki-iri-hime no miya.

²⁷⁷ Several articles in OJ 1968-91, Vol. 3: 614-652 deal with the question of the identity of Yamato no Kasanui no mura and Hibara-jinja. The term Moto-Ise is also used in connection with other shrines in the country.

²⁷⁸ On the history of Ômiwa-jinja since the Meiji period, cf. Inui 1968-91; Miyachi 1968-91; Mori 1992; OJ 1977; Umeda 1975. See also Hardacre 1989: 81f.; cf. Antoni 1995c.

²⁷⁹ Even to this day, Miwa claims and documents its close connection to the imperial household and the state order, especially that of State Shintô, of pre-1945 Japan. The influence of this religious order even today can be seen in the fact that regular celebrations in honor of the most important document of Meiji-period state ideology, the »Imperial Rescript on Education« (*Kyôiku (ni*

It is apparent that the Meiji period was especially important for the conception of Ômiwa-jinja. But to the interested observer, the significance of the events of the time – particularly the religious policy of the Meiji Restoration – is difficult to unearth. This is not surprising, since it reveals a dark – and even tragic – chapter in the shrine's history, which concluded with the elevation of Ômiwa-jinja to the rank of a »first-class imperial shrine.«

2. 2. 1. 1. *The implementation of the shinbutsu-bunri decree at Ômiwa Shrine*

The so-called *jingûji*, Buddhist temples that operated in symbiosis with Shintô shrines, whose teachings were based on syncretistic models that identified *kami* with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Buddhist pantheon, had existed throughout the land since ancient times. It was the two great Buddhist schools of the Heian period in particular that provided the foundation for this practice: Tendai Buddhism with its concept of *honji-suijaku*, and Shingon Buddhism with Ryôbu Shintô, which was based on the tradition of Mikkyô. Both assumed that there was an original unity of the *kami* and Buddhist higher beings, but both schools also saw the deities of Shintô as being inferior, since they were only the »local« manifestations of their respective universal beings of Buddhism, whether in the form of the »original reality« and »manifested traces« of the Tendai doctrine or as manifestations of the Dainichinyorai in parallel Shintô deities according to the Shingon Mikkyô tradition. This syncretistic thinking had been prevalent in Japan since ancient times, and particularly since the end of the Heian period.²⁸⁰ Only in the Edo period, when the Tokugawa *bakufu* designated Buddhism as a state religion, and with the (resulting?) rise of the Kokugaku, were forces from within Shintô circles able to gain power and push for a separation and »cleansing« of Shintô from everything related to Buddhism. Finally, in the Meiji Restoration, this national-religious movement was actively implemented.

Even – and especially – Mount Miwa provided an example of the coexistence of these religions and for the close, seemingly inseparable combination of Shintô, Buddhism and folk religion that appeared to be resistant to such religious fanaticism.²⁸¹ And yet the »separation« – that is to say, the elimination of all historically

kansuru chokugo) are performed, e.g. on October 30, 1990 as part of a centennial celebration ; cf. OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 174.

²⁸⁰ For further research on Buddhist-Shinto syncretism cf. Breen, Teeuwen 2000; Naumann 1994; Teeuwen 1996, 2000; Teeuwen, Scheid 2002; cf. Antoni 2001c.

²⁸¹ Cf. in particular the collected sources published by Ômiwa-jinja itself (OJ 1928; OJ 1968-91), editions (OJ 1968-91), collections of academic essays (OJ 1968-91), monographs (OJ 1975) and periodicals (*Ômiwa*); source materials can also be found in Ueda 1989. For an introduction to this area, cf.

developed Buddhist elements – was so thoroughly implemented at this shrine around 1868 that today nothing remains of the shrine’s great Buddhist syncretistic past. Only a single building remains of the formerly three *jingûji* of Miwa (Daigorinji, Jôganji and Byôdôji), the main building of the former Daigorinji.

Since the time of the Meiji Restoration, this building has been located on the northern edge of the compound, far removed from the main part of the shrine precinct, and the trained eye will recognize that its architecture does not belong to the Shintô tradition, since it is built in the so-called *irimoya-zukuri* style.²⁸² Since this time, it has functioned as a branch shrine of Ômiwa-jinja – called Wakamiya, and also known as Ôtataneko-jinja – that is dedicated to the ancestor of the family of priests at Ômiwa-jinja, and the descendant of the god Ômononushi no kami, called Ôtataneko. However, this designation has existed only since the spring of 1868. Up until that time, this building housed the principle object of worship (*honzon*) of the Buddhist Daigorinji, a statue of the eleven-headed Kannon (*jûichimen-kannon*, Sanskrit: Ekadasamukha) from the Tempyô era (729-748), which is of great artistic value, and thus served as a main hall (*hondô*) of this temple, one of the *jingûji* of Miwa.²⁸³

With the *shinbutsu-bunri* decree by the Meiji government, the long Buddhist syncretistic tradition of the Daigorinji came to a brutal end. Already on March 17, 1868, an order of the new central government demanded the defrocking of the *bettô* and *shasô*, the Buddhist priests who served at shrines. These priests were now required to perform their services in the white (meaning of neutral rank) garb of Shintô priests. The implementation of these measures at the individual shrines was to be administered at the local level.²⁸⁴

Shortly thereafter, the »separation edict« of March 28, 1868, was issued. In Miwa a final report on the inspection of the shrine of the »honorable divine images of Ôtataneko no mikoto« was written (*Ôtataneko no mikoto go-shinjiku no kiji*),²⁸⁵ in which the fact that this »shrine« was actually *the* main place of worship for the syncretistic Buddhist Daigorinji was no longer acknowledged at all. An investigator from the newly created *jingikan* by the name of Ôtani Shûjitsu had visited Ôtataneko-jinja/Daigorinji for this purpose and led the investigation

Kubota 1968-91; OJ 1975, chapter 7 (»Chûsei no Ômiwa-jinja«) and 8 (»Kinsei no Ômiwa-jinja«); Yoshida 1991; Abe 1984-85. Ponsonby-Fane’s work (1968-91 [1939]) reflects the official Japanese doctrine of the pre-war era and is of no academic value today.

²⁸² Detailed architectural drawings of the building can be found in Ômiwa 76, 1989: 24-25.

²⁸³ On the Daigorinji, cf. Ikeda 1992; Ikeda, Ôya 1968-91; Kawagishi 1991; Kubota 1968-91, Kuramoto (no year); Murayama 1990; OJ 1975; Yoshida 1991; Ueda 1989: 77-79.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Tsuji, Murakami 1926; for the regulations relating to Nara Prefecture, *ibid.* Vol. 2: 2-166; see also Lokowandt 1978, doc. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11.

²⁸⁵ Text in Ueda 1989: 77-79; OJ 1968-91, Vol. 4: 826.

there. Due to the large scope of the material, he immediately sent a special messenger for the painter Okamoto Tōri, who (supposedly) was in the service of the Imperial Bureau of Graves. This painter recorded the artworks.

In this context, it is worth noting that this report was included in the volume on Ômiwa-jinja in the collection of source materials *Shintô-taikei* (Sakamoto 1989, Vol. VI/12). However, there is no historically critical commentary on the history of »Ôtataneko Shrine« – actually the Daigorinji – or of the details of how this report came to be written. Thus, to this day all references to the main place of worship at the Daigorinji from the time have been lost (cf. Lokowandt 1978: documents 4 and 11).

Only a short time later, also in April 1868, the final defrocking of the monks of the Daigorinji took place. From then on, they were to serve as *kannushi* or *shajin* according to the Shintô laws of the new government (OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 133). In the following month, the removal of the treasures from the temple began.

It has not been made fully clear whether all of the temple's treasures were saved, but the location of the most important and valuable pieces is known. The most important possession of the Daigorinji, the statue of the eleven-headed Kannon, was brought to the nearby Shingon mountain temple Shōrinji, located south of the city of Sakurai. This is where the impressive statue is kept today as a *kyaku-butsu*, or »guest Buddha,« located in its own building, although its origins in Miwa are not mentioned in the temple's publications.²⁸⁶ It also attained art-historical prominence through a painting by the American artist, philosopher and art historian Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1904), whose efforts for the preservation of traditional Japanese art were influential beyond the artistic development of the Meiji period. His painting of the eleven-headed Kannon can be viewed today in the *hondō* of the Shōrinji.²⁸⁷

In late summer of 1868, the policy regarding the former Daigorinji, as well as the other *jingūji* of Miwa, which will be covered later, became stricter. On September 27, 1868, permission was obtained from Nara Prefecture to level the entire complex of the Daigorinji, including the three-story pagoda and the prayer hall (*gomadō*; OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 134). Although such extreme measures were not ac-

²⁸⁶ Illustrations of the Kannon of Miwa are also prominently featured in writings without direct reference to Ômiwa-jinja (for example, Ômori 1992: 185; Nara-kenritsu Nara-toshokan 1992 [title page]; Tsuji, Murayama, Vol. 2: plate I). Cf. Ikeda 1992; Kawagishi 1991; Kubota 1968-91 and *ibid.*: »Shōrinji-Kannon no koseki« in: OJ 1969-91, Vol. 4: 1022-1026; Kuramoto (no date); Momobashi 1984-85; Shōrinji (no date); Yoshida 1991: 34.

²⁸⁷ Based on oral reports and the author's own experience at the Shōrinji, Sakurai, Nara-ken (September 1992).

tually covered by the decree for the separation of Buddhism and Shintô²⁸⁸, and the government had strictly forbidden attacks on Buddhist complexes already in April of the same year, the application on behalf of Ômiwa-jinja was apparently approved, since one year later, on October 8, 1869, the final remodeling of the only remaining main building of the former Daigorinji began based on Shintô designs. On this day the festival of the enshrining of the deity in the new shrine (*shinzasai*) was celebrated (OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 134). A few months later, in March of 1870, the transformation of the temple into a shrine was completed both in the spiritual and theological sense and in concrete architectural terms. This formerly important temple complex of the Daigorinji, the center of (despite its name) syncretistic Buddhist Miwa (-ryû) Shintô, was transformed into a small branch shrine called Ôtataneko-jinja, or Wakamiya, on the periphery of the increasingly important Ômiwa-jinja. One year later, on May 14, 1871, Ômiwa-jinja was elevated to the highest of the newly created shrine ranks, *kanpei-taisha*.²⁸⁹ The Daigorinji and the other *jingûji* of Miwa were no longer referred to by these names.

The main building of the Daigorinji probably only remained intact – although under completely different religious pretenses – because it was designated a Wakamiya of Ômiwa-jinja²⁹⁰ in earlier times according to the syncretistic tradition of Miwa. This path was not open to the other *jingûji* of Miwa. Not a trace of them remains to this day, despite an obscure recent attempt to revive them (cf. Antoni 1993a: 33ff.).

Today only part of the name of one of the smaller branch shrines of Miwa, the Jôgan-Inari-jinja, is reminiscent of the second most important Buddhist place of worship in Miwa, the former Jôganji.²⁹¹ Jôgan-Inari-jinja is a shrine to Inari on the southern edge of the complex (cf. Kikuchi 1987: 36-38, »Jôganji-Inari«). Until the Meiji Restoration, the Buddhist convent of Miwa was located here. This convent, which was administered by the Daigorinji during the Edo period, was placed under the direct supervision of the Saidaiji in Nara, the main temple of the

²⁸⁸ Already on April 10, 1868, the new government saw it necessary to issue a decree strictly forbidding violent attacks on Buddhist institutions. It states with surprising openness: »[...] because Shintô priests (*shajin*) and Buddhist monks have been at odds with one another since ancient times and are like ice and coal [oil and water], today, now that the Shintô priests have suddenly gained authority, actions are being taken ostensibly to protect the government, but which actually serve to satisfy their own private grudge. This is not only a hindrance to the imperial policies, but also necessarily causes unrest.« (Lokowandt 1978: 251, doc. 8)

²⁸⁹ OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 135; cf. Mori 1992: 36; Umeda 1975: 319-321; see also doc. 29 in Lokowandt 1978.

²⁹⁰ Cf. the study by Murayama 1990; references in OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 1: 43-44.

²⁹¹ On the former Jôganji, cf. Yoshida 1991: 37; Mori 1992; Kubota 1968-91, OJ 1975: 223, 231; OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 1: 16; source material also in OJ 1928: 752-785.

Daigorinji, at the request of Ômiwa-jinja on May 12, 1868, as a result of the events of that spring. But only five days later, on May 17, 1868, Ômiwa-jinja sought official permission to defrock the nuns (OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 134).

Apparently this unusual question created problems, since, a short time later, on September 8, 1868, a new request was made to the city government of Nara (*Nanto-yakusho*; l.c.). Specifics about the course of events up to the temple's end are unknown. Even a recent publication mentions only briefly that this temple was dismantled in the year Meiji 2 (1869) together with the Daigorinji (Yoshida 1991: 37). The renovation of the former convent as a shrine to Inari must also have occurred during this period. Although the historical materials published by Ômiwa-jinja do not give any information on this subject, the extensive archives of the library of Nara Prefecture, which are available for further research, may provide additional clues (cf. Antoni 1993 a: 33, note 46).

While the Daigorinji and Jôganji can hardly be located today, this applies even more to the last of the three *jingûji* of Miwa, the Byôdôji.²⁹² This temple complex, once the largest in Miwa and historically even larger than Ômiwa-jinja itself, has completely vanished from the face of the earth, despite recent attempts to revive it.

Not a trace remains of the original temple grounds, which measured over 500 meters in length on the east-west axis and 330 meters on the north-south axis and was located on the southern slope of Mount Miwa. The complex once contained a great number of buildings, including a *hondô*, *gomadô*, *miedô*, *issaikyôdô*, *kaizandô*, *akamon*, *shôrôdô* and many others.²⁹³ The forest, interrupted by orchards, has taken over the area that once, together with the Daigorinji, represented the center of Buddhist syncretistic practice in Miwa. But this temple complex, as opposed to the Daigorinji, did not belong to the Saidaiji, the main temple of the Shingon-Ritsu School, but rather to the main temple of the Hossô School, the Kôfukuji in Nara (see below), which itself suffered great damages in a conflict with the Kasuga-taisha during the *shinbutsu-bunri* period.²⁹⁴

The official written history of Ômiwa-jinja (1968-91, *bekkan* 2) is remarkably taciturn on the subject of the end of the monastery, compared with its statements on the Daigorinji. Although in size, number of monks, buildings, temple treasures

²⁹² On the historical Byôdôji, cf. Kikuchi 1987: 35-36; Kubota 1968-91: 970-973; Maruko (no date); OJ 1975: passim, especially 226-229; Sakurai-shi-shi-hensan-i'inkai 1977, Vol. 1: 845, 1218-1220; Yoshida 1991: 34-37.

²⁹³ L.c.; the size of the complex can be inferred from historical maps and pictures contained in the appendix of the collection *Miwa shôsho* (OJ 1928).

²⁹⁴ On this topic, cf. Tsuji, Murakami 1926, Vol. 2: 5-108; Iwai 1984; Nara-kenritsu Nara-toshokan 1992: 1-3.

etc. it was far more important that the Daigorinji, only a few details on the monastery are given. For example, it states that on September 20, 1868, the *jingikan* approved the request by Ômiwa-jinja to defrock the monks of the Byôdôji. However, the monks were actually converted to *shajin* only two years later, in April of the year Meiji 3 (1870). This fact was announced in a declaration by the office of the *jingikan* on December 27, 1870 (OJ 1986-91, *bekkan* 2: 135).

This marks the end of the discussion of the Byôdôji in the current official history of Ômiwa-jinja. The name of this temple complex is not mentioned again in the history of the shrine, which extends to November 23, 1990, the day of the *daijôsai* of Emperor Akihito.²⁹⁵

On what must have been the dramatic circumstances of the complex's destruction, it merely states that in April 1870 the temple buildings were »removed« (*tori-harau* – *harau* meaning »to expel, drive out, purify«) along with the defrocking of the monks. An attempt by the members of the community in July of 1870 to rebuild at least one of the buildings (the *kaizandô*) apparently failed (OJ 1968-91, *bekkan* 2: 134f.).

Even Yoshida Yasuo (1991: 37) merely remarks that the Buddhist implements of the monastery were removed in the year Meiji 2 (1869), the main hall of the temple was demolished in the following year, and in April of 1871 the temple grounds were finally nationalized. Umeda and Nishino write in the official »History of Ômiwa Shrine« with the utmost brevity on the end of the Byôdôji that the temple was »swept away« (*haku*, meaning »to sweep«) – that is to say, it was razed to the ground. The main hall (*hondô*) of the Daigorinji, however, was remodeled as Ôtataneko-jinja, or Wakamiya (Umeda 1975: 314). In accordance with the decree for the separation of Buddhism and Shintô of March 1868, all Buddhist devotional objects at the Byôdôji were removed from Miwa. Among them were such valuable items as a copy of the Daihannyakyô (Sanskrit: Mahâprajnaparamita Sutra) in 600 *maki* from the late Heian period that was brought to the Honganji of the nearby town of Kashiwara-Tôichi.²⁹⁶

The most important work of art and main statue of the former Byôdôji is a figure of a sitting Fudô-myôdô (Sanskrit: Acalanâtha), which functioned as the executor of the punishments of the Dainichinyorai in esoteric Buddhism and was one of the five (or eight) Dai-myôdô (cf. Ômori 1992 a: 198f.).

²⁹⁵ Even a »reestablishment« of the Byôdôji on Mount Miwa is not mentioned; cf. Antoni 1993 a: 33ff.

²⁹⁶ In 1964 the rolls were returned to Ômiwa-jinja, a fact that is seen by the shrine as proof of the newly relaxed relations with Buddhism. Cf. OJ 1975: 697; Yoshida 1991: 37 (»Afterword«).

Although the sculpture of the eleven-headed Kannon, which functioned as the Daigorinji's *honji-butsum* («Buddha who is the original source»), was taken into the protection of the Shōrinji, its history immediately thereafter is unknown. However, in the year Meiji 6 (1873), this work of great art-historical importance (which was declared a »national treasure« (*kokuhō*) in 1908 and has been deemed an »important cultural property« since the end of the war) was brought to one of the most famous temples in Japan since antiquity, the Hase-dera (also called Chōkokuji).²⁹⁷ This temple complex, located on the southern slope of the Yamato mountain range, not far from Mount Miwa, is rightfully considered to possess one of the most beautiful landscapes in Japan and is the eighth station on the Buddhist pilgrimage route in western Japan (cf. Hirakata 1992: 60-65, no. 8). The main devotional image (*honzon*) of this main temple of the Buzan School of Shingon Buddhism is a statue of the eleven-headed Kannon from 1538 that, at a height of 10.8 meters, is the largest wooden statue in Japan (cf. Hase-dera (no date): 11).

However, the Fudō-myōō statue of the Byōdōji of Miwa did not remain in the Hase-dera, but rather in a small branch temple a short distance from the main temple, the Fumonin (Hase-dera-tachū-fumonin) whose head priest, Maruyama Tsuranaga, accepted the statue on January 14, 1874 and made it the *honzon* of the temple in the following year.²⁹⁸ This is where the statue of the terrible Fudō-myōō of Miwa is kept until today.

2. 2. 1. 2. Conclusion

On a pleasant fall day, the beauty and tranquility of Mount Miwa and the shrine complex are remarkable. Old shrine buildings, the famous cedars of Miwa (*mi no kamisugi*), in front of which worshippers place offerings of *sake* and raw eggs for Ōmononushi no kami – the deity that, according to an age-old belief, appears as a snake at the foot of the tree – these are all arresting sights. For those familiar with the religious significance of the place, it calls to mind the myths of the *Kojiki*, the inseparable connection of Miwa to the myth of Izumo, and the great subjects of ancient religion evidenced in the iconographical link between tree, snake and the drink of life (cf. Antoni 1988).

At places such as the modern-day Ōmiwa Shrine, however, the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to understanding the real development and true history

²⁹⁷ On the Fudō-myōō of Miwa/Hase, cf. Ikeda 1968-91: 1206-1208, Maruko (no date); Hase-dera-tachū-fumonin (no date); OJ 1975: 701. The historical dates in these works differ from one another in some cases.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Ikeda Ōya 1968-91: 1206; Hase-dera-tachū-fumonin (no date).

of Shintô in modern Japan are also apparent. The past often appears distorted, as if glimpsed through frosted glass; the misleading archaisms and invented traditions of the Meiji period cloud our vision for the authentic traditions. Today Miwa appears to its visitors to have been a genuinely Shintô place of worship whose history apparently extends continuously from ancient times to the present day. And yet large parts of this picture were filled in later, modified and falsified. In order to understand these enormous manipulations, it is necessary to examine their spiritual and intellectual background and motives. This religious and ideological foundation was provided by Shintô according to the interpretation of the late Kokugaku (i.e. Hirata Atsutane) and the Mito School. Ironically, the body of thought that resulted from these two schools, which was devised by small circles of scholars during the Edo period, was ultimately applied in the modern Japanese state. Therefore, in order to understand modern Japan, one must first take these indigenous religious and ideological constructs into account.

2. 3. *The Great Teaching* (daikyô-senpu-undô)

The separation of Buddhism and Shintô in the first phase of the Meiji period alone did not lead to the events hoped for by supporters of the Shintô restoration. The Buddhist influence on Shintô was too great to be wiped out in one blow, and the ideals of the restoration most likely contained little of interest to the common people. There was no religion that could seriously replace Buddhism. For this purpose, the *jingikan* had already created the institution of the so-called »propagandists,« or »[Shintô] missionaries« (*senkyôshi*). This term was used by the authorities and others to refer to all shrine priests. On February 3, 1870, an imperial decree declared the beginning of the »movement for religious, moral and political enlightenment« (*daikyô-senpu-undô*), which was based on the doctrines of Hirata Shintô (cf. Muraoka 1988: 205).

As Lokowandt (1978: 58ff.) writes, the Great Teaching (*daikyô*) considered the propagation of the Japanese concept of the *kokutai* to be a matter of education, and it attempted, on the basis of the aforementioned decree, to indoctrinate the entire populace. Although the term is not mentioned explicitly, the decree contains the most important components of the concept of the *kokutai*. According to Lokowandt,

»it includes the following ideas: a) the divine origin of Japan and b) of the imperial dynasty, c) the uninterrupted reign of the imperial household, which d) ruled and still rules under the mandate of the divine ancestors, which is

expressed in e) the unity of religion and government, although f) the religious side is accorded greater weight; g) according to this correct policy, both the political principles of the rulers and the customs of the people existed in their original purity, and h) the people were unanimous.« (Lokowandt 1978: 59).

This purely Shintô-based campaign for »enlightenment,« however, was modified in March of 1872. Under the new term »ethics teacher« (*kyôdoshoku*), Buddhist priests were also charged with the propagation of the Great Teaching. Two essential factors led to this decision: the rural population with its long tradition of Buddhism was hardly amenable to Shintô indoctrination, and, just as important, the number of Shintô priests was not nearly sufficient to carry out an effective campaign of education.

The inclusion of the Buddhist priests made sense for another reason as well: unlike the Shintô priests, they were accustomed to teaching people. In order to avoid deviations from the Shintô program, however, on April 28, 1872, the newly founded *kyôbushô* declared three tenets to be spread by the ethics teachers, the »three rules for teaching« (*kyôsoku sanjô*, also *sanjô no kyôken*):

- »1. The spirit of worshipping the gods and love for the homeland is to be included and accepted.
2. The laws of nature (*tenri*) and the rules of man (*jindô*) are to be made apparent.
3. In honor of the rule of the emperor, it must be ensured that the emperor's will is followed.« (Lokowandt 1978: 148; 293f., doc. 50)

As Lokowandt (l.c.) remarks, religious beliefs that contradicted these rules were not allowed to be taught. In order to make these rules for teaching more specific, in 1873 the government drew up the so-called »11 topics« (*kendai*), and later added a further 17 topics (cf. Lokowandt 1978: 58, 148).²⁹⁹ As Muraoka (1988, chapter VI: 206) writes, these topics form the basic principles of Hirata Shintô. At the request of the Buddhists, the government established a large educational facility (*daikyôin*) in 1873 as a training center for the ethics teachers. Sixty-two mid-sized (*chûkyôin*) and 227 smaller (*shôkyôin*) such facilities were also created. This area cannot be covered in detail in the present study. However, it is worth mentioning that one of the national educational facilities established throughout the country by the Meiji government, after its ultimately failed attempt to establish

²⁹⁹ Lokowandt summarizes the content of the »11 topics« as follows: »The power of the gods and the mercy of the emperor; the immortality of the human soul; the creation [of the world] by the heavenly gods; the separation of the world into this world and the afterlife; patriotism; holy ceremonies; the appeasement of souls; [the relationship between] ruler and subject; [the relationship between] father and son; [the relationship between] man and woman; the *ôharai* (purification ceremony)« (Lokowandt 1978: 148).

»pure Shintô« as the state religion, was located at Mount Miwa. These facilities served to spread the Great Teaching (*daikyô*) as a mandatory state ideology, but were ultimately based on the tenets of modern Shintô thought, especially in regard to the position of the emperor.³⁰⁰ Under the leadership of Ise-jingû, similar educational facilities (*kyôin*) were established throughout the country. And even in Miwa, although somewhat later, on February 18, 1880, a »small educational facility« (*shôkyôin*) was founded, and in 1882 it became »Ômiwa Church« (*ômiwa-kyôkai*).³⁰¹ However, this concentrated initiative by Buddhists and Shintô priests did not last long. It was brought to an end already in May of 1875. One of the biggest problems of the campaign was that the ethics teachers used it for their own purposes. Although they were expected to overlook religious differences and only preach the national religion as embodied by the Great Teaching, they were not able to fully suppress their own religious identities. The Buddhists were, as previously mentioned, the better preachers and were not able to resist the temptation to preach a version of Shintô in which the Bodhisattvas were equated with the *kami*, as was the case before the Meiji Restoration. Thus, the government's plan to unite Japan under the banner of Shintô through religious, political and moral instruction with the help of Buddhism was destined to fail from the very beginning. Time and again after 1872, disputes emerged between the Shintô and Buddhist clergies. In the end, the Buddhists were not able to accept an official subordination of their religion to Shintô, despite all far-reaching attempts at accommodation.

But even the Shintô clergy themselves were far from being united on basic theological questions. The followers of Hirata Atsutane fought with the students of Ôkuni Takamasa, who was also a former student of Hirata's.³⁰² Moreover, individual shrines also attempted to promote their own interests. Due to the constant ideological and personal conflicts within the *daikyôin*, government bureaucrats called it the »Department of Indecisiveness« (*injunkan*) or »Ministry of Naps« (*hiruneshô*, cf. Fridell 1975: 154; Hardacre 1989: 44). These quarrels finally led to the end of the Great Teaching. This was triggered by a dispute between the two highest-ranking Shintô places of worship, the shrines of Ise and Izumo.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Hardacre 1989: 42-59; Hori, Toda 1956: 65-84.

³⁰¹ Even after World War II, this church remained intact as a religious institution independent of Ômiwa-jinja. Cf. Ômiwa-kyô hon'in (no date) a/b: passim; Hardacre (1989: 82) also mentions Miwa as an example of such an educational facility.

³⁰² On Ôkuni Takamasa cf. Inoue 1994: 502; Brüll 1966.

2. 3. 1. *The Pantheon Dispute*

Beginning in 1875, the so-called Pantheon Dispute (*saijin-ronsô*) also caused a split among the Shintô priesthood (cf. Hardacre 1989: 48ff.). The head priest of the Great Shrine of Izumo, Senge Takatomi (1845-1918), had attacked the superior position of Ise-jingû and now demanded that the main deity of Izumo Shrine, Ôkuninushi no mikoto, be adopted as ruler of the underworld in the official state pantheon. His counterpart at Ise-jingû, Tanaka Toritsune (1837-1897) rejected this request. This was the origin of a dispute that finally split the world of Shintô into two camps.

As Muraoka Tsunetsugu (1988: 217f.) writes, Senge Takatomi advocated the worship of Ôkuninushi no kami together with the three creator-deities and the sun goddess, in order to correct the foundation of the official tenets of Shintô. (See also Philippi 1995) His opponents, Tanaka Yoritsune and others, who represented the position of Ise Shrine, voiced their concerns with this proposal, and furthermore, Tanaka in particular was of the opinion that the conception of Ôkuninushi no kami was an imitation of Jesus! Ochiai Naoaki (1852-1934) criticized Senge Takatomi's *Shintô yôsho* (»Main Points of Shintô«) in his work *Shintô yôshô ben* for equating the Izumo deity Ôkuninushi with the sun goddess and ancestral deity of the imperial household. Yokoyo Nagatane, who had at first agreed with Senge Takatomi, later also distanced himself from his theory, stating that it had no basis in the historical tradition (Muraoka 1988; chapter VI: 219).

In order to resolve this debate, the case was presented to the emperor in January 1881. However, his reply turned out to be completely different from what was expected. Instead of a decision for or against the adoption of the Izumo deity, priests above a certain rank were simply forbidden to continue in their function as ethics teachers or carry out religious services such as Shintô burials. The logic behind this astonishing decision implied that a priest who does not carry out burial ceremonies would have no reason to take sides on the matter of which deity rules the underworld (Hardacre 1989: 49).

The effects of this decision were sweeping, since the general acceptance that the Shintô priests had worked to promote through the Great Teaching depended in particular on the introduction of Shintô funerals, with the intent of breaking the population's ties to the Buddhist temples. At first, many Shintô priests were reluctant to carry out burials, on the one hand because they saw themselves as liturgists and not as ministers, and on the other hand because they considered contact with death to be impure – a core principle of all Shintô theology (cf. chapter I: 3. 2. 3.). They agreed with the emperor's decision, since they did not consider

such services to be compatible with what they saw as their own crucial function in the state. However, some priests protested, albeit in vain, against limiting of their activities to purely ritual acts. Ultimately, some of them founded their own independent Shintô sects.

Thus, the emperor himself intervened in the conflict, though not as a theologian, but as a politician. In 1884 the Ministry of the Interior recognized the discrepancy between the privileges of state sponsorship and the emptiness of Shintô teachings. The *kyôbushô* was replaced by a new agency, the *shajikyoku* (»Bureau for Shrines and Temples«; cf. Lokowandt 1978: 378, 210), which was conceived as an administrative office for the areas of Buddhism and Shintô and whose duty was to deal with religion only in matters relevant to the state (Lokowandt 1978: 205).

The Shintô religion, in the sense of a theologically based state religion, and its spiritual leaders had shown themselves in the public opinion to be too weak to direct the movement for religious, political and moral enlightenment, and thus also the state. The movement for enlightenment was suspended and the government began to work toward a separation of religion and state.

2. 4. *The Hirata School: failure of Shintô as a state religion?*

Within Shintô research this development is widely considered as an important victory for the Hirata School, since the state-supporting, liturgical function triumphed over the state-religious, ministerial aspects:

»This view of Shintô and the nature of the priesthood represented a defeat for that sector of the Shintô world that favored promulgation of Shintô as a national creed and a pastoral role for priests. Thus the Ôkuni line of National Learning thought suffered a major defeat, and the priest-as-liturgist view, represented by the Hirata line of National Learning, gained an important victory.«³⁰³

Other commentators, however, take an opposing view, focusing on the failure of Hirata Shintô in the first half of the Meiji period. Since the Hirata School of *Kokugaku* Shintô cannot be equated with a purely ritualistic position – as this study's further investigation of the *kokutai* and Kokutai Shintô from the late Meiji period to the end of World War II tries to show, some questions remain. The core of Hirata Shintô was especially its clear theological and ideological worldview,

³⁰³ Hardacre 1989: 49. On the connection between Hirata Shintô and the Meiji Restoration see also Sakamaki 1985.

which declared Shintô to be the metaphysical source of all existence, not just of Japan. Thus, it would seem to be generally problematic to speak of mere ritualism in this case.

But why does the generally accepted opinion assume the failure of Hirata Shintô as a state religion in this period? Muraoka Tsunetsugu (1988: 203-229, chapter VI) in particular formulates this widely accepted theory. He emphasizes the fact that the most important spiritual foundation of the restoration of imperial rule was contained in the teachings of the Kokugaku, and especially in the Hirata School. In July of 1867, Hirata Kanetane (1799-1880) was asked by Iwakura Tomomi, a supporter of the restoration under the concept of the rule of Emperor Jinmu, about his opinion on the situation. Kanetane recommended reviving the *jingikan* and suggested not to attack Buddhism directly, but rather to work toward a process of self-destruction. In the same year, the policy of *saisei-itchi*, with an emphasis on Shintô, was described in detail in Yano Harumichi's work *Kenkin sengo* (see chapter II: 5. 1. 3. 2.).³⁰⁴ Later followers of Hirata Shintô, led by Fukuda Bisei (1831-1907), played an important role in the government's attempts to control the spread of Christianity.

The Hirata School also played a central spiritual role in the campaign for the spread of the Great Teaching: although the »three principles of education« (*sanjô kyôken*) of April 28, 1872, (see above; cf. Muraoka 1988: 206) applied to both the Shintô and Buddhist clergy, according to Muraoka the »11 topics« pertaining to the government embodied the basic principles of Hirata Shintô (as well as the concept of the *kokutai* in the sense of the Imperial Rescript on Education; cf. Muraoka 1988: 207).

According to Muraoka (1988: 210ff.), various internal and external factors contributed to the early end of Shintô indoctrination. The first argument he advances is that the policy of Shintô indoctrination was not in tune with the enlightenment movement led by scholars such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1902). In his work *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (»An outline of the theory of civilization«) of 1875, Fukuzawa advanced the opinion that Shintô has no developed teachings, and that Japan can only attain international independence if it learns from Western civilization, studies Christianity and throws off the shackles of its ancient traditions (cf. Muraoka 1988: 210). But Fukuda Bisei, a leader of the »progressive« element within the Hirata School, also advocated involvement with Christianity (Muraoka 1988: 221f.) and advanced the opinion that the modern-day efforts toward »civilization and enlightenment« were in harmony with the great Kokugaku scholars of the Edo period.

³⁰⁴ On Yano Harumichi cf. the study by Michael Wachutka (2013: 21-28, 288, and passim).

The second reason for the failure of Shintô indoctrination was, according to Muraoka, Shintô's »immaturity.« He writes that Hirata Shintô originally developed out of Motoori's Kokugaku Shintô, and Hirata Atsutane and his followers attempted to formulate their own theology. Hirata was a fervent advocate of the emperor and the restoration of imperial rule, but he was not able to gain any control over Shintô.³⁰⁵ This underdevelopment was also the reason for various internal disputes within the world of Shintô, which the author describes in some detail (among others, the Pantheon Dispute over the position of the Izumo deity Ôkuninushi).

The third reason for the failure of the movement, according to Muraoka, can be seen in the failed attempt by the Meiji government to elevate Shintô to the state level by political authority, since this led to the confusion of politics and religion (Muraoka 1988f.). There were indeed many opponents of this policy – all of them educated in the West – who raised objections to such a policy of religious indoctrination. Nakamura Masanao (1832-1891), for example, supported the separation of state and religion, and none other than Mori Arinori (1847-1889) supported the freedom of conscience and especially of religion with the argument that any involvement on the part of the government in religion is bound to fail. The freedom of religion was finally guaranteed by Article 28 in the Constitution of February 11, 1889, and Muraoka writes that the adoption of the Constitution marked the definite end of the policy of indoctrination (Muraoka 1988: 228).

Without settling the matter definitively here, it seems to me that the general view that Shintô failed as a state religion in the early Meiji period is hardly convincing. Especially the late Meiji period, beginning with the Constitution and the *Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyôiku chokugo)* of 1890, shows quite clearly that the beliefs and maxims of Hirata Shintô and the Mitogaku – that is to say, the concept of the Japanese *kokutai* – were officially declared common spiritual beliefs and the foundation of the Japanese national interest. The mere fact that Shintô was pro forma declared a »non-religion« for pragmatic reasons (in order to guarantee the freedom of religion under the Meiji Constitution) does not prove the theory of Shintô's failure as a state religion. Rather, the opposite could be seen to be the case here: in order to save the Shintô foundation of the modern Japanese empire from the pressure of opposition both from within and outside Japan – liberalism from within and imperialism from without – the government decided on the

³⁰⁵ This statement by Muraoka is contradicted by the fact that the Hirata school officially continued the tradition of the Edo period Shirakawa and Yoshida schools.

supposedly ingenious solution of making Shintô a non-religious state religion.³⁰⁶ This fact has been a focus of discussion especially among foreign commentators, as will be covered later in this study.

Overall, I tend to agree more with the opinion of an exceptional expert on the topic and a contemporary witness of the events, D. C. Holtom (1922), who, in the course of his intensive studies, reached the conclusion that Shintô continuously spread in its function as a state religion between the years 1880 and 1920, and that this spread occurred relatively steadily over the course of the entire period.³⁰⁷ And finally, the spiritual and political developments of the 1930s and early 1940s show how strongly the ideologization of government and society progressed under the tenets of (State) Shintô. Overall, this can be seen more as a triumph than a defeat for the Hirata School, in actual rather than ritualistic terms.

The Meiji Constitution and the *Imperial Rescript on Education* formed the spiritual basis for these further developments. Therefore, these areas will be examined more closely in the following discussion.

³⁰⁶ In recent studies this problem has been widely discussed. Michael Wachutka (2013: 52-69) dedicates a whole chapter of his study to the topic »The shift from Shinto as the State Religion to the Imperial Way as public morality.« Maxey (2014) recently debated the matter in extenso and stated, for example: »By rejecting the category of religion, the shrine priests and their allies could employ the Imperial Diet to represent their cause as national cause.« (Maxey 2014: 214)

³⁰⁷ Holtom 1922: 47. In his review of the work of Ernst Lokowandt (1978), Peter Fischer (in NOAG 131-132, 1982: 147-156) emphasizes that he was unable to find any proof that Shintô was a non-religious cult as early as the 1880s. He continues: »Thus, Shintô studies should focus on the 1890s and more strongly emphasize aspects of foreign policy, which was of great importance to the religious development of Japan in these years.« (l.c., 150)

3. SHINTÔ AND KOKUTAI IN THE LATE MEIJI PERIOD

3. 1. *The Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education*

The end of the enlightenment movement and the closing of the *kyôbushô* in 1884 marked the beginning of the final phase in the development of Meiji-period State Shintô. When this phase came to a close in 1890, State Shintô was fully developed as a state cult that was officially considered non-religious in contents and structure.³⁰⁸ It remained largely unchanged in this form until the end of World War II in 1945.

After 1884, Shintô split into the non-religious State Shintô (or Imperial Household Shintô) that was mandatory for every Japanese, and the religious Shintô of the various sects. Already in May 1882, all Shintô sects were required to be registered. From then on, their places of worship were no longer called *jinja* (»shrine«) but *kyôkai* (»church«). This was an affront to the sects, which had supported the Great Teaching campaign both personally and financially.

Beginning in 1882, Shintô priests were gradually stripped of their status as civil servants, although this did not affect shrine priests serving at places where »rites of the state« (*kokka no sôshi*) were performed such as Ise and Izumo (cf. Lokowandt 1978: 230). The smaller shrines no longer received financial support from the state, and they had no choice but to find new sources of funding. Consequently, in these times one could find small rental houses, schools or police stations, rest areas and parking spots for rickshaws, market stalls etc. within the formerly sacrosanct shrine precincts (Lokowandt 1978: 220).

The great national shrines, on the other hand, such as Izumo, Ise and Yasukuni, were lavishly expanded. The ceremonies at these places of worship were perfected and made one of the most important pillars of State Shintô. But the political class noticeably lost interest in Shintô during this time. In 1887 there was even a revision of the state's financial contributions to the great shrines. The support was to be paid for only for the next 10 to 15 years and was then to be discontinued, barring any formal extension.

³⁰⁸ Maxey (2014: 6) sees the year 1900 as a starting point »for anything resembling State Shintô.«

3. 1. 1 *The Meiji Constitution*

But while interest in Shintô as a state-supporting religion faded on the surface, its spiritual foundations, which were rooted in the Kokugaku as well as the Mito School, gained ground in politics. This is best exemplified by the Constitution, which was promulgated on February 11, 1889, the same day that, according to mythical tradition, the founding of the empire by Jinmu-tennô supposedly took place in the year 660 B.C. Although the word »Shintô« does not appear in the Constitution, the central tenets of the concept of the *kokutai* and State Shintô are contained in its first articles.

The sovereign position of the emperor is established primarily in Articles 1 and 3 of the Meiji Constitution.³⁰⁹ Article 1 reads: »The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.« In Article 3 this principle is made more precise: »The Emperor is sacred and inviolable.«³¹⁰ In his »Imperial Oath at the Sanctuary of the Imperial Palace« at the promulgation of the Constitution the emperor stated the following principles:

»We, the Successor to the prosperous Throne of Our Predecessors, do humbly and solemnly swear to the Imperial Founder of Our House and to Our other Imperial Ancestors that, in pursuance of a great policy co-extensive with the Heavens and with the Earth, We shall maintain and secure from decline the ancient form of government.«³¹¹

In the Meiji Constitution, the position of the emperor over all other political entities was defined as holy, absolute and unlimited, by virtue of his divine descent. The emperor ruled the country and the people by uniting the executive and legislative powers in himself. However, according to chapter IV (Articles 55-56) of the Meiji Constitution, the emperor was not accountable for political decisions, since it was his ministers' duty to advise the emperor and take responsibility for their advice. In chapter II of the Constitution (Article 28), the freedom of religious belief was declared »within limits,« meaning, as long as the religion in question did not pose a contradiction to the imperial household and (Shrine) Shintô – a clause that was aimed directly at Christianity. The religious Shintô of the sects

³⁰⁹ Ienaga 1967 provides a comprehensive discussion of the Meiji Constitution; see also Röhl 1963. On the topic »100th anniversary of the Meiji Constitution: state, society and culture in Japan during the Meiji period« an academic symposium was held in 1989, the results of which were published in the journal OE (vol. 33/1, 1990).

³¹⁰ Wittig 1976: 87, doc. 26; cf. Miyazawa 1986: 291.

³¹¹ Cited by Itô 1906: 167.

was given no rights as a state religion under the Meiji Constitution. The only religion of political relevance was the worship of the emperor.³¹²

The Meiji Constitution of February 11, 1889, which was in part influenced by Prussian constitutional law, accorded the emperor a holy, inviolable position that was exempt from any responsibility, thus following in the tradition of the nationalist schools. And yet, the document also contains elements aimed at preventing imperial despotism.³¹³

Thus, the Constitution was in fact the product of competing interests and ideas in Meiji-period Japan, situated between the two poles of the Shintôist ideology of the land of the gods and contemporary liberal thought on constitutional law. The final victory of the conservative powers is apparent in a further document that, more than any other, influenced spiritual life in Japan until the end of World War II: the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*Kyôiku [ni kansuru] chokugo*) of October 30, 1890.

But before turning to this central document of imperial state ethics and doctrine we will discuss some aspects of political mythology, being of fundamental importance in this context.

3. 1. 2 *Political mythology and the legitimation of imperial power – the case of the Jinmu-tennô myth*

1889, the year of the proclamation of the Meiji Constitution, generally marked a turning point in the history of modern Japan, as the Japanese historian Kokaze Hidemasa (2011) points out. It was a series of ritual events and state ceremonies of that year which marked the end of the age of the Meiji Restoration and the birth of the modern Japanese state. In the center of these ritual state ceremonies stood the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution on February 11, 1889. By this ceremonial event the Empire of Japan was established as a modern constitutional state, which could face the Western powers in an equivalent position from now on. Since the restoration of the year 1868, the new Japanese Empire had endeavored to be recognized as equal in relation to the European powers and the United States. In particular, the revision of the »unequal treaties« represented an ultimate goal of foreign policy efforts. However, a prerequisite was seen in a structure of

³¹² For a detailed discussion of the Constitution, cf. Beasley 1989: 663ff. See also Itô 1906.

³¹³ Cf. Meiji Constitution, Article 4: »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.« (Itô 1906: 7) Article 5: »The Emperor exercises the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet.« (Itô 1906: 10) Johannes Ueberschaar (1912: 14) uses the term »limited constitutionalism« to refer to this form of Constitution.

the state corresponding to international standards. In this context, the existence of a formal Constitution was seen as of central importance. Under the leadership of the statesman Itô Hirobumi (1841-1909) the text of the Constitution had been drafted over several years.

European constitutional concepts served as models, and it is known that foreign advisors (*yatoi*) in the service of the Japanese government played a major role in the drafting of the Constitution. These were, among others, the German constitutional lawyers Albert Mosse (1846-1925) and Hermann Roesler (1834-1894). Their work demonstrates the significant proportion of western thought in the construction of the modern Japanese Constitution. Therefore the importance of foreign contributions to the development of the Meiji Constitution is usually emphasized within international research.

But in its essential core the Meiji Constitution was ideologically based on indigenous Japanese political and religious ideas as well, especially with regard to the position of the Tennô. The emperor became defined as sacred, and it was him alone who occupied the position of the sovereign. This basic idea was expressed, as already shown, in Articles 1 and 3 of the constitution.

These statements were based on the concept – or ideological construct – of an allegedly special Japanese national polity, its *kokutai*. The idea of *kokutai* rooted, as was pointed out, in religious and political concepts of modern Shintô as well as Neo-Confucianism, postulated a sacred position of the Tennô, based on an allegedly direct blood line to the founder of imperial Japan in the archaic days: Jinmu-tennô. According to the written sources of antiquity (especially the *Nihonshoki*, 720 A.D.) the Imperial Japanese state was founded by Jinmu-tennô in the year 660 B.C.

The *Nihonshoki* states on the founding of Kashihara palace which marked the beginning of Jinmu's reign:

»Year Kanoto Tori, Spring, 1st month 1st day. »The Emperor assumed the Imperial Dignity in the Palace of Kashi(ha)-bara. This year is reckoned the first year of his reign. He honored his wife by making her Empress. The children born to him by her were Kami-ya-wi-mimi no Mikoto and Kami-nunagaba mimi-no Mikoto. Therefore there is an ancient saying in praise of this, as follows: »In Kashi(ha)-bara in Unebi, he mightily established his palace-pillars on the foundation of the bottom-rock, and reared aloft the cross roof-timbers to the Plain of High Heaven. The name of the Emperor who thus began to rule the Empire was Kami Yamato Ihare-biko Hohodemi.«³¹⁴

³¹⁴ *Nihonshoki*, Vol. 3, Jinmu-tennô, 1/1/1 = NKBT 67: 213/2-5 and 214/1-3; Aston 1956, 1: 132.

This episode is reported much shorter in the parallel mythological source book *Kojiki* (712 A.D.), vol. 2, Jinmu-tennô:

»Having thus subdued and pacified the unruly deities and having swept away the defiant people, he dwelt in the palace of KASIPARA at UNEBĪ and ruled the kingdom.«³¹⁵

Modern historical research has proven the absolute fictivity of this alleged Jinmu-tennô - who is known in the sources by his personal name Iware-biko only -, and consequently of his founding of the state. Nevertheless, modern Japan of the Meiji period took these mythical events as historical facts. The early years of the Meiji period witnessed the emergence of a veritable Jinmu cult. A question of particular importance was the fixation of an exact date for the alleged founding of the empire by Jinmu. Hence, the date of February 11, 660 B.C. was derived from the ancient sources as the foundation date of the early Japanese empire. This date also formed the basis for a new national holiday introduced in 1873, the National Foundation Day (*kigensetsu*).

3. 1. 2. 1. *Excursus: On the kigen calendar*

Here we are confronted with a specific, particularly Japanese calendar, which is no longer in use, but was quite popular in wartime Japan - the so called *kigen* calendar, a linear chronological system, starting with the date of the alleged founding of the Japanese Empire (*kôki*) by the so-called first Emperor Jinmu-tennô. In this calendar, the year of his accession to the throne and founding of the empire corresponds to the Western date of 660 B.C.³¹⁶ As is well known, this date must be regarded as purely legendary, having been designed artificially by the compilers of the earliest Japanese classics which date from the 8th century. This central concept was based on the first histories of the country, namely the *Kojiki*, dating from 712 A.D., and the *Nihonshoki*, dating from 720 A.D.

Especially the *Nihonshoki* followed chronological speculations in accordance with the Chinese 60-years cycle. As John Brownlee (1991: 31) points out, the year 601, which was the ninth year of the reign of Empress Suiko, »provided a basis

³¹⁵ *Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 160/7-8 and 161/7-8; Philippi 1968: 52/62:177; cf. Antoni 2012a: 105

³¹⁶ The method of counting years from the legendary founding of Japan (in 660 B.C.) was begun in the early Meiji period (1868-1912) and commonly used until the end of World War II, when it was abandoned. To find the Western equivalent for a year, simply add 660 to the number. The word *kigen* (the beginning of the dynasty) or *kôki* (imperial era) is sometimes prefixed to such dates to differentiate them from years of the Christian era.« (Herschel Webb: »Calendar, dates, and time«. In: KEJ, 1983, vol. 1: 232)

from which to calculate backwards.« Using a combined system of cycles with a year called *ippô* as »a time of great change,« the compilers of the *Nihonshoki* calculated back for a period of 1,260 years, »and arrived at 660 B.C. for the *ippô*, which had to be the year of accession of Emperor Jinmu.«³¹⁷

In the Meiji period, this date became a sacrosanct founding date for the Japanese empire,³¹⁸ and was not historically questioned until the end of World War II. Even in present-day Japan, it constitutes the symbolic starting point of the history of the Japanese state, and is commemorated on February 11th as the national holiday *Kenkoku Kinen no Hi*, the direct successor of the Meiji-period holiday of *Kigensetsu*.³¹⁹ As Brownlee (1991: 32) states, »the accession of Jinmu in 660 B.C. became an established truth, which no historian in traditional Japan would ever have thought of questioning.« Although the findings of archaeological research and comparative history since the end of the 19th century had definitely proven the wholly legendary nature of this founding date, it did not lose its significance as an ideological construct in modern Japan from the Meiji period until the end of World War II. It was the eminent scholar Basil Hall Chamberlain, the first translator of the *Kojiki* into a Western language, who mentioned already in his still highly valuable³²⁰ »introduction« to the work and in presentations before the *Asiatic Society of Japan* on April 12th, and June 21st, 1882,³²¹ stated that the real history of the Japanese state must be regarded as »more than a thousand years later than the date usually accepted« (Chamberlain 1883 (1982): lxx). »400 A.D.,« he continued, »is approximately the highest limit of reliable Japanese history« (Chamberlain 1883 (1982): lxxxvii). Chamberlain reached a highly modern conclusion by theoretically opposing the idea of Japanese cultural homogeneity and exclusivity and stating, »in almost all known cases culture has been introduced from abroad, and has not been spontaneously developed« (Chamberlain 1883 (1982): xciii). This is a remarkable standpoint for the 1880s, one that seems to anticipate modern comparative cultural studies.

Historical and archaeological research since Chamberlain's time has proven these statements to be correct. But for official Japan, the illusion of a monogenetic foundation through Jinmu-tennô never became obsolete.

³¹⁷ Cf. Brownlee 1991: 31.

³¹⁸ »The chronology which fixes the date of the accession of Jimmu Tennô at 660 B.C. is officialized in modern Japanese law and in imperial edict alike,« (Holtom 1922: 189).

³¹⁹ Cf. Hardacre 1989: 101, *Kigensetsu* »Commemorating the founding of the Yamato dynasty by Emperor Jinmu«; cf. the *Kigensetsu*-controversy on the reestablishment of this holiday after the war.

³²⁰ Cf. Naumann 1996: 19.

³²¹ Chamberlain 1883 (1982): i – ci.

That the Meiji Constitution was proclaimed in 1889 on February 11 thus had a deep symbolic meaning. With this date, the proclamation of the Constitution was directly linked in terms of ceremony to Jinmu-tennô as the founder of the imperial line. Jinmu-tennô was accepted as the historical founding figure, having descended in direct line from the divine ancestors with the Sun Goddess Amaterasu as ultimate source.³²² Through the selection of this day for the promulgation of the constitution, the basic ideas of *kokutai* thought found their way directly into the ceremonial festivity for the promulgation of the Constitution.

The design of the of festivities' program was the responsibility of the Ministry of the Imperial Household (*kunai-sho*) which was headed by the very statesman who had already played a major role in the drafting of the constitutional text: Itô Hirobumi. To support this task, foreign advisors (*oyatoi*) had been hired, who were to contribute to the design of state ceremonies by introducing adequate European models. One of these western advisors was the German diplomat Ottmar von Mohl (1846-1922), who stayed in Tôkyô in the service of the Ministry of the Imperial Household for two years (1887-1889), being responsible for the transmission of Prussian and other European court ceremonial into the ceremonial regulations of the Meiji imperial house.

3. 1. 2. 2. *Ottmar von Mohl and the promulgation of the Constitution*

Born in 1846 as son of the famous expert in constitutional law and professor for political science, Robert von Mohl (1799-1875), at the University town of Tübingen, von Mohl attended law school in Bonn, Heidelberg and Munich, before he entered the diplomatic service, becoming an attaché at the Foreign Office in Berlin in 1870. This was followed by positions as cabinet secretary for Empress Augusta and consulate offices in Cincinnati and St. Petersburg. From 1887 to 1889, von Mohl, accompanied by his family, stayed as an adviser to the Imperial Household Ministry and the imperial court in Tôkyô, where his duty was to advise members of the Japanese court in questions of European etiquette and ceremonial and thus help to modernize the court according to Western models. His wife, Wanda von Mohl (née Countess von der Groeben), also served at the imperial court as a court lady for the Empress Shôken (1849-1914). In 1904, fifteen years after his return from Japan von Mohl published memoirs of his service in Tôkyô under the title *Am japanischen Hofe* («At the Japanese Court»). In 79 more or less detailed chapters he recollected his and his wife's experiences in Japan. These recollections are based on entries taken from the diary he kept during his

³²² On the »Jinmu-tennô revival« in Meiji-Japan cf. Wachutka 2013: 11ff. (chapter 1.2.).

stay in Japan. Besides descriptions of his duties as an advisor for the Imperial Household Ministry, as well as for Itô Hirobumi himself, von Mohl especially provides detailed accounts of the Japanese imperial court life of the time and the culture of the country. The most notable event of his whole work is the solemn proclamation of the Japanese Constitution on February 11, 1889, which von Mohl attended and describes in his memoirs.

But Ottmar von Mohl was not such a humble man as to see his own role at the imperial court just as that of an advisor, instead he always stressed his own importance and personal contribution in the process of introducing modern court etiquette to Meiji Japan. This is especially true for the major national event of the constitutional promulgation on February 11, 1889. In his memoirs he writes on the process of preparing the *Program for the celebration of the Constitutional Proclamation* (ch. 73):

»We started our zealous look in the new Palais and started to design the plan for the prospected constitutional proclamation and inauguration of the first Japanese parliament.« (von Mohl 1904:219)

»[...] I was responsible to design a program for the court. This program for the constitutional proclamation was designed following the models of similar celebrations as they often occurred in recent years in Berlin, and the corresponding draft of the Ministry of the Imperial Household found the approval of the Tenno.« (von Mohl 1904: 220)

»For the celebration itself February 11, the anniversary of the accession of Jimmu Tenno, was elected, i.e the founding of the Japanese monarchy.« (von Mohl 1904:220)

Reading this and other passages of his memoirs one gets the image that it was mainly von Mohl himself who was responsible for the key decisions. It was him, he writes, who was responsible for some classical Japanese parts of the program, which were included against the will of Itô Hirobumi. As von Mohl points out in some other parts of his memoirs, Itô strictly rejected any traditional Japanese ceremonial parts within the modern court ceremonies, wishing to make clear this way that Japan was a modern state now, equal to the great European powers of his time.

The already mentioned historian Kokaze Hidemasa (2011:119) states in this respect: »The promulgation of the Meiji Constitution on 11 February 1889 [...] served to demonstrate to the Western powers that Japan was now a modern state«. But Kokaze, in his essay »The Political Space of Meiji 22 (1889): The Promulgation of the Constitution and the Birth of the Nation« does not even mention von Mohl's part within this process, except in one case, when he cites a passage from von Mohl's memoirs concerning the status of the empress (without men-

tioning the role of von Mohl's wife): »The model for the empress was none other than Augusta, the German empress and Prussian princess.« (Kokaze 2011:125) This shows that Kokaze is well aware of the existence of von Mohl's memoirs which were translated into Japanese in 1988, with a new paperback edition in 2011. An English translation of this work is still missing.

Kokaze discusses the role of the *kokutai* in this context and points out the socio-political role of ceremonial in general, stating:

»My argument is that 1889 was the year in which the post Restoration political conflicts dissolved in a cycle of political ceremonial, the pivot of which was the Constitutional promulgation itself.« (Kokaze 2011:131)

In his final conclusion Kokaze suggests to see the modernization process of this epoch as a part of a global phenomenon, namely:

»The process whereby 'native' turns 'national' was a 'relativisation' of the universal values of the nineteenth century West [...]. It was a restoration of the ethnic and the romantic; an attempt in brief to establish a Japanese nationalism.« (Kokaze 2011:139)

In an even more recent contribution to the topic, an essay titled »February 11, 1889. The Birth of Modern Japan« dating from 2014, Lionel Babicz, states that it was the day of the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution »which was to mark the official birth of a 'civilized' Japan.« Highly interesting in our context, he continues: »This was the emergence of a new political system based on national mythology and fervent patriotism, but also on the rule of law.« (Babicz 2014:22)³²³

As to the importance of the very date of the ceremony of promulgation Babicz concludes:

»February 11, 1889, was not chosen by accident as the day of promulgation of the Constitution. By selecting the 2,549th anniversary of the mythical accession of Jimmu to the throne of Japan, the Japanese leadership was stressing that Japanese modernity was linked to the most remote origins of the imperial dynasty. February 11, 1889, was to mark the official birth of modern Japan. The two decades since the 1868 Meiji Restoration were defined as a mere prologue, a period when modern Japan was erected step by step. The Constitution was crowning that edifice and opening a new and brilliant chapter in Japan's immemorial history.« (Babicz 2014:22)

³²³ Babicz mentions also Kuga Katsunan, who was already discussed by Kokaze (2011:138). But Babicz seems to be unaware of Kokaze's publication, since it does not appear in his bibliography.

The promulgation of the constitution, as »a result of the ‘advance of civilization’ [...] was not meant to cut Japan from its origins«. The day of *kigensetsu*, the day of founding the empire by Jinmu-tennô, was chosen »to anchor Japan in its most remote past«. (l.c.)

In the same way as Kokaze, Babicz does not discuss the role of Western models for the promulgation ceremony, which clearly could be seen as an impressive example of an Invented Tradition. Needless to say that he, of course, does not mention Ottmar von Mohl in this context at all. Just in one single sentence the existence of »foreigners employed by the government (*oyatoi gaikokujin*)« (Babicz 2014:26) is addressed, giving the information that those people, as well as some journalists, »where also allowed to witness (*haiken*) the ceremony« (l.c.).

Already von Mohl himself expressed some frustration in this respect in his memoirs, since he was dismissed from service at the imperial court soon after the ceremonial events from February 11, 1889 had ended, having to return with his family to Germany, where a new phase of his career started. His name was never mentioned in Japan again.

3. 1. 2. 3. *Further ideological developments*

It was only much later, in the era of early Shôwa State Shintô and official *kokutai*-nationalism, which we will deal with in chapter IV, that the day of the anniversary of the foundation of the Japanese Empire on February 11, eventually became a central topic and event in Japan. The affirmative reception of the alleged Jinmu-tennô served as a basic pillar for the 1930s’ and early 1940s’ war propaganda, especially at the festivities for the 2,600th anniversary in the year 1940 (which were held in Berlin too). Official propaganda scriptures, as *Kokutai no hongî* (1937) or *Shinmin no michi* (1941/1943)³²⁴, emphasized the importance of Jinmu-tennô for the present Japanese empire.

The *Kokutai no hongî* declares:

»The Emperor Jimmu ascended the Throne with such a deep august mind as this, and with a great spirit [which had in mind] the uniting of the whole realm and the mantling of the whole world.«³²⁵

And in the *Shinmin no michi* we read on the war time slogan of *hakkô ichiu*, which referred to a saying by Jinmu-tennô in the *Nihonshoki*:

³²⁴ Cf. *Shinmin no Michi* 1943 (2003) and Tolischus 1943.

³²⁵ *Kokutai no hongî*, part II, cf. *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 68; Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 108.

»[...] The eastward expedition of Emperor Jimmu was carried out, and this resulted in the pacification of the great eight provinces and the consequent selection of his capital at Kashihara in Yamato Province. [...]

The Imperial spirit of expanding the Imperial tasks is mainly based on this spirit and policy [of the Emperor Jimmu] at the time of the Empire-founding. The succeeding Emperors have been ruling over the Empire in observance of these precepts. The Imperial Rescript granted by His Majesty the Emperor at the time of the conclusion of the Japan-German-Italian Tripartite Alliance mentioned the following: 'It has been the great instructions bequeathed by Our Imperial Foundress and other Imperial Ancestors that our grand moral obligation should be extended to all directions, and the world be unified under one roof. This is the point We are trying to obey day in and day out.'³²⁶

After WWII the state holiday for the commemoration of Jimmu's accession to the throne on February 11th, *kigensetsu* was abolished in 1948. But in the year 1966 this festival date was revived as national holiday in the new form of a »National Foundation Day«, *kenkoku kinen no hi*.³²⁷ Thus, although without the pre-war nationalistic agenda, February 11 still serves today to commemorate the mythical foundation of the Empire in present day Japan.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the modern Empire of Japan was established after the Meiji Restoration by taking recourse to the historical construct of a mythical-legendary empire, which allegedly was founded by a certain »Jinmu-tennô« in mythical times. It cannot be stated often enough, that this alleged founding of the empire is not supported by any historical or archaeological evidence. The real emergence of the Japanese state in prehistory was an evolutionary one, occurring about 1,000 years later than the mythical date of 660 B.C. The mythical story of this foundation is told in the oldest Japanese source books, dating from the early 8th century. After the decline of the imperial state during the Middle Ages, this myth was actively revived by the authorities of the new Empire. Consequently the Meiji Constitution was promulgated on the day of *kigensetsu*, the anniversary of this supposed foundation date (February 11, 1889), and in 1940 the 2,600th anniversary of this mythical event was widely celebrated. One of the basic functions of myths and mythologies is to provide the political sphere with structures of (sacred) legitimacy. And Japan can be regarded as an outstanding example for the political functionalization of myths in the past as well as in the present.

³²⁶ *Shinmin no Michi*, part II/1, cf. *Shinmin no Michi* 1943 (2003): 32, 33; Tolischus 1943: 423.

³²⁷ Although the fictional nature of the event and especially the date has long been known in historical science, this holiday, which was of great ideological importance in pre-war Japan, was reinstated after the war. A discussion of the field can be found in Lokowandt 1981: 15, 17, 153-172 (collected material on the topic of the National Founding Day).

3. 1. 3 *The Imperial Rescript on Education* (Kyôiku [ni kansuru] chokugo)

Only one year after the promulgation of the Constitution, in 1890, an even more important document for the development of imperial ethics and State Shintô followed, the »Imperial Rescript on Education« (*Kyôiku [ni kansuru] chokugo*).³²⁸ The Rescript was seen as an addendum to the Meiji Constitution. Both documents define the position of the emperor in the Japanese state – the Constitution by establishing an institutional framework, and the Imperial Rescript through spiritual and moral means. This decree emphasized the uniqueness of Japan and its ruler, as expressed in the concept of the *kokutai*. Since the contents and intention of the Imperial Rescript were identical with the goals of State Shintô, it became the central written work, the »Bible,« of State Shintô. Copies of it, along with portraits of the emperor, were objects of worship in Japanese schools. As a document of State Shintô, the text concisely explained to the people the basic moral foundations on which the Japanese government and the concept of the state (*kokutai*) had rested since ancient times (Lokowandt 1978: 237f.).

Aside from basic Shintô tenets on the founding of the state by the imperial ancestors and a reference to the eternal imperial dynasty, the *Imperial Rescript on Education* is largely influenced by Confucian values such as loyalty, respect for the Constitution and the subordination of the individual for the good of the community. Modern patriotism and Confucian state ideology were united in the *Kyôiku chokugo* and directed at the emperor.

The purpose of the Imperial Rescript on Education was originally only to determine the pedagogic goals for education in Japanese elementary schools by offering guidelines for mandatory moral instruction (*shûshin*³²⁹). However, the true significance of this document extends far beyond this. The Rescript actually provided the moral foundation for the late Meiji state and thus formed the official basis of *kokutai* thought until the end of World War II as a »non-religious religion« of »magical power,« as the philosopher Maruyama Masao states.³³⁰

The truly mythical nature that was even attributed to the text itself is apparent in the fact that the official copies of the text were added as a second holy ob-

³²⁸ Text published in Ôkubo 1969: 425. Translations: Wittig 1976: 89-91, doc. 27; Tsunoda et al. 1964, Vol. II: 139f.; Lokowandt 1978: 345, doc. 113. Cf. Sugiura Shigetake: »Vorlesungen über das Erziehungsedikt« (1914) in: Wittig 1976: 118-125, doc. 32.

³²⁹ On moral instruction, cf. Wittig 1972: 119ff. and (same) 1976, doc. 35 and 38; Foljanty-Jost 1979: 13ff.; Weegmann 1935; Wray 1973; Fridell 1970.

³³⁰ Maruyama 1971: 31; cf. Maruyama 1988: 45.

ject of worship in schools, after the portrait of the emperor, already three months after its promulgation in January 1891. Thus, the Rescript itself was the object of quasi-religious worship under State Shintô as an incarnation of the spiritual essence of Japan, its *kokutai*.

Upon first examining the text, however, the reader may be surprised to find that it is far from being a demagogic pamphlet of ultranationalistic navel-gazing. Instead, its moderate tone is reminiscent of a merely moralistic guide for living a decent life:

»Know ye, Our subjects: Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education.

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.

So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may thus attain to the same virtue.

The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji. (October 30, 1890)

(Imperial signature and imperial stamp).³³¹

However, a closer analysis of the text reveals a clear structure and statement of views in the tradition of the Kokugaku, and even more so of the Mito School.

At the very beginning, the Rescript reveals the core of the Japanese *kokutai*, its 'original essence': the Japanese empire was founded by the gods according to mythical tradition. The imperial line, in stark contrast to the classical Chinese concept of governance, has been virtuous from the beginning as the universal ba-

³³¹ Official translation of the Rescript in: »The Imperial Rescript on Education translated into Chinese, English, French & German« (Tôkyô 1931). Cf. Lokowandt 1978: 345.

sis of the way of the emperor. The ruler and his subjects are connected through the absolute loyalty of the people, which in fact is identical with the love of a child for his father.

Thus, the nation itself is depicted as a great family – not in a metaphoric sense, but in the sense of being directly related to one another by the collective divine ancestors. However, in order to manage social coexistence, ethical principles are needed. These the Imperial Rescript largely borrows from Confucian teachings – also in the tradition of the Mito School.

The scholar Yamazaki Ansai (1618-1662), the founder of Suika Shintô, already strove to reach a synthesis of Confucianism and Shintô, and can thus be considered one of the predecessors of the Mito School. Citing Chu Hsi directly, he argued that the Five Virtues for managing the Five Relationships should be the basis of any decent education (Tsunoda et al. 1964, Vol. I: 355f.).

In the Meiji-period Imperial Rescript on Education, these Five Values and social relationships are joined by a series of modern, Western constitutional norms for regulating a modern government, such as the commandment to respect the Constitution and the laws.

In the last paragraph of the document, the topic covered at the beginning is taken up again: once again, it emphasizes the eternal existence of the single imperial dynasty. The »way« was bequeathed by the ancestors, and it applies to the whole nation – to the ruler as well as his subjects. This motif can also be found in the thought of the Mito School, for example, in the work of Aizawa Seishisai, according to whom the Way exists inside every Japanese.³³²

The Imperial Rescript on Education specifies the essential and classical elements of *kokutai* thought as follows: 1) the religious core of the concept – borrowed from Shintô – of the divinity of the imperial dynasty; 2) the Confucian Five Virtues and Relationships for managing society; and 3) combining the first two elements, familism – that is, the concept of the Japanese nation as an actual family.

These measures marked the completion of Meiji-period State Shintô. For the common Japanese, this was manifested in the traditional relationship between the state and the larger places of worship; in state holidays, the content of which was determined by the imperial household and Shintô; in the treatment of Shintô myths as the historical truth in the teaching of history; in Shintô-based moral education; in the mandatory annual shrine visits by school classes; and in the religious worship of images of the emperor and official copies of the *Kyôiku chokugo*.

³³² *Shinron*, Mitogaku-zenshû, vol. 2, 1933: 7; cf. Hammitzsch 1940: 70; Hammitzsch 1939: 57 gives further examples of this view in writings of the Mito school.

Thus, the teachings were made obligatory and their spread among the people was ensured through moral education and military training.³³³

3. 2. *Morality as a means to national unity: the case of Inoue Tetsujirô*³³⁴

The historian Irokawa Daikichi (1985: 280ff.) differentiates between four constituents of the state, which was based on the concept of the *kokutai*: 1) the myths relating to the imperial household, 2) ancestor worship, 3) the transfer of structural principles of the family to the state, and 4) a universally mandatory system of national morality.

In order to ensure national unity and hinder the efforts toward freedom and civil rights circulating in Japan at the time, the political leadership used means that the historian Kôsaka Masaaki (1958: 374ff.) summarizes under two terms: 1) »law« and 2) »morality.« The nation was organized according to the ideology of familism, based on the principles of »law« and »morality.« The highest expression of the legal basis of the state – the »law« – was the Constitution of the Empire of Japan that was promulgated on February 11, 1889. This document, which synthesized heterogeneous systems of government, gave the young empire a secure legal foundation for the state.

And yet the ideology of State Shintô was only officially justified and spread among the population through mass education after the introduction of the *Kyôiku chokugo* in 1890. The Imperial Rescript on Education canonized the core, classical elements of the concept of the *kokutai*. While the Constitution provided the basis for the area of the »law« in the late Meiji state proposed by Kôsaka, the Imperial Rescript on Education formulated the credo of the universal »morals« as a mandatory national system of morality. The Japanese nation was understood to be a literal family, connected by the bond of a theorized common lineage of divine ancestors. The unity of history and mythology, the idea of Japan as the »land of the gods,« ultimately led to the politically motivated view of Shintô as an authoritative state ideology. Since the nation itself, on the basis of mythology and history, was understood to be a family, it found its organizing structure in the moral principles of the family and interpersonal relationships. These were based on the maxims of the originally Confucian system of individual and social ethics,

³³³ Ethical education in the military was regulated by a separate decree, the »Imperial Rescript for the Military« (*Gunjin chokuyû*). For a detailed discussion of moral education in schools and the military, cf. Tsurumi 1970: 99-137.

³³⁴ For Inoue Tetsujirô's ideological foundation cf. Nawrocki 1998; Antoni 1990a and 1991: 76-99.

which, however, in the official Japanese view, were fully reinterpreted as genuinely Japanese values.

For the purpose of indoctrinating the people, and especially for the ideological training of the teachers who were to expand on and convey the entire meaning of the short and rough-seeming text of the Rescript, a wide variety of official commentaries appeared during the Meiji, Taishō and early Shōwa periods that were initiated and published by the Mombushō, the Japanese Ministry of Education. The most famous (and infamous) of these works is without a doubt the *Kokutai no hongī* (»Cardinal Principles of the National Entity [of Japan]«) from 1937. This work covered all the elements of the Japanese missionary beliefs and national hubris based on the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 (see below).

Just as the *Kokutai no hongī* marks the end of this series of official commentaries, another work, which dates back to 1891, represents its beginning: the *Chokugo engi* (»Commentary on the Imperial Rescript [on Education]«) by the philosopher and Confucian scholar Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944). This work was the first instance in which the spirit of the Rescript was officially interpreted and spread to a wide audience. It marked the beginning of the canonical interpretation of the Rescript and formed the basis for all further commentaries (cf. Antoni 1991a: 81ff.).

3. 2. 1. *Chokugo engi: Inoue Tetsujirō's commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education*

A decisive experience for Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944) that influenced his entire later life was a period of study abroad lasting several years, which he spent as a student and recipient of a Japanese government scholarship mostly in Germany from the winter of 1884 to the summer of 1890. There he pursued philosophical studies under notable scholars of the day, after already having completed a comprehensive study of Western philosophy (Inoue 1883-85). After his return to Japan, Inoue was immediately appointed professor of philosophy at the Imperial University of Tōkyō, to which he remained loyal throughout his entire career. Inoue influenced generations of young Japanese Tōdai philosophers, whom he taught about German idealism in particular (cf. Inoue 1935, among others).

Directly after his return from a period of study in Germany, however, Inoue did not publish a work along these lines – his preferred area of study in philosophy – but rather an ethical and ideological work, his *Commentary on the Imperial*

Rescript on Education.³³⁵ He was motivated to write this work personally by then Minister of Education Yoshikawa Akimasa (1841-1920)³³⁶, who apparently expected a result from Inoue that was in accordance with the state's intentions.

Inoue's commentary was published in September of the year Meiji 24 (1891). It went on to remain the essential authority among the 600 commentaries published before Shōwa 15 (1940). In the period between its publication and the year Meiji 40 (1907) alone, several million copies of this work were printed across 30 editions (cf. Inoue 1983: 229).

Inoue had feared that, in light of the influences from the movements for liberalism and enlightenment, the Kokugaku, Confucianism and Buddhism would completely lose their influence over Japanese society:

»Such was the nature of the time that it was feared [in the government] that a commentary on the 'Rescript' would be met with little respect from representatives of Kokugaku or Sinology in light of the current circumstances in the academic world. For this reason, it was assumed that an appropriate commentary could be produced by someone who himself had studied the Western sciences. That was how it came to pass that I was chosen as the author of the commentary.« (Inoue 1973: 31)

In this work, Inoue detailed the principles for a new kind of state morality whose main pillar was the demand for loyalty of the individual toward the state (Inoue 1983: 229). In his programmatic preface to the *Chokugo engi*, the author remarks:

»The principle of the Imperial Rescript is to strengthen the foundation of the state by cultivating the finer virtues of filial piety, brotherliness, loyalty, honesty (*kô-tei-chû-shin*), and by promoting the common feeling of communal love for one's country, or patriotism (*kyôdô aikoku*), and thus to provide for unforeseeable events. Should all of our countrymen manage to live up to these principles, the hearts of the people will then unquestionably be united.«³³⁷

Thus, Inoue clearly states that the essential points of the Rescript are, on the one hand, (Confucian) personal virtues, and on the other hand, the call to widespread patriotism. But in his view, these two areas are not separate, but rather,

³³⁵ Text in: *Chokugo engi* 1891 and 1899. Reprint: Tôkyô 1939. Inoue's programmatic preface is contained in Vol. 3 of the series *Nihon tetsugaku shisô zensho*, (Heibonsha), Tôkyô 1956: 265-277.

³³⁶ Inoue himself writes about this in his posthumously published autobiography (Inoue 1973: 31); cf. Ishizu 1983: 228.

³³⁷ Inoue 1899 (1939): 231; cf. Inoue 1983: 229, see also Gluck 1985: 130; Yamazaki, Miyakawa 1966: 120f.

they merge into an inseparable spiritual whole under the term *chûkun-aikoku*, »loyalty to the ruler, love for the country.«

Upon closer examination of the ideological core of Inoue Tetsujirô's *kokutai* thought, it becomes apparent that both ideological constituents, »patriotism« (*kyôdô-aikoku*) and »national morality« (referred to as *kokumin-dôtoku* in later works), originated from different sources.

3. 2. 1. 1. »Patriotism« (*kyôdô-aikoku*)

A competent account of Inoue's life and work, which appeared in 1983 as part of the series *Kindai bungaku shiryô sôsho* (KBKS, Vol. 54), claims that Inoue made a compromise between modern and traditional thought (Inoue 1983: 229). The extent of the influence of modern European and especially German nationalism at the time on Inoue, on the other hand, is apparent in his own writings.

From his memoirs it becomes apparent that the author returned from Europe not only as a proponent of the »pure philosophy« (*junsei-tetsugaku*) he himself propagated and a scholar of »identity realism« (*genshosoku-jitsuzairon*), but also brought back to Japan lasting impressions from Germany in the areas of national ideology and national morality, which were of great importance to him – impressions that had a direct influence on his commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education. In this context, Inoue writes:

»During my studies in Germany I felt deeply that it was a time in which Germany, which had just defeated France in the war, had reached a position of extraordinary power. Wilhelm II followed Wilhelm I, and it was the era of Bismarck and Moltke. The nation's prestige had grown and an era of great patriotism had begun. Upon closer examination of the condition of my own country, however, I concluded that after the Restoration it had submitted too far to Europeanization and was about to lose its spirit of autonomy and independence. This was very dangerous for our country.

In Germany, on the other hand, the spirit of autonomy and independence blossomed, and in the sciences, in the military, in education and various other fields, a great development was taking place.

After some consideration, I recognized that Japan must stress its own strengths and especially foster a spirit of self-determination and independence.

Because I returned to Japan with such thoughts, I felt that the promulgation of the »Imperial Rescript on Education« was something extraordinarily deserving of thanks, and I could not turn down the request of the Minister of Education Yoshikawa Akimasa [to write the commentary]; this is how I took on the task.« (Inoue 1973: 31f.)

This offers an extremely interesting perspective for the comparison of ideologies between Japan and Germany at the end of the 19th century. It is well known that Inoue Tetsujirô's academic teacher, Katô Hiroyuki, as well as other important figures of Meiji ideology – Hozumi Yatsuka is also important in this context – were strongly influenced by intellectual developments in the nationalist ideology of the new German empire as well. In my view, this case demonstrates a concrete link between the German nationalism of the time of the German empire and the Japanese ideology of the *kokutai*, and I believe there is also a considerable basis for the later ideological development of »racial (*völkisch*) nationalism«³³⁸, which was largely congruent in Japan and Germany during the 1930s and '40s. In this context, it is important to remember that »patriotism,« as one of the two ideological pillars of Inoue's national thought, was based primarily on his concrete experience of modern nationalism, especially as it existed during the imperial era in Germany.

3. 2. 1. 2. »National morality«

It goes without saying that the moral basis on which the Imperial Rescript and Inoue operated was rooted in Confucianism. The terms *kô* (benevolence), *tei* (brotherliness), *chû* (loyalty) and *shin* (honesty), cover nearly the entire Confucian catalog of virtues. Inoue unites individual virtues with those of a communal system of state ethics. The concept of familism is based on the principle of organizing society along the same moral guidelines as the area of interpersonal relationships – that is to say, the family. Inoue remarks that only when the same principles apply to all areas – meaning, when the family and the state are in harmony with one another – can the nation be united as a whole. Following from this, he also arrives at an organic model for the state in which government and the family state are shown to be two sides of the same coin: »The house (i.e. the family), like cells in an organism, is the true basis of the state,« (Inoue 1983: 230).

Inoue's interest in Confucianism was deeply rooted and extended beyond the area of ideological exploitation. And yet, he continually sought to find a connection between scientific argument and national ideological education. Inoue published a series of works on »national morality,« the most noteworthy of which was *Kokumin dôtoku gairon* (»Outline of National Morality,« or »Outline of the Morality of the Nation«) from 1912 (Inoue 1912). This work is a compilation of various lectures that were held in a teachers' seminar and was published by

³³⁸ The use of this term (German: *völkischer Nationalismus*) follows Seifert 1997.

Inoue at the request of the Ministry of Education. It represents the final development of the ethical ideas outlined in the *Chokugo engi* of 1891. Inoue's *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* is part of a whole series of similar works by various authors from around 1910 on the subject of the Japanese »national morality« (*kokumin-dōtoku*). This was occasioned by the school book reforms of 1910, which emphasized general moral education (*shūshin*) at all public schools (cf. Morioka 1977: 188). At this time Inoue was considered the ultimate authority in this area (cf. Morioka 1977: 192).

Inoue's work dedicates a chapter to each of the central thematic areas of the national ideology: the basic principles of the Japanese »national morality,« the relationship between »national morality« and the *kokutai* (Chapter III), the importance of Shintō (Chapters IV and V), *bushidō* (ch. VI), the characteristics of Japanese familism (*kazoku-seido*; chapters VII-IX) etc. (Inoue 1912; cf. Davis 1976: 17ff.). Inoue also emphasizes that the principles of the Japanese national morality are found in their purest form in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890.³³⁹

Thus, the connection between Inoue the academic and Inoue the national ideologue in this work from 1912 points to a fundamental problem in Inoue's argumentation. This stems from the question of Inoue's attitude toward the mythical and mystical foundation of Meiji nationalism, his relationship to the revitalized Shintō, which is strongly opposed to Confucian rationalism and claims the existence of a system of morality that is supposedly innate to the Japanese people and has nothing in common with Chinese (and therefore »foreign«) Confucianism.

3. 2. 1. 3. *Shintō and the Kokugaku on the origin of morality*

At this point it is necessary to examine the religious components of the concept of familism – that is, their foundation, which was generally shaped by historical Shintō tradition. This is where the Kokugaku began to shape the system.

The orthodox Kokugaku believed in the theoretical axiom of the historical truth and reality of the ancient historical myths, including the chapter on the »Age of the Gods« in the oldest annals of the Japanese empire.

The myths were understood literally to be *jijitsu*, or »facts«; their account of the creation of the world, the divine and human spheres, the beginning of the

³³⁹ Inoue 1912: 6. As in later commentaries, such as the *Kokutai no hongī* of 1937, parallels are drawn between the Meiji-period Imperial Rescript and the so-called Seventeen-Article Constitution written by Shōtoku-taishi under the reign of the Empress Suiko (592-628); cf. discussion in Antoni 1991a: 53.

emperorship, the origins of the powerful clans – all these mythical and legendary events were considered by the scholars of National Learning to be descriptions of historical reality. When, for example, a theorist such as Hirata Atsutane called Japan the »land of the gods,« he was following a literal interpretation of the historical writings in the sense of an idea that could be called »Shintô fundamentalism.« In Atsutane's work this view led to a fanatical nationalism and to his belief in the essential superiority of Japan over all other nations. In his view, the gods were »the beginning of all that is human, and just as the gods gave birth to the world, at the same time they also gave birth to humans,« (Hammitzsch 1936: 20).

The question of the origin of ethics was also central to Kokugaku thought in this context. Unlike China, which in Atsutane's view only learned the principles of virtue and morality through the teachings of Confucianism, Japan possessed a quasi-genetic form of ethics from the beginning of time. Due to the descent not only of the emperor, but also, according to the expanded *kokutai* arguments, of the entire nation, from the deities of the Japanese pantheon, Japan possessed an indigenous »way« of its own. Thus, Japan's superiority to all other nations, and over China in particular, was based on the fact that in Japan the maxims of virtue and morality were realized intuitively, while China must resort to complicated systems of rationally based ethics in order to bring its supposed spiritual chaos under control.

In the Mito School at the end of the Edo period, which aimed to synthesize the Kokugaku and Confucianism, the area of personal and social ethics was a great focus of attention. This school disproportionately emphasized and finally equated the categories of »loyalty« (*chû*) and »filial piety« (*kô*), which were henceforth considered to be the moral basis of the Japanese *kokutai*. Regardless of their origin in Chinese (i.e. Confucian) thought, in the Meiji period it was claimed that »loyalty« and »filial piety« were purely Japanese values. The further expansion of this ideology, which argued on the basis of national ethics, finally reached a point at which any elements of Confucianism in the principles of virtue and morality were officially negated. In line with the tradition of the Kokugaku, the *kokutai* ideology of familism saw these values as the common product of the Japanese nation, manifested in their highest perfection in the person, as well as the institution, of the emperor.

3. 2. 1. 4. *Inoue's attitude toward Shintô dogma*

Inoue writes in his memoirs that, before his departure for Germany, he had loose contacts with Kokugaku circles. But it is clear to the reader that his position

was basically quite distant from that of Kokugaku scholars. As a Confucian, philosopher, and also a lyricist, he was at that time still quite oriented toward the West.

Even his stated position toward Shintô in his earlier works shows a certain ambivalence, even distance, on the part of the author. The extent of the shift toward radical Shintô nationalism in the later years of Inoue's thinking is shown in a substantial study by Johann Nawrocki (1998), which will be discussed in the following.

In his work on the history of Japanese Confucianism (Inoue 1908), Inoue also briefly discusses the Confucians of the Edo period who had worked most diligently toward a synthesis of Confucianism and Shintô, Hayashi Razan and Yamazaki Ansai. In his account of these two scholars, there is an element of modest criticism that is not evident in Inoue's discussion of any other scholars. He considers Hayashi Razan to be a great mind and the most capable student of Fujiwara Seika, but he also accuses him of a lack of tolerance toward those who think differently from himself, whether it be followers of the school of Wang Yang-ming or even Buddhists and Christians; only toward Shintô does he appear to be open-minded. According to Inoue, Razan's writings on ethics were merely copied from Chu Hsi and did not contribute any new ideas. Still, although he left behind no original ideas, he was at least the founder of the most important school of the Edo period, which definitely left its mark on the Japanese national polity (Inoue 1908: 41).

Inoue's judgement of Yamazaki Ansai, the founder of the Confucian-influenced Suika Shintô, was no more flattering. He too, in Inoue's opinion, lacked original ideas, and his contribution consisted merely in writing school textbooks (*kyôkasho*) in which he explained the teachings of Chu Hsi. Later he made an attempt to bring Shintô and Confucianism into harmony, which, however, led to a further loss in the clarity of his teachings. After his death, however, his teachings spread widely and to a large extent were appropriated by the Mito School (Inoue 1908: 47f.).

Finally, an entire chapter of his main work from 1912, *Kokumin dôtoku gairon*, is devoted to the relationship between »Shintô and the *kokutai*« (Inoue 1912: 86-103). In this work, Inoue emphasizes the importance of the Divine Mandate, *shinchoku*, that is, Amaterasu's mandate for the eternal rule of the Japanese imperial household. Inoue writes that the spirit of this mandate reveals the morality of the Japanese nation. It is entirely national in character (*mattaku kokkateki de arimasu*; cf. Inoue 1912: 87). Thus, Shintô, as Inoue (1912: 103; cf. Gluck 1985: 142) clearly states, is a »national religion« (*kokkateki shûkyô*). In the following chapter, which is

devoted to the origin of Shintô, Inoue declares that Shintô and the Japanese nation both came into being at the same time; Japanese mythology possesses a unique character and forms the basis of Japanese ancestor worship (Inoue 1912: 109f.). Inoue views this point as the actual – or sole – meaning of Shintô: ancestor worship in Japan – the basis of modern familism – also emerged alongside it.

However, research has since been able to prove that much of the supposedly ancient Japanese ancestor worship was the product of the national ideologues of the Meiji period (cf. Morioka 1977), and it was Inoue who played an important role in the formation of these beliefs. Thus, in his view, the core of Shintô is ancestor worship, which in turn emerged from the mandate of Amaterasu ômikami to the heavenly grandson Ninigi no mikoto. According to Inoue, this proves the legitimacy of the imperial household, and thus of the entire Japanese *kokutai*, both ethically and genealogically. Inoue the philosopher was always suspicious of Shintô as a religion. To him, the value of Shintô lay in the founding of the *kokutai*, not in its religious dimension. Thus, in later works, Inoue consistently speaks of Kokutai Shintô (see chapter IV: 2. 2.).

Thus, Inoue's answer to the question of the origin of the national ethics, or rather, the »national morality« of Japan, which, in the view of Shintô, is an essential question, avoids any religious interpretation. Far from denying the Confucian origin of ethics, or even disguising it, Inoue (1908: 30f.) gives the following explanation:

»In the 16th year of the reign of Emperor Ôjin – the year 285 according to the common [Western] calendar – the teaching of *ju* [Confucianism] was introduced to our country. However, its true beginning was at least 120 years later. The adoption of Confucianism did not cause the slightest disturbance at the time. On the other hand, in the times when Buddhism and Christianity first entered our country, there was at first great outrage and unrest, which ultimately led to tragic bloodshed. Similar unrest did not occur in the case of Confucianism, because the teachings of *ju* were in harmony with the traditional character of our people in many areas.«

Inoue's high estimation of Confucianism's significance at the time is evident in his further comments, in which he suggests that the adoption of Western civilization after the Meiji Restoration was only made possible by the intellectual preparation through Confucianism during the Edo period (Inoue 1908: 59). He writes that, although Confucianism declined in the Meiji period, its teachings found their way into the national program of education. However, as Inoue (1908: 61) remarks, this no longer occurred in the name of Confucianism itself; the teachings remained intact, but their name, and thus the consciousness of their origins,

disappeared. Finally, Inoue clearly states the intellectual-historical facts: the value of Confucianism has always been to make moral education possible independent of any religion (*shûkyô wo hanarete*; Inoue 1908: 61). How this can be unified with *shinchoku* mysticism, toward which he showed himself to be increasingly open as early as 1912, and even more so in the 1930s and '40s, ultimately remains unclear, nor is it explained by the opportunistic workaround that Confucianism corresponded to the original character of the Japanese people »from the very beginning.«

Due to his Confucian, rationalist view, Inoue, who had previously been among the most prominent pioneers of the nationalist state ideology in Japan, later became one of the persecuted. A work from the year 1926 entitled *Waga kokutai to kokumin dôtoku* that deals with the area of »the *kokutai* and national morality,« which by that time had become a classic topic in Inoue's writings, was seen by the newly dominant fundamentalist Shintô ideologues as a slight to the imperial household, due to his rational interpretation of the imperial regalia. As Yamazaki and Miyakawa (1966: 125) write, following this, Inoue withdrew from all government offices, even from the House of Peers, to which he had been appointed by the emperor in 1925. But both authors neglect to mention that Inoue's attitudes ultimately did adjust to a large extent to the prevailing thought of the 1930s. At this point, he saw Shintô as the means to the moral unification of all people; in his view, Shintô was the tool for Japan's expansion in the world (cf. Davis 1976: 26f.). In the 1940s Inoue finally made a ultimate adjustment to the spirit of the times. Under the influence of the war and the supposed Japanese mission in Asia, he eventually reached the conclusion that the basis of his commentary - that is, the ethical maxims of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 - applied not only to Japan, but also formed the foundation for education in the »coming Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.«

This further development in Inoue's thinking, which has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged in academic research, is the focus of an impressive dissertation by Johann Nawrocki (1998). The most important points of this study will be covered in the later discussion of the early Shôwa period.

3. 3. *Shintô and the state in the late Meiji period*

The Imperial Rescript on Education marked the completion of the basic structure of Meiji-period State Shintô, which remained in this form until 1912, and to a large extent even until the end of the war in 1945.

Japan's aggressive policy of expansion, which began in 1890, was rooted to a great extent in religious nationalism and the belief in the superiority of the divine character of the nation, based on Shintô. The desire to rule as a superior »land of the gods« manifested itself in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1905) and the subsequent occupation of Korea in 1910. The tendency of the nationalistic, chauvinistic and militaristic traits of State Shintô became more and more evident and continued after the Meiji period on into the Taishô and early Shôwa periods.

However, political interest in Shintô did not fully ignite again until the beginning of the 20th century. In the year 1900 the government separated the management of shrines from that of other religions, including the Shintô sects. The Bureau for Shrines and Temples (*shajikyoku*) became the »Shrine Bureau« (*jinjakyoku*), and a »Religions Bureau« (*shûkyôkyoku*) was created within the Ministry of the Interior. As Holtom (1922) writes, the rules regarding the separation of Shintô shrines and religious institutions were laid down in a separate imperial ordinance (*Chokurei* no. 163). Even the duties of the newly organized Ministry of the Interior were specified, and thus also those of the two aforementioned bureaus (Holtom 1922: 28). According to the imperial ordinance, the *jinjakyoku* was responsible for matters relating to the grand shrines, government shrines, national shrines, prefectural shrines, district shrines and so on. Additionally, all duties relating to the shrine priests fell under the responsibility of this bureau (Holtom 1922: 29). The *shûkyôkyoku*, on the other hand, was responsible for the Shintô sects, Buddhism and the other religious groups. The separation between official Shintô shrines and other religions was finally intensified in 1913 by the transfer of the Religions Bureau from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Education (l.c.).

The separation of the former *shajikyoku* into a bureau responsible for religions and another responsible for shrines also marked the official outward separation of Shintô from the religious realm. In 1918 Tsukamoto Seiji, then leader of the Shrine Bureau, finally wrote expressly that shrines were clearly not religious in character, but that this point had time and again led to misunderstandings by foreigners as well as the Japanese themselves (Holtom 1922: 44). According to Tsukamoto, the shrines were already viewed as being non-religious even before the separation of the *shajikyoku* into the two separate bureaus in 1900. Theoretically, he writes, matters relating to the shrines could have been handled within the Religions Bureau, but in order to prevent the misunderstanding that the shrines were of a religious nature, the two bureaus were separated.

Tsukamoto also attempted to explain the separate laws relating to Shintô shrines and Buddhist temples (Holtom 1922: 45). According to him, the nature of

both institutions and their relationship to the state are so different that it is impossible to apply the same rules and ordinances to both. Finally, only the matters relating to the shrines fall under the responsibility of the state; the same is true for the priests at these shrines, who, as opposed to leaders of religious organizations, are civil servants.

According to Holtom (1922: 46), Tsukamoto wanted to show that the reason for the separation of religions and politics lay in the non-religious character of the shrine ceremonies. These were subsequently declared *kokurei*, or »national rites,« by the state, and this provided the legal basis for designating the shrines as non-religious, national institutions toward which all Japanese citizens were obliged to show reverence (Holtom 1922: 27). This marked the final step in the appropriation of Shintô by the state.³⁴⁰

Since the Meiji Restoration, among other things, numerous new shrines had been founded in honor of war heroes and loyal followers of the imperial household. The most important among these shrines was Yasukuni-jinja in Tôkyô, which will be discussed later in more detail. Originally dedicated to those on the side of the imperial loyalists who died during the Restoration, the fallen soldiers of the Sino-Japanese (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese (1904-06) Wars were later also included. The emperor performed rituals at the shrine in honor of the dead who were worshipped there as *kami*. In this way, the novel idea of dying in battle for the sake of the homeland as an honorable deed spread among the people.

On October 13, 1908, the government issued the so-called »Boshin Decree« (*boshin-shôsho*) in the name of Emperor Meiji that was directed against the liberal schools of thought in Japan at the time. The shrines were also more closely integrated into society. The decree states that they were to play a part in the further unification of the country.³⁴¹ As a first step in this direction, already two years prior to the decree, the smaller shrines were merged with larger ones by a separate decree. The goal of this measure was to only allow one shrine per locality, and thus to bring the shrine and town organizations into line. Such measures were already a central point in the plans drawn up in Shintô circles during the Edo period. With the Boshin decree, the government supported attempts to create connections between shrines and other state-oriented organizations, such as national youth groups, women's groups and army reserve units. It was hoped that the shrines would be useful in preventing social conflicts such as strikes and conflicts between landlords and tenants (l.c.).

³⁴⁰ According to Hardacre (1989: 5f.), only after this point in time did Shintô theologians begin to speak of »State Shintô.«

³⁴¹ Cf. Hardacre 1989: 38; KEJ 1: 165; Wagner 1991. For a recent study cf. Maxey 2014.

One of the most remarkable directives regarding the shrines dealt with public schools. Komatsubara Eitarô, then Minister of Education, announced in 1911 that all teachers were required to take their students on a visit to a public shrine so that they could pay their respects before the altar. According to the decree, a sense of reverence is directly interrelated with the feeling of respect for one's ancestors and is thus extremely important for creating the foundation of a new national morality (Holtom 1922: 42). This is reminiscent of the efforts by Inoue Tetsujirô to create a Japanese system of ethics (*Nihon-dôtoku*). However, these mandatory visits were not uncontroversial. One of the most well-known examples in this context is the refusal of a group of Catholic students from Sophia University to bow before Yasukuni Shrine (1932). They justified their refusal by referring to the guarantee of freedom of religion in Article 28 of the Constitution. The Ministry of Education dismissed this argument on the grounds that shrines are clearly non-religious institutions whose primary purpose is to foster patriotism and loyalty. And because shrine rituals are non-religious, it is also permissible to make participation obligatory for all Japanese subjects.

As Holtom (1922: 26ff.) writes in detail, in 1899 and 1900 the government thus undertook the last steps in order to give Shintô the status of a non-religion. The priests of Ise-jingû were pioneers in this regard in their claim that Shintô is merely a religion for the preservation of ancestor worship and the conservation of historical continuity in Japanese society. In anticipatory obedience, the leadership of this national treasure went as far as to submit a (successful) petition to renounce their status as a religious organization and instead to adopt the legal status of a secular legal entity (*zaidan-hôjin*) with the title *Jingû-hôsaikai* (»Society for the Worship of the Illustrious Shrine [of Ise]«).

According to Holtom, the religious changes of these years must be viewed in light of the general political situation of the time. As for the religious situation, the Constitution of 1889 guaranteed every Japanese citizen religious freedom, provided that their exercising of this freedom did not interfere with their duties as subjects.

This made it possible for the government to maintain control over the Shintô shrines, which were so important for the image of the state, while at the same time the administrative measures could be declared independent of religious policy. The shrines functioned officially as state institutions for maintaining the continuity of Japanese history and the stimulation of loyalty and patriotism among the people. Thus, it was possible for the government to deny any accusations from within the country or abroad of supporting a state religion, while still maintaining full jurisdiction over the shrines (Holtom 1922: 32). According to Holtom,

this did not do any damage to Shintô; on the contrary, the close relationship between the Japanese government and the religion of the shrines actually intensified after 1900. In 1902 the government announced detailed regulations regarding the ranks, appointments, duties and rights of the priests at all shrines on the governmental and national levels.

Further laws followed that regulated all matters of the shrines up to the smallest details (Holtom 1922: 32-34). These laws are a sign of the extent to which the nationalization of the shrines had progressed at the time (Holtom 1922: 40). And the determination to use the (actually religious) ideas, rites and customs of the shrines to promote national unity was underlined in official statements time and again. Thus, a document from 1908 states, among other things, that the feeling of »reverence [toward God]« (*keishin*) is a special characteristic of Japan. It states that the Japanese *kokutai*, as well as the splendor of the nation's history, are enhanced by further developing this spirit of reverence and using the shrines for promoting the unity of the state (Holtom 1922: 41). This reveals a direct link to the concept of the *kokutai*, and thus also to the content of the Imperial Rescript on Education!

The extent of the expansion of Shintô as a national religion during the Meiji and Taishô periods can also be seen in the annual government statistics on the shrines (Holtom 1922: 47). According to these statistics, between the years 1880 and 1920, an increase of 373 shrines of higher rank took place; the statistics on the priests show a similar development. While the priesthood was reduced at the district level and below, the number of priests at shrines on the prefectural level and above rose by 362. According to Holtom, these numbers support the view that the national religion was mainly focused on the development of shrines of higher rank that could help unify popular opinion.

3. 3. 1. *The spread of Shintô abroad*

Inoue Nobutaka and Sakamoto Koremaru (1994: 22f.) point to the fact that since the middle of the Meiji period, a constant spread of Shrine Shintô took place abroad as well. A large number of shrines were established on the Korean peninsula, in Taiwan, Sakhalin and several regions of China. Taiwan-jinja was established 1900 in Taiwan as a »First-Class Imperial Shrine« (*kanpei-taisha*). Later, several other shrines were also established in Taiwan. The recently deceased Prince Yoshihisa Shinnô Kitashirakawa no Miya (1847-1895) was often chosen as the deity (*saijin*) worshipped at shrines in Taiwan, since he had commanded the expedi-

tionary troops in Taiwan as head of the Imperial Guard and died there after falling ill. This is a remarkable case of the deification of a newly deceased person.

As for the Korean peninsula, Frits Vos writes of numerous shrines that were established there particularly during the Japanese colonial period (1905-1945), as Japanese customs were enforced (*kôminka*) by the Japanese authorities (cf. Vos 1977: 218-224). Although a shrine dedicated to the god Ômononushi was built at the mountain Yongdu-san as early as 1678, as well as several shrines during the Meiji period by Japanese living in Korea (cf. Vos 1977: 220f.), it was only in 1915 that shrines began to be established in large numbers there.³⁴² In 1919, Chôsen-jinja was established in the administrative area of Seoul as the main shrine in Korea, and it was completed in 1925. Under the name Chôsen-jingû, it was elevated to the status of *kanpei-taisha*.³⁴³ Subsequently, Shintô shrines were founded in large numbers throughout Korea.³⁴⁴ Japan's defeat in August of 1945 also marked the end of the history of Shintô in Korea. In this context, Vos remarks:

»Immediately after the announcement of Japan's defeat, many Shintô shrines were destroyed by the Koreans as symbols of colonialist suppression. The first shrine that was burned down was Heijû-jinja in P'yongyang during the night of August 15, 1945. The Japanese held *shôshin-shiki* (ceremonies for »sending up the gods«) directly after the end of the war – that is to say, the gods were asked to return to Japan. Thus, the *kami* returned home before the people they protected.« (l.c.)

In Sakhalin (Karafuto) a *kanpei-taisha* by the name of Karafuto-jinja was also built in 1910 in the city of Tôyôhara, today called Yugno-Sahalinsk, and during the Taishô period, several prefectural shrines (*kensha*) were also built there. Ando-jinja was built in Manchuria in 1908, and after the »Manchurian Incident,« the number of shrines in Manchuria continued to grow up until the end of the war.

In Okinawa, which has formally belonged to Japan since 1879, but which was culturally and politically unique in several ways, a state policy of »Shintôization« was also consistently pursued. For example, the most important place of worship in the Ryûkyû empire, Naminoue Shrine in Naha, was designated the central Shintô holy place in Okinawa Prefecture in 1924. Along with four kings from the

³⁴² These shrine establishments were decreed in a separate directive by the Japanese government (*Chôsen jinja sôritsu kisoku* (»Regulations Regarding the Establishment of Shintô Shrines in Korea«), September 1915; cf. Vos 1977: 222).

³⁴³ Cf. Inoue, Sakamoto 1994: 22; Vos 1977: 223.

³⁴⁴ Inoue, Sakamoto (l.c.) state that »more than 50« shrines were established; Vos (1977: 223), however, cites much higher numbers: »In June 1945 there were two imperial shrines in Korea, the previously mentioned Chôsen-jingû and Fuyo-jingû, which was still under construction [...] , eight state shrines (*kokuheisha*) ... , 69 'general' shrines (*ippan-jinja*) and 1062 smaller shrines.«

island's history, Minamoto no Tametomo, who was closely connected with the annexation of Okinawa to the Japanese empire, was also worshipped there (cf. Antoni 1983-86).

After the Meiji period, shrines were also founded in the farthest reaches of the Japanese sphere of influence. For example, upon the beginning of the Japanese mandate after World War I, Shintô shrines began to be built in the South Sea on the islands of Saipan, Palau, Yap and Chuuk (Truk). Thus, the building of Shintô shrines in Asia and Oceania can be seen as being directly related to the expansion of the Japanese colonial sphere of influence at the time.

The shrines established before the Pacific War in Hawaii and in North and South America were generally places of worship established by Japanese immigrants in these regions. In the case of Hawaii, immigration began after the signing of the immigration agreement between the Japanese government and the royal family of Hawaii, and around the year 1900, shrines were built on each of the Hawaiian islands (Maui, Hawaii and others). In this context, it is significant that the shrines spread along with the Buddhist Jôdoshû and Jôdoshinshû sects, among others, since the immigrants hoped to maintain their customs abroad. Elements of Sectarian Shintô and the Shintô-influenced new religions, which unfortunately cannot be further discussed in this context, had already sent missionaries abroad before the war. Among the »13 Shintô sects« (*jûsanpa*), the Tenrikyô, Konkôkyô, Shinrikyô, Kurozumikyô and other sects had established bases abroad. And Tenrikyô, Konkôkyô, Seichô no Ie and others undertook missionary initiatives not only in Asia, but in North America and Hawaii as well.

The shrines that were founded abroad before the war have all but disappeared; not one remains in North America and Asia, and only a few shrines remain in Hawaii. It goes without saying that this is due to the fact that the shrines in Asia were seen as symbols of Japanese imperialism, and in North America of State Shintô. After Japan's defeat on August 15, 1945, the short history of Shintô in these areas abruptly came to an end.

3. 3. 2. *The Shintô burial of Meiji-tennô*

Ceremonies clearly played a crucial role in State Shintô thought as manifestations of the familistic national unity. The importance of Shintô rituals to the state can be seen in the final ceremony of the Meiji period: the burial of Emperor Meiji.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ As source book cf. *Meiji-tennô gotaisôgi shashinchô* (no ed., Tôkyô 1912); cf. Antoni 1991a: 212-220.

The burial of Meiji-tennô, who died during the night of July 29 to 30, 1912, was the first time an emperor was buried in a Shintô ceremony since the introduction of the new political system in 1868. In accordance with legal regulations instated in 1909 (*Kôshitsu fukumorei*), the funeral ceremonies and the burial itself took place between September 13 and 15, 1912, in Tôkyô and Momoyama, outside of Kyôto.

The funeral for the deceased emperor took place at the parade grounds that were located in Aoyama, Tokyô, west of the Imperial Palace. In the following years, these parade grounds were incorporated into the shrine dedicated to Emperor Meiji. The shrine itself was built on imperial land west of the Akasaka district – what is now Meiji-jingû and Yoyogi Park. The nearby Aoyama parade grounds were designated the »outer garden of (Meiji) Shrine« (Jingû-gaien). Only in 1926, after the death of Meiji-tennô's successor Taishô-tennô, was the construction completed. No shrine was built for Taishô-tennô after his death.

Following the emperor's wishes, the burial itself took place not in Tôkyô, but on a hill at Momoyama near Kyôto. After the conclusion of the funeral ceremonies on the night of September 13 to 14, 1912, at the funeral hall (*sôjôden*) in Tôkyô, the coffin was brought to a specially built train station (Aoyama Station) and transported to its final resting place on a special train. Inhabitants of the town of Yase, the so-called *Yase-dôji*, carried the palanquin (*sôkaren*) with the emperor's coffin in a procession from the station in Momoyama to the grave site. The town has been said to harbor a special loyalty toward the emperor since ancient times. Thus, its inhabitants have enjoyed the favor of the imperial household and served as bearers of the imperial coffin.³⁴⁶

In general, the burial of Meiji-tennô served as a model for all subsequent burials of this kind up to the present day. In a nighttime procession, the coffin, hidden in a black oxcart, was brought to the burial site. The design of the *sôjôden* and the *akusha* tent halls for the funeral guests and diplomatic corps, like the placement of the two *torii*, also served as an example for the later burials of Emperors Taishô and Shôwa. At this funeral the colors black (the Western funeral color) and white (the traditional East-Asian funeral color) were used together for the first time. Also, in addition to the imperial *gagaku* music, Franz Eckert's *Kanashi no kiwami* was played by the military bands.

³⁴⁶ This tradition can be traced to a story in which the inhabitants of the town supposedly saved the emperor of the Southern Court, Godaigo-tennô (1288-1339), from his opponent Ashikaga Takauji at the time of the imperial schism in the 14th century. Since the canonical decision in the *Dainihonshi*, the historical work of the Mito school, the Southern Court, which was of great importance for the institution of the emperor in the Meiji period, has been seen as the only legitimate line.

A short remark in the contemporary correspondent's report in the *Tägliche Rundschau* (Berlin) on September 16, 1912, gives an idea of the authenticity of this ceremony. In his report on the funeral of Meiji-tennô, the author writes:

»Aside from its wonderfully simple refinement, the funeral in Aoyama did not differ at all from the traditional burial ceremony according to the Shintô ritual.«

This knowledgeable witness, whose name was unfortunately not identified, reached an unusually significant conclusion: such burial ceremonies were not limited to imperial funerals, but apparently existed within a larger context of Shintô burials of the Meiji period. Since it is clear that the propagation of Shintô was a crucial part of the state ideology, and that, to a large extent, anachronistic, supposedly ancient elements were reconstructed for this purpose, this fact can be seen as a key to understanding the development of the modern imperial funeral ceremony.

Fortunately, two contemporary studies on this subject were published by E. Ohrt in 1910 and 1911 in the journal of the German East-Asian Society (OAG) in Tôkyô. One of these describes the »Burial Customs in Japan« in general (Ohrt 1910 a), and the other covers »The State Funeral of Prince Itô« in detail (Ohrt 1910 b). Based on these works, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) The burial of Emperor Meiji was not an unusual ceremony that was limited to imperial burials, but rather follows a custom of state funerals that began in the Meiji period. 2) The form of these funerals represents only one especially elaborate version of Meiji-period Shintô burials. 3) The general progression of a Shintô burial can be described as follows:

»The religious part of a Shintô burial is split into four separate acts: *Mitama utsushi*, the transfer of the soul of the deceased to the *tamashiro*; *shukkwan*, the ceremonial removal of the coffin from the place of death; *sôjô no shiki*, the main ceremony for the entire burial procession; and *maisô*, the burial itself. The first two ceremonies are performed at the place of death, while the *sôjô no shiki* is usually held in a hall that is reserved for such ceremonies, or which has been specially built for the occasion, and the *maisô* takes place at the gravesite. [...]

Foreigners who take part in a Shintô burial usually only attend the *sôjô no shiki*, unless several of these ceremonies are combined into one.« (Ohrt 1910 a: 92)

In fact, imperial funeral ceremonies followed exactly this outline of Meiji-period Shintô burials. Ohrt's mention of the role of foreigners in the ceremony is particularly interesting. They were only allowed to take part in the *sôjô no shiki*.

Thus, the diplomatic corps was only present for this part of the ceremony during the burial of Meiji-tennô (as well as the later burials of Emperors Taishô and Shôwa).

The burial ceremonies for the outstanding statesman Itô Hirobumi, who was assassinated on October 26, 1909, and was brought to his final resting place already on November 4 in a large state funeral, provide an example of the full *sôjôden* ceremony. The ceremonies took place in Hibiya Park in Tôkyô:

»At the southwest end of this square, a small hall in the style of a Shintô temple, which was open in front and on the sides, had been built in the style of a Shintô temple, which was used to store the body. At first, this hall was blocked off by a curtain. [...]

Also, farther away from the temple hall, there were two long halls to the right and left and open on the sides, one larger than the other, to accommodate the burial procession.« (Ohrt 1910 b: 143)

This design is exactly the same as the one used for the burial of Emperor Meiji. As for the role played by foreigners in this ceremony, Ohrt writes:

»After the conclusion of the reading [of the eulogy by the head Shintô priests], *tamagushi* were offered by all those in attendance in the following order:

the representative of the emperor of Japan;

the representative of the empress of Japan;

the representatives of foreign heads of state – that is, the foreign ambassadors in attendance, the German *chargé d'affaires*, and the aforementioned Chinese prince [...];

the envoy of the emperor of Korea;

the representative of the crown prince of Japan.

The envoys and ambassadors left the ceremonial grounds one by one after offering their *tamagushi* and were led by a master of ceremonies to their coaches.« (Ohrt 1910 b: 149f.)

Only after the departure of the foreign representatives did the other members of the burial procession, especially the family members of the deceased prince, step forward and offer *tamagushi*, branches of the *sakaki* tree decorated with white strips of paper.

On the origins of these burial customs, Ohrt writes:

»State funerals in Japan are an institution of the modern era. They were not known under the shogunate, and were adopted in the Meiji era along with so many other elements of Western culture. The first state burial took place in 1883 and was for Prince Iwakura. [...] State funerals in Japan always follow the Shintô ceremony. This was also the case with Prince Itô, although he him-

self was a Buddhist and his parents were buried according to the traditions of that religion.« (Ohrt 1910 b: 123)

It is evident that state funerals, befitting the spirit of the times, were based on a concept of Shintô that is actually not regarded as a religion, but rather the sum of all Japanese customs, and therefore independent of the religious beliefs of the individual.

Secondly, Ohrt's remarks reveal that Itô Hirobumi's parents were buried according to the Buddhist ceremony. This shows that funeral customs underwent a fundamental change during the Meiji period, and that the tradition of the state burial according to the Shintô ceremony was a modern custom of the Meiji period, despite Edo period precedents of Shintô burials (see chapter II: 2. 1. 2. 1).

In the case of the Shintô burial ceremony, its intentions and methods pointed in a direction that absolutely conformed with the prevailing spirit of the Meiji era. Thus, in accordance with the general tendency toward »revitalizing« Shintô, during this period an attempt was made to popularize the Shintô funeral ritual among the people. As is well known, however, the areas of death and burials have been the domain of Buddhism since ancient times in Japan. Particularly the religious aversion to the »impurity« of death and all dead things hindered the development of a unique Shintô burial ritual until that time.

For instance, funeral ceremonies can never take place at a Shintô shrine. Cemeteries cannot lie within the shrine precincts, and it is often strictly forbidden even for Shintô priests to take part in funerals (Ohrt 1910 a: 87). This explains the overt tendency toward the »temporary« in Meiji-period Shintô burials: the *sôjôden*, where the burial ceremony takes place, must be temporary and is removed afterward so that the community is not contaminated by death – even the highest one of all, that of the emperor. For this reason, even in the Meiji period, Shintô funerals were the exception; only the upper classes, especially in the capital, adopted the new custom – most likely for its prestige. The common people remained true to the older custom, which entailed not only a burial according to the Buddhist ceremony, but in most cases also cremation. Although in the late Meiji period this custom was increasingly justified as being more hygienic, as in the case of the 1897 law for the prevention of epidemics (cf. Pallester 1912: 11), its roots in ancient Buddhist tradition were in fact the true spiritual and religious basis for this practice.

At first the authorities attempted to combat the custom of cremation by administrative means, and in July 1873 (Government Decree no. 253), the custom was prohibited; however, already in May 1875 (Government Decree no. 89), the

prohibition was lifted.³⁴⁷ Over the further course of the Meiji period, community crematoriums began to outnumber the old cremation grounds, especially in urban areas. Additionally, the Buddhist custom of »separating the bones,« in which the bones and other remains are sent to the Buddhist temple Zenkôji on Kôyazan directly after the cremation, became increasingly popular even during the »anti-Buddhist« Meiji period (cf. Inoguchi 1977: 109-120, among others).

Therefore, it cannot be said that the Shintô funeral customs were widely adopted during this time; rather, these forms were limited to the court, the nobility and the urban bourgeoisie. But even Ohrt is mistaken in his view, expressed in an otherwise valuable study, that the centuries-long tradition of imperial burials served as a model for this custom, and that this custom merely spread to the upper classes during the Meiji period. In fact, even the imperial household did not conduct funerals according to the Shintô ritual in previous eras, despite the fact that this area represented a core point in the theological debate on Shintô during the Edo period.

³⁴⁷ For the details of these decrees as well as other laws and regulations regarding cremation during the Meiji period, cf. Pallester 1912: 8-15.

4. RELIGION, IDEOLOGY AND TRADITIONALISM DURING THE MEIJI PERIOD

The end of the 19th century saw ethnic conflicts throughout the world, centered around the emancipation of those regions that had until then been politically and culturally dependent on imperial powers. The revival of these regions' own cultural traditions, a process called »nativism« in cultural anthropology,³⁴⁸ played a central role throughout this process. In this phenomenon, the indigenous, usually strongly religiously influenced national traditions are contrasted with modern civilization spanning national borders. Thus, the area of tradition is defined as ethnic and authentic, while modernity is seen as potentially foreign – that is to say, supranational – and in opposition to the traditional, indigenous culture.

Japan played a prominent role within this global process of religious nativism. Many commentators view Japan as a country in which the conflict between tradition and modernity, which is the bane of the rest of the world, is not destructive, but rather, quite atypically and yet with enormous success, that social progress actually results from this productive conflict.

Thus, Thomas Immoos, a knowledgeable scholar of Japanese studies, gave a book of his the programmatic title *Japan: Archaische Moderne* (»Japan: Archaic Modernity«; 1990), and in another work (Immoos 1989) he speaks of a »regression of archaic structures« even in present-day Japan. The author ends this work with the following credo:

»Once again, my thesis proves to be correct: Japan is the unchangeable nation that found its identity in early history and maintained it steadfastly throughout all the changes in its violent history. All changes take place only on the surface. Shintô is not a denomination, nor a religion, but rather the expression of the Japanese identity.« (l.c.)

This represents the most radical statement of the argument for the Japanese culture's reliance on tradition: it claims that under a thin layer of (Western) modernity lies the immutable and thus ancient and timeless »eternal« Japan. This antagonistic view of »tradition« versus »modernity« is widespread and has also

³⁴⁸ The term »nativism« was introduced to ethnology by Ralph Linton and defined as »any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture,« (Linton 1943: 230). In recent English-language literature, the term »nativism« in regard to Japan is used primarily to refer to nationally oriented Edo period schools of philosophy (Kokugaku, Mitogaku; cf. Harootunian 1988, among others).

been used in modern Japan since the Meiji Restoration itself as a standard of self-interpretation, as is evident in the slogans *wakon-yôsai*, or *tôyô no dôtoku seiyô no gakugei*. The expression *wakon-yôsai* (»Japanese spirit, Western skill (technology)«) was increasingly used in Japan during the Meiji period to indicate a constructive antagonism between (Japanese) tradition and (Western) technological and civilizational modernity. The similar expression *tôyô no dôtoku saiyô no gakugei* (»Eastern ethics, Western science«) was coined by the Confucian scholar Sakuma Shôzan (1811-1864), on which Tsunoda et al. remark:

»The formula proved workable enough to serve a whole generation of leaders during the Meiji Restoration, and to provide the basis for a modernization program of unparalleled magnitude in the late nineteenth century.« (Tsunoda et al. 1964, II: 100)

Modernity as something (usefully) foreign stands in contrast to the indigenously defined tradition; a country such as Japan that is envied for its outstanding success especially in the area of »modernity« thus excels as a model of allegedly authentic culture that can ultimately be seen as an example of a new, »ancient« modernity.

However, Immoos also points to an indisputable historical fact that portrays the idea of the »immutability« of Japanese culture in a different light. The author writes:

»The so-called State Shintô was artificially created around 100 years ago. Only in the new Japan of the Meiji period did the emperor become the head of state, commander in chief and high priest in one person.« (l.c.)

How can these two statements, which are representative examples, be reconciled: on the one hand, the antagonism between tradition and modernity, and on the other hand, the acknowledgement of the lack of historical depth in just this crucial element of tradition, (State) Shintô? Without stating the problem directly (or perhaps even recognizing it), Immoos touches on the central conflict in the historical analysis of modern Japan since the Meiji Restoration: apparently, the antagonism between the two categories of tradition and modernity does not adequately describe the true complexity of a cultural reality that, as the product of a historical process, includes basic traits that do not conform to this simple model.

Thus, the essential question in this context is, how should we view cultural anachronisms, archaisms and historical elements that are still present to a large degree in present-day Japanese culture? Also, how are those »traditions« to be viewed that take such liberties with the body of traditional culture, and in so do-

ing, paint a picture of Japanese culture that ultimately only consists of one thing: the *ideology* of the »eternal« Japan as a nation with a timeless, uniform culture?

The previously discussed study by Eric J. Hobsbawm (1983) on invented traditions provides an excellent methodological basis for analyzing this problem. The term »invention« is crucial in this context. Thus, one speaks of intentionally »invented« or manipulated traditions whose traditional nature is merely assumed. Hobsbawm focuses primarily on the areas of ritual and symbolism:

»Inventing traditions, it is assumed here, is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition. The actual process of creating such ritual and symbolic complexes has not been adequately studied by historians.« (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983: 4)

In a study on this topic, the author covers the genesis and function of such rituals and symbols in several countries, including Italy, France, Germany and the United States. This is clearly also the pattern for developments in Japan during the second half of the 19th century.³⁴⁹

Especially remarkable examples of this phenomenon can be found in the areas of ceremony and rituals. Already in 1986 a dissertation by the historian Fujitani Takashi was published at the University of California entitled *Japan's Modern National Ceremonies: A historical ethnography, 1868-1912*.³⁵⁰ It covers some of the great national ceremonies that were introduced during the Meiji period. The formation of a canon of state ceremonies was necessary for the process of Japanese nation building, particularly during the second half of the Meiji period. According to Fujitani, the new empire was confronted with two challenges: the need to establish national unity – that is to say, a common Japanese national consciousness – and the need to demonstrate the power of the new nation-state of Japan to the rest of the world. These domestic and foreign-policy necessities resulted in the creation of a comprehensive national apparatus of symbols as the visible expression of the legitimacy to rule. This included the creation of a capital, Tōkyō, with all the attributes not only of a center of political power, but also as the spiritual center of the nation. Fujitani (1986: 18) cites the work of Hobsbawm directly and concludes with unmistakable clarity:

»During the period from the second half of the nineteenth century through the early-twentieth century, Japan's governing elites also invented, revived,

³⁴⁹ Invented traditions, however, can be found also in earlier periods of Japanese religious and intellectual history (cf. Antoni 1997b).

³⁵⁰ Fujitani 1986, cf. Fujitani 1996.

manipulated and encouraged national rituals with unprecedented vigor. Through rituals the rulers helped to bring a country divided horizontally into regions and vertically into estates under one ruler and one legitimating sacred order.«

Upon closer examination, even the area of ceremonies and rituals shows no evidence of an »eternal« Japan; rather, it becomes apparent – in the case of Shintô funeral ceremonies, for instance – just how problematic their supposedly authentic traditional nature is.

Based on the previous discussion, in my view, two basic conclusions can be drawn here. Firstly, cultural elements in Japan during the Meiji period that appear to be traditional and even ancient cannot be taken a priori as remnants of earlier cultural strata, and must not be left unchecked as arguments for traditional authenticity. Rather, in each individual case it must be verified whether these cultural elements are not actually creations, or at least modifications and manipulations, that belong to the modern age – more specifically, to the development toward the Japanese nation-state at the end of the 19th century. An observer who is too easily blinded by the supposedly authentic traditional nature of such elements runs the risk of overlooking the ideological function of the Meiji-era manipulation of such cultural elements. The unquestioning reception of national symbolism results in a kind of exoticism that ultimately threatens to lead to the cultural (self-) isolation of Japan.

Secondly, this process of manipulating tradition was not by any means limited to Japan. The situation in the Meiji period in Japan is not the only case of a country in which tradition and modernity entered into a unique relationship. On the contrary, the case of Japan is an especially instructive example of a process that was underway throughout the world at this point in history and which can be understood within the context of the formation of nation-states at the end of the 19th century. The manipulation and even the creation of traditions was an essential factor in this development. In this context, Japan does not appear to be a »belated« nation (like Germany)³⁵¹, as is often supposed in discourse on modernity. On the contrary, the formation of the Japanese nation-state, which could be said to be an example of what is called a »nativist regression« in cultural anthropology, occurred simultaneously to similar developments in Europe and reached its first peak, as was also the case in Europe, at the end of the 19th century. This shows that Japan cannot be said to be unusual in its development in comparison with other countries, but rather, that it provides a nearly inexhaustible reservoir

³⁵¹ For the concept of Japan and Germany as »belated« nations cf. Martin (ed.) 1987.

of world-historical material relevant to the study nation-building beginning at the end of the 19th century.

To state this in the extreme, the introduction of the National Foundation Day (February 11) in the Meiji period in Japan was not a case of specifically Japanese historical continuity, but rather the Japanese manifestation of a global phenomenon (nation-building) that was characteristic of the time and sought to demonstrate its regional authenticity using the religious inventory of the indigenous culture (Jinmu-tennô). As outlined in the previous discussion, the visible national symbols – monuments, ceremonies etc. – played a crucial role as mostly invented traditions in this context. However, upon closer examination, this does not describe the problem in its entirety. Symbols function as emblems of what are actually much more complex circumstances. Dietmar Rothermund takes the crucial analytical step in this context by synthesizing the areas of »artificial« and »true« traditions, regional special cases and universal structures, symbols and ideas.

4. 1. *The concept of »traditionalism«*

In Rothermund's writings, the concept of »traditionalism« (see chapter I: 2. 2) is extremely useful for analyzing both real and »invented« traditions. Already in a work from 1970, Rothermund points to the universal character of the traditionalist construction as used in modern national ideologies:

»Traditionalism is a phenomenon that can be observed in many nations in a transitional phase of cultural and political development. Tradition is a many splendoured thing, it encompasses a variety of social structures and ideas which are frequently contradictory. Traditionalism, however, is a conscious attempt at streamlining tradition so as to fit a particular need for a useful past. This need arises when a people wants to acquire a national identity and looks for some common denominator. This common denominator is usually found in a reconstructed tradition of social, cultural and religious solidarity.« (Rothermund 1970: 35)

In a later work on this topic, Rothermund also points out that »modern traditionalism is universally important, and therefore it is not possible to conceive of 'universalism' and 'traditionalism' as irreconcilable opposites,« (Rothermund 1997: 188). Traditionalism plays a crucial role in the formulation of national identity. Traditionalists select, systematize and create ideological systems in which heterogeneous cultural traditions are reshaped into a homogenous national ideology. The purpose of this search for identity is to project national solidarity, with

the aim of leveling existing social, religious and other differences. It becomes clear, as Rothermund writes, »that the search for identity is the conscious goal of the 'traditionalists' for the purpose of fostering solidarity,« (Rothermund 1989: 147).

Traditionalism is in many ways analogous to nativism as described by cultural anthropology, as is evident in its »attempts to reconstruct a 'pure' tradition« (Rothermund 1989: 145). However, it is per se the instrument of a political ideology whose goal is national consensus. The author mentions the ideas of the Indian national revolutionary Vinayak Damodar Savarkar as a concrete example of a truly »traditionalist« connection between the search for identity and fostering solidarity (cf. Rothermund 1997: 174-181, among others).

Savarkar's nationalism is centered around the concept of »Punyabhumi.« This word is a Sanskrit neologism that can be translated literally as »the country (*bhumi*) in which religious merit (*punya*) is earned,« (Rothermund 1989: 146). This expression implies »that this possibility only exists in this one specific country, India.« Rothermund continues:

»Thus, Savarkar was able to unite the characteristics of the modern territorial national state under a common denominator that was in accordance with Indian tradition. This case reveals with particular clarity the connection between the search for identity and the fostering of solidarity. The clear and simple definition of the »Hindu« identity provides the foundation for widespread solidarity. But this also implies an equally clear exclusion: the Indian Muslim, who obviously cannot view India as his »Punyabhumi,« is excluded from this solidarity.« (Rothermund 1989: 146)

If nothing else, this account of a »religiously founded traditionalism of solidarity« must catch the attention of any scholar of Japanese studies, since the structures of modern Japanese *kokutai* thought are easily recognizable in it: the Japanese *shinkoku* (»land of the gods«) and the Hindu Punyabhumi appear to have the same basic structure. Rothermund (1997: 185) also remarks, while referring to research in Japanese studies, that the teachings of Hirata Atsutane »can be seen as a prime example of traditionalism of solidarity.«

4. 2. »Familism« and the ideology of homogeneity

The intellectual core of modern Japanese nationalism is the postulation of Japan's ideological and religious homogeneity. Since the Meiji period, this idea has been expressed in the concept of »familism,« or the idea of Japan as a country

whose inhabitants are connected to one another in the sense of one great family. The emperor stood at the peak of this national family, functioning as its father. Remarkably, the most radical version of this ideology did not consider the intimate relationship between the emperor and his subjects to be metaphorical, but rather an actual, ethnically and genetically defined extended family whose members were linked to one another genealogically by their common descent from the divine ancestors. Thus, familism is inseparable from the custom of ancestor worship, which, regardless of its ancient appearance, in this form was also a product of the Meiji period.

The following elements are among the basic ideological pillars of religiously based *kokutai* familism: the mythical founding of the empire by Jinmu-tennô, a calendar system based on the ruling dates of the emperors, national ceremonies, the position of the great shrines as symbols of national religion, and the divine position of the emperor within Shintô, which is elevated to the level of a state religion. However, intellectual-historical analysis shows that this religious and ideological system in fact was not the expression of an »ancient« Japan with a linear history centered around the institution of the emperor, but rather in its highest form the product of a – to adopt Rothermund’s term – »religiously based traditionalism of solidarity.«

All the criteria of the traditionalism that Rothermund describes as universal were evident in the Meiji period in Japan, including the exclusivity of membership in the national extended family: only those who were born into the circle of common descent from the divine ancestors could be considered members of the family, a fact that naturally led to enormous problems and discrimination against ethnic minorities in Japan. The Ainu, Okinawans and Koreans living in Japan were all by definition excluded from the national family. This problem becomes especially clear in light of the mythological tradition relating to the origin of the inhabitants of the Ryûkyû islands, which holds that they do not belong to the circle of genealogically legitimate Japanese.³⁵²

And yet the Meiji-period conception of the family-state not only represents a grandiose example of a »traditionalist« construction, but also makes clear the difference between living, heterogeneous »tradition« and artificially homogenized »traditionalism.« Japanese nationalism stems from a rich source of heterogeneous intellectual-historical schools of thought. These include elements of the medieval concept of the *shinkoku* (land of the gods), along with Edo period Kokugaku in-

³⁵² On the origin of people in the Okinawan tradition, cf. the chapter »Genjin no mori« in Torigoe 1966: 43-57, among others. For a contemporary source on the ideological exploitation of this topic in the 1940s, cf. Oshita 1943: 206-222; cf. Antoni 1983-86.

terpretations of Japanese mythology. Further elements include the concept of the *kokutai* from the late Edo period Mito School with its syncretistic combination of Shintô dogma and Neo-Confucian ethics. These indigenous intellectual-historical schools of thought, supplemented by various heterogeneous, traditional elements (generally in radically modified forms), were combined with the Western concept of the nation-state and ultimately led to the emergence of modern Tennôism, which, as Itô Hirobumi states, exploits the indigenous tradition from a rationally and intentionally argued point of view in order to provide the newly created centralized government with historical and religious legitimation.

As has already been demonstrated in the discussion of invented traditions according to Hobsbawm, national symbols and rituals took on a great significance in this context. But their true relevance becomes clear only upon examining the underlying spiritual and ideological intentions. In the case of Japanese familism, the goal was the creation of a Japanese national consciousness which sought to unite the members of this supposed national family both internally and in relation to the outside world. The indoctrination by schools and the military proved to be so successful that their ideological tenets became part of the common culture of the new nation state of Japan, and continue to influence nationalist discourse on an unconscious level to this day.

Particularly the commentaries on the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 (cf. Ôkubo 1969: 425), which reached their nationalist climax in 1937 with the *Kokutai no hongî* (see below), propagated the image of a unified Japanese culture with a linear history, with the person and institution of the emperor at its center according to Shintô doctrine, inseparable from the homogeneous people, who were linked by a quasi-genetically inherited system of national ethics (*kokumin-dôtoku*) such as in the work of Inoue Tetsujirô, as we have seen above. It seems that hardly any other country or culture besides modern Japan was capable of ideologically perfecting and actually implementing this »religiously founded traditionalism of solidarity« to such a degree within the state.

In this context, the historical and archaeological facts, which contradicted the ideology of homogeneity, were largely ignored. The fact that, over the course of its history, Japan was a country that was particularly characterized by diversity and a fractured cultural, social and territorial landscape was so successfully suppressed in the Meiji period that the new view of an ethnically, culturally, socially and linguistically uniform country became the absolute dogma of Kokutai Shintô.

Although intellectual efforts to portray Japan as a unified country had been made since ancient times, especially in the circles of Confucian-influenced Shintô theology, the reason these constructs, which were inseparable from the idea of the

centralized government of the Ritsuryō period that was borrowed from Chinese Confucianism, were so attractive was because they never corresponded to the social, cultural and political reality of Japan. And after centuries of turmoil in the government of medieval Japan, it was particularly the government of the Tokugawa period that gave the appearance of a strictly managed and thus hierarchically unified entity whose actual social and territorial fragmentation necessitated unity in the national state. The utopia of homogeneity must have looked so promising to the new, Meiji-period centralized government especially because the country had previously always split into individual groups.

Thus, the fact that the social, religious and political reality, especially in the Japanese Middle Ages, never corresponded to this ideal explains the existence of the idea of Japan as a country with a unified, common culture among national government theorists and religious nativists. Nativism influenced Japanese thought long before the encounter with Europe in the *bakumatsu* period across various intellectual-historical developments, and this is why it was able to so easily combine with Western, and especially German, romantic nationalism. Both these ideologies were based on similar approaches and goals and sought to transform social, regional and linguistically fragmented cultural spheres into unified nations (it is worth noting that there are striking parallels between the nativist ideas of the Kokugaku and Johann Gottfried Herder's romantic ideas on folklore and *Kulturnation* («culture nation»)).

In summary, the following elements contributed to the genesis of modern Japanese traditionalism: 1.) Indigenous nativism as an expression of an independent national religious utopia, 2.) Living tradition as an expression of cultural, social and territorial heterogeneity, 3.) European nationalism as an ideological impulse toward the selective use of traditions within the modern nation-state.

Thus, traditionalism was able to harmonize indigenous Japanese developments with the global process of nation building at the end of the 19th century.

Shintō plays a key role in this context, since the perception of this originally complex religious system, which was later simplified and declared the authentic Japanese religion, increasingly came to be identified with Japanese culture itself. In the world of Meiji and Shōwa-period State Shintō, Shintō was divested of its religious character and was declared the purest form of Japanese culture. Nonetheless, or perhaps for this reason, in order to further analyze modern Shintō's role within the larger intellectual and ideological context, it is first necessary to investigate the religious dimension of this supposedly indigenous religion of Japan.

CHAPTER IV

THE TAISHÔ AND EARLY SHÔWA PERIODS

1. THE HISTORICAL BASIS: THE PATH TOWARD »ULTRANATIONALISM«

Meiji-tennō, who died on July 30, 1912, left his successor Yoshihito (Taishō-tennō, 1879-1926, reigned from 1912 to 1926) an empire that was a modern superpower in terms of its political and military importance (cf. Bersihand 1963, chapter 14). The economic and political rise of the country continued in the following years, and World War I in particular was of great importance for Japan. As an ally of England against Germany, it occupied the area of Jiaozhou Bay (Qingdao), which had been occupied by Germany, and conquered the Mariana and Caroline Islands and others in the Pacific in October 1914. The Treaty of Versailles brought further advantages for Japan, which was a member of the League of Nations: the Japanese empire was given the German rights to the Chinese area. In 1922, however, Japan returned Jiaozhou to China.

After World War I, Japanese society changed dramatically (cf. Bersihand 1963, Mecklenburg 1990). By 1920 the population had grown to 55 million, the majority of which lived and worked in the cities. This led to the emergence of other groups besides the so-called »establishment,« which consisted of senior bureaucrats, the leaders of the *zaibatsu*, conservative party leaders, wealthy landowners and the military, who tried to promote their own interests.

The world economic crisis of 1929 pushed Japan into a deep depression. The economy had not yet recovered from the earthquake of 1923 and the general economic crisis (Inoki 1977: 138). Only a handful of large companies existed in Japan, and these companies developed at the expense of smaller, traditional enterprises. Therefore, wages and the standard of living for workers were low. The farmers' situation was equally dismal. Their impoverishment was caused, among other things, by the rapid drop in prices for raw silk, a source of income that the farmers depended on dearly at the time (Hall 1968: 306f.).

The result was that unions and farmers' organizations experienced an enormous influx in membership and demanded political influence, meaning the right to vote. This social conflict threatened to throw the country into chaos. The high level of growth that Japan had experienced during and shortly after the war ended quickly as the Western powers, forced it out of the Asian markets, especially in China, which Japan had dominated during the war. The result was that demands for military expansion became more prominent, especially within the military itself (Togo 1958: 18f.).

The political parties took a moderate course in domestic and foreign affairs during the 1920s. The Minseitō and Seiyūkai, the two leading parties, which gov-

erned alternately, actually represented the interests of the establishment and were particularly close to the areas of industry and trade (Hall 1968: 309). But eventually they had no choice but to yield to the demands of the people for more political influence, and in 1925 general suffrage for men was introduced. The global economic crisis and the growing power of the military eventually led, among other things, to the decline of the democratic parliamentary system. In general, parliamentarianism remained a superficial phenomenon in Japan. »The political influence of the parliaments was already extremely limited under the Constitution and could only have been expanded by a [...] new constitution,« (Martin 1977: 104). The parties, which were not mentioned at all in the Constitution, had split into factions according to the loyalties of the various groups. Almost all of them lacked a basic program. The two strongest parties, the Minseitô and Seiyûkai, which were essentially the same, clearly revealed the »facelessness« of the parties, and both were closely connected to large-scale industry. »In the view of the Japanese, the political parties remained a foreign concept imported from the West. Japan lacked the requirements for the emergence of and responsible leadership by political parties.« (Martin 1977: 105) In the most crucial areas, the parties always remained loyal to the government.

1. 2. The Shôwa Restoration and the ni-ni-roku Incident

The military's strength was finally tested when the government, facing protests from the navy, ratified the London Naval Treaty of April 22, 1930, which specified a ratio of fleet strength for Japan to the United States and Great Britain of 5 to 5 to 3 (Martin 1977: 104). Admiral staff chief Katô Kanji saw this as an infringement on the basic defense interests of Japan; he insisted on the military prerogative of the emperor and disputed the cabinet's authority over military matters (Martin 1977: 106). In the following years, the army attempted to achieve its goals using brutal force. On May 15, 1932, Prime Minister Inukai was assassinated by a group of young officers. The influence of the parties began to weaken as large portions of the population turned away from them in disappointment because they were unable to overcome the economic crisis (Inoki 1977: 142). The people paid far more attention to propaganda claiming a conspiracy on the part of England and America or the communist Soviet Union.

The unrest in China also stoked fears in Japan, and so the so-called »Manchurian Incident« of September 1931 was viewed positively by the majority of the population as the upholding of Japanese interests on the continent. In 1936, after

a series of assassinations of moderate civilian politicians, the army made a further attempt to carry out the so-called »Shōwa Restoration.«

In the 1930s the view had spread, especially in military circles, that a »national reorganization« such as the Shōwa Restoration was unavoidable. Many young soldiers and officers were among the supporters of the Restoration, since they had experienced poverty themselves during the economic crises, some among them having come from the lower classes. Kita Ikki (1883-1937), whose writings were initially banned, had developed plans for the national reorganization of Japan that called for the military to take over leadership from the government in order to free the emperor from his weak advisors and accord him his true place of power (Kita 1963: 22).

Kita Ikki further demanded that the Constitution be suspended for three years and the parliament dissolved. The entire Japanese nation was to form a great community under the rule of the emperor in which there would be only one national will and no other views would be supported (l.c.). In order to achieve this great harmony, peerage was to be abolished, the emperor was to relinquish part of his fortune, big business was to be restrained, and the working classes were to be supported. Japan was to take on a leading role in Asia and free the region from the West.³⁵³ Ultimately it was the military that contributed most to the spread of nationalist and militarist thinking in Japan. Compulsory military service and an almost mythical respect for members of the military among large parts of the population also played a role. Tachibana Kosaburo, an important leader of the agrarian movement of the 1930s, described the military as the leaders of this national reform movement. Otherwise, in his view, patriots could come from all classes of society, if only they were prepared to carry out the »will of Heaven« and sacrifice their lives for the greater goal of saving the country (Maruyama 1963 b: 52).

On February 26, 1936, troops of the first division, who were stationed near Tōkyō, attempted to organize a coup. They occupied the police headquarters, the Ministry of War, the headquarters of the General Staff and the new parliament building, paralyzing state functions for four days. Various high-ranking bureaucrats were assassinated, including the Minister of Finance Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936), the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and former Minister-President Admiral Saitō, and the General Inspector of military training. The Prime Minister and the Grand Treasurer Suzuki narrowly escaped the slaughter due to fortunate circumstances (Togo 1958: 27).

³⁵³ On Kita Ikki's plan for reorganization cf. Kita 1967: 219-281; Tsunoda et al. 1964, vol. 2: 268ff.; Hasegawa 1994; Wilson 1969, Hall 1968: 323; see also Rothermund 1997: 186.

The attempt failed due to the emperor's declaration against the mutineers as well as the intervention by level-headed members of the military. Of the insurgents, 103 were imprisoned and 17 of the ring-leaders were shot. Although their attempt to reach their goal directly using violence failed, »the spirit expressed by their actions made a deep impression on the general opinion and served to prepare the nation for the internal 'renewal' and further conquests in later years,« (Togo 1958: 28). The nationalist, war-oriented soldiery experienced a short decline from February 1936 to July 1937. The parties resurged for a short time and attempted to suppress the influence of the military.

However, this period lasted only a short time. The Hirota regime (cf. KEJ: »Hirota Kôki«), which came to power in 1936, openly fell into line with the military and advocated an aggressive advance on Manchuria (Hall 1968: 330). Their successes in Manchuria raised the esteem of the army among the people and became a cause célèbre for reaching strategic military as well as economic and ideological goals among all »true« patriots in Japan (Togo 1958: 28).

Amid this »atmosphere of the glorification of militarism and violence,« (l.c.) Prince Konoe Fumimaro came to power in June 1937. As a member of the imperial family, he was even better suited to lending these goals a »divine purpose.« Japan gradually undertook an intellectual de-modernization and returned to its supposedly original values (Hall 1968: 330). The Anti-Comintern Pact signed with Nazi-Germany in 1936 also appeared to set Japan on an authoritarian course in foreign affairs. Compared with the later war with the United States, the war with China began with a relatively unimportant skirmish on the Marco Polo Bridge outside of Beijing (Togo 1958: 29). Besides serving to control Northern China and its resources of cotton and coal as well as its enormous market for Japanese goods, the war mobilized the Japanese people as a »great family totally committed to the war,« the central ideological factor of which was the Shintô myth of the emperor (Martin 1977: 114).

The war with China solidified the position of totalitarianism in Japan. Among other things, this included the superiority of the military oligarchy, the subordination of the civil government (Togo 1958: 39) and the creation of a centrally planned economy (Hall 1968: 332) in which the state-controlled war industry was given absolute priority. The state also determined wages and working hours, and thus exercised complete control over the economy (Togo 1958: 38).

The National General Mobilization Law (*Kokka sôdôinhô*), which was ratified by the parliament in 1938, gave Prime Minister Konoe almost full political control over domestic policy. This law marked the end of parliamentary government in Japan. After this, the systematic creation of a »unitary state« began. In 1940 the

political parties were forced to disband and join the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*taisei-yokusankai*). This association served to unite all bureaucratic and political efforts relating to the goals of the empire – that is to say, it was its responsibility to marginalize all »differences in opinion« for the benefit of the »single common goal« and to suppress opposition and critical statements against the military strategy and the nationalist dogmas (Hall 1968: 334).

After the creation of the united imperial party, the labor unions were combined into a single patriotic association. Prime Minister Konoe announced the introduction of a New National Organization (*shintaisei*) in order to transform Japan into an advanced »national defense state.« This marked the full military mobilization and centralization of the economy of Japan. The people were advised to devote themselves entirely to the nation through nationalistic and patriotic slogans. Japan was fixated on the emperor, the »national mission« and the »holy war.«³⁵⁴

The more difficult Japan's position in the war became, the more important the belief in patriotic solutions such as the »way of the emperor« (*kôdô*), the »spirit of Yamato« (*yamato-damashii*), the »imperial mission« and »the whole world under one roof« (*hakkô-ichiu*) became. In schools children were indoctrinated with the Shintô belief in the divinity of the emperor and the superiority of the Japanese people. Thus, one characteristic of this nationalism, which also functioned as its ideological foundation, was the teachings of Shintô relating to the spiritual perfection of the ruler and nation of Japan that had been elaborated since the days of the Kokugaku and Mito School. In accordance with the interpretations of the Hirata School, now the Japanese nation itself was also considered to be divine. At the latest since the 1930s, religion and nationalism entered into an inseparable ideological relationship.

According to Maruyama Masao, the unifying element was the »magic« of the *kokutai*. The *kokutai*, the core of the state order itself, took on the role in Japan of a »spiritual replacement for Christianity, which formed the 'axis' of European culture for one thousand years.«³⁵⁵ This Japanese totalitarianism had developed an extraordinary record of bringing the public into line, in which the traditional myth of the emperor proved to be advantageous and only needed to be restated. Maruyama sharply criticizes the ability of the Japanese system to bring ideologies

³⁵⁴ For the concept of a Japanese »holy war« cf. the detailed and comprehensive study by Walter Skya (2009).

³⁵⁵ Maruyama 1971: 30; 1981: 31; 1988: 45.

into line. He writes that »Japanese totalitarianism,« at least ideologically, »shows an ability to bring into line that even Hitler would envy.«³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ Maruyama 1971: 34; 1981: 34; 1988: 48. The German translation appends a sentence to this remark that is not contained in the original Japanese (Maruyama 1971: 34): »In Japan mußte man nicht erst einen 'Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' neu schaffen; es genügte, den vor zweitausend Jahren entstandenen Mythos zu mobilisieren.« English translation: »In Japan it was not necessary to create a new 'myth of the 20th century'; it was enough to mobilize the mythology from two thousand years ago.«

2. THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOKUTAI CONCEPT

The dogma of a specifically Japanese »national polity« thus formed the pivotal point in the ideological development of Japan at the time. What the Kokugaku and Mito scholars of the Edo period had devised and the politicians of the Meiji period had enacted in a comprehensive »State Shintō« worldview now developed into a totalitarian, fundamentalist doctrine of salvation for Japan and the world.

2. 1. *The path to the Kokutai no hongī*

The intensely polemical debate on the position of the emperor in the 1920s and '30s centered around two opposing views stating that the ruler of the country was either merely an organ of the state, as the expert in constitutional law Minobe Tatsukichi (1873-1948)³⁵⁷ claimed, or the embodiment of the state, and thus above all nationality, as Minobe's opponents Uesugi Shinkichi and Hozumi Yatsuka from the orthodox school postulated.

While Minobe saw no difference between the Japanese and the European monarchies of the time, his opponents emphasized the »'special character' of Japan and valued the *kokutai* to the highest degree,« (Neumann 1978: 20).

The result of this dispute, which so deeply influenced the intellectual development of Japan until 1945, is well known: during the so-called *kokutai* debate, Minobe was accused in the Parliament of dishonoring the emperor; his works were banned and he was convicted and removed from the House of Peers.

Now the path was clear for a form of government based entirely on the *kokutai* ideology. The writings of Uesugi Shinkichi (1878-1929), one of Minobe's rivals, on the »Imperial Constitution« in 1924 give an idea of the mystical outgrowths that followed. Machida Sanehide (1930: 161f.) writes:

»According to Uesugi the Japanese empire was founded when the heavenly grandson of the sun goddess was named ruler of Japan. By the divine mandate of Amaterasu, Japan's eternally unchangeable form of government (*kokutai*) was established and its ruler was designated. The Japanese believe that everyone achieves their own personal perfection and eternity by immersing themselves in the soul of the emperor, who, as a descendant of the divine original deity, inherits her soul and makes it his own. Only through the em-

³⁵⁷ On the »Minobe case,« cf. Miller 1965; Röhl 1963: 52ff.; Neumann 1978; Skya 2009: passim.

peror can one achieve the ideal of the cosmos, perfection, and continue to perfect the nature of people to an even greater degree and develop further by becoming one with the emperor, that is to say, the divine original ancestor, for the Takama-ga-hara is the ideal government of the Japanese, the highest morality.

[...]

Japan on earth is the continuation of Takama-ga-hara. Just as in heaven several gods form a single family, the head of which is Amaterasu, on earth the Japanese form (psychologically) a great family whose various wills are united and embodied in the emperor as the progeny of the god Izanagi.

[...]

The emperor is transcendent, and at the same time he contains everyone in himself.«

Parallel to this development of the concept of the *kokutai* toward a religious mysticism with the emperor as its foundation, in the 1920s attempts were made to legally anchor the term *kokutai* and thus make it concrete.

The second of Minobe's opponents mentioned above, Hozumi Yatsuka (1860-1912), played a crucial role in this process.³⁵⁸ He defined *kokutai* in general as the defining characteristics of a particular nation; the specific *kokutai* of Japan was characterized by the direct rule of the emperor. This »national body« was forever immutable (Röhl 1963: 47). In accordance with this definition, the term was first adopted in a body of laws, namely, Paragraph 1 of the law for »the maintenance of peace and order« (*Chian ijihô*) of April 22, 1925.³⁵⁹ An authoritative definition of *kokutai* as a legal term was only provided four years later by the Supreme Court in a decision on May 31, 1929. According to this decision, the Japanese *kokutai* represents a form of government in which »the emperor himself, belonging to an ancient, unbroken line of descent, graciously exercises authority over the government.«³⁶⁰

Thus, for a long time, a theoretical anchoring of the term *kokutai* was consciously avoided, because an exact definition would have taken away much of its ideological magic as, on the one hand, an intimidating instrument of power, and on the other hand, a force of integration uniting the emperor and the people. In this way, the concept of the *kokutai* revealed itself as a means for controlling popular opinion with the goal of bringing the entire country into line.

³⁵⁸ Cf. Röhl 1963: 47f.; on Hozumi's role in the development of the concept of familism, cf. Fridell 1970: 828, note 17; Miller 1965: 30; cf. Skya 2009: 53ff.

³⁵⁹ Maruyama 1971: 33; 1981: 33, note 55; 1988: 47. On the *chian ijihô*, see also Worm 1981: 71; English translation in KEJ 6: 168.

³⁶⁰ Maruyama 1971: 33; 1981: 33, note 56; 1988: 47.

Minobe's defeat, Uesugi's mysticism and the legal anchoring of the term *kokutai* according to Hozumi's definition opened the way for the high point of *kokutai* thought, the »phase of hubris.« The concept of the *kokutai* was then expanded into a mandatory, totalitarian ideology of the absolute unity, unique superiority and quasi-religious holiness of the Japanese nation.

In order to popularize this philosophical system, on March 20, 1937, an extensive commentary on the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 was published under the title *Kokutai no hongî*, »The Basic Principles of the (Japanese) National Polity.«³⁶¹ This text, millions of copies of which were distributed in Japanese schools, and which was one of the two »ultranationalist« works banned under the American occupation,³⁶² fills in the basic principles of *kokutai* thought in detail, as previously discussed. This work was intended for the ideological training of teachers.³⁶³ The original text was written by none other than Hisamatsu Sennichi, a professor at the University of Tôkyô and a respected authority on the Japanese classics.

The superiority of the home country and its higher virtue compared to all other countries also became the justification for the Japanese claims of rulership in East Asia. Here too the mythical times of antiquity serve as a model. Regarding the wars with Russia and China, in which Japan was victorious, the annexation of Manchuria during the Meiji period, and the founding of Manchukuo, the *Kokutai no hongî* states that these occupations were merely the continuation of the spread of the Japanese people in ancient times, the battles against the Ainu and the Kumaso, and the campaign of the Jingû Kôgô against Shiragi (i.e. Silla):

»The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, the annexation of Korea, and the efforts exerted in the founding of Manchoukuo, are one and all but ex-

³⁶¹ *Kokutai no hongî* 1937; cf. Gauntlett, Hall 1949. Partial translations in: Tsunoda et al. 1964, II: 278-288; Wittig 1976: 127-130, doc. no. 33. Cf. Antoni 1991: 50.

³⁶² See chapter V: 1.1; Shintô directive of December 15, 1945, entitled »Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control and Dissemination of State Shintô«; cf. Gauntlett, Hall 1949: V.

³⁶³ Roy Andrew Miller (1982: 92) remarks on the position of the *Kokutai no hongî* in relation to the Imperial Rescript on Education: »Since the *Kokutai no Hongî* consists of a discursive commentary upon various principles first supposed to have been enunciated by the Meiji emperor in his *Imperial Rescript on Education* of October 10 (sic!), 1890 (another of the landmarks of Japanese fascist-nationalist ideology), it was widely felt that this 1937 pamphlet shared in large measure the quasi divinity attributed to the Rescript on Education itself. This meant that the *Kokutai no Hongî* tract was often accorded the same worshipful honors as those that were extended to the Rescript. Like the Rescript, the *Kokutai no Hongî* pamphlet was frequently treated as a fetish object. When not actually being read or studied, it was reverently placed upon the kamidana, the 'god shelf' of Shinto observances, a small platform in a room just above eye level where fetishes, talismans, and other important cult objects are customarily placed for safekeeping when they are not actively being employed in religious observances.«

pressions of the great august Will replying to the august benevolence seen in the granting of the Land by the Imperial Ancestors to the Grandchild.« (Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 75; *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 28)

In a different passage, it states that the special spirit of Yamato, the land of the gods, recently came to power and was manifested concretely in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars.³⁶⁴ It goes on to state that it is the army's responsibility to maintain peace in Asia, as was the case in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars.³⁶⁵

In order to demonstrate continuity of history that was so important for this ideology, the *Kokutai no hongî* consistently makes use of the same pattern: a few examples from archaic times, taken from the legendary stories of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, directly follow a corresponding event usually from time of Meiji-tennô's rule. In this way, the enormous historical gaps between these eras are conveniently bridged, and the illusion of a single, unbroken line of tradition is created.

This concept was finally taken to even greater extremes in 1941. Under the slogan *hakkô-ichiu*, »the whole world under one roof,«³⁶⁶ the emperor-centered, hierarchical idea of the family was now applied to the world outside Japan in school textbooks for citizenship class (*kokuminka*³⁶⁷).³⁶⁸ The emperor, and thus Japan in general, took on the role of the head of the family; China, Manchukuo, Korea and Taiwan were understood to be the older brothers, while Thailand and others were the younger ones. In 1944 Madagascar and the countries of the Middle East were finally at least theoretically adopted into the extended *kokutai* family (l.c.). The Japanese army advanced on the countries of Southeast Asia with an

³⁶⁴ Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 132; *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 94.

³⁶⁵ Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 171; *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 141. Cf. Antoni 1988b.

³⁶⁶ Even in the present-day political debate the topic may arise frequently. An example of this occurred only recently, in March 2015, when the press reported the following incident: »During her question in the Diet last week, Junko Mihara, a member of the Upper House who belongs to the Liberal Democratic Party, employed a phrase closely associated with Japan's militarism and nationalism in the 1930s and '40s – 'Hakko Ichiu,' which literally means putting all the eight corners of the world under one roof [...].« »The phrase was coined by Chigaku Tanaka, an activist of the Nichiren school of Buddhism, in 1913 by taking a cue from a remark attributed to Japan's legendary first Emperor Jinmu. *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*), an official history book completed in 720, quotes him as saying just prior to his enthronement in the legendary palace of Kashihara in what is now Nara Prefecture: 'I will cover the eight corners of the world and make them my abode'.« (*Japan Times*, »Wartime slogan should stay buried«, March 24, 2015)

³⁶⁷ The subjects of ethics, geography, Japanese history and language were combined at public schools under this term from 1941 on. On the ultranationalist goals of this subject, cf. Foljanty-Jost 1979: 18-19.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Wray 1973: 85. »Under the Glory of the Throne it is our fixed aim that people of the world should become one big family.« Translation from a textbook for ethics class; cf. *Nihon-kyôkasho-taikei*, vol. III, 1962: 432.

extensive propaganda campaign. »Asia for the Asians,« »Turn out the white barbarians,« and similar slogans and promises helped them secure a certain amount of support among the people, with the exception of the Phillipines. But the ideology of the *kokutai* and *hakkō-ichiu*, with its strong Shintō and Confucian influences, could not be so easily applied to other countries and had to be reinterpreted. Beasley (1987: 244) remarks unmistakably on this subject:

»It was not possible there to appeal to a common confucian heritage. [...] Hakkō-ichiu, which Japanese could claim as a Shinto justification of empire, was sometimes translated 'universal brotherhood.'«

The universalization of the concept of the *kokutai* reached by Japanese expansionism marked the completion of a development whose intellectual basis had already been prepared in the 18th century by the Kokugaku. Its leading scholar, Motoori Norinaga, had previously written in 1771:

»Japan is the birthplace of the sublime ancestral deity Amaterasu ōmikami. From this, it is especially clear why Japan is so distinguished compared to all other countries. After all, there is no country that is not touched by the power of this sublime goddess.«³⁶⁹

Thus, the concept of the *kokutai* emerged strengthened and victorious from the constitutional debates of the 1920s and '30s, and it finally resulted in the totalitarian ideology of Japan during the war, when it formed the basis for the empire.

2. 1. 1 *On the divinity of the Imperial line*

The core of the *kokutai*, which postulated a Japanese identity as a divine nation, remained the same, despite all its development and expansion: it consisted of the idea of the divinity of the Imperial line. The following discussion will focus on this core idea.

Although it was still necessary after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 for some government officials to educate the population about the pure existence of the emperor³⁷⁰ (since large parts of the population were apparently ignorant of this idea), only a few years later, this mythically based ideology that postulated the divine emperor as the nation's mystical foundation – a »divine ruler« in the most literal sense – had succeeded in becoming the mandatory state ideology.

³⁶⁹ *Naobi no mitama* = KGS 10: 3, Stolte 1939: 193.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Lokowandt 1978: 41. See also Worm 1981: 65.

Not only critical experts in constitutional law such as the aforementioned Minobe Tatsukichi, but also historians who sought to understand the true basis and beginnings of the imperial line using an objective, scientific approach lost their positions as well as any possibility of continuing their academic work. Just one example of such a scholar, mentioned here *pars pro toto*, is the most important figure among them, Tsuda Sôkichi.³⁷¹ Research of this kind touched on the core of *kokutai* ideology: the mythically based divinity of the imperial household.

The aforementioned *Kokutai no hongî* of 1937 stated categorically that the mandate to rule given by Amaterasu to her grandson Ninigi no mikoto, the divine ancestor of the imperial household (as recorded in the *Nihonshoki* in the year 720), represented the founding of the *kokutai* of Japan. And yet, hidden in a subordinate clause of the *Kokutai no hongî* is an extremely precise, most likely unintentional account of the true, far more pragmatic basis for emperor worship.

This section, which covers the constant love of the emperor for his people, states, among other things, that the moral principles of the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, which played a critical role in the formation of the *kokutai* ideology, were granted to the people out of the emperor's love for them. A related remark mentions a historical parallel: the Seventeen-Article Constitution (*Kenpô jûshichijû*) written by Shôtoku-taishi during the reign of Empress Suiko (592-622) in ancient Japan.³⁷² It is easy to overlook this comparison, but it appears to me to be the most important thing in the entire commentary, since it reveals the true intentions of emperor-worship as being far from mere mythological and historical mysticism.

The Seventeen-Article Constitution, written by Crown Prince Shôtoku in the year 604,³⁷³ determined the principles according to which the transformation of Japan occurred from a loose group of dynasties into a centralized state according to the Chinese model. The foundation of the new state in the 7th century, just as later in the 19th century, was the institution of the divine ruler: the emperor. Also, in these ancient times as well as in the modern era, the basic principles of Confucian ethics and political science formed the basis for the organization of the state.

³⁷¹ Tsuda Sôkichi (1873-1961) carried out objective, academic research on the orthodox history of the ideology of the *kokutai* and the land of the gods, and consistently reached the conclusion that the stories of the founding of the empire did not correspond to the historical facts, but rather served to secure power for the imperial line. In 1940 his most important works were banned, and he was removed from the famous Waseda University and imprisoned for a short time. After the end of the war, Tsuda turned down his nomination as president of the university. Cf. Tsuda 1967.

³⁷² *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 32; cf. Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 78.

³⁷³ *Nihonshoki*: Suiko 12/4/3 = NKBT 68: 180-186; Florenz 1903: 12-21. Cf. Tsunoda et al. 1964, vol. I: 47-51.

Thus far, the comparison advanced in the *Kokutai no hongî* may appear to make sense and serve the work's aims, especially in linking the hallowed *Rescript on Education* of 1890 to a tradition extending back to the 7th century. But in reality, the comparison of the *Rescript on Education* with the Seventeen-Article Constitution written by Shôtoku-taishi contains in its core an outrageous attack on the foundations of the *kokutai* ideology that must have been evident to any observer. This attack can be inferred not from the Buddhist elements³⁷⁴ in Shôtoku's text, which would have contradicted the anti-Buddhist politics of the Meiji period, but rather from the fact that not a single word mentioning the divine nature of the emperorship, the metaphysical core of the *kokutai*, appears in the Seventeen-Article Constitution. According to this document, a central ruler is simply necessary for the efficient leadership of a centralized government; only the institution of the emperor offers a guarantee for overcoming and eliminating the divergent interests of the clans. This is the actual, and incredibly sobering, beginning of the emperorship, and the readers of the *Kokutai no hongî* were more or less directly confronted with this fact. And yet, it may have been difficult for them to recognize it, since they were caught up in a process that was astonishingly similar to that of the 7th and 8th centuries, namely, the process of the *deification* of the emperor.³⁷⁵

The 7th century marked the beginning of a development, based on the pragmatic views of Prince Shôtoku, that is essentially quite similar to that of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although there is no record of the concept of the divinity of the emperor in the year 604, the first mention of this idea appears in an edict by Kôtoku-tennô (645-654) on the position of the emperor that has been dated to the year 647 :

»In their capacity as gods – *kamunagara* means 'to follow the divine way' (*kami no michi,shintô*) and carry the divine way in oneself – my children shall rule the empire.« Thus commanded [Amaterasu ômikami]. Consequentially, it is a country that has been governed by rulers since the beginning of Heaven

³⁷⁴ Of all the 17 articles, the second shows a clearly Buddhist orientation: »Worship the Three Sacred Treasures fervently. The Three Sacred Treasures are Buddha, the law and the priesthood. They are the last refuge of the four natures and basic principles of all countries. What generation, what people shall not honor these laws? Few are the people who are entirely bad; they can be taught and made to follow (the laws). How shall they be made right except by recourse to the Three Sacred Treasures?« (NKBT 68: 181; cf. Florenz 1903: 15).

³⁷⁵ On the deification of the emperor in the Meiji period, cf. Lokowandt 1978: 42-47. As Nelly Naumann (1970: 13, inter alia) points out, the deification of the emperor can already be seen in archaic Japan.

and Earth. Since the time of our imperial ancestral rulers who first ruled the empire, there has always been harmony, and this has never changed.«³⁷⁶

Thus, it is evident that, since the days of the pragmatic Seventeen-Article Constitution, a process of deification of the imperial line in the sense of the *kami no michi* (Shintô) was undertaken³⁷⁷ that began anew in the 19th and 20th centuries, following the decline of imperial power during the Japanese Middle Ages.

The official commentary on the Constitution by Itô Hirobumi, one of the fathers of the Meiji Constitution, shows that even the creators of the new Empire of Japan and its Constitution of 1889 originally took a similarly pragmatic view as the statesman Shôtoku did 1300 years before them. He remarks unmistakably, and with remarkable candor, that the emperorship was chosen as the foundation of the new state because Japan lacked a unifying, common spiritual guideline along the lines of Christianity in Europe, and that such an »axis« was essential for the desired form of government. In Japan, the religions had little power, and so the emperor was chosen for this purpose.³⁷⁸

Thus, it is plainly clear that the creation of a functional centralized government was also the principle necessity for establishing the modern empire, and only afterward did the question of its spiritual foundation arise. It was not the case that a suitable state was created for the emperor because people believed in the divinity of the imperial dynasty in a religious sense, but rather, because there was a need for a government that was suited to its time, when Japan began to deal with Western nations.

Thus, it was necessary to establish a new imperial consciousness among the people. For the emperor's subjects, the idea of being ruled by a divine emperor was in no way an matter of self-evident, immutable values as postulated by Kokutai Shintô. This reveals an interesting paradox: it was necessary to undertake a campaign of indoctrination that spanned decades in order to popularize the concept of the nation's supposedly immutable traits.

³⁷⁶ Taika 3/4/26 = NKBT 68: 300-301; English translation from the German in Florenz 1903: 135 (here incorrectly attributed as Taika 3/4/29).

³⁷⁷ Due to terminological anachronisms the dating of some of Emperor Kôtoku's edicts is doubtful; in this form the earliest they could have appeared is during the rule of Tenmu-tennô (673-686), and possibly not until the early 8th century. The process of imperial deification would have thus taken place over an even longer period of time (cf. Naumann 1970: 7, 11, note 35).

³⁷⁸ Cf. Maruyama 1971: 28ff.; 1981: 29ff.; 1988: 43ff.; cf. Pittau 1967: 177-178.

2. 2. Inoue Tetsujirō and the concept of *Kokutai Shintō*

The already discussed philosopher and ideologue Inoue Tetsujirō played an important role in this context. He was mentioned in the previous discussion of the Meiji period as the author of the first official commentary on the *Rescript on Education* of 1890. However, Inoue's work in the 1920s, '30s and '40s until his death in 1944 has so far received little attention in academic research. Some thoughts on Inoue's later work can be found in a recent study by Johann Nawrocki (1998), which examines the ideological development of an important Japanese scholar at the time.

Inoue Tetsujirō, who is known in academic circles mostly as a Confucian, Western-oriented philosopher and also as a poet, underwent a remarkable shift during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods toward a radical Shintō nationalism that precisely corresponded to the general trends in Japan at the time. The study by Johann Nawrocki represents a great achievement, since it is the first academic discussion and analysis of this fact. In a comprehensive discussion of the study's sources, the author succeeds in demonstrating not only that Inoue underwent a consistent ideological development from his Meiji-period beginnings to a fanatical, religious nationalism in the 1940s, but also that Inoue can be seen as the prototype for conservative Japanese scholars and intellectuals during this period.

It is even more astonishing that Inoue turned toward Shintō – that is to say, to the religious nationalism he himself called »Kokutai Shintō« – since this influential scholar had distanced himself from Shintō and the Kokugaku at the beginning of his academic career, when he appeared to be entirely influenced by Chinese and European philosophy (see chapter III: 3. 2.). But Nawrocki clearly documents the scholar's philologically exact and historically stringent development; the study demonstrates that Inoue Tetsujirō distanced himself from the rational approach of philosophy, only to become lost in the depths of the mystical, mythical irrationality of the *kokutai*.

In the late Meiji period Inoue was particularly influential in the area of official ethics, which can be seen as one of the two spiritual pillars of the modern Japanese state, along with the Constitution of 1889. At this time, the scholar Inoue was still solidly grounded in Confucianism and Western idealism, but he later underwent an intellectual shift. Over the course of this change, Inoue developed an affinity for the official state ideology of the early Shōwa period to a degree that until recently was not considered possible, thus abandoning important positions in his originally conservative Confucian thought from the Meiji period.

In light of the advanced age that this thinker and ideologue reached while in full grasp of his health and creative powers (he lived from 1855 until 1944), his career is congruent with the intellectual history of imperial Japan from the Meiji period until the time of its collapse. Among the most important periods in Inoue's life, from his childhood and schooling (1855-1875), through his studies and assistant professorship at the University of Tôkyô (1875-1884), his stay in Germany (1884-1890), and the first years of his professorship (1890-1893), the topic of Shintô dogmatization (Nawrocki 1998: 121ff.) played a surprisingly important role in his thought as early as the late Meiji period, when Japan's national profile was on the rise and the movement for popular morality was under way. As Nawrocki states, »In this period Inoue continues to make use of principles of Confucian ethics, [...] but, since he was carried away with the general enthusiasm and national pride at the time, he shifted his sphere of argumentation increasingly toward Shintô tradition, which he saw as the main reason for Japan's military and political success« (Nawrocki 1998: 122f.). The fact that »in the propaganda campaign that began after the annexation of Korea in 1910 [...] Inoue resorted to the mystical, divine elements of Shintô mythology in order to justify the imperialist goals of the empire on the Asian continent in ethical and historical terms« (Nawrocki 1989: 123) shows how closely the political and military expansion of Japan was related to Shintô in Inoue's view. Nawrocki states that from this phase on, Inoue »often attempts to show the age of myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* in a sense as historical facts,« (Nawrocki 1998: 126); he sees Inoue as having »abandoned academic methods of thought and research« (l.c.) and finally reaches the conclusion that »over time, the mystification of Shintô in particular became increasingly important in his [Inoue's] works« (Nawrocki 1998: 128).

In the following years, Inoue continued moving toward a Shintô fundamentalist ideology. This finally resulted in the formation of a specific, national-religiously influenced worldview whose core, in Inoue's view, was the concept of Kokutai Shintô, which he »accorded the greatest importance among all the aspects of Shintô,« (Nawrocki 1998: 152). Particularly in his 1915 work *Shakai to dôtoku*, from which Nawrocki quotes extensively, Inoue sketches a taxonomy of Shintô based on three categories. The aforementioned Kokutai Shintô takes the first rank, as a combination of all specifically Japanese values and aspects – that is to say, the »power that forms the Japanese nation and has made its existence possible up to the present day,« (Nawrocki 1998: 153). Thus, Inoue mystically elevates the Japanese nation itself in a way that is similar to the traditional concept of the *shinkoku*. After Kokutai Shintô, the second most important area according to Inoue's theory is Shrine Shintô (*jinja shintô*). Ceremonies are of primary impor-

tance in this category, but the author also emphasizes the religious aspect of Shrine Shintō, in a blatant contradiction of the official view at the time, which maintained that State Shintō was non-religious. The third area covered by Inoue is Sectarian Shintō (*shūha shintō*): »This Shintō includes the various sects that have formed, such as Taishakyō or the Mitakekyō« (l.c.).

This classification of three areas of Shintō represents the crystallization of Inoue's thinking on Shintō. Although he emphasized the internal connections between the three areas, he did not allow any doubt – even in his later works – that the area of Kokutai Shintō is of the greatest importance. The question of the Japanese *kokutai* had already played a central role in his earlier writings, but only from this point on did Inoue recognize an unambiguous religious connotation in this context. In the aforementioned work, he remarks unmistakably:

»The origins of the *kokutai*, from a religious perspective, can be found in Kokutai Shintō.« (Nawrocki 1998: 157)

As Japan developed into a political and military world power, Inoue's conception of Shintō increasingly took a global view. Kokutai Shintō also plays a central role in this regard. Although Inoue advocated peace and harmony, his vision of spreading Shintō harmony across the whole world »could only be achieved by accepting the use of military force« (Nawrocki 1998: 163). Inoue continued to advocate the idea of a Shintō world mission up to his death in 1944.

In 1926 a mysterious affair caused Inoue to lose all his public offices, marking a dramatic turn in what had until then been a remarkably successful career. As if unable to rid himself of the ghosts he himself had summoned, he became the victim of a campaign accusing him of infringement of majesty due to a misinterpretation of the Japanese imperial regalia.

Finally, in a separate, detailed section, Nawrocki discusses Inoue's ideology of the *shinkoku* in the early Shōwa period (1926-1945). In light of the »opportunism« that he had previously demonstrated, it is not surprising that even this man, who was once held to be »the most important philosopher east of the Suez«³⁷⁹, and in spite of the embarrassments of the public campaign against him, actively took the final step toward nationalistic hubris. Although he was violently attacked by radical forces under Kita Ikki and Ōkawa Shūmei in February 1929 and suffered a serious eye injury as a result (Nawrocki 1998: 196), »over the course of the 1930s, his Confucian ideology was replaced more and more by mythological elements of Shintō theology and the new imperialism, [...] inspired by the grow-

³⁷⁹ Cf. Yamazaki, Miyakawa 1966: 120; Gluck 1985: 129; Antoni 1990a: 108.

ing imperial ambitions of the army« (l.c.). Nawrocki writes that, in Inoue's case, this resulted »almost automatically in his own construction of a cultural-imperialistic ideology of the *shinkoku*« (Nawrocki 1998: 197).

Thus, Nawrocki provides a comprehensive picture of Inoue's intellectual development during this period. According to the author's detailed analysis of Inoue's ideology of the *shinkoku*, this thinking was expressed in the concept of a unity of »gods and people« (*shinjin-gôitsu*), a concept that is reminiscent of Hirata Atsutane's national-religious theories. Following uncritically in Atsutane's footsteps, in 1934 Inoue writes:

»People from all over Japan are all realizing the divine nature, and thus, for the first time Japan is truly becoming a land of the gods.« (Nawrocki 1998: 202)

Logically, his thoughts focus on the emperor, whom he reveres as a »living deity« (*arahitogami*). This is also a basic tenet of the late Kokugaku. Nawrocki clearly points out these intellectual-historical antecedents:

»As the Japanese empire expanded, Tetsujirô attempted, similar to Hirata Atsutane one century before him in the *Kodô taii*, to extend the divine nature of the people and the individual beyond the Japanese nation.« (Nawrocki 1998: 204)

In accordance with criticism of Western civilization at the time, which was becoming increasingly radical, Inoue postulated an independent Japanese alternative based on the idea of Kokutai Shintô. The term *kannagara no michi* as an original term for Shintô played an increasingly important role in his thinking. Inoue saw this term as the basis for the specifically Japanese code of ethics as well as the *kokutai*, and he called the »way of the gods,« in an adaptation of Kant's terminology, the »categorical imperative« of Japan (Nawrocki 1998: 211). The expansionist component of this principle always remained clear – for example, in Inoue's 1934 remark:

»The Japanese principle of leadership will spread around the world, lead people to the *kannagara no michi*, and finally realize the universal land of the gods.« (Nawrocki 1998: 213)

As Nawrocki demonstrates, Inoue's writings are »characterized by an esoteric Shintô belief in the *shinkoku*« (Nawrocki 1998: 216) that justifies the missionary role of Japan in the world. He views the »Japanese spirit« and the *kannagara no michi* (i.e. Shintô) as synonyms:

»Shintō is at the center of the Japanese spirit This refers primarily to the aforementioned Kokutai Shintō. Kokutai Shintō is the origin of the life-force of the nation of Yamato. Today the nation of Yamato is entirely based on Kokutai Shintō.« (Nawrocki 1998: 221)

In these later years, the relationship to East Asia and the creation of a »Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere« dominated by Japan played an important role in Inoue's thought. He wholeheartedly supported these plans (cf. Nawrocki 1998: 269, among others) and effortlessly connected them to his mystical theories on the »land of the gods.« While referencing great scholars of the past, such as Kitabatake Chikafusa, Nichiren, Yamazaki Ansai, Motoori Norinaga, Hirata Atsutane and Ôkuni Takamasa, he outlined an expansion of the concept of Kokutai Shintō – once again in exact accordance with the prevailing opinion at the beginning of the 1940s – into the concept of »the whole world under one roof« (*hakkō-ichiu*). As Nawrocki writes, according to Inoue, this radical view, which goes far beyond the contents of the *Kokutai no hongî*, became

»... a plausible alternative development, not only for the Far East, but for the entire world.« The former Confucian and idealist philosopher euphorically states in 1942: »The imperial dynasty, whose rule has been uninterrupted since the founding of the empire, will continue to thrive for all eternity. Nor is there any doubt that such a country is capable of achieving the great ideal of the whole world under one roof.« (Nawrocki 1998: 278)

In the remainder of his study, Nawrocki analyzes Inoue's problematic relationship with contemporary National Socialism and Italian fascism. At first, Inoue distanced himself from these European counterparts to his national-religious teachings, but later, after the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936 and the Tripartite Pact of 1940, and the early military victories of the Axis Powers, he viewed these similarities more favorably. Here too, an opportunism in Inoue's thought is apparent that runs throughout his entire work. In 1942 he saw Hitler and Mussolini as the leaders of countries that, like Japan, were characterized by agreement and the inner unity of the entire nation. Inoue proudly remarks: »But in Japan this did not happen only recently; it has existed since the founding of the empire. No, even better: since the country's creation, solidarity and harmony have been practiced horizontally and vertically,« (Nawrocki 1998: 273). In his last work published before his death in 1944, Inoue even praises the alliance with Nazi Germany in anthemic verse:

»Our country of Japan is closely allied with Germany, together we will create a new moral world.« (Nawrocki 1998: 282)

2. 3. *Mythology and fascism in Japan and Germany*

Thus, toward the end of his life Inoue once again dealt with a topic that had been evident throughout his entire intellectual development – at the latest since his first stay in Germany during the Meiji period: Japan and Germany, a fascinating topic that has been covered in great detail in numerous academic, popular and even propagandistic works.

The topic of ideological similarities between Japan in the early Shōwa period and Germany under National Socialism is worth covering in depth in this context, since it offers further insights on the basic elements of *kokutai* thought. Beyond the essential analyses of the historical facts, including the reasons that led to the war, the war's development, diplomatic relations, etc., which have been pursued by historians in great earnest, a further important area, is also worth examining in this context: fascist ideology (cf. Antoni 1991a: 100-121)

2. 3. 1. *Preliminary remarks*

Reaching a theoretical understanding of »fascism« in this context is a highly complex and extremely difficult problem (cf. Antoni 2004). Given the political, historical, ideological, and even emotional dimensions of the topic, we risk straying from the realm of serious academic research in using this term, particularly in attempting comparative studies. After the so called »historian's debate« (*Historikerstreit*) in Western Germany during the mid 1980s it became a common conclusion to regard this term as inappropriate in dealing with the historical reality of the highly diverse, so called »fascist« regimes of Germany, Italy and Japan, during the 1930s and 1940s. The political argument that using the term »fascism« in taking a comparative approach ultimately would open the door for relativization of the horrors, especially those of German National Socialism had great effect. »To compare« could lead to relativization of the dimensions of guilt. Accordingly, the historian's debate ended with a clear verdict against all comparative »fascism« studies, a position still held by most German historians. While the term »fascism« might be applied to Italian system under Benito Mussolini, it could not be used to describe any other political framework of the time. Neither the German Nazi system nor the Japanese emperor system of those dark days, should, or could, be subsumed under this descriptive term.

So the term »fascism« lost much of its academic distinctiveness in Germany, becoming just a catch phrase in political polemics, between »rightists« and »leftists«, Marxists and bourgeois. In the field of scholarly research comparative »fascism« studies seemed to be out of bounds for all time. But American historians have carried on comparative »fascism« studies, even enlarging the cultural and geographical sphere to Asian countries. This definitely is a new and encouraging trend, showing that structural similarities and historical parallels between various »fascisms« can be analyzed in comparative terms, without any attempt at relativizing the singularity of »fascist« regimes.

In this respect, a recent study by Harry Harootunian (2000) sets the standard for dealing with the Japanese case. In studying the »history, culture, and community in interwar Japan,« as the subtitle of his enormous study states, the author clearly elucidates that for the Japanese situation »it is important to return to the question of fascism in the interwar period and its location in the cultural discussions of the time.«³⁸⁰ We cannot, Harootunian argues, »simply ignore the question of fascism and its many inflections during the 1930s.« (l.c.) The author, of course, is clearly aware of the problems connected with defining this term, but he points out that such issues are not unique to fascism. To illustrate the point, he notes that »there are as many definitions and explanations of modernism as there are people willing to speak about it.«³⁸¹

Clearly, »fascism« was a reality in Japan of the 1930s and 40s, and was an important factor in the discussions of the distinctive and allegedly superior Japanese patterns of culture. Confronted with the Western concept of modernity, nativists turned to ideas of an allegedly pure, genuine and fixed Japanese culture and »in this way, the crisis was inflected into claims of cultural authenticity and diverse efforts to recall the eternal forms of community outside of history.«³⁸² The construction of a national history, and we may add, a national entity, essentially timeless and not subject to historical change, is a central point in this ideological world.

In this approach, discussing »fascism« in a comparative fashion deals not mainly with problems of political organizational forms but with questions of ideology. A fascist ideology embraces the idea of cultural or racial superiority, founded in an idealized and remote national past, serving as a model for the future. Harootunian calls this »an ideological/cultural order calling for authentic-

³⁸⁰ Harootunian 2000: xxvii.

³⁸¹ Harootunian 2000: xx.

³⁸² Harootunian 2000: xxvi.

ity, folkism, and communitarism« in pointing out fascism's »ideological appeal to culture and community.«³⁸³

Consequently the nativistic search for a unique national character, in combination with an aggressive idea of a nation's superiority over others, in racist and/or culturalist terms, marks the core of any fascist ideology. In this respect, the term »fascism« may be used in comparative studies, and written even without quotation marks.

2. 3. 2. German admirers of the Japanese kokutai

Lacking democratic institutions for the freedom of expression, the National-Socialist state in Germany resorted to domestic espionage in order to monitor the nation. This led to an enormous amount of background reports on the opinions, rumors and views on the current situation circulating among the people. These secret reports by the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*) of the SS from 1938 to 1945 were summarized and collected as *Meldungen aus dem Reich* (»Reports from the Reich«) and made available to those in power.

Today these documents, which are stored in the German Federal Archives in Koblenz and are now available to the public in a seventeen-volume reference edition, represent an invaluable body of source materials on the actual state of mind of the German people during this period.

They are also a rich source for anyone interested in Japan, since the relevant reports by informants also give a detailed picture of the image of Japan, Germany's allied power in East Asia, that emerged among the German people. Of particular interest is the report entitled »Report from the Reich« (»Meldung aus dem Reich«), No. 306, dating from August 6, 1942. It is divided into five (or four) chapters, the second of which is entitled »Cultural Areas,« and, as is evident from a heading contained within, focuses exclusively on the »View of Japan Among the People.« The report begins with the following remark:

»Since Japan's entry into the war, and particularly since its surprisingly rapid and far-reaching victories in the East-Asian sphere, many national comrades of all classes are increasingly considering the deeper reasons that have made it possible for the Japanese people to wage this new war, despite the long-standing war with China, with astonishing power. Beyond superficial talk of the »yellow menace,« the national comrades are most often interested in understanding the mental and spiritual constitution of the Japanese, which they credit more strongly than the material potential for war as the secret of the

³⁸³ Harootunian 2000: xxix, and xxx.

Japanese advance. [...] The fact that in Japan life, politics and the war effort are shaped and defined by non-Christian religious and ideological beliefs, apparently with great success, has led to numerous comparisons with the ideological and religious situation in the [German] empire itself.«

Overall, the text goes on to remark, certain developments in the view of Japan have emerged that will eventually require a certain correction. More precisely, this means that the exclusively positive elements of the German view of Japan that led to an idealization of Japan were viewed with increasing skepticism by those in power.

The report, which is consistently written in the subjunctive mood,³⁸⁴ remarks that the Japanese soldiers' readiness to sacrifice »has led to something of an 'inferiority complex'« in Germany. It continues:

»The Japanese presents himself as 'Germans to the second power' [*»Germanen im Quadrat«*], so to speak. It is thought that even today the Japanese possess characteristics attributed to the mythical heroes of prior centuries in our country. Along with slogans warning of the »yellow peril,« a certain pessimism is spreading that in Japan the full power is still in effect that once characterized our own history, the mythical greatness of which is not recognized in the battle currently being waged to the degree that it is in the case of the Japanese, and that perhaps the centuries under Christianity »cannot be compensated for after all,« and that the Japanese power could one day be turned against us.«

The absurd idea of the Japanese as the »German to the second power« reveals a certain amount of insecurity and anxiety, but also admiration. The text then turns to the question of to what extent Japan can serve as an example for Germany. »Questions relating to the ideological and religious new order,« it states, »are discussed with great interest.« Finally, the text makes its core statement:

»To the reader, the dominant impression is of Japan's absolute internal cohesiveness. [...] Especially in the obvious comparison with developments in Europe, in which we have endured many hardships, many national comrades have formed the view that Japan has proceeded without internal breeches and that the entire Japanese people to this day are unified, lending the present day in Japan a mythical greatness that, in our country, is only associated with historical eras of the distant past.«

While referring to Kitayama's book *West-östliche Begegnung* (»Encounters between West and East«), the question is posed of »whether the Japanese way is also feasible for us, and whether the Japanese methods of education could also be

³⁸⁴ Translator's note: the subjunctive mood indicates indirect speech in German.

applied to our system of military education. [...] The book does not mention the National-Socialist forces of a new Germanic order even once. Compared to Japan, Europe appears to be a region that is being torn apart by various forces.«

The »Report from the Empire« ends by stating that there is a danger that this »image of Japan without the clear and positive contrast of our own standards is making an increasingly strong impression« on the German people. The unabashed admiration for Japan that is evidenced in this report may have been met with worried skepticism within the security apparatus,³⁸⁵ but it was nonetheless shared at the highest levels of the government, including Hitler himself.

In Henry Picker's *Tischgesprächen* (»Table Talks«), Hitler mentions Japan and the Japanese on several occasions. Torn between the racist conceit comparing the Japanese with the devil, »with whom one would ally oneself in order to win,« (Picker 1983: 310) and admiration for their superior intelligence (Picker 1983: 404), Hitler spoke on April 4, 1942, for instance, on the »state religion, or rather, state philosophy« of the Japanese. The state philosophy of the Japanese, he says, is one of the essential reasons for their success, and the only reason it has remained the basic principle according to which the Japanese live is because »it was long protected from the poison of Christianity,« (Picker 1983: 184).

Hitler's admiration for Japan is particularly evident in Ernst Nolte's essential work *Fascism in its Epoch* (1984). Nolte writes about Hitler:

»His true partners, however, were the Japanese, and he was often obliged, even in his own remarks, to defend himself against accusations of betraying his own racist principles. But the pragmatic reasons that he occasionally offers do not express what is most important, but rather, he genuinely admires this Far Eastern country. To him, Japan is a naturally fascist country, so to speak – having been untouched by Christianity, and with its inaccessibility to the Jews, and its internal cohesiveness and hero worship – that points the way for his own efforts.« (Nolte 1984: 501)

2. 3. 3. *Public reception and effects*

Thus the Japanese *kokutai* ideology did not fail to influence populist figures and those who subscribed to race theory. H. W. von Doemming writes in 1934, for example, in the first lines of his work *Was will Japan?* (»What does Japan want?«) on the supposed thinking of »the« Japanese:

³⁸⁵ Significantly, the Japanese views were not feared for offering opposition, but for their supposed perfection, especially in comparison with the German national ideology.

»The sun goddess Amaterasu ōmikami entrusted her descendants with the rulership of the Land of the Rising Sun with these words: 'My children shall rule in their capacity as deities.' This was 2500 years ago, and today more than ever, every Japanese, from the cabinet minister down to the last peon, is convinced of the truth of this mythological statement. After all, the entire Japanese people view themselves as 'children of the gods,' and their religion is called Shintō, the 'way of the gods.'«

He goes on to state that if Japan's politics are not understood in Europe and America today, this is due to the fact that »Japan's religion of race, that is to say, its racial-religious structure,« is not understood (Doemming 1934: 9), »since each Japanese does not merely believe, but knows that he is of divine descent and that no other race shares this advantage with him,« (Doemming 1934: 18).

Full of admiration, he quotes from a speech by the Minister of War General Araki from May 16, 1931, in which he remarks on the ideology of the *kodō*, the »way of antiquity« and Japan's resulting mission in the world:

»When the country is again illuminated by the same great spirit in which it was founded, then the time will come when all nations of the world will be forced to look up to our *kodō*. The *kodō*, the great ideal of the Japanese nation, is so rich that it will be spread across the whole world and overcome every barrier - even by the sword.« (Doemming 1934: 19)

It is not surprising that such Japanese national self-conceptions did not fail to influence Germany in the 1930s and '40s. After all, a parallel was recognized in Japan, which in many areas was far more advanced and possessed a deeper historical foundation, that outshone Germany's own ideological efforts as an unreachable ideal.

Japan appeared to have already realized everything that the populist ideologues in Germany strove for in such earnest: the uninterrupted homogeneity of the nation, the mystical unity of leadership and people, the dependence of virtue and general ethics on race and the resulting national polity rather than on individual insight and learnedness, the rejection of everything foreign that in the past was culturally dominant, combined with the rejection of rationality and reason as necessary categories of thought, and in their place a propagation of »appropriate, intuitive« emotional perception. It was also possible to draw parallels to the German nation from these conclusions, for example, in the pursuit of the supremacy of the homeland, which was seen as superior within the region, combined with the ideal of military heroism.

But one area in particular justified the similarities on a basic level in spiritual terms: the ancient stories, myths and legends, whose function it was to establish

cultural independence and uniqueness. In this regard, Japan can actually be seen as having attained a nearly impossible ideal. The nation, with its traditions supposedly spanning millennia and its legendary founding of political power by the gods of antiquity, was popularly held to be unassailable, and likely even invincible.

Thus, the previously mentioned concept of the Japanese as »Germans to the second power« contains a far-reaching complex, as well as fear and admiration. It directly refers to the cult of the old Germanic peoples or teutons that was rampant at that time in Germany, since the Nazi ideology also idealized antiquity as providing the concrete nativist goal of the »national essence« and sovereignty.

2. 4. *Commemorating the »founding« of the Japanese Empire and Kojiki studies in wartime Germany*

The highlight of the ideological cooperation between wartime Germany and Japan is represented by the year 1940.³⁸⁶ This year saw the 2,600th anniversary of the legendary accession of Jimmu and marked an ideologically extremely important occasion in wartime Japan.³⁸⁷ Festivals and events throughout the whole year commemorated this date, since Jimmu, the so-called First Emperor, stood at the center of the ultra-nationalistic *kokutai* ideology of that period. Even a hymn to mark the 2,600th anniversary of the *kigen* (see above) was composed, to commemorate the founding of the Japanese empire.³⁸⁸

As could be shown above the Japanese *kokutai* ideology of the 1930s and 1940s won high admiration in wartime Germany, not only among the ideologues of the contemporaneous National Socialist (Nazi) Party but among ordinary people as well. The 2,600th anniversary of the alleged founding of the axis partner in the East, Imperial Japan, was commemorated among interested Germans in 1940 too.

³⁸⁶ For this chapter see also Antoni 2011.

³⁸⁷ On the year 1940 Brownlee (1991: 1, 2) states: »1940 - A Year of Singular Importance. The year 1940 was the 2,600th anniversary of the accession of the first Emperor of Japan. Emperor Jimmu in 660 B.C. The event was entirely mythical; yet, remarkably, the government of Japan was organized under a constitution of 1889, which accepted the event as historical. The unbroken succession of Emperors from Emperor Jimmu was the explicit basis for Japanese imperial sovereignty. His accession was recorded in two works of historical writing unrivaled in authority, *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712 A.D.), and *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720 A.D.).« On the reception of the Jimmu-myth in Meiji-Japan cf. Wachutka 2013: 11ff. and passim.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Weiner (2004: 50): »In 1940, '2,600 Years Since the Nation's Founding', an officially sponsored song commemorating the anniversary of the founding of the nation by Emperor Jimmu, captured many of the prevailing visual images of transcendence with ornate and appropriately archaic lyrics about 'the glorious light of Japan,' 'pure gratitude burning like a flame,' 'the glistening national power,' and 'the rising sun of everlasting prosperity.'« (note 21)

There were festival activities in Berlin during that year and institutions of German-Japanese cultural relations were active in commemorating this anniversary.³⁸⁹ Especially notable is a joint publication project of the *Japan Institute at Berlin* (»Japaninstitut zu Berlin«) and the *Japanese German Culture Institute at Tōkyō* (»Japanisch-Deutsches Kulturinstitut zu Tōkyō«). In 1940, in commemoration of the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese Empire, both institutions presented an enormous work of philological research, a new edition of the *Kojiki* in two parts, and announced a plan for a complete translation of the text into German as part three. The main editor and translator of the whole project was a scholar quite unknown today, Kinoshita Iwao (1894-1980). Because of the importance of his work for the reception of Shintō and the *Kojiki*, in Germany and Japan in the 1940s, I shall discuss Kinoshita's life and work here in some detail.

2. 4. 1. Kinoshita's *Kojiki*

Kinoshita's work on the *Kojiki* consisted of three parts, a complete Japanese text of the *Kojiki* (Part 1, hereafter Kinoshita 1940a), a complete transliteration of this text into *rōmaji* (Part 2, hereafter Kinoshita 1940b), and a complete translation of this text into German (Part 3). Unfortunately this third part, consisting of the German translation was lost - it was never published and was destroyed in a fire bombing of Tōkyō in 1944. The whole text of the translation as well as the notes and commentary were completely lost.³⁹⁰ More than twenty years after the war, Kinoshita began his translation project again, but as he was serving as the head priest (*gūji*) of the Shintō shrine Kashii-gū near Fukuoka - a position he had inherited from his father -, it took him until 1976 to finish and publish the translation. This edition, announced as the missing third volume of his *Kojiki* project, could not, of course, appear as a publication of the no-longer extant institutions of prewar and wartime Japanese-German relations. Hence Kinoshita privately published his translation, sans commentary, as a publication of his Kashii Shrine in Fukuoka (Kinoshita 1976).

In the preface to this work, the author comments on the 36-year delay of the publication. Interestingly, as he did with the first and second volumes in 1940,

³⁸⁹ Cf. Friese 1984: 276. For an ideological pamphlet in German commemorating the event cf. Heuvers and Uda (1940: 363)

³⁹⁰ In the years 1984 and 1986 two further parts of the work were published. Although they were officially counted as volumes 4 and 5 of Kinoshita's former work, (Kinoshita 1984 and 1986), in fact these volumes, posthumously arranged by Manabe Daikaku, did not comprise of Kinoshita's lost commentary work but of various additional materials, such as astronomical tables and calendrical data.

Kinoshita dedicated this 1976 volume to a member of the imperial family, Prince Takamatsu no miya Nobuhito (1905-1987), the third son of Taishô-tennô, whom he highly revered.³⁹¹ Nothing shows the continuity of Kinoshita's work more clearly than his dedication to the prince, which reads:

»His imperial Highness
Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito
I take with highest reverence the liberty
to present the German translation of the Kojiki, volume three of the complete
edition.
Thanks to your benign courtesy I was finally able to accomplish the work.
Kashii-gû, April 1976, Iwao Kinoshita.«³⁹²

Kinoshita was completely unknown to research in Western Japanese studies, but first research on his person started in Japan some years ago.³⁹³ Most of the materials were published at Kyûshû University, by Yake et al. (2001).³⁹⁴

Kinoshita Iwao was born in Fukuoka on March 7th, 1894.³⁹⁵ His father, Kinoshita Yoshishige, was head priest of the same shrine where Kinoshita Iwao later served as *gûji*, Kashii-gû³⁹⁶, near Fukuoka. In April 1909, the young Iwao entered middle school, graduating in March 1914. In September of the same year, he enrolled at the private university Kokugakuin in Tôkyô, graduating from the faculty of National Literature in July 1918. In September of the same year, Kinoshita enrolled at the faculty of law at the private Nihon Daigaku. Although he returned to Kokugakuin as a research student in April 1920, Kinoshita graduated from the Nihon University faculty of Law in March 1921. In March 1922 he graduated from the research school (*kenkyûka*) of Kokugakuin University, and in the same year received an order from the Institute of Imperial Classics of Kokugakuin University to study abroad. On August 22, 1922, Kinoshita embarked from the port of Yoko-

³⁹¹ Takamatsu (Teru) no Miya Nobuhito (1905-1987) was the youngest brother of the deceased Shôwa-tennô; since 1913 head of the Takamatsu family.

³⁹² »Seiner Kaiserlichen Hoheit, Prinz Takamatsu Nobuhito, Erlaube ich mir ehrerbietigst die deutsche Übersetzung des Kojiki, Band III der Gesamtausgabe, zu überreichen. Dank Ihres mir gewährten gütigen Wohlwollens konnte ich die Arbeit beenden. Kashii-gû, April 1976, Iwao Kinoshita.« (»Widmung«, in: Kinoshita 1976).

³⁹³ Cf. Kinoshita 1984, 1986 and Yake et al. 2001; cf. Antoni 2011.

³⁹⁴ Cf. Antoni 2011: 8. My thanks also to Professor Wolfgang Michel of Kyûshû University for the permission to use his materials.

³⁹⁵ Yake et al. (2001: 1) provide two different dates: Meiji 37 (1904) and Meiji 27 (1894). From the context it becomes clear that 1894 must be regarded as the correct date.

³⁹⁶ The Kashii-gû is one of the Shintô shrines of national importance. It is dedicated to the worship of the three Sumiyoshi deities as well as the legendary Empress Okinaga-tarashi-hime, alias Jingu Kôgo, her son Homuda-wake (the later Ôjin tennô), and her husband Tarashi-naka-tsu-hiko, alias Chûai tennô, whose tomb also is located here.

hama and traveled to Europe. More than one year later, in October or December of 1923, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy at Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin, where he began to study the academic subjects of Philosophy, Sinology,³⁹⁷ and History. This was the year that Kinoshita started his *Kojiki* translation project, which later became a part of his dissertation. The German side officially entrusted him with this enormous study, and Kinoshita worked with the *Kojiki* texts that he found in Berlin. The whole project was to be published in five volumes at the famous academic publishing house DeGruyter.

In July 1929 Kinoshita finally graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Berlin University. Following an initiative of the Japanese philosopher Kanokogi Kazunobu, in the same year the »German Japanese Society« (DJG) was founded in Berlin. Until 1932, this society published the academic journal *Yamato*,³⁹⁸ which was succeeded by the journal *Nippon*. In the 1929 edition of *Yamato*, Kinoshita published an article on »primeval Shinto« (»Ur-Shinto«),³⁹⁹ which shows that he was abreast with the academic standard of his time. On May 28, 1929, the Japanese Embassy in Berlin announced that His Imperial Highness, Prince Takamatsu no miya, would provide financial aid to the printing of the German translation of *Kojiki*. But in August 1929, Kinoshita was ordered to return to Japan, arriving there on of September 10. He received an order to study the *Kojiki* again, financially aided by Kuroita Katsumi,⁴⁰⁰ one of the main editors of the *Kokushi taikai* series.

In August 1933, Kinoshita presented a new Japanese edition of the *Kojiki*, which was incorporated into volume seven of this series in 1936.⁴⁰¹ In the same year, Kinoshita began his work on the *rômaji* transcription as volume two of his *Kojiki* project, based on the *Kokushi taikai* text. In 1940, both volumes were printed on the occasion of the 2,600th anniversary of the founding of the empire,⁴⁰² with the Japanese text, being fully identical with the *Kokushi taikai* version, as part one (Kinoshita 1940a), containing various prefaces and addresses by well-known persons of the era. The *rômaji*-edition was printed as part two (Kinoshita 1940b). But due to unknown reasons, the actual main body of the project, the third volume

³⁹⁷ In the same year, the famous sinologist Otto Franke (1863-1946) had received a call to this university.

³⁹⁸ On the journal *Yamato* cf. Walravens 2000: 13.

³⁹⁹ Kinoshita 1929: 120 - 127.

⁴⁰⁰ For Kuroita Katsumi cf. the recent study by Lisa Yoshikawa: *Kuroita Katsumi and his state-sanctioned national history, 1896-1937: Narrating absolute imperial sovereignty and Japan's civilizing mission in Asia as history* (2007).

⁴⁰¹ Kuroita Katsumi et al. (eds.) 1936.

⁴⁰² Cf. Kinoshita's preface to Kinoshita 1940a.

consisting of the German translation, was not published, probably because it was not yet finished in 1940. Unfortunately, the whole stock, as well as all the manuscripts and materials were burned and destroyed during a fire bombing of Tôkyô in 1944. Thus Kinoshita's project remained incomplete.

After the war, Kinoshita worked several jobs, but finally became the *gûji* at his home shrine of Kashii-gû in 1959. In 1967, two German Japanologists from West Berlin, Hans Eckard and Johanna Fischer, visited Kinoshita in Fukuoka, providing help for the plan of a new translation. Hans Eckard (1905 - 1969), being one of the most problematical German Japanologists both before and after the war,⁴⁰³ died in 1969, but with the help of other well-known Japanologists, Kinoshita was finally able to finish his work, albeit only the pure translation, without any commentary or bibliographical sections. In 1975, the private printing of his *Kojiki* translation began, and the work was published in 1976 as part three of the original series. Four years later, on October 23, 1980, Kinoshita Iwao died at Kashii-gû, Fukuoka.⁴⁰⁴

As can be seen from the biographical sketch given above, Kinoshita's work was designed as more than the existing three volumes. Only the first and second volumes, which were printed in 1940, make special reference to the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese Empire, as can be seen in the introduction to volume one. The philosopher Kanokogi, being one of the most important individuals within the German-Japanese relations of the 1930s and 1940s, underwent an intellectual conversion from philosopher to ideologue, as did many other Japanese and German intellectuals of those days.⁴⁰⁵ Although the project of translating the *Kojiki* had started as early as 1923, long before the coming of the dark days of fascist axis fantasies, by 1940 the *Kojiki* translation project had obviously become a part of this ideological change.

Looking at those two volumes - the Japanese text and the *rômaji* edition - one aspect becomes visible for the reader at first glance: in Kinoshita's and Kuroita's *Kokushi taikai* version, the *Kojiki* appears, with regard to language, as a nearly completely Japanese text. This is made visible by the *furigana* that run parallel to the Kanji scripture. Chinese characters in the *Kojiki* are not only transcribed, as

⁴⁰³ Before and during the war, Eckard seems to have been one of the most fervent axis believers among German Japanologists; nevertheless, he was appointed professor of Japanese Studies after the war, at the Free University of Berlin in 1964. This, among other events, caused an outburst of students' protests, leading to the »student revolution« of 1968 in West Berlin. cf. Walravens 2000: 15.

⁴⁰⁴ Yake et al. (2001: 3) state that Kinoshita has died in the age of 87, but in regard to his lifespan the age of 86 seems correct.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Teruko Yoh (1999) on the ideological transformation of Kanokogi, see also Zentrum für Sprache und Kultur Japans (ed.) 2006.

has been done in all editions since Motoori Norinaga's philological reconstruction of the text, but it seems as if the editor(s) have composed an fully independent narrative in artificial archaic Japanese, running parallel to the textual body, thus creating another in contrast to the original's appearance in Chinese characters. Through this, the *Kojiki* text increasingly loses its original Kanji, or better Chinese, appearance. This process of totally Japanizing the whole body of the text by deconstructing its Chinese appearance reaches its final stage within volume two, where the complete text is printed in phonetic *rōmaji* transcript only. In this volume, no visible trait of a basically Chinese writing of the narrative appears any longer, and the reader gets the impression of actually dealing with the original archaic Japanese narrative, written down in a phonetic style. Thus any former Chinese (con-) text is neglected.

We probably do not do justice to Kinoshita Iwao's basic intentions with this interpretation of the *rōmaji* version, since in the 1920s he was a serious researcher, as we can see from his 1929 article in *Yamato*. Possibly he intended his *rōmaji* volume as nothing more than a kind of a friendly aid for the foreign reader, as this was his second volume of the whole translation project, which he wrote completely in *rōmaji* as well, including his introduction, the forewords, and so on. But in my view it does not seem an absurd interpretation to regard the importance of this phonetic transcript as going much beyond such purely pragmatic explanations.

But as was pointed out above (cf. chapter II. 5. 1. 2. 2. 3.), the question of language, probably even in the magic sense of *kotodama*, was of utmost importance for the reception of the *Kojiki* as one of the main sources for modern Shintō, starting with Motoori Norinaga's masterpiece *Kojikiden*. Kinoshita Iwao, with his 1940 edition of the text, stood in the tradition of this project. His rendering of the text into a purely phonetic form, his denial of the original Kanji text corpus and usage of phonetic *rōmaji*, distanced the original text dramatically from any Chinese context and »pollution« - a move which perfectly matched the ideologically set up of the time. Therefore I am convinced that this idea stood behind the decision of 1940 to produce a phonetic *rōmaji* version of the *Kojiki*, without, however, being able to present final evidence.

2. 5. *Kokutai Shintō and the concept of man*

The ideological interpretation of Shintō mythology is crucially important in the context of political Shintō in wartime Japan. Fujisawa Chikao, at the time a

professor at the Imperial University of Kyôto and one of the most outspoken and well known supporters of the Japanese national ideology in the service of the government in the 1940s (cf. Dower 1986: 225-228), writes in his essay »The Spiritual Foundation of Japan« in 1936:

»In its essence, Japan is a purely collective family state that emerged quite naturally out of a history of two thousand years. Thus, one must take into account that in this case myths actually extend into modern-day life. [...] Japan is a special kind of family state, and no other country in the world can be compared with it.« (Fujisawa 1936: 7f.)

Thus, the special character of the Japanese state stems from its structure, which is unique in its religious legitimation.

2. 5. 1. *On the concept of the state and man*

Fujisawa mentions three basic pillars of the government according to this view: »the emperor as the head of the Japanese family-state, the subjects as members of the Japanese family-state, and the way (*michi*), which is observed by the emperor and his subjects in perfect harmony with one another,« (Fujisawa 1936: 8).

He writes that the emperor is to be seen as the »spiritual and biological center of the Japanese national community,« whose primary role is that of a »national teacher«; Meiji-tennô for him clearly wrote in the »famous Rescript on National Education that the emperor as the moral leader and the people as his moral followers must strictly observe the same way,« (Fujisawa 1936: 9). The second role of the emperor is that of a »father of the entire nation«; the relationship between him and his subjects is like the relationship between parents and children. The third basic value regarding the emperor is his »capacity as a ruler,« (Fujisawa 1936: 10) which is »very significantly symbolized by the sacred sword.«⁴⁰⁶ The position of the ruler is legitimated by the divine mandate of the sun goddess Amaterasu to her grandson Ninigi no mikoto to rule the empire through his descendants, who make up the uninterrupted line of the imperial household.

Although Fujisawa's remarks are hardly original in their content, this is precisely the aspect that makes his treatise so interesting and valuable as a source for the present study. His writings clearly outline the spiritual and ideological quintessence of the Japanese concept of the family-state at the time, as well as State Shintô and the *kokutai* ideology. It consistently states the same points over and

⁴⁰⁶ The sword is one of the three elements of the mythical imperial regalia.

over again: the divine emperor is the center of the state; his subjects are like a great family to one another he is connected to them as their father; in the state, they function as the family's children.

However, this terminology begins to show serious terminological problems. Despite the clarity with which the position of the ruler is outlined within this thinking, the exact status of the other members of the »national family« remains vague. Are the subjects – the Japanese people – human beings who belong to the emperor only symbolically, or must their position be understood literally, making them related to the emperor in the sense of a real family?

Fujisawa does not avoid making a clear statement on this important point. First, he refers to the central ethical norms of loyalty (*chū*) and filial piety (*kō*) as the »fundamental national virtues,« before pressing on into the metaphysical core of the issue. While referring to the »millions of gods [...] from whom the ancestors of the Japanese are descended« (Fujisawa 1936: 13), the author writes:

»According to this myth, the empire and the emperor's people are organically linked by one and the same divine blood, which represents the core principle of our national religion. [...] In Japan the divine is organically woven into and fused with the human.« (Fujisawa 1936: 14, 15)

Another author, Machida Sanehide, remarks no less clearly on this point:

»Thus, the Japanese myth of creation is not universal, but purely national. The concept of the people expressed in mythology, and which still thrives today as its spiritual basis, is the idealized notion of the dynasty, the country and its people as the chosen ones. These three elements are, on the one hand, united in the belief in a common descent, and on the other hand, by the charismatic ruler who is directly descended from the sun goddess and who is her embodiment on earth.« (Machida 1930: 168)

Fujisawa and Machida's statements show that the position of the people within this ideology is characterized by what at first appears to be ambivalence. On the one hand, the inhabitants of the country of Japan are full citizens and »subjects« according to the codified system of state ethics described in the *Rescript on Education* from 1890. On the other hand, the Japanese are accorded a kind of metaphysical status as a chosen people, based on the nation's collective divine origins.

While the *Rescript on Education* postulates a quasi-familial bond between ruler and subject by equating the core, originally Confucian virtues of loyalty and filial piety, an additional spiritual founding was necessary in order to imbue this social, earthly link with metaphysical and religious substantiation and legitimacy.

The question of the fundamental ideological arguments that made it possible to make a kind of divine being out of what was originally merely a good subject in the Confucian sense cannot be explained on the basis of Confucian individual and social ethics alone. In this context, it is necessary to examine the religious components of the concept of familism, which were to a large extent influenced by Shintô.

The reception and establishment of the Shintô worldview in the modern national ideology of Japan was rooted primarily in Kokugaku thought. This school's social ideals were anchored in the distant past and were found to exist in the conditions of ancient Japan, which was romanticized as an age of ethical and religious as well as political rule by the emperor. This view held that Japan was a »land of the gods« (*shinkoku*) – a concept that provided the intellectual-historical basis for the ultimate metaphysical exaggeration of the entire nation. When, for example, Hirata Atsutane called Japan the »land of the gods,« he was following the view expressed in the ancient written works. In the case of Atsutane, this view led to a fanatical nationalism and to the belief that Japan was chosen for its superior character to all other countries. In his view the gods were »the very origin of all humanity, and when the gods gave birth to the world, at the same time they also gave birth to humans,« (cf. Hammitzsch 1936: 20)⁴⁰⁷. According to Atsutane, the way of »upright people is in reality the way of the gods,« (cf. Hammitzsch 1936: 20). On the nature of the Japanese, he also writes: »We all are without a doubt the descendants of the gods.«⁴⁰⁸

The aforementioned examples give a comprehensive picture of the intellectual-historical development that ultimately led to the formation of an ideologically influenced conception of man in which the »subject« was seen as basically divine, despite his inferior position in the state. In this way, the people were also elevated to the level of descendants of actual deities and they were viewed as subjects of an *arahitogami* (»currently visible deity«): the emperor.

Aside from the written tradition of ancient myths, stories from the Japanese Middle Ages also functioned as sources for this view. The Shintô-oriented historical work *Jinnô shôtôki* by Kitabatake Chikafusa from 1339 is particularly relevant in this context.⁴⁰⁹ These stories formed the basis for the reception of the concep-

⁴⁰⁷ To use Horst Hammitzsch's publications in this context could be seen as problematical since he obviously had an affinity for the ideological sphere of the time. In this study his contributions are strictly used for his translations of Kokugaku works.

⁴⁰⁸ Hirata Atsutane: *Kodô taii*, KGS edition, 10: 1.

⁴⁰⁹ See also the excellent intellectual-historical overview in Worm 1981: 63. For a recent study of this text cf. Michael Wachutka: »A Living Past as the Nation's Personality': *Jinnô-shôtôki*, early Shōwa nationalism, and *Das Dritte Reich*«. In: Scheid (ed.) 2013: 203-236.

tion of man in the recent past, and provided legitimation for religiously motivated nationalism, which could also be called Shintō fundamentalism. Thus, it is worth investigating what these sources actually say about the origin of humankind, in contrast to the ruler, who clearly takes on a mediating role between man and *kami*, a term that in this context clearly is to be understood to mean »deity,« and not »spirit.«

2. 5. 1. 1. *Excursus: on the human image in Japanese mythology*⁴¹⁰

In his remarkable book on mythology and culture, the Romanian cultural anthropologist C. I. Gulian (1971) writes that primitive mythology concentrates »on the beginnings, the origin of things: the world, society, man and his creations.« This general statement also applies broadly to the Japanese mythological anthologies from the 8th century; they tell of the origin of the gods, the world, culture, the ruling house and its claim to power, and much more. On only one point are the myths silent: the origin of man. In these myths, which tell of the gods of heaven and earth, human beings are apparently too self-evident to merit mentioning.

Upon reading the consecutive episodes of events according to the mythical chronologies of the *Nihonshoki* and the *Kojiki*, it becomes apparent that the gods whose deeds these works describe carry human traits both in form and character. These gods are anthropomorphic. Thus, directly after the separation of heaven and earth in the *Nihonshoki*, they appear under the terms »deity« (*kami*), »divine human being« (*kami-hito*), or simply »human being« (*hito*), depending on the version of the story.⁴¹¹ Over the further course of mythical events, these deities also show human traits. Aside from their clearly anthropomorphic forms, they also consume and digest food. They are sexually active, susceptible to disease, and to a certain extent, even mortal.

And yet, alongside the world of the gods, there is also the world of human beings. This middle country of the three-tiered cosmos exists between heaven and the underworld, and yet it is only vaguely described and is hardly concrete. Only when the deeds of the gods extend into the human sphere to directly affect human beings are events on earth described in more detail. The relationship between man and the gods can be divided into four overarching areas under the terms »death,« »disease,« »nourishment,« and »genealogy.«

⁴¹⁰ For this chapter see also Antoni 1990c.

⁴¹¹ *Nihonshoki*, version NKBT 67: 76/77 and 78/79; cf. Aston 1956: 4-6.

A dramatic account of the beginning of human mortality is given during the underworld episode regarding the god Izanagi and his sister and wife Izanami, who has become the goddess of death. She curses him and announces her intention to kill 1000 people a day, to which Izanagi responds by giving life to 1500 in the same period of time. Thus, human mortality is inevitable, but so is the primacy of life over death.⁴¹² A different myth focuses not only on human mortality, but also on the brevity of life. Once again, the curse of a goddess plays a central role in this myth. Later on, it is written that the deity Susanoo determined what kind of wood the coffins of humans should be made of.

Thus, mortality is ultimately the defining characteristic of human beings. Death as an inescapable fate remains the common human destiny, and mortality is a curse from the gods. But the gods are also the source of all that is necessary for human life. It is Amaterasu herself who determines which foods are good to eat, and she is the first to create the divine rice fields as prototypes for those of the middle country. The deceased goddess Ukemochi also turns out to be beneficial for humans, her body is a source of cultivated fruits and many cultural goods – a particularly old, so-called »ancient agricultural« element of Japanese mythology. The methods of medicine and medicinal baths are also divine gifts for the benefit of human beings (cf. Antoni 1982: 29-33).

While the areas of death, nourishment, and disease show that the modalities of human existence are the result of divine actions – that is to say, they are determined by the gods – they do not provide any sign that the human race itself is descended from the gods. This is covered in the fourth and last of the aforementioned thematic complexes: genealogy.

Throughout Japanese history, it becomes apparent that an unusual amount of value has generally been accorded to genealogical thought. And mythology in its traditional, already critically ordered form serves the sole purpose of documenting the exclusive descent of the imperial household and a few noble families, thus legitimating their relative status within the social hierarchy.

The Foreword to the *Kojiki*⁴¹³ clearly states that this work, by order of the emperor, serves to summarize and organize the complex mythological tradition in order to provide a religiously based legitimation for the superior status of the imperial household.

But even the earliest story in this work reveals the degree of uncertainty with which this kind of lineage, which so obviously existed to serve a purpose, was ac-

⁴¹² On the myth of Izanami and Izanagi and the conceptions of death and the hereafter contained in it cf. Naumann 1971.

⁴¹³ For a comment on the Foreword cf. Antoni 2012a: 483-504.

tually viewed. Ingyō-tennō – the 19th emperor, according to the traditional order, who reigned from 412 to 453 – already ordered a review of the bloodlines of the nobility, since he was »lamenting the transgressions in the surnames and gentile names of the people of all the surnames and names in the Empire.«⁴¹⁴ In his preface to the *Kojiki*, Ō no Yasumaro, the work's compiler, also mentions significant doubts about the accuracy of the myths and quotes from Emperor Tenmu's decree, which states:

»I hear that the chronicles of the emperors and likewise the original words in the possession of the various families deviate from exact truth, and are mostly amplified by empty falsehoods.«⁴¹⁵

Empress Gemmei also complained that »the 'ancient tradition' contains falsities and distortions, and she wished to set the errors [...] right.« (l.c.) Clearly these genealogies mainly served political and hierarchical intentions, with which important families sought to define their position within the newly created centralized government by claiming as close a genealogical link to the imperial household as possible – naturally, in the best interests of the clan in question. The appeal to divine ancestors served as a means to this genealogical positioning, since in this way it could be argued that they were already closely connected to the deities of the imperial household during the »Age of the Gods.« A closer examination of the sources in question reveals three categories that define the relationship between a deity and a human family. I will refer to these by the names mentioned in the original text: »ancestor,« »offering,« and »child.«

These terms refer to the fact that some families claimed certain deities as their own founding ancestors, while others merely worshipped certain deities and made sacrifices to them. The third category, »child,« refers to families who saw themselves as being directly descended from a certain deity.

Bearing in mind these aspects, upon close examination the chapters in the *Kojiki* relating to the «Age of the Gods» contain a surprisingly small number of cases in which any kind of connection between humans and gods is mentioned at all. Almost without exception, the genealogies in these sections concern the creation of new deities, and not the origins of human families. *Kami* are descended from other *kami*, and a vast number of gods reside in the *takamagahara*, the »plain of high heaven.« Once again, humans only play a marginal role (cf. Antoni 1991a: 71, note 23).

⁴¹⁴ *Kojiki*, edition NKBT 1: 292/293; Chamberlain 1883 (1982): 367, 368, n. 1.

⁴¹⁵ *Kojiki*, edition NKBT 1: 46/47; Chamberlain 1883 (1982): 3f., cf. below, n. 173.

Regarding the previously mentioned categories of »ancestor,« »offering« and »child,« the written sources show that a few ancient Japanese noble families, all of which are specifically named, claim to have their own divine ancestor. Usually this merely involves mentioning a clan name that has no internal connection to the mythical events discussed in the text. In the »Age of the Gods« in the *Kojiki*, a total of 28 clans are mentioned in this context, while in the *Nihonshoki* 18 are mentioned. Only 11 of the clans mentioned in both texts are consistent with one another. One exception is the five attendants to Ninigi no mikoto, the grandson of the sun goddess and founder of the imperial household, each of whom is mentioned by name. They are the ancestors of the illustrious Nakatomi (who later became the Fujiwara) and Imbe clans, who went on to be of great importance to the imperial family.

The clan of the Azumi no muraji is an instructive special case. According to the *Kojiki*, this family has three female deities as its ancestral deities, the daughters of the goddess of the sea, Watatsumi no mikoto,⁴¹⁶ and the clan is said to be the offspring of these goddesses. The *Nihonshoki*, on the other hand, merely states in this context that the family of Azumi no muraji worships these goddesses and makes sacrifices to them (*itsuki matsuru*).⁴¹⁷ There is no mention of the family being descended from the deities in question here, but rather the description of an entirely different religious connection: a clan worships its »ancestral deity« as a »protective deity« that exchanges worship and offerings for divine protection.

A close analysis of the sources reveals further similar cases in which the human-god relationship is always a relationship of sacrifices, in which a clan chooses a protective deity. And it can be concluded that the actual basis for the belief in so-called »ancestral deities« lies in ancient Japan.

This concept relates to the second category, the offerings. The case of the Azumi no muraji as well as the Munakata no kimi⁴¹⁸ and other families shows that the true religious core of the supposed lineage is found in the offerings given to a protective deity by the clan, and not in the concept of its physical descent from this deity.

This is also confirmed by the last of the three aforementioned categories, the child. In fact there are only a few cases in the mythology in which a human is called the »child« of a deity. In these cases a human woman, who does not know the true identity of her lover, always appears in the act of love as being possessed by a deity (cf. Antoni 1991a: 73, note 27). The most famous mythical story in this

⁴¹⁶ *Kojiki*, edition NKBT 1: 70/71; Chamberlain 1883 (1982): 48, n. 19.

⁴¹⁷ *Nihonshoki*, edition NKBT 67: 95; cf. Aston 1956: 27.

⁴¹⁸ *Nihonshoki*, edition NKBT 67: 95; cf. Aston 1956: 27.

complex of motifs tells of a man called Ôtataneko who appears in the sources as the founding ancestor of two noble families who are thus able to actually claim divine descent (the Miwa and the Kamo). We already discussed his shrine in the context of the *shinbutsu-bunri* complex in Miwa (cf. chap. 2.2.1.).

Let us examine the specifics of this case. The aforementioned Ôtataneko was the offspring of the union of a deity and a human woman, in accordance with the basic idea of this motif, a union that the deity Ômononushi no kami attained surreptitiously by hiding his true nature and form. In human form he drew close to the woman; and after the true nature of his identity was revealed the sources cannot emphasize enough the special, exceptional nature of this relationship and the resulting offspring (cf. Antoni 1988: 91-98, 106-108). Nowhere is it more clear than here that an unheard-of event came to pass in the conception of a human child by a deity. And nowhere is it more clearly documented that the human and divine spheres are separate from one another.

But now after this necessary and insightful look at ancient Japan let us return to the original topic at hand. The question to be investigated is what sources provided the basis for the propagandistic, ideological claim that the people and the emperor were related to one another because they both were descended from the Japanese deities.

The degree of importance of religious nationalism in the tradition of the *Ko-kugaku* can be seen in the views of a contemporary German scholar of Japan, Horst Hammitzsch, who gave his remarks on the topic in 1936 with these ideologically affirmative and contaminated words:

»According to the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, the ancient sources, the emperor and the people and the empire are an organism supplied with the very same blood and thus to worship one's ancestors is to pay tribute to the gods, since gods and people are organically connected. [...] The Japanese state is one 'family.'« (Hammitzsch 1936: 25)

Our investigation, on the other hand, comes to exactly the opposite conclusion on this point. The certainty with which the emperor is held to be of divine descent according to the mythological tradition does not apply to the people. The tracing back of a few noble families to certain gods not only appears extremely contrived toward the end of reaching transparent political motives, but also shows itself upon closer examination to be less rooted in genealogy than in religion.

Humans and gods are existentially separate from one another, and the events of the »Age of the Gods« do not tell of the two spheres being connected, but rather of their lasting and irrevocable separation. It is only the person of the em-

peror that takes on a special role here, regardless of whether he is subject to mortality. From a historical view this fact means that the imperial household was already able to anchor its mandate to power in the numinous sphere in ancient times, i.e. in Tenmu-tennô's times.⁴¹⁹

The Japanese people, on the other hand, only played the role of »subjects.« An interpretation according to which they are also divine, such as was postulated by Kokugaku thinkers and ideologues in the tradition of Hirata Atsutane, remained an illusion and the ideal of the national theoreticians of the modern age.

2. 6. Ideology and propaganda

But not only the old myths played a key role in the context of nativist ideology. The entire area of »authentic« folk stories was of prominent importance. By 1945 schools represented the primary pillar of the nationalist education of the people.

Especially primary school education played an important role in this context. Using centrally unified teaching plans and curriculum, regional and linguistic differences in dialect were to be leveled. National pride and a pan-Japanese feeling of community were taught to the children using practice exercises in the »textbooks for elementary schools« (*Shôgaku tokuhon*).⁴²⁰ Thus it is worth examining these textbooks more closely, though our main focus will be the textbooks of the early Shôwa period, which, however, only show slight differences to those of previous periods (i.e. the Meiji and Taishô eras).

The ten short volumes of the *Shôgaku tokuhon* from the years 1932 to 1937 (Shôwa 7 to 12) covered a wide spectrum of subjects. They included various areas according to their appropriateness for children of this age-group. But the texts did not only have the duty of teaching children the basic cultural technique of reading, but also served, as is well known, to educate them ideologically according to the *Rescript on Education* and its various commentaries. Thus, it is not surprising that already the first text in the first book (Book 1, 1932) begins with a picture of the cherry blossom, the national symbol of Japan, followed by marching toy soldiers and the following text: *Susume susume heitai susume* (»Go forward, go forward, army, go forward!«)

⁴¹⁹ For a discussion concerning Tenmu-tennô's politics and the question of the so-called Tenmu Dynasty cf. Ooms 2009: passim.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Mombushô 1932-38.

More »civilian« texts about nature, good behavior and technology (e.g. telephones) follow. There are, however, always texts with clear political, national intentions scattered among them, about the navy and the air force, for example. The result is the image of a patriotic, nature-loving, cultivated and always well defended country – exactly the image of Japan and its national polity that is given in the official commentaries on the Rescript on Education. Thus, from the beginning, school education is made to serve the national ideology.

Upon examining the other texts, it becomes apparent that in Books 1, 2 and 3 a certain group of texts is especially well represented: folktales. Book 1 contains the folktales *Shitakiri suzume*, *Usagi to kame* and *Momotarô*; Book 2 contains four folktales: *Saru to kani*, *Nezumi no yomeiri*, *Kobutori* and *hanasaka jiji*; Book 3 contains the texts *Issunbôshi*, *Kachikachi-yama*, *Nezumi no chie*, *Kin no ono* and *Urashima Tarô*. Even those who are only vaguely familiar with Japanese folktales will recognize most of these stories. They form the cannon of Japanese »national folktales,« stories that every Japanese, at least at the time, was familiar with. Their great popularity is due solely to the fact that they were included in elementary school readers. In this way they attained the status of widespread, pan-Japanese folktales, regardless of the question of whether these tales were limited to specific regions or only known in different variations. The schools served to standardize them and thus fulfilled their duty of fostering a common national consciousness.

Book 3 is especially interesting in this context. Like the preceding books, it contains five folktales. Besides these, however, there is also a story entitled *Kunibiki* that at first appears to be a folktale, but soon reveals itself to the attentive reader as a simplified form of the ancient Japanese mythical tale of »land pulling« (*kunibiki*).⁴²¹ An examination of the next volume, Book 4, shows that this tendency continues here, and that the folktales are increasingly replaced by mythical topics. In this book there are not even any folktales anymore, but rather exclusively stories from the border areas of mythology, legends and stories adapted to simplified language for children such as *Kaguyahime*, *Shirousagi*, *Yuriwaka* and *Hagoromo*. Clearly these stories have replaced the folktales of the first three books. An examination of the following books confirms this trend. In Book 5 there are no

⁴²¹ The mythical episode of the »land pulling« (*kunibiki*) is to be found in the *Izumo-fudoki*, where it is reported already at the beginning that the land masses of Shimane peninsula, the central area of the old Izumo province, had been drawn over from the continent in four parts by a deity in an enormous feat of strength and fastened to the country of Izumo. The first of these land pieces had been drawn over from the Korean kingdom of Shilla. cf. *Izumo-fudoki* (NKBT2: 99 -103); for an English translation (which is partly problematical because of being inaccurate) cf. Aoki, Michiko Yamaguchi: *Izumo Fudoki*. (MN-Monograph), Tôkyô: Monumenta Nipponica, 1971: 82 – 83. For the »land pulling« myth see also Antoni 2005: 4-6 and Carlqvist 2010.

longer any folktales and legends, but only the most important elements of traditional Shintô mythology.

The stories contained in this volume outline important elements of Japanese mythology. But Books 6 and 7 form the peak of the entire series with stories about the »first emperor of Japan« (Jinmu-tennô) and finally the conquests and deeds of the first great Japanese hero, Yamato-takeru, the »valiant man of Yamato« with which the specifically »Japanese spirit« (*yamato-damashii*) began according to the mythology.

It is clear that the folktales, legends and myths in these readers had a specific, clearly recognizable duty: they were intended to familiarize children with what the political leadership of the country saw as the core of the national tradition, equating the folktales with stories of gods, heroes and emperors of the oldest Japanese tradition.

The close connection between various motifs and the contents of this tradition and modern Japanese nationalism will be shown using an example that clearly shows the function of folktales in this context: the tale of the »peach boy,« Momotarô.

2. 6. 1. *The role of popular tradition*

Like in Nazi Germany (as previously discussed), the popular tradition also played an important ideological role in the general spread of the political worldview at the time. This applies to the area of myths and legends to a much higher degree than for the more »apolitical« folktale. But the popular tradition of folktales was also interpreted and used according to the nationalist view. Thus the Japanese folklorist Mizuyo Ashiya remarks in his dissertation on the topic published in 1939 in Germany - and thus possibly even directly influenced by National Socialism, *Japanische und deutsche Tiermärchen, besonders Fuchsmärchen, in ihrem Wesen und nach ihrer volkstumskundlichen Grundlage* (»The essence of Japanese and German animal folktales, especially tales about foxes, according to their basis in folklore,« Cologne 1939), on the well-known Japanese animal folk tale of the »race between the fox and the tiger«:

»The foxes appear here not as self-obsessed, deceitful animals, but rather as intelligent and capable animals that fought out the forced competition with the foreign opponent with a true sense of a common spirit. This well known animal folktale fits well with the patriotic feeling of the Japanese people. The tiger comes from Korea, and often from China and is closely connected to the idea of the enemy from the continent.«

The folktale appears here as an allegory for the political rivalry of the time. Japan and its continental enemies are identified with well-known figures from the tradition of folktales in a way that is easily understandable for the reader and thus subjected to the black-and-white ethics of the folktale of good versus evil.

This function of folktales can be seen especially clearly in the case of the most famous Japanese folktale, »Momotarô.« No other subject from the tradition of folktales offered itself so conveniently to nationalist interpretation and war propaganda as the story of the little »Peach boy« who succeeds in conquering the powerful enemies from the land of the demons.

In his book entitled *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, the American historian and scholar of Japanese Studies John Dower (1986) points to a remarkable circumstance in this context.

Dower describes the function of racist propaganda on the American as well as the Japanese side over the course of the Pacific War. In the work the author also turns to what at first appears to be an unusual topic. Building on the folktale of Momotarô, Dower covers a specific aspect of Japanese war propaganda that he calls the »Momotarô paradigm.«

Dower states that in all the Japanese magazine articles, caricatures and films during the war none other than the little Momotarô appears in the role of the patriotic hero. The substance of these stories is always the same: Momotarô appears as the embodiment of Japanese heroic bravery who is able to conquer the enemy, analogous to the »demonic« enemy of the folktale – who appears to be of superior strength.

In films and caricatures of this kind Momotarô always appears as a youthful and energetic embodiment of the »new« Japan, in sharp contrast to the Americans and English, who are shown as »demons with a human face.« The propagandistic identification of Momotarô with the young pilots of the »Special Attack Forces, tying on their headbands and preparing to depart on their first and last great missions« (Dower 1986: 256) was a popular motif in this context.

The people of Southeast Asia, who according to Japanese doctrine of the »Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere« (*Daitôakyôeiken*, cf. Fujiwara 1989: 113-152) were to be freed from Euro-American, »white« imperialism, appear in this conception either as Momotarô's auxiliaries (in the role of the accompanying dog, monkey and pheasant of the folktale) or as childish and naïve natives oppressed by the »demons« that are freed from oppression by Momotarô and his helpers.

In this way the events of the war could be presented in widely recognized and thus easily comprehensible categories. Momotarô is the »pure Japanese hero,« while the enemies are »foreign demons.« In the work Dower shows that

the Momotarô paradigm is based on an antagonism that can be described using the polar opposites of »the Pure Self« and »the Demonic Other.« (Dower 1986: 205)

These are the well-known supporting pillars of modern Japanese *kokutai* thought. A representation that gives the enemy a polar-opposite position within this concept and marks him as part of the »demonic other« must have shown itself to be unusually useful as an instrument of propaganda, since the »purity« of the Japanese »self« could shine even brighter the more bleak the »demonic other« appeared to be.

2. 6. 2. Momotarô and the »spirit of Japan«⁴²²

As discussed above, the maxims of this religiously based nationalism were spread among the people at the latest since 1890, with the proclamation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, in schools (and the military). Elementary school textbooks played a crucial role here. They took on the function of propagating the basic principles (*hongî*) of Japanese ethics among children using vivid didactic texts.

An analysis of the historical motifs shows that the collection of folktales, legends and myths in the form of reading passages for textbooks was in fact a subtly woven whole: the folktales with Momotarô took on a prominent place, followed by the most important examples from the legendary and mythological traditions, and finally the deeds of the great ancient hero Yamato-takeru. The two figures of Momotarô and Yamato-takeru complete the cycle. The figure of Momotarô in the school textbooks reveals himself as merely the childish, naïve form of the original Japanese hero and conquerer Yamato-takeru. The schoolchildren, who at the beginning of their schooling were familiarized with Momotarô and thus made to identify with the child-hero, finally arrive at the end of this cycle, which was so important for the propagation of the Japanese national morality, with the mythical figure of Yamato-takeru. According to the mythological tradition he was the first to fully formulate the love of one's country and the special »spirit of Japan« (*yamato-damashii*). And he was also the first to advance against the »foreign« at the edge of the known world, conquer its regions for Yamato and thus became the epitome of the brave, patriotic Japanese warrior who also belonged to the imperial family, as even his name, Yamato-takeru (»the brave one from Yamato«) shows.

⁴²² For this section see also Antoni 1991b.

Yamato-takeru as a mythical figure is followed by the legendary heroes of the Japanese Middle Ages, Minamoto no Yoshitsune and Minamoto no Tametomo, while Momotarō is the young, stoic hero of folktales. The idea of the »foreigners« as the devil, uncultivated and inhuman, is an integral part of this complex. Thus, it is not surprising that Yamato-takeru and Momotarō were so readily adopted as subjects especially in imperialistic Japan during the modern age (1890-1945).

The level of detail with which the historical pattern was adopted in wartime propaganda can be seen in the examples mentioned by Dower. The demons from abroad whom Momotarō encounters correspond exactly to the »demon islands« of Japanese legend. In the propaganda Momotarō meets demons that are characterized by their outward appearance (a horn on their heads) and an incomprehensible language (English), typical characteristics of the »classical« island demons. A further typical element of the »demon world« is the cultural underdevelopment of the inhabitants of the »demon island.« In movies, the people of Southeast Asia are portrayed as culturally underdeveloped »demons.« However, the audience is invited to sympathize with them, since Momotarō, functioning as the classical culture hero, frees the uncivilized people and lifts them into true humanity, just as the legendary hero does with the inhabitants of the »island of the demons.« The demons in these movies are actually sympathetic figures, burdened by the European, white imperialists who play the role of the classical demon king Kanehira in the legend of Yoshitsune. Momotarō's freeing of the people of Southeast Asia from the yoke of colonialism is analogous to the »deliverance« of Okinawa, Hokkaidō and other border areas from the condition of demonic non-culture by the archetypal Japanese »border heroes« of ancient times and the Japanese Middle Ages (cf. Antoni 1983-86).

A comparison with further analogous cases shows that the functionalization of famous heroic figures and motifs from the Japanese mythological tradition within modern nationalism was not arbitrary or random, but rather served clear ideological intentions: the historical heroes and their deeds provided the pattern for the benefits demanded by the people at the time.

The »pure« legendary hero Momotarō took on the important role of being the first in this series of didactic examples. Momotarō subtly provided the youngest Japanese schoolchildren with the essence of what the Japanese government saw as the goal of ideological education according to *kokutai* doctrine. The folktale of the »peach boy« opened the door to the »Japanese spirit.«

3. CRITICAL VOICES FROM ABROAD

The development of State Shintô with its *kokutai* dogma thus continued progressing toward a »fundamentalist«⁴²³, emperor-centered state ideology in the Taishô and early Shôwa periods. Not much criticism from this period is known, since Japanese intellectuals generally at least came to terms with the spirit of the times - with the exception of an example like Tsuda Sôkichi -, if they did not actively contribute to it. An example of this is Inoue Tetsujirô who, as we have seen, underwent a consistent development in the 1930s and '40s to become a fanatical Shintô nationalist.

In the Meiji period, however, a large group of mostly socialist critics of the *kokutai* ideology existed who were unable to come to terms with the Shintôization of daily life built around the emperor. Several such cases are documented in the extensive survey by Herbert Worm (1981), of which the case of the medical doctor and Christian socialist Ôishi Seinosuke (1867-1911) is the most remarkable. The scion of a family of academics, and educated abroad, Ôishi sharply criticized the *kokutai* doctrine and exposed its intellectual-historical fabrications. In a paraphrase of the contents of Ôishi's most important discussion, Worm (1981: 80f.) gives an overview of his argumentation. He complains among other things that in Japan »obstinate pedagogues and a narrow-minded government treat the image of the emperor as an idol.« He continues: »Only a people without self-confidence sends its academics to America in order to hold propagandistic lectures about the uniqueness of the Japanese *kokutai* and our morality.« As Worm (1981: 81) correctly remarks, the text »fundamentally contradicts the *kokutai* interpretation of [...] Hozumi Yatsuka.«

With the intensifying political climate in Japan and the increasing spiritual and religious ideologization, critical voices increasingly fell silent, while to a certain extent warnings were voiced by foreign observers in Japan. Some of them had been well versed in events in the country for decades, but they were not subjected to the same pressure to conform as their Japanese colleagues. Two authors are especially relevant in this context: Karl Florenz and Basil Hall Chamberlain.

⁴²³ On the term »fundamentalism« cf. the writings of Reinhold Bernhardt (1996), who remarks in summary: »Thus, Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon: 'modern antimodernism' (G. Küenzlen) struggling against the worldview of the Enlightenment. Fundamentalism is a modern answer to the existential fears brought about by the modern age. The answer lies in a 'backwards-looking utopia.' [...] Fundamentalism has become more prevalent since modernism has become embattled,« (Bernhardt 1996: 29f.).

3. 1. Karl Florenz and Basil H. Chamberlain

Only a few artists and scholars within and outside Japan voiced opposition to these subtle ideological constructions, like Karl Florenz did to a certain extent, who studied the historically authentic development of Shintō in detail already in the late 19th century.

In his research on Shintō Karl Florenz applied strict academic and comparative methods. In 1892, during his position as a lecturer in Japan, at a time when the cult of Jinmu-tennō and the mythological view of early history reached an early peak, he declared, on the basis of his historical and philological work, that the written histories (*Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*) could only be »reasonably trusted« from the beginning of the 6th century on (Florenz 1892: IV). Thus, Florenz also sees it as self-evident that Jinmu-tennō is merely a »legendary« emperor. In most cases, however, he uses only the historical proper names of these mythical, legendary figures – in this context: Iware-biko.

Finally, Florenz renders his unmistakable judgement – unfortunately not lacking in a certain feeling of self-assurance:

»The few insights on the true nature of ancient Japan that European research has been able to provide, however, reveal that the historical representation in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi* (on which all later claims by the Japanese are based) are steeped to their core in false principles.« (Florenz 1892: III)

Florenz is entirely indebted to the European academic tradition of the late 19th century, not the ideological historicism of the time, and in this context he speaks of »evolution« and »critical research« (l.c.). Imperial mysticism and family-state ideology, on the other hand, are not present in his commentaries.⁴²⁴ Florenz's great importance for the formation of critical Japanese research (Tsuda Sōkichi and others) was first outlined in detail in Masako Satō's study from 1995. This area offers important points of departure for further research on the genesis of critical, academic Shintō research during the era of state dogma.

But more important in this context are the writings of a further foreign scholar in Japan who dealt with this topic in a surprisingly pointed, even provocative and polemical way: none other than Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935), one of the fathers of historical and philological Japanese Studies.

As an unsurpassed linguist and translator of historical sources, especially the *Kojiki*, which is so relevant to the present discussion, Chamberlain was one of the

⁴²⁴ A lively academic debate within German Japanese Studies developed around Karl Florenz in the 1980s; cf. Worm 1988; Naumann 1985a.

most knowledgeable people about the authentic cultural and textual tradition of Japan. But in the broader public he was better known as the author of the collection of miscellanea *Things Japanese*, a competent and often lighthearted and informal guide to all »things Japanese«. On the other hand, it is hardly known that Chamberlain added an addendum to one edition of this work (5th edition, 1927) that does not fit the image of the lighthearted, enlightened scholar, but rather is perplexing to this day for its theoretical and verbal radicalness. In this essay, which was first published already in 1912 – tellingly in a publication with the name »Rationalist Press« – Chamberlain renders his judgment on contemporary intellectual developments in Japan in sharp, entirely undiplomatic words. The tone is set already in the title: »The Invention of a New Religion« (Chamberlain 1927), anticipating the term »invention« that would later become so important in the work of Hobsbawm.⁴²⁵

At the very beginning of the essay, Chamberlain (1927: 559ff.) remarks caustically that contemporary Japan is a good example of how religion can be made to serve worldly purposes. He writes that although this also requires certain elements to be already in place, such as the worship of the emperor, the government bureaucracy seeks to combine existing ideas into new theories that benefit itself (and, in a broader sense, also the Japanese people; Chamberlain 1927: 561). Chamberlain writes on the religious situation of the time: »Shintô, a primitive nature cult, which had fallen into discredit, was taken out of its cupboard and dusted,« in order to replace Buddhism, the true religion of the common Japanese people. Only the Japanese government, he continues, insists on doctrinaire claims of Shintô, such as the direct descent of the emperor, who is worshipped as a living deity, from the sun goddess. Only in this context were Shintô priests given the right to carry out burials – and later, even marriage ceremonies – which were actually foreign to Shintô.

And thus, he continues, Shintô pushes into more and more areas of daily life, and Japan's political and military progress is traced back to the miraculous influence of the virtues of the emperor and his divine ancestors. In all important Shintô shrines, Chamberlain complains, canons seized from the Chinese and Russians have been put on display with the intent of identifying Shintô with national glory in the public perception. In schools, as well as the army and the navy, everything was aligned with imperialism (Chamberlain 1927: 562).

Criticism of mythology was not allowed if it contradicted the so-called »historical facts« such as the supposed founding of the monarchy in 660 B.C. Japanese scholars of the time were conscious of the fact that the first concrete evidence of

⁴²⁵ For a recent discussion of Chamberlain's essay cf. Maxey 2014: 1.

Japanese history can be found in the 5th century A.D., but strict belief in every element of the national historical legends was required, and woe be to him who strays from this path.

Since then everything has been based on these »absurd dates« (Chamberlain 1927: 563), regardless of the fact that mythology and early history appear in the same sources and furthermore the earliest Japanese stories and customs were so thoroughly influenced by their Chinese models that it was no longer possible to tell to what extent »indigenous« thought was even contained in these fragments. And even the ethical ideals, especially those of loyalty and filial piety, which refer to the imperial offspring, originally came from China.

»The new Japanese religion of loyalty and patriotism has emerged into the light of day,« and yet this simple ideal makes the Japanese capable of great deeds. The new Japanese religion consists of worshipping the emperor and his divine ancestors and the belief in the superiority of the nation above all other nations, since the emperor, in his divinity, is superior to other kings and emperors. Already the early history books report that Japan was created before all other countries. It would thus be seen as an act of gracious condescension if Japan were to associate with other nations and adopt their unimportant mechanical inventions.

In fact, however, Chamberlain (1927: 565) continues, the common people, farmers, do not much identify with this new thinking and have held on to the Buddhist religion of their ancestors.⁴²⁶ Up to that time, the new religion still lacked a holy text; however, this gap was filled by the Imperial Rescripts, whose written style was incomprehensible to the people. Then Chamberlain turns to a point which is relevant in the present context. He remarks that one could easily assume that Japan must have had great difficulty in convincing foreign countries of the truth of these dogmas, but that in fact the opposite was true. Western nations actually showed great interest in all areas of Japan's legendary past and its great virtues, with which the Japanese government was happy to make them familiar.

Thus, Japan took advantage of the credulity of the foreigners (Chamberlain 1927: 568), who had to rely on these claims and were unable to examine the original sources. Mastery of the language also represented a nearly insurmountable hurdle for foreigners. The result was that Japan knew everything about Europe, but that Europe only knew about Japan what served Japanese interests. For this reason, the neo-Japanese myths were able to make their way into English textbooks, newspapers and reference works.

⁴²⁶ Chamberlain 1927: 567; cf. in this context also Antoni 2008.

Europeans in Japan were angered by the bureaucrats' actions with regard to the new religion, but it did not allow criticism and academic scrutiny. This also explains the rigorous campaign against Japanese liberals, who were declared traitors. Chamberlain's militant essay concludes by stating that it was of enormous importance to the government that their contrived religion reach widespread acceptance, even if they themselves knew that it did not correspond to reality.

Thus Basil Hall Chamberlain concludes his essay. Decades before Hobsbawm's pioneering research on »invented traditions,« Chamberlain presents us with a polemical work on modern Shintô as an »invented religion.« These are not the remarks of a critic safely distanced by historical perspective and geographical remove, but rather those of a factually competent contemporary witness whose views are based on direct observation and judgement, and who is familiar with the true history and is pained at the manipulation thereof. There was scarcely another scholar at the time as intimately knowledgeable about Japanese (religious) history and philology as Chamberlain. He was familiar with the historical sources and it is this deeply rooted knowledge that lends his criticism such weight. Chamberlain does not make himself an accomplice to the spirit of the era, but takes his position in the current debate of his time based on his exact knowledge of the historical sources. This is an especially clear warning from an enlightened cultural scientist as someone who deciphers the ideological network of arguments. As an active witness to history, Chamberlain thus makes clear how important knowledge of the historical sources is in order to understand the historical reality and constructions of ideology.

But criticism of the increasingly religious and ideological indoctrination of Japan did not only form in circles of historians. The foreign Christians, who, it could be said, were by nature opposed to the Shintô dogma of the time, also had clear words to this effect. While making sure to take their own religious intentions into account, material from this time can offer a vivid impression of the contemporary situation in Japan. Especially the regular reports of the Protestant »East Asian Mission« are worth examining in this context.

3. 2. *The East Asian Mission*

The »East Asian Mission« began in 1884, when the »General Protestant Missionary Association« (»Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein«) was founded in Weimar, Germany, led by the Swiss minister Ernst Buss (cf. Eger 1984: 57). As opposed to the existing missions in East Asia, this missionary

association was conceived as explicitly »non-partisan and supranational« from the beginning (Eger 1984: 58). According to Eger, the Mission's work was divided into three phases, the first of which took place in the relatively short span between 1884 and 1900. Literary, spiritual and educational work was the focus of this phase, while the second phase (1900 to 1930) was »devoted to practical social work,« (Eger 1984: 59). In the third phase, which has lasted to this day, the focus lies in cooperation with local churches in China and Japan. Details about the history of the East Asian Mission in Japan can be found in Heyo E. Hamer's writings (1984), which begin with the arrival of Wilfried Spinner on September 8, 1885 in Yokohama.

The Mission attained lasting influence, which is also of relevance to the present context, through the work of Emil Schiller (1865-1945), who was continuously active in Japan from 1895 to 1931. Schiller's reports, especially his annual reports from the 1920s, are a source of authentic, interculturally sensible and sophisticated insights into the reality of Japan at the time. This is a result of »the particular approach of the East Asian Mission dictated by its charter stating that it is the goal of the missionaries 'not only to learn the spoken and written language of the people of the host country, but also to research their thought, especially religious thought, and form a deeper understanding of non-Christian religions,'« (Hamer 1984: 89). Thus, Schiller's reports offer a chronicle of the directly experienced encounter with the religious, intellectual and ideological events of the time. As an intelligent observer he perceives especially the development of State Shintō and the concept of the *kokutai* with open eyes and strives to objectively capture the circumstances of the time from a distanced standpoint.

The fact that even the work of the East Asian Mission was not unaffected by the spirit of the time can be seen in the reports of a later successor to Emil Schiller, Gerhard Rosenkranz, whose report »Die religiöse Lage Japans in der Gegenwart«, dating from 1939 (»The religious situation of Japan today«; *Ostasien-Jahrbuch* 1939: 1-19), for example, lacks any distance to the official ideologies of Japan and Germany at the time. While Schiller's immediate successor Pastor E. Hessel was »removed from his position due to pressure from the state« (Hamer 1984: 95) as a leader in the Confessing Church in 1936 due to his critical opinions, Gerhard Rosenkranz, in accordance with the beliefs of the so called German Christians,⁴²⁷ appears to have strived especially to reach a harmonization of the ideologies of Japanese Tennōism and German Nazism. Nothing more clearly documents the

⁴²⁷ Note 84 in Hamer 1984: 104: »DC (Deutsche Christen [translator's note: German Christians]) was the name of a group of members of the German Evangelical Church [*Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*] whose goal was the transformation of the church according to Nazi Party thought.«

intellectual change of that time as a comparison of the reports of the two protestant missionaries Schiller and Rosenkranz from Japan. Remarkably enough, Gerhard Rosenkranz apparently continued to influence the Mission's basic principles after the war in the 1950s (cf. Rust 1984: 113) and turned to be a respected scholar in Heidelberg and Tuebingen, even becoming rector of Tuebingen University in 1957.

3. 2. 1. *The reports of the East Asian Mission on the development of Shintô*

Thus, the reports published in the annual *Ostasien-Jahrbuch* of the East Asian Mission are a direct reflection of the circumstances of the time. Emil Schiller is a reliable witness who directs his gaze at the problematic aspects of the reality of Japan – decrying, for example, the poor treatment of the Koreans in the country, especially after the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923, or reporting on the effects of the American Immigration Act of 1924 – while Gerhard Rosenkranz's writings prototypically reflect all the clichés, images and dogmas of the official ideology of the day. Especially his reports on Shintô, as well as a resulting monograph from 1944, are influenced by this spirit. In one crucial point, however, even Rosenkranz does not follow the official Japanese dogma: like Schiller, he also sees State (or Kokutai) Shintô as clearly being a religion:

»And yet Shrine Shintô is a religion [...] because it is Kokutai Shintô.«
(Rosenkranz 1944: 100)

Thus, the reports of the members of the East Asian Mission, which for a short time also included Wilhelm Gundert, represent a rich source for our understanding of the reality of the time, with Emil Schiller as the expert observer and Gerhard Rosenkranz as the involved ideologue.

Let us begin our overview with a report by Schiller on »Japan in the years 1921-22« (Schiller 1923). In the chapter »From the religious, non-Christian world of Japan« the author conveys the extent to which daily life was influenced by the maxims of (State) Shintô:

»In the passed year, all sorts of movements in the area of Shintô religion have gained importance, which, due to its historical connection to the state and the imperial household, has continued to maintain its hold on popular opinion to such an extent that participation in this religion may be said to be one of the self-evident duties of the Japanese, even if this is limited to occasional pilgrimages to the main holy place of the sun goddess in Ise, the ancestral deity of the imperial family, or the mausoleum of Emperor Meiji in Momoyama, outside Kyôto, or his temple in Tôkyô. This is an essential requirement for

bureaucrats, and Christian government workers justify it to themselves as participation in a kind of state worship and not a religious act.« (Schiller 1923: 49)

In fact, the author continues, the Japanese idea of *kami* does not correspond to the Christian idea of God, and for this reason it would be more appropriate to choose another Japanese word for the Christian term »God.« Schiller examines the origins of the state religion in detail as they appear to him (l.c.):

»And also Professor Genchi Kato, the European-educated lecturer on comparative religious history at the University of Tōkyō not only declared in his book *Waga kokutai to shintō* (»our system of government and the religion of Shintō«) in 1919 that the two are inseparable, but also that the emperor is of divine nature, and that to worship him is thus a religious matter, and that it has always been the Japanese way to assimilate new religions arriving in Japan into this relationship and to include them in the practice of emperor-worship. He goes so far as to argue that in 1912, shortly before Emperor Meiji's death, when thousands of loyal subjects prayed on their knees for the emperor's recovery outside the palace grounds in Tōkyō, they did not pray to another god for the emperor's recovery, but rather to the emperor himself that he may return to health for the benefit of his people! This is the same as saying »Doctor, help yourself!« in other words. The Japanese people believe that the emperor is a god in human form, and the worship of him is the central point of the Shintō religion, which can only be described as a religion (that is to say, not merely a state religion).«

The author covers the role of Buddhism critically and is skeptical of its tolerance. Schiller points to the close relationship that Buddhism and the ruling concept of the state entered into and refers in this context to

»... the journal of the nationalistically oriented Nichiren sect 'Kokuju Shim-bun' in which the editor wrote that the historical Buddha is none other than an incarnation of the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu, meaning that Buddhism actually originated in Japan and not in India. He even has the audacity to claim that Christ himself handed down none other than the Japanese Constitution in his sermons. The extent to which this kind of national chauvinism can go can be seen in the cover page of this journal, on which a motto is printed in Japanese that means in translation 'May all the nations of the world abandon all other relationships and study Japan, for the light of the world emanates from here!'« (Schiller 1923: 50)

After a detailed discussion of new religious developments of the time, especially the Ōmoto(-kyō) with its *kishin* ritual, Schiller comes to his conclusion with regard to Christianity in Japan. He states that Christianity »cannot placate [the masses] [...] because as a world religion it is not able to make a compromise with

Japanese nationalism and emperor-worship,« (Schiller 1923: 51). This is where Schiller sees the insurmountable difference separating Christianity from Buddhism, which is apparently more flexible in the question of emperor worship.

The report (Schiller 1925) from the years 1923-24 is influenced by the effects of the Great Kantô Earthquake. Schiller describes the way in which he clearly analyzes the resulting social and spiritual changes in an equal amount of detail. In the chapter »Japan's domestic situation before and after the earthquake« (Schiller 1925: 57-61), the author covers the advance of socialist ideas in contemporary society. He remarks that the »anthems of the red flag and May Day [...] could be heard everywhere,« (Schiller 1925: 57) and describes the government's position on this. His clear analysis is worth quoting from in detail:

»The main goal was the old means of organizing the people toward more patriotic ends. Not only the schools, but also the government-sponsored youth groups in cities and the countryside, as well as the army and reserve units, contributed to this goal. Special organizations like the Fascisti, or Kokusuikei (national scouting organizations) were also convened. Pilgrimages to the ancestral temples of the imperial family were encouraged - especially to Ise, as well as to the Meiji Temple in Tôkyô and to the grave of Emperor Meiji in Momoyama, near Kyôto - by offering discounted tickets and various special subsidies. The graves of emperors scattered throughout the country, high burial mounds with old trees, in front of which stand Shintô gates (*torii*) and stone lanterns, are carefully maintained, fenced off from the outside world, and outfitted with watchtowers in order to ensure that the visitors conduct themselves respectfully. Woe be to him who neglects to remove his knapsack! New graves are also discovered by researchers and then managed by the government. The military spirit that was always cultivated in elementary and middle schools through military exercises conducted by reserve officers will now be fostered at universities. This, however, led to serious conflicts at the private Waseda University, whose political attitude is especially mistrusted (it was founded by Marquis Okuma), when military science was to be introduced there in special courses. The entire nation is monitored for its political attitudes and its loyalty to the emperor by the aforementioned organizations. Socialist meetings are usually disrupted or disbanded, and in Ôsaka some overly ambitious patriots even went from house to house in order to call the heads of families to a monthly visit to the imperial ancestral temple, a Shintô temple.«⁴²⁸

⁴²⁸ Schiller 1925: 58. See also the following report from page 67: »In Kyôto the meeting of the local governor with Shintô and Buddhist leaders along with the directors of the national schools led to an agreement to urge the people to visit Shintô temples and imperial graves, which then led some overzealous people in Ôsaka to go around with lists of signatures of the fathers of families pledging to visit a temple once a month. Since the worship of the imperial ancestors, who have been declared deities, represents an act of loyalty to the emperor, I should like to see a Japanese who would dare not to sign such a list.«

In the chapter »Japan's religions« (Schiller 1925: 65-71) in the same report Schiller examines the religious situation in this state of change in more detail and also takes the opportunity to examine the question of the religious character of Shintō:

»To better understand the above I would like to point out that the Shintō religion is divided into two parts by the state: 1) Shintō as a religion, namely the sects and temples, which have nothing to do with the imperial household. They belong to the Bureau of Religions in the Ministry of Education. 2) Stately Shintō [»der Staatliche Shintō«] with all the temples of the imperial ancestors and those that have been associated with the imperial household, for example, the temple in Ise, the Taisha in Izumo, the temples in Nikkō and Miyajima and countless others in cities and the countryside. These belong to the Bureau of Shrines and Temples in the Ministry of the Interior and receive subsidies from the state or are completely financed by public funds if necessary. Above all the state offerings are given there. The state claims that it is not a religion (apparently despite the gods, prayer and offerings), but rather a form of state worship in which anyone may take part as he sees fit, which becomes a kind of duty in the military and in schools. Thus, the state attempts to claim a separation between church and state while at the same time fostering patriotism and loyalty to the emperor through religious means. The people of course are largely unconcerned with this distinction and indisputably view this worship to be of a religious nature, which in fact it is.« (Schiller 1925: 67)

The report on the year 1924 (Schiller 1926) is shaped by a different, but no less influential event, the new anti-Japanese immigration laws in the United States. The author describes the deep resentment of this exclusion, which was received as an embarrassment. Here too State Shintō is drawn upon in the statement of his protest:

»On July 1, 1924, the day this ban on immigration took effect, the gods were officially informed of this scandal at the Shintō temples and were beseeched for a swift abolition of the law. The convened members of the Parliament protested unanimously against this American law that destroyed the friendship of 70 years between the two nations and called on the Japanese government to take the necessary steps for the arrangement of an amendment to the law. In Kyōto, as in many other places, the flags at city buildings were flown at half mast. In Ōsaka a protest march of 10,000 people took place in the streets. In Kyōto a demonstration of 5000 reservists took place in front of the main Shintō temple Heian Jungū. Everywhere patriotic organizations called on the Japanese people to return to the Japanese customs in hairstyles, clothing, furniture and other things.« (Schiller 1926: 53)

Bearing in mind the military conflicts of later years the following remarks sound nearly prophetic, as Schiller warns that it should be taken seriously

»... when the sober-minded newspaper 'Ôsaka Mainichi' points to the fate of hubristic nations in the editorial on May 30, 1924, as exemplified by Germany, and then continues: 'Today the United States does not behave better, but even worse than Germany before the war' It then describes how the world order may someday change and closes with the words: 'The time will come when America must reap what it has sown.' Our intervention at the end of the Sino-Japanese War showed us Germans that Japan does not forget. It bides its time.« (Schiller 1926: 55)

This report by Schiller also addresses the religious situation in Japan. In the chapter »Japan's non-Christian religions« (Schiller 1926: 65-69) the author also deals with the situation of Shintô at the time in detail. Again he strives to highlight the actually religious character of Shintô, regardless of the official definition:

»To the foreigner the participation of the Japanese in the ancient national Shintô religion appears to consist mostly of the observation of outward forms and in the participation in its holidays and their recurring popular festivals. However, this is not the case. The feeling for the holy, numinous Shintô, which is to be worshipped, and the feeling of the dependence of one's fate on the higher powers, who are beseeched for help, have a strong presence among the people. And this is still so deeply rooted that a difference is drawn between religion, meaning Buddhism and Christianity, and Shintô as an establishment that since ancient times has been a self-evident part of the Japanese nation, to whose customs and demands every Japanese must submit, which Buddhism generally also tends to do. In order to appease the Christians and modern-minded Japanese, the government has set aside a kind of Shintô religion based on the sun goddess and the other imperial ancestors and everything related to this - however, this also includes the worship of Inari, which the Europeans often call the fox deity - and made it into a kind of state religion that supposedly has no real religious character, even if it is practiced in religious forms of offerings and prayers and the masses are in fact unconcerned with this difference. As an aid to fighting ideas that are dangerous to the state, such as democracy, socialism and communism, this form of Shintô is promoted in schools, government-organized associations and the military and was called in a petition to the House of Peers on November 23, 1923 the »founding of Japan« and »a system for the preservation of the characteristic spirit of the nation.« The Shintô temples are not considered a religion, but they are closely connected to religion! This Shintô religion, which is run and partly financed by the state, includes 114,548 temple-shrines and 14,836 priests who, however, are considered bureaucrats. Everything else is left to the customary Shintô as a true religion.« (Schiller 1926: 65)

The constantly increasing involvement of the State Shintō ideology in daily life is also reflected in Schiller's reports. In the 1931 edition of the *Jahrbuch*, which focuses on the period between 1929 and 1930, there is even a separate chapter on the topic of »The Problem of Shintō.« Here Schiller deals with the history and the present form of the Japanese »national religion« in detail. Since these detailed reports are an authentic primary source that gives us a direct impression not only of the problems, but also of the atmosphere of this period, Schiller's remarks (1931) are quoted (in a shortened form) in the following. It is remarkable that, among other things, to him as a contemporary witness the term »State Shintō« is self-evident, thus proving wrong the oft advanced view that this is a coinage of the post-war era. The focus of his remarks is the central problem of the official view stating that State Shintō is not a religion. In lively and emotional words Schiller describes the confusion of a Japanese population that is oblivious to the fact that their ancestral deities are no longer religious:

»Why does this matter [of the non-religious character of State Shintō] remain a difficult problem? Because such a declaration by the government cannot suffice to make the people believe that forms of worship that have been practiced at holy places since ancient times are no longer religious worship – that is to say, that Amaterasu no Mikoto, who is worshipped at the Daijingu in Ise, is no longer the ancestral deity as in ancient times, but merely the ancestral mother of the imperial family. (Schiller 1931: 85f.)

[...]

The government itself appears to sense the difficulty of the problem and for this reason convened a commission of 30 respected scholars, Shintō priests and members of Parliament, whose mandate it was to determine whether Shintō truly lies in the area of religion, which then, if this question were answered in the affirmative, would have important consequences. For if Shintō is actually a religion and not only a matter of public state morality, the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution would have to be applied so that schoolchildren could no longer be forced to go to the temples, and the State Shintō [orig. »Staatshintō«] shrines could no longer be financed with public funds. The head of this commission, Professor Yamakawa, a member of the Privy Council, and a former president of the Imperial University of Tōkyō, declared that at least five years would be necessary for the commission to reach a conclusion! And the director of the Bureau of Shrines and Temples, Baron Kinoshi Ikeda, stated that the results of this commission's work would then form the basis for a further commission that would perhaps be convened 40 years later!!! (cf. *Japan Advertiser*, December 11, 1929). It looks as if they are trying to buy time for a long time to come. (Schiller 1931: 86)

[...]

The extent to which the question is discussed can be seen in the debate held by the Kyōto magazine »Bunka Jippō« (»Magazine for Cultural Progress«) on February 17 of this year, to which respected Shintō and Buddhist priests, as

well as professors, a representative from Japanese Christianity, and as the only foreigner, the author of this report were invited. The problem of State Shintô [orig. »Staatsshintô«] was discussed from every possible angle. It was reassuring to me that the representatives of Shintô recognized and felt this problem. The Buddhists were of diverging opinions, because Buddhism takes a clouded, unclear position in all such questions, which is often falsely called tolerance. (Schiller 1931: 87)

[...]

Shinichiro Yamada, the head priest of the great Kitano Shrine in Kyôto, attempts to solve this problem more superficially for outsiders (cf. *Ôsaka Mainichi*, August 21, 1930). He states that it is the duty of every Japanese subject to obey the national rites (sic), since they represent the worship of the state and that one must therefore worship the gods, who are the original source of these state rites. He continues to say that it is wrong to view the freedom of religion as if subjects have the right to decline to worship at the Shintô shrines on account of their own religious beliefs and thus to show disobedience toward the institutions of the state bureaucracy!!!« (Schiller 1931: 87f.)

This text, presented here in excerpts, marks the end of Schiller's eyewitness reports on the religious situation in Japan.

The next detailed discussion of the problem of Shintô is found not until several years later, in the writings of Gerhard Rosenkranz from 1939. In the intervening years the intellectual climate changed dramatically. Instead of the knowledgeable and subtle reports by Emil Schiller, one finds in Rosenkranz's writings on the »religious situation in Japan at the present« (Rosenkranz 1939a) ideologically highly contaminated sentences such as the following: »We Germans in particular have a sharp eye for what is important, and which forms the basis of national life: a *völkisch* and racially based mindset« (Rosenkranz 1939a: 3).⁴²⁹ In the chapter »Japanese nationalism and the religions, 1. Shintô and Japanese nationalism« (Rosenkranz 1939a: 8) the author details his view of the Japanese »national religion.« Here one also finds the equation of State Shintô and *kokutai* as the basis of Japanese nationalism. Rosenkranz's remarks in this report, and even more so in his monograph from 1944, show the extent to which even the Christian East Asian Mission had drifted into the waters of religiously argued extremism.

After a discussion based on Katô Genchi on primordial Shintô, the author turns to the historical development of what is in his eyes the original »religion of nature« into a »religion of culture.« These remarks are suffused with the spirit that even today is expressed in the idea of »the« Shintô as the »national religion«

⁴²⁹ Original wording: »Gerade uns Deutschen ist ja der Blick scharf geworden für das Wesentliche, das der Gestalt eines Volkslebens zu Grunde liegt, für eine jeweils völkisch und rassisch bedingte geistige Haltung«.

of Japan and only recently has been subjected to critical examination. Rosenkranz, who does not appear to possess a deep knowledge of Japan and cannot be compared to his predecessor Schiller in this regard, is of course not conscious of the deep roots of his views in the theology and worldview of the Edo period *Kokugaku*. Even when in another place, in a booklet dedicated to his own children, he remarks in 1939 that »the Japanese have a national religion. They say, ‘Our country is a land of the gods, and our people are descended from the gods,’« (Rosenkranz 1939b: 11), it is unlikely that he had Hirata Atsutane in mind. However, the author always insists on his view that State Shintō cannot be considered non-religious. Rosenkranz remarks on the spread of this »national religion« among the Japanese population in the terminology of the day:

»This Shintō has now been made the national religion of Japan. [...] Today the propagandist of the belief that Japan is a land of the gods and the emperor is of divine descent, the beliefs on which the religion of Shrine Shintō is based, is the *schoolteacher* [my emphasis]. This religious instruction takes place in morality class. [...] It must be added that this class is not only limited to theoretical instruction, but is intended to foster practical action. ‘You children have learned,’ the teacher exhorts his students at the end of the third volume of the aforementioned textbook, ‘that Emperor Heika is the great ruler of the Empire of Greater Japan. The ancestor of the emperor is called Amaterasu ōmikami. [...] Since she is the ancestor of the emperor, she is the most highly worshipped deity in our country of Japan. And since the Great Imperial Shrine (sc. in Ise) is the holy place where the Great Deity is worshipped, the Japanese, in addition to their obedience toward the emperor, must always honor and respect this shrine. Thus, when opportunity allows, you children should make a pilgrimage to the Great Imperial Shrine and, with a greater understanding of the majesty of the *kokutai*, pray for the prosperity of the imperial family,’ (page 54). A short note for the teacher follows that after this lesson he should instruct the students on the correct behavior at shrines.« (Rosenkranz 1939b: 53f.)

Rosenkranz’s writings mark the end of the regular reports of the East Asian Mission on the religious situation in Japan. Especially the reports of Emil Schiller represent an informative first-hand account that gives direct insights into the ideological and religious situation of the early Shōwa period. With Rosenkranz the reports took a turn that fatally reflected the ideologies of their time, German as well as Japanese, but these circumstances make it possible to gain direct insights into the intellectual situation of the era.

As has become clear from various examples, Japan, similar to Nazi Germany, consistently marched on its way into the ideological abyss. At the end of this path lay not only the military defeat in the Pacific war, but the collapse of the entire re-

ligious and ideological system of the Japanese »national polity« that had been so artfully constructed since the Edo period.

On August 15, 1945, Japan experienced a turning point in history no less dramatic than the Meiji Restoration only a few decades before. State Shintô and the *kokutai* as specific characteristics of the previous Japanese national state abruptly came to an end. But a critical analysis reveals the question of whether the radical changes of the post-war era also represented the true end of State Shintô based *kokutai* thought. These questions will be the focus of the last part of our investigation.

CHAPTER V

LATE SHÔWA AND HEISEI PERIODS

1. THE END OF THE WAR AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE KOKUTAI

After Japan's defeat on August 15, 1945, the problem of Shintō was given the highest priority by the occupying powers. The American government and its allies saw the influence of State Shintō on politics in Japan as the true origin of the spread of excessive militaristic and chauvinistic thought and action during the war era. Thus, they were determined to completely eliminate the effectiveness of this religion after Japan's defeat, but there was great uncertainty regarding the measures to be taken.

1. 1. *The »Shintō Directive«*

Contrary to widespread radical views that aimed for the complete abolition of Shintō, more moderate forces prevailed that sought to remove nationalist thought from Shintō while allowing it to exist as a religion under civil law. President Truman and General MacArthur joined the moderate camp due to political considerations, which were finally realized in the so-called »Shintō Directive.« The Directive was submitted to the Japanese government already on December 15, 1945, only four months after the end of the war. According to the law of the occupying forces it was to take effect and be applied immediately.

There was hardly any reaction to the Directive among the Japanese people. But already in the spring of 1946 the Association of Shintō Shrines (*jinja-honchō*) was formed without hindrance. The *jinja-honchō* served to maintain the shrines and continued to recognize the shrine at Ise as the main shrine of Shintō due to its close relationship to the imperial household.

Due to its historical importance, the complete text of the directive follows:

»Directive for the disestablishment of State Shintō

I.

In order to free the Japanese people from the direct or indirect compulsion to believe or profess to believe in a religion or cult officially designated by the state, and

In order to lift from the Japanese people the burden of compulsory financial support of an ideology which has contributed to their war guilt, defeat, suffering, privation, and present deplorable condition, and

In order to prevent a recurrence of the perversion of Shintō theory and beliefs into militaristic and ultranationalistic propaganda designed to delude the Japanese people and lead them into wars of aggression, and

In order to assist the Japanese people in a rededication of their national life to building a new Japan based upon the ideals of perpetual peace and democracy,

It is hereby directed that:

a. The sponsorship, support, perpetuation, control and dissemination of Shintô by the Japanese national, prefectural, and local governments, or by public officials, subordinates, and employees acting in their official capacity are prohibited and will cease immediately.

b. All financial support from public funds and all official affiliation with Shintô and Shintô shrines are prohibited and will cease immediately.

(1) While no financial support from public funds will be extended to shrines located on public reservations or parks, this prohibition will not be construed to preclude the Japanese Government from continuing to support the areas on which such shrines are located.

(2) Private financial support of all Shintô shrines which have been previously supported in whole or in part by public funds will be permitted, provided such private support is entirely voluntary and is in no way derived from forced or involuntary contributions.

c. All propagation and dissemination of militaristic and ultranationalistic ideology in Shintô doctrines, practices, rites, ceremonies or observances, as well as in the doctrines, practices, rites, ceremonies, and observances of any other religion, faith, sect, creed, or philosophy, are prohibited and will cease immediately.

d. The Religious Functions Order relating to the Grand Shrine of Ise and the Religious Functions Order relating to state and other Shrines will be annulled.

e. The Shrine Board (Jingi-in) of the Ministry of Home Affairs will be abolished, and its present functions, duties, and administrative obligations will not be assumed by any other governmental or tax-supported agency.

f. All public educational institutions whose primary function is either the investigation and dissemination of Shintô or the training of a Shintô priesthood will be abolished and their physical properties diverted to other uses. Their present functions, duties and administrative obligations will not be assumed by any other governmental or tax-supported agency.

g. Private educational institutions for the investigation and dissemination of Shintô and for the training of priesthood for Shintô will be permitted and will operate with the same privileges and be subject to the same controls and restrictions as any other private educational institution having no affiliation with the government; in no case, however, will they receive support from public funds, and in no case will they propagate and disseminate militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideology.

h. The dissemination of Shintô doctrines in any form and by any means in any educational institution supported wholly or in part by public funds is prohibited and will cease immediately.

(1) All teachers' manuals and textbooks now in use in any educational institution supported wholly or in part by public funds will be censored, and all Shintô doctrine will be deleted. No teachers' textbook or manual which is

published in the future for use in such institutions will contain any Shintō doctrine.

(2) No visits to Shintō shrines and no rites, practices or ceremonies associated with Shintō will be conducted or sponsored by any educational institution supported wholly or in part by public funds.

i. Circulation by the government of »The Fundamental Principles of the National Structure« (Kokutai no hongī), »The Way of the Subject« (Shinmin no Michi), and all similar official volumes, commentaries, interpretations, or instructions on Shintō is prohibited.

j. The use in official writings of other terms »Greater East Asia War« (Dai Tōa Sensō), »The Whole World under One Roof« (Hakko Ichi-u), and all other terms whose connotation in Japanese is inextricably connected with State Shintō, militarism, and ultra-nationalism is prohibited and will cease immediately.

k. God-shelves (Kamidana) and all other physical symbols of State Shintō in any office, school institution, organization, or structure supported wholly or in part by public funds are prohibited and will be removed immediately.

l. No official, subordinate, employee, student, citizen, or resident of Japan will be discriminated against because of his failure to profess and believe in or participate in any practice, rite, ceremony, or observance of State Shintō or of any other religion.

m. No official of the national, prefectural, or local government, acting in his public capacity, will visit any shrine to report his assumption of office, to report on conditions of government or to participate as a representative of government in any ceremony or observance.

II.

a. The purpose of this directive is to separate religion from the state, to prevent misuse of religion for political ends, and to put all religions, faiths and creeds upon exactly the same basis, entitled to precisely the same opportunities and protection. It forbids affiliation with the government and the propagation and dissemination of militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideology not only to Shintō but to the followers of all religions, faiths, sect creeds, or philosophies.

b. The provisions of this directive will apply with equal force to all rites, practices, ceremonies, observances, beliefs, teachings, mythology, legends, philosophy, shrines, and physical symbols associated with Shintō.

c. The term State Shintō within the meaning of this directive will refer to that branch of Shintō (Kokka Shintō or Jinja Shintō) which by official acts of the Japanese Government has been differentiated from the religion of Sect Shintō (Shūha Shintō or Kyōha Shintō) and has been classified a non-religious cult commonly known as State Shintō, National Shintō, or Shrine Shintō.

d. The term Sect Shintō (Shūha Shintō or Kyōha Shintō) will refer to that branch of Shintō (composed of 13 recognized sects) which by popular belief, legal commentary, and the official acts of the Japanese Government has been recognized to be a religion.

e. Pursuant to the terms of Article I of the Basic Directive on »Removal of Restrictions on Political, Civil, and Religious Liberties« issued on 4 October 1945

by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in which the Japanese people were assured complete religious freedom,

(1) Sect Shintô will enjoy the same protection as any other religion.

(2) Shrine Shintô, after having been divorced from the state and divested of its militaristic and ultra-nationalistic elements, will be recognized as a religion if its adherents so desire and will be granted the same protection as any other religion in so far as it may in fact be the philosophy or religion of Japanese individuals.

f. Militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideology, as used in this directive, embraces those teachings, beliefs, and theories which advocate or justify a mission on the part of Japan to extend its rule over other nations and peoples by reason of:

(1) The doctrine that the Emperor of Japan is superior to the heads of other states because of ancestry, descent, or special origin.

(2) The doctrine that the people of Japan are superior to the people of other lands because of ancestry, descent, or special origin.

(3) The doctrine that the islands of Japan are superior to other lands because of divine or special origin.

(4) Any other doctrine which tends to delude the Japanese people into embarking upon wars of aggression or to glorify the use of force as an instrument for the settlement of disputes with other peoples.

III.

The Imperial Japanese Government will submit a comprehensive report to this Headquarters not later than 15 March 1946 describing in detail all action taken to comply with all provisions of this directive.

IV.

All officials, subordinates, and employees of the Japanese national, prefectural, and local governments, all teachers and education officials, and all citizens and residents of Japan will be held personally accountable for compliance with the spirit as well as the letter of all provisions of this directive.

For the Supreme Commander: H. W. Allen,
Colonel, A. G. D., Asst. Adjutant General⁴³⁰

In the directive State Shintô, in accordance with the wartime view, is designated a non-religious, national cult whose sole purpose is the glorification of the state and which is separate from the religion of Shintô. An understanding of the actual basis and intellectual-historical development of State Shintô and the ideology of the *kokutai* remained outside the grasp of the authors of the Directive. They were too caught up in the Western conceptual categories of religion and modernity to understand the reality of Japan. Thus, the Allies also remained oblivious to the fact that the Japanese were able to preserve large elements of Shintôist *kokutai* thought in the post-war era under the cover of the Shintô Directive and

⁴³⁰ Quoted from Lokowandt 1981: 64-67; Woodard 1972: 295-298.

other measures by the occupying powers. This process will be the focus of the following discussion.

1. 2. *The kokutai after 1945*

With the total defeat and the relinquishment of the divine status of the emperor under pressure from the occupying forces, the *kokutai* became obsolete as a concept of the empire and a form of government.

The democratic post-war Constitution of May 3, 1947,⁴³¹ begins, like the Meiji Constitution, with a section on the emperor (Articles 1-8), but the emperor is demoted here to the status of a mere symbol (*shōchō*) of Japan; his position rests on the will of the people, who possess sovereign power (Article 1).⁴³² Regardless of the fact that the first eight articles of the Constitution define the function of the emperor as purely ceremonial, discussions about the Constitution during the post-war era concentrated primarily on the questions of whether the emperor, beyond his status as a mere »symbol,« is also to be seen as the head of the Japanese state and to what degree Japan should continue to be a monarchy. But this debate, which according to Neumann (1982: 108-120) is largely completed, does not approach the actual core of the *kokutai* problem.

The abolition of the sovereign position of the ruler essentially struck down the ideology of the *kokutai*, and the Constitution itself could also hardly lead one to believe that the *kokutai*, specifically the State Shintō Tennōism of the Meiji and early Shōwa periods, survived the collapse of 1945 without injury. The questions of the inheritance, or the continuity of the ideology of the *kokutai* thus appears to have been already answered at this point. With regard to constitutional law, it must be said that the concept of the *kokutai* with its specific position of the emperor was apparently removed and replaced by a democratic constitutional form of government. And yet a closer examination shows that even in the case of the Constitution – that is to say, in the basic question of the position and concept of the emperor in post-war Japan – far more aspects of *kokutai* thought survived than was originally assumed (cf. Antoni 1995 a).

Especially the death of Shōwa-tennō in 1989 and the subsequent enthronement of the current Emperor Akihito at the ritual *daijōsai* ceremony in November of

⁴³¹ Text of the post-war Constitution in Nagai 1968: 252ff.; cf. Sakurai 1972; Hasegawa 1975; Neumann 1982: 185-204.

⁴³² On the position of the emperor in the Japanese post-war Constitution cf. the study by Reinhard Neumann (1982: 108-120).

1990 unearthed the debate on the religious founding of the emperorship in Japan. In the wake of this event, numerous historical materials and overviews have been published⁴³³ that suggest a new interpretation of many questions relating to the imperial household and the problem of *kokutai* ideology in post-war Japan.

Viewed from a purely legal positivistic perspective, the problem appears to have been solved with regard to Constitutional law. But other important documents from the early post-war years exist that suggest a more »traditionalist« (as in Rothermund 1989; Antoni 1992, see discussion below) interpretation of the term »symbol« and ultimately point to a continuity of the concept of the *kokutai*. The period between the end of the war in August, 1945, and the proclamation of the Constitution in May, 1947, as a transitional phase, is decisive here. Thus, we shall focus on two documents from this period in which the emperor himself defines the spiritual orientation of the country after the defeat in the war as a mandate to the nation.

The first of these is the public declaration by the emperor at the end of the war on August 15, 1945 – Hirohito’s famous radio address – which announced Japan’s defeat to a deeply confused and uncomprehending nation, and the second is the address by the emperor on New Year’s Day of 1946, in which he renounced his divine status. These two documents contain extremely illuminating passages regarding a possible continuity of the concept of the *kokutai* even after the defeat.

1. 2. 1. *The »Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War«* (shûsen no shôsho)

The dramatic events of the night of August 14, 1945, in which an audio recording was made with great difficulty in the Imperial Palace and prepared for broadcast the following day, merit their own investigation, but can only be outlined in brief here. In an account from 1988, Kôbayashi Kichiya describes the events of these days using the emperor’s own words:⁴³⁴

»On August 14 the last imperial conference on the end of the war took place. His Majesty wore the uniform of the supreme commander of the army, decorated only with the large chrysanthemum medal on his left arm. [...] Then His Majesty gave His final judgment: ‘If there are no other comments, I would

⁴³³ Cf. Itô 1989; Mayumi 1990; Takamori 1990; Yoshino Hiroko’s work (1987/1990) first appeared in 1987. See also the collection entitled *Tennôsei to saishi* by the historical journal *Nihonshi kenkyû* (no. 300/1987.8) with a panel discussion (*zandankai*) on the topic »Imperial rituals and the coronation ceremony« (*Tennô-saishi to sokui-girei ni tsuite*) with the historians Iwai Tadakuma, Okada Seishi and Kawane Yoshiyasu.

⁴³⁴ Meyer 1989: 105f. On the problem of the traditional declarations and monologues by the emperor at the war’s end see also Bix 1992. Cf. Antoni 1995a.

like to present my view. I will not change my opinion any more. After considering the situation in the world and the conditions in our country I have reached the conclusion that a continuation of the war is impossible. There appear to be some doubts about the preservation of the *kokutai*. [...] But I want to save the life of the entire nation by all means. [...] The alternative would be the complete downfall of Japan. But if only a small core is left, we can begin to consider a reconstruction. At the time of the Triple Intervention, Emperor Meiji shed no tears and bore the misfortune. Now we must endure the unendurable, bear the unbearable; we must look toward the reconstruction in unity.' [...] Finally His Majesty stood up and turned to the Minister of War Anami and said, 'Anami, I understand your feelings well. But I am confident that the *kokutai* will remain intact.'«

The radio broadcast of the »Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War« (*shûsen no shûsho*)⁴³⁵ on August 15, 1945, was at first hardly understood by the Japanese people, since it was written in an ancient form of court Japanese. But the text of the address was subsequently published and made accessible to the public by the press. Already on the following day an authorized English translation was printed in the English-language editions of the Japanese daily newspapers that continued to be published.

Looking at the text from the angle discussed here, it becomes apparent that the question of the *kokutai*'s future plays a key role in it. This can hardly be assumed from the official translation, for example, as it appeared on the front page of the English-language newspaper *The Mainichi* on August 16, 1945⁴³⁶, since the term *kokutai* is generally translated as »Imperial State,« as opposed to the otherwise customary and correct term »national polity.« Only the Japanese original reveals that the emperor and the authors of the Rescript, especially the Minister of War Anami Korechika, who committed suicide,⁴³⁷ were not concerned with the preservation of a »form of government« (*seitai*), but with the survival of the specific »national polity,« the *kokutai*, with all the implications and connotations attached to this term at the time.

Let us thus examine a few relevant passages of the Rescript in the original version. At the beginning the emperor states:

»To Our good and loyal subjects: After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in Our Empire today, We

⁴³⁵ Rescript reproduced in Murakami 1983, no. 38: 319-321; cf. Meyer 1989: 109-113.

⁴³⁶ »Imperial Rescript.« In: *The Mainichi. A National Newspaper For International Readers*. No. 8019, Thursday, August 16, 1945: 1.

⁴³⁷ A thorough account of the dramatic events of the time can be found in the study by the Pacific War Research Society (1984); cf. Storry 1960: 235-239; on General Anami's suicide cf. *ibid.* p. 237; cf. Bersihand 1963: 509; Beasley 1963: 210.

have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.«⁴³⁸

The emperor then declares that Japan is prepared to accept the Potsdam Declaration. The course of the war is discussed in brief from the Japanese perspective and the threat against Japan by the enemy's new atomic bombs is mentioned. The emperor continues:

»Should We continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.« (l.c.)

The emperor then states that it was Japan's intention to free East Asia. He deeply regrets the victims who lost their lives or fortunes in the pursuit of this goal. Finally the Rescript reaches the statement that is relevant to this context. The emperor unmistakably formulates his mandate for the future of the country and the Japanese *kokutai*, which is officially translated as «Imperial State»; he says:

»Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the Imperial State (*kokutai* 國體ヲ護持), We are always with you, Our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.« (l.c.)

However, these words do not mark the end of the Imperial Rescript. In the Japanese original there is also a closing sentence: *Nanji shimmin sore yoku chin ga i wo taiseyo*, »Our subjects, obey Our will!« This closing sentence, written in the most pointed form of command – *chin ga i wo taiseyo* – shows that the Rescript is not merely the declaration of the emperor's position on the defeat in the war, but rather a clear order to the nation regarding its future development. Notably it is this closing sentence that is missing from the official English translation of the Rescript. It ends with the words »... enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.« Possibly it was thought that the commanding character of these statements was already contained in the translation, but it is nonetheless the case that neither this, nor any of the later translations, contains the express statement of a clear duty of the nation toward the emperor's words.

Against the background of our knowledge of *kokutai* thought, as it developed from the days of the Kokugaku and the Mito School and the Meiji-period *Rescript on Education* to the ultranationalist state ideology of the early Shōwa period, the

⁴³⁸ *The New York Times*, 15 August 1945: 3; cf. Murakami 1983, doc. 38: 319-321; cf. Meyer 1989: 109-113; Antoni 1995 a: 56.

importance of the emperor's command to his country requires no further emphasis.

The emperor conceded military defeat at exactly the moment when total breakdown was at hand – the obliteration of the land of the gods and the »national polity« of the specifically Japanese *kokutai*. The survival of the people was doubtless an important matter to the emperor, but he ultimately agreed to a defeat in order to secure the spiritual core of the nation, its *kokutai*, for the future. In this context the excellent study by Peter Wetzler (1989) is worth mentioning, in which he states the following, well-founded thesis as a summary of his findings »on the political responsibility of the emperor in modern Japanese history«:

»The emperor was neither for peace nor war, nor did he consider himself responsible for the Constitution or the »Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.« His main consideration during a turbulent era was to secure the survival of the imperial line and the Japanese people.« (Wetzler 1989: 642)

Herbert P. Bix reaches a similar conclusion in his study from 1992.⁴³⁹

The emotional conclusion of this dramatic declaration, which in its moral imperative is only comparable to the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, declares all the classic elements of the State Shintō concept of the *kokutai* as the basis for post-war Japan. The emperor speaks of the Japanese nation as a family continuing from generation to generation, meaning that familism is a basic principle of the *kokutai*. He invokes the »unshakable belief in the immortality of the land of the gods and thus formulates the theological credo of Kokutai Shintō. Morality and conviction are also mentioned, which, as we have seen, functioned as a bond of unity between the emperor and the people in the *Rescript on Education* of 1890. In another place in the declaration he previously formulated his responsibility for the people before the divine ancestors. Finally the emperor mentions in a highly compressed form again in his closing sentence the entire credo of the concept of the »national polity« as it developed since the Meiji period. He commands that even in the future the »essence« (or »brilliance,« *seika*) of the *kokutai* be maintained and not fall behind the progress of the world.⁴⁴⁰

The basic elements of the traditional *kokutai* dogma are unambiguously visible in these remarks, which contradict later declarations of the »new beginning in 1945« in Japan. But let us continue to focus on the text of the Imperial Rescript. The concluding remark of the previously quoted proclamation regarding the

⁴³⁹ Bix (1992: 300-307) even programmatically calls a similar chapter in his work »Capitulate to Protect the Imperial Institution.«

⁴⁴⁰ This term appears mainly in the *Kokutai no hongī*.

»progress of the world« appears at first strange and out of place. How does the backward-looking utopia of the land of the gods stand in relation to the »progress of the world,« one is likely to ask, perceiving a break in the argumentation. But it is just this closing sentence that demonstrates the astonishing and seamless continuity of the »Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War« with the spiritual world of the Meiji period.

The crucial connection between the imperial line of Japan and the »progress of the world« mentioned at the end of the Rescript of August 15, 1945 can be found in a previous and far more well known document from the very beginning of the development of modern Japan. In this declaration the young Emperor Meiji proclaimed the founding of the newly created – or, according to the official view, restored – Empire of Japan. This is the previously discussed »Charter Oath« from 1868. We saw that the passage in question in this historical oath by Meiji-tennô in 1868 established the connection between the »imperial household« as the essence of Japan and the »knowledge of the world« as a criterion for technological progress.

In restating this conscious combination at the end, and as the high point, of his Rescript on the future of Japan after the war, the emperor places himself consciously and concretely in the tradition of his great predecessor, Emperor Meiji, and the view that technological progress serves the greater good of Japan in the form of its imperial foundation.

1. 2. 2. *The »Humanity Declaration« (ningen sengen)*

A further important document in this context shows that this conclusion is not merely speculation, namely the previously mentioned proclamation by the emperor on January 1, 1946, in which he officially renounced his divine status. The rescript is entitled »Imperial Rescript on the Construction of a New Japan« (*ningen sengen*).⁴⁴¹

The emperor begins his remarks, which historians have recognized as having played an essential role on the path toward a democratic post-war Constitution in Japan, remarkably with a direct reference to his close connection to the Charter Oath of his grandfather, Meiji-tennô, of April, 1868. Just as the emperor's oath stood at the beginning of the Meiji state, it is again this historical oath that stands at the beginning of the new post-war Japan. Hirohito remarks unmistakably:

⁴⁴¹ The Rescript can be found in Murakami 1983, no. 44: 333-336. German translation in Lokowandt 1981: 68-70.

»In greeting the New Year, We recall to mind that Emperor Meiji proclaimed, as the basis of our national policy, the Five Clauses of the Charter Oath at the beginning of the Meiji Era.« (Murakami 1983: 333)

The emperor then directly quotes the five paragraphs of the Charter Oath (l.c.) and categorically states:

»The proclamation is evident in significance and high in its ideals. We wish to make this oath anew and restore the country to stand on its own feet again.« (l.c.)

After emphasizing the connection between the people and the emperor even in the difficult post-war era, the emperor nonetheless proclaims a brilliant future for the country »if the nation is firmly united in its resolve to face the present ordeal.« On the relationship between the people and the emperor he finally states:

»Love of the family and love of the country are especially strong in this country. With more of this devotion should we now work towards love of mankind.« (l.c.)

After expressing his worries about signs of a moral decline in the country, the emperor then arrives at the core statement of his proclamation:

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

The text concludes with the repeated summons to the people to approach the demands of the future with unity and courage. At the end of his remarks, the emperor states pointedly:

»We expect Our people to join Us in all exertions looking to accomplishment of this great undertaking with an indomitable spirit.« (l.c.)

The text of this declaration was immediately made known around the world. The English-language translation appeared already on January 1, 1946, in the *New York Times*. The historian David John Lu remarks on the importance of this document:

»It was a necessary step in effecting the transition of Japan into a democratic society, and paved the way for making the Emperor a symbol of the state and of the unity of the people in the new constitution.« (Lu 1974: 190)

While not seeking to detract from this statement, it seems important to reexamine the contents of the document. Upon doing so, it becomes apparent that the emperor's main focus is not the unity of the nation, as Lu formulates in a self-fulfilling expectation, but rather the bond between the emperor himself with the Japanese people. The unbreakable nature of the bond between the people and the emperor, as we have seen, formed the very core of the concept of the *kokutai* prior to and during the war.

The emperor's proclamation on January 1, 1946, given only a few months after the Rescript from April 15, 1945, clearly seeks to save this last core belief of the *kokutai*. The relinquishment of the emperor's divinity appears to be a bearable consequence. The doctrine of State Shintô before 1945 also officially negated all religious content in the concept of the *kokutai* and saw the rites and ceremonies of the state as merely »national customs.« This disguising of the religious basis of the state religion occurred, as we know, in the 19th century as a reaction to the pressure of the Western powers, who – especially in the interest of the unhindered spread of Christianity – pressed for religious freedom and the prohibition of a Japanese »state religion.« And despite the pragmatic position of the Japanese state at the time, it appears that in the extremely vulnerable position after its loss in a war of aggression, the state once again reacted. The goal was, as the emperor stated on August 15, to save the basic elements of the *kokutai*; its core was the idea of the Japanese national family headed by the emperor. This central concept, which constituted the *ideal* of the *kokutai*, was successfully defended in the proclamation of January 1, 1946, and declared the national basis for post-war Japan, even if the mention of the word »*kokutai*« itself was carefully avoided and this loaded term was banned from official discourse shortly thereafter, although it was frequently mentioned later too⁴⁴² (cf. Antoni 1995a: 61, note 19).

⁴⁴² Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, declared in his address to the 88. Session of the Imperial Diet on September 5, 1945: »... It is the heavy responsibility of us all today to make our national polity shine forth more gloriously than ever by shouldering the burden and moving in the right direction. [...] It is duty of us all to conform absolutely with the Imperial Command, and never depart from it. In obedience to the Imperial Proclamation we should bear the unbearable, and suffer what is unsufferable.« (*Contemporary Japan*, no. 14.4 - 12 (Tôkyô, April-Dec. 1945): 280-288; cit. p. 285). Bix (1992: 303) refers to this speech, arguing that the primary concern had been »protection of the national polity«. He further declares: »In September 1945 it was still a crime to criticize the emperor and the 'sacred national polity' (*kokutai*), and hundreds of Japanese political prisoners who had opposed the war still languished in jail.« (Bix 1992: 305). Cf. Antoni 1995a: 61, note 19.

The designation of the emperor as the symbol of Japan and the unity of the Japanese nation in Article 1 of the Constitution of 1947 is to be seen as the logical consequence of this process. Although the people attained sovereignty, strictly speaking this sovereignty cannot exist without the emperor, since only he can symbolically represent and thus guarantee their unity.

Thus, the pressure from the American occupying forces was cleverly countered and the core of the *kokutai*, in the sense of the Imperial Rescript from August 15, 1945, was saved in its basic structure.

The fact that the religious and mythological basis of the emperor's position had to be sacrificed proved to be far less relevant. As we have already seen, questions of religiosity were officially removed from the concept of State Shintō before 1945; rather the negation of an individually professed belief in the divinity of the emperor reflects basic Western, Christian beliefs and motives that do not actually apply to the value system of (State) Shintō. Far more important was the fact that the preservation of the imperial household after 1945 also meant that the formerly state-controlled area of Shintō ritual was preserved. Now ostensibly held as a private matter of the imperial household, it thus remained intact. Anyone who is knowledgeable about the importance of ritual in Confucian and East-Asian thought, and who takes into account their central function in Shintō, not only in the variant of State Shintō, will conclude that this alone meant that the true spiritual core of the complex of the *kokutai* was preserved beyond the supposed turning point of 1945.

However, only later did the full implications of this fact become clear. Only after the rituals surrounding the death of Emperor Hirohito and the enthronement of his successor Akihito in 1989 and 1990 did it become apparent that the imperial household by no means renounced its ritual function. The broken nature of the artificial and unconvincing separation between »public« and »private« rituals of the imperial household in this area can be seen upon examining the actual rituals in both cases. And it must be emphasized that in practice the important rituals, such as the burial ceremony (*taisō no rei*) and the enthronement ceremony (*daijōsai*) remained intact and corresponded in detail to the (State) Shintō ceremonies of the pre-war era. The active participation of state representatives in these rituals shines a revealing light on the supposedly »private« nature of the area of ceremony (see below).

It bears remembering that in the historical documents of the early post-war era the preservation of the *kokutai* represented the highest goal of the emperor, even though the term itself was no longer officially used after 1945. Apparently all positions that did not entirely serve this purpose – in consideration of the main goal

- could be abandoned. This applies especially to the question of religious belief in the divine character of the emperor, which was never relevant within State Shintô. In State Shintô of the pre-war era it was ritual that was truly important, in accordance with basic Shintô and Confucian beliefs.

2. THE YASUKUNI DEBATE

The extent to which the religious definition of Shintō and shrines influences the present-day debate can be seen in an area that has become well known internationally: the Yasukuni Shrine in Tōkyō (cf. Antoni 1993c). All of the problems of the relationship between Shrine Shintō and the state since the end of the war converge here.

On August 15, 1985 Japan commemorated the 40th anniversary of its defeat in World War II. However, the way in which this day of remembrance was officially handled by the Japanese government drew attention and caused irritation in the international community. The reason for this irritation was Prime Minister Nakasone's choice of the symbolically charged location at which he paid his respects, Yasukuni Shrine in Tōkyō (cf. Antoni 1991a: 156).

It was the first time since the end of the war that a Japanese politician overtly showed reverence toward this shrine in his official function as the head of state, which, as the place of worship dedicated to the soldiers killed in battle, is considered one of the centers of Japanese emperor-worship and its resulting aggressive nationalism.⁴⁴³

The visit also drew vehement criticism from all of the opposition parties represented in the Japanese Parliament;⁴⁴⁴ this caused Cabinet Secretary Fujinami to give an explanation already on the day before the event, on August 14, in which the non-religious character of the visit was pointed out. The usual Shintō ritual, it was argued, would be very limited during the visit and thus stripped of its religious character. For this reason, the Cabinet Secretary emphasized, the basic principle of religious freedom would not be injured.

But these explanations completely miss the true core of the problem. It was not worries about limiting of religious freedom in Japan that had alarmed the opposition and the international press, but rather the fear that the visit might point to a rehabilitation or even a renaissance of State Shintō ideology, that is to say, the emperor worship of the pre-war and wartime eras.

The matter was only able to attract such great attention internationally because Yasukuni Shrine is considered an apparently easily understandable symbol of

⁴⁴³ On the function of Yasukuni Shrine in State Shintō during the Meiji period, cf. Lokowandt 1978: 96-100, among others; see also William P. Woodard 1968: 71-74.

⁴⁴⁴ The *Japan Times*, no. 31.089, 89th year, Thursday, August 15, 1985.

past Japanese militarism and its ideology of the *kokutai*. But the Yasukuni debate revealed how complicated this problem actually is.

The true core of the problem lies in the question of the religious nature of the shrine. Since it is formally and clearly a Shintô shrine – that is to say, a holy place of Japanese religiosity – in which the great number of soldiers killed in the wars are worshipped as deities, it would at first appear, paradoxically, that the religious character of the shrine is largely negated by the Shintô establishment itself, especially by the governing body of the Shintô shrines, the *jinja-honchô*. The political controversy around Yasukuni Shrine thus shows itself to be a direct function of its religious dimension, since a reevaluation of the shrine unavoidably raises questions of the rehabilitation of the State Shintô of the pre-war era in general, which was defined as non-religious, and of the relationship between religion and the state in particular.

The fact that the religious circles themselves postulated the non-religious character of one of the most important shrines in the country, while non-religious groups vehemently argued for the religious definition of Yasukuni Shrine, is the most confusing aspect of this matter for outside observers. Just how important this is to an understanding of the Yasukuni debate can be seen in an affair in the fall of 1985, following the »great« political debate about Yasukuni Shrine, that drew attention within Japanese academic circles, but which drew no notice at all outside the country.

2. 1. Religion versus science

In the September edition (1985) of the journal *Sekai* a writer named Shimagawa Masaji published an article entitled »Religion at Yasukuni and Science.« Shimagawa discusses the case of a Japanese religious historian from Kokugakuin University in Tôkyô, who, in the wake of his critical examination of the basis for religion at Yasukuni Shrine, was subjected to a severe backlash from the aforementioned governing body, the *jinja-honchô*, as well as from his own university.

Shimagawa remarks in his introduction:

»In the past few years the problems of Yasukuni Shrine and the separation of religion and state in general have attracted a great amount of interest. Since last year an attempt was made by those representing the Shintô shrines to involve the universities. And yet hardly anything has been said about this event, which must be called an incident of the 'hindrance of science and (free) speech.'« (Shimagawa 1985: 19).

Shimagawa had published a discussion of this topic, the details of which were called »unusual« by the *jinja-honchō*. The governing body lodged a formal complaint with the university, which in turn called Shimagawa's behavior incorrect and called for »an apology to the *jinja-honchō*« (l.c.).

The protest was ignited by the topic of the work, which sought to »approach the nature of religion at Yasukuni from the point of view of Shintō as a religion.« »The author,« Shimagawa continues, »criticizes the frequent use of the term *sukei* [»respect«] instead of *shinkō* [religion] in regard to Yasukuni« (l.c.). The attempt to place the shrine outside the area of religion using a corresponding terminology, he writes, reveals the face of the State Shintō era. In State Shintō during the pre-war era, according to which the shrines merely served the non-religious worship of the state with official priests as masters of ceremony, the viewpoint that »the people of the state have the duty to pay 'respect' (*sukei*) to Yasukuni Shrine, which does not belong to the area of religion« was dominant. The choice of words subtly shows the ideological background of the message. Shimagawa sees the protest of the *jinja-honchō* against the religious definition of the gods of Yasukuni as part of a campaign for the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine:

»Beginning with the successful reinstatement of the National Founding Day, and the amendment on the numbering of years according to imperial era names (*gengō*)⁴⁴⁵, the *honchō* gave its support to the movement for the revival of emperor worship and State Shintō. This movement's core goal is the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine as an expression of appreciation toward the state.« (Shimagawa 1985: 20)

The further details of the affair, over the course of which the academic in question was stripped of his right to teach classes, are not as relevant here as the fact itself that a religious interpretation of the deities of Yasukuni could bring about such consequences. Shimagawa sees the ultimate goal of the campaign as the nationalization of all shrines; according to this »domino theory,« Yasukuni Shrine takes on the function of the first domino unleashing a chain reaction. By declaring the religious ceremonies of the shrine »customs« (*shūzoku*), the debate on its religious character is reopened.

»The consequences of this are the official visits to the shrine and ultimately a nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine. This is why the arguments for the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine most likely serve to justify the nationalization of all shrines.« (Shimagawa 1985: 22)

⁴⁴⁵ The numbering of years according to imperial era names was reinstated on June 6, 1979.

The »Yasukuni problem« thus proves to be the focus of a sociopolitical controversy that, beginning with the question of the relationship between state and religion in present-day Japan, questions the basis of the national self-conception. It becomes apparent that the root of the problem lies in the religious dimension, the concept of gods at Yasukuni Shrine. This point will be taken up in the following analysis.

2. 2. *The deities of Yasukuni Shrine*

The history as well as the legal and political position of Yasukuni Shrine have been covered in a series of studies and collections, of which especially the monographs by Murakami Shigeyoshi (1974), Ôe Shinobu (1984) and Ernst Lokowandt (1987 and 1981) are worth mentioning. Especially the collection edited by Lokowandt in 1981, *Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Shintô im heutigen Japan* (»On the relationship between the state and Shintô in present-day Japan«), offers an introduction to the »conflict on the transfer of Yasukuni-jinja into state control« in a dedicated chapter (Lokowandt 1981: 173-198). The author remarks in agreement with the aforementioned view by Shimagawa:

»And yet this especially great symbolic value [of Yasukuni Shrine] may not be the most important reason for the unusually strong resistance to all the plans for nationalization. More important is the fact that the nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine would mean a significant breach in the present system of the separation of state and religion, and that a revival of State Shintô would then only be a matter of time. For reasons of consistency the state would then be obliged to take over all the other shrines, as in the State Shintô of the pre-war era.« (Lokowandt 1981: 21)

The crucial element of the ideological system called »State Shintô« of the pre-war and war eras was, as we have seen, the official negation of the religious character of Shintô and its rites, which were understood to be merely »customs.« This made it possible to declare Shintô a mandatory form of state worship according to the ideology of the *kokutai* with the emperor at its center, while formally sidestepping questions of religious freedom. The fallaciousness of this construction is especially apparent in the example of Yasukuni Shrine.

Originally founded under the name Shôkonsha (»Shrine for the summoning of the spirits of the dead«) in Kyôto for the soldiers fighting for the emperor and who were killed since 1853 in the turbulent last years of the Shogunate, the direct predecessor of the shrine was finally moved to Tôkyô in 1875 and renamed to Ya-

sukuni-jinja by the order of Meiji-tennō.⁴⁴⁶ A rescript by Emperor Meiji addressed to the dead honored at the Shrine states the following about the meaning of this new name:

»Loyal, upright and of a devoted heart are each of you deceased, not thinking of your home, sacrificing your life. The peace of our Great Empire rests on these great heroic acts. This is why We have renamed (this shrine) to Yasukuni Shrine, 'Shrine of the peaceful country' and elevated it to an Imperial Shrine of Special Status (*bekkaku kampeisha*). We promise to bring offerings of paper and silk (*mitogura*) as well as congratulations and to worship you from now into eternity without interruption.«⁴⁴⁷

While the original name of Shōkonsha contains a recognizable reference to essential aspects of Japanese religiosity – the periodic inviting, regaling and final sending off of deities and ancestors, as can be seen especially clearly in the custom of the annual festival of ancestors called *O-bon* – the motives for renaming the shrine »Yasukuni-jinja« remain largely unknown, despite the rescript by Meiji-tennō. According to Murakami (1974: 109) the name refers to a term from the Chinese classic *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Tso-chuan*), in which the composite character actually appears twice under the meaning »peace, tranquility of the state,« »peacefulness of the state.«⁴⁴⁸

The establishment of the national Yasukuni Shrine in Tōkyō and Gōkoku-jinja, the »Shrines for the Protection of the Country« in the individual prefectures⁴⁴⁹ marked the creation of a system of worshipping the war dead that, centered around Yasukuni Shrine, remained intact in all wars after the Meiji period. Entirely caught up in the ideological language of the time, Kurt Meissner writes in an article in 1939 entitled »Der Shintoismus als Quelle des japanischen Volk-scharakters und Nationalgeistes« (»Shintōism as the source of the character of the Japanese people and national spirit«):

»Upon doing something for his immediate home, the Japanese goes proudly to the town shrine. Upon going to war, the Japanese will die more at ease on the battlefield when he thinks of the reverence his progeny will show for those who died for the emperor and their home country. He will sacrifice his

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. document in Murakami 1974: 107; see Lokowandt 1978: 328f., D 94; Kawada 1982: 66ff.

⁴⁴⁷ Quoted from Murakami 1974: 109; cf. Yasukunijinja-shamusho (ed.): 1975: 1.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. *Ch'un-ch'iu*, *Tso chuan*, Book 5, Duke Hsi (He), 23rd year and 27th year = Legge 1935 (1983): 184, 200.

⁴⁴⁹ In analogy to Yasukuni Shrine as a national shrine for the worship of soldiers killed in battle, in the prefectures the war dead were worshipped in so-called Gōkoku shrines. This category of shrines originated from the regional Shōkonsha, which were renamed in 1939. Today 52 of these shrines exist (Okada 1982: 161): cf. Lokowandt 1987: 96, note 351; Kawada 1982: 68.

life more at ease because he knows that he will be honored by the entire nation and by the emperor himself at Yasukuni Shrine in Tôkyô.« (Meissner 1939: 5)

The aspect of being »honored« – Meissner’s term is suspiciously unclear here and thus corresponds to the »non-religious« linguistic conventions of the time in Japan – by the emperor himself was of the highest significance. The fact that each of the soldiers killed in service of the emperor, regardless of his previous social standing and moral conduct, was entered into the pantheon of Yasukuni Shrine as the »deified soul of a hero,« as well as the fact that the emperor himself paid tribute to them, was a source of deep pride for the soldiers and the families they left behind. Especially the removal of all social barriers and hierarchies in the empire of the »divine souls of heroes,« the fact that all fallen soldiers would be welcomed there – as the successors to the divine ancestors in the sense of the radical *kokutai* ideology, according to which all Japanese are of divine origin – served to lift the battle morale of the troops. This was reflected in the expression of soldiers leaving for battle that they would meet after the battle in Kudan, the district in Tôkyô where the shrine is located. The importance of this egalitarian aspect even to the most fanatical fighters of the Pacific War can be seen in a series of »Yasukuni jokes« from the ranks of kamikaze pilots, who joked that their current commodore, since he would only later attain a heroic death, might only appear at Yasukuni as an adjunct or servant (cf. Morris 1975 (1980): 318, 454). In a diary entry quoted by Tsurumi Kazuko the critical voice of a »student soldier« is mentioned that not only reveals his own skeptical views, but also the prevailing mood:

»Soldiers believe with extreme naiveté that they are heroes in the defense of their country. They are proud to be the saviors of their fatherland. That is an easy sentimentalism. But that is the anchorage of their emotion. [...] Moreover, should they deny this belief, they would have nothing left to sustain them in their hardships.« (Tsurumi 1970: 125).

The *Kokutai no hongî*, the programmatic work of the ideology of the imperial state, remarks unmistakably on this point:

»[The emperor deigns] to worship those loyal subjects as deities at Yasukuni Shrine who have sacrificed themselves for the sake of the Empire since the Restoration, regardless of their class or profession, in honor of their contributions.«⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁵⁰ *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 31; cf. Gauntlett, Hall 1949: 77.

No sophisticated speculation is necessary to determine that the honoring of the war dead by the emperor himself served to strengthen the concept of the dynasty. The belief that a deceased family member could become the protector of the family (cf. Yanagita 1963: 561; Tsurumi 1970: 12), rooted in popular religion, was thus brought into the state context, according to the ideology of the family state, which stated that the principles of loyalty (*chū*) and filial piety (*kō*) represent the foundation of the family and the state. Just as a single deceased family member protects the family, the entire group of those who died for the state protect it as well. Clearly, religious feelings stemming from popular belief were put into the service of the state.

The relinquishment of the emperor's divine status, declared in the previously discussed New Year's address on January 1, 1946, and the Shintō Directive of the American occupying administration marked the abolition of State Shintō. Article 20 of the post-war Constitution of November 9, 1946, specifies a strict separation of religion and state⁴⁵¹, to which Yasukuni Shrine, now designated a »religious entity« (*shūkyō-hōjin*), is also subject. A new nationalization of the shrine would only be possible by renouncing its religious nature. Lokowandt quotes from a polemical work by the *jinja-honchō* published entitled »Transfer Yasukuni-jinja to state control« which substantiates this argument by referring to the situation in other countries. The appeal begins with the programmatic statement that Yasukuni Shrine – even in the present – is »the most important holy place for the Japanese people« (Lokowandt 1981: 193; one is left to wonder what status Ise-jingū is given here). This shows the unusually high status given to Yasukuni Shrine in the entire Shintō debate. This argumentation immediately follows the thought of the pre-war era.

2. 3. *The heretical interpretation of the gods of Yasukuni*

Before undergoing a more detailed analysis, let us return to the current Yasukuni debate sketched at the beginning. The central point of this academic affair is the religious definition of the gods of Yasukuni; this represents the primarily political level of the conflict. The aspect relevant to religious studies, however, is contained in the definition of the gods of Yasukuni. These views can rightly be called heretical. Shimagawa puts himself into the position of the soldiers killed in battle, especially in World War II; it states that they died a meaningless death un-

⁴⁵¹ *The Constitution of Japan*, Article 20: «Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious acts, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.»

der false pretenses due to »mistaken politics.« »For this reason, the deities of Yasukuni Shrine are 'gods who profoundly hate war'« (Shimagawa 1985: 19). Their will to live was violated, and they themselves are full of hate.

Based on these views, the author reaches a definition of the gods of Yasukuni as *onryô-gami*, »vengeful deities of the souls of the dead,« that is of great interest to religious studies. An earlier definition of the deities of Yasukuni as *onryô* or *goryô* can be found in Ôe Shinobu's work on Yasukuni Shrine (1984: 107ff.). In the wider field of religious studies this category of bitterly hateful souls of the dead is referred to as the »terrible dead.«

2. 3. 1. Yasukuni and the »terrible death«

From a theoretical standpoint, this view results in far-reaching consequences. As we know, the Tennôist Meiji state was based on the ideology of »familism.« From the standpoint of an extreme Kokugaku, following the radical views of Hirata Atsutane, this system ultimately resulted in the construction of a familial relationship between the Japanese people and the imperial family that was seen as factually true. The legitimation for this was provided by the ancient myths. However, the logical consequence of this idea, in light of the previous discussion, creates dangers for the state and the nation resulting from the definition of the family state. For just as a single family can be threatened by the »wandering spirit« of a family member who has suffered a »terrible death,« the religious logic states that the greater group of those who died an early, violent death, the »terrible dead,« pose a danger for the »family state« in its entirety. Ceremonies are carried out, and a »house of souls« is built in order to appease and comfort them, thus, as Sell writes (1955: 39; cf. Antoni 1991a: 183), making them »harmless.«

In the case of Yasukuni Shrine, this means that the country maintains its »peace« through the shrine because the deceased souls of the war dead, who could potentially represent a danger to the community, are subdued in it and thus do not represent a danger for the state family (see also Smith 1974: 58).

Among other things, Emperor Meiji's Rescript of May 10, 1868, on the founding of the Shôkonsha in Kyôto supports this interpretation. Although it speaks at length of the emperor's thanks for the loyalty of the dead soldiers, elsewhere the other, threatening side of the »heroic death« becomes apparent: the construction of the shrine is ordered »in order to make [the dead soldiers'] feelings known

throughout the Empire, and in the hope that *the souls of the dead may be comforted* [my emphasis].⁴⁵²

Also in the present this point plays a recognizable role at the center of the current debate about the religious definition of Yasukuni Shrine. Significantly, the following statement on the function of Yasukuni Shrine is found in the very draft of the law that seeks to establish⁴⁵³ once again the non-religious nature of the shrine:

»The purpose of Yasukuni-jinja is to express the people's feeling of reverence for the souls of those who died in war as well as of the people who sacrificed their life for the country, to give thanks for their lasting contributions, to *appease* [my emphasis] them and to carry out ceremonies, celebrations, etcetera in honor of their deeds and thus to secure their place of honor forever in the memory of future generations.«

Section IV, § 22, 1, II states even more clearly on the function of the shrine:

»Remembrance of the lasting contributions of those who died in the war etcetera and the carrying out of ceremonies and celebrations in order *to appease them* [my emphasis].«

However, the *appeasement* of the souls of the war dead is, as we have seen, an eminently religious idea that is based on the concept of the »terrible death«; citing it as the justification for the supposed »non-religious« status of Yasukuni-jinja represents an unsolvable contradiction. Yasukuni Shrine could only become a »war memorial« stripped of all religion if popular belief in the power and potency of the souls of the dead came to an end.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Lokowandt 1978: 259; the original document can be found in Murakami 1974: 28f. The verb *nagusameru* used in the text means, among other things, »to comfort,« but also »console,« »calm,« »solace.«

⁴⁵³ The draft of a law on the transfer of Yasukuni Shrine into state control was first introduced to Parliament by a group of representatives from the ruling party Jimintō (LDP) on June 30, 1969 (cf. Lokowandt 1981: 18, 173-181).

⁴⁵⁴ For a detailed discussion of the topic of Yasukuni Shrine in the present cf. the study by Frank Nitzsche (1993), which analyzes especially the coverage by the newspaper *Asahi shimbun* from 1985 to 1993.

3. SHINTÔ, THE STATE AND THE END OF THE POST-WAR ERA

With the death of Shôwa-tennô and the subsequent enthronement of his successor Akihito, it was widely hoped in Japan that the post-war era had finally come to an end. In fact, however, both events sparked debates in Japan and abroad on the causes and background of the war to an extent not seen since 1945. The debates focussed on the figure (and institution) of the emperor, whose involvement in the unfortunate history was now discussed far more openly than before. And more than ever, questions arose about a true break with the pre-war system and the position of the imperial household that resulted from it.

In this context, two major ritual events in 1989 and 1990 influenced a new worldwide understanding of the issues surrounding the Japanese imperial family. The burial ceremonies (*taisô no rei*, cf. Antoni 1990b; 1991a: 190-239) on February 24, 1989, marked Japan's final farewell to Shôwa-tennô, who died on January 7 of that year after a long illness. The *sokui no rei* (»enthronement ceremony«) on November 12, 1990, and even more so the *daijôsai* (»Great Thanksgiving Festival«) on November 23, 1990, marked the accession of the former heir to the throne.⁴⁵⁵

3. 1. *Shôwa-tennô's illness and death*

The widespread sympathy among the people for the emperor's illness and death again demonstrated their deep reverence for the emperor. At the same time, however, in Japan as well as abroad, especially among the former enemy countries in the war, the death of the emperor sparked a public discussion of formerly unseen proportions on the position and function of the imperial household in present-day Japan and the immediate past – in this case primarily regarding the problem of the personal guilt or responsibility for the war (*sensôsekinin*) carried by the emperor during World War II. Japanese conservatives generally took the view that the death of the emperor marked the irrevocable end of an entire era – the Shôwa period, with its entanglement in the war and its militarism – and that Japan could now look toward the future free and unburdened by the shadows of the past (cf. *Mainichi-gurafu-kinkyû-zôkan* 1989: 65, among others). However, it became apparent, not only from the critical comments from abroad, that wishful thinking and reality very nearly threatened to erupt into conflict. Es-

⁴⁵⁵ On these ceremonies see also Rekishigaku Kenkyûkai (ed.) 1990: passim.

pecially on the occasion of the burial of the emperor, sensitive problems and questions regarding the imperial household were brought up again, and Japan appears to stand only at the beginning of a discussion that is far from being concluded.⁴⁵⁶

Two questions in particular emerge from the context of the public debate. The first of these, which has been intensely and controversially discussed, asks to what extent the emperor can or should be recognized as having a personal authority of decision and thus a responsibility for the course of the war during the 1930s and 1940s. In this context, the spectacular affair surrounding the mayor of Nagasaki, who charged the emperor with personal complicity, drew attention from abroad. Motoshima Hitoshi, a member of the governing party Jimintō (LDP) and mayor of the city of Nagasaki, publicly charged the emperor with responsibility for Japan's role in World War II before the city council and furthermore later declared that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki could have been avoided if the emperor had ended the war earlier. Following these statements Motoshima suffered a severe backlash from within his own party and was inundated with death-threats from radical right-wing organizations. Finally the »Motoshima case« came to be seen as a touchstone for the freedom for speech in present-day Japan. This unfortunate affair reached its climax in the attempted assassination of Motoshima on January 18, 1990, from which the mayor escaped with serious injuries.⁴⁵⁷

Secondly, since Emperor Hirohito's death, the position of the imperial household within the Japanese state has been fundamentally disputed. This question emerged despite the change in the emperor's position long since effected by the Constitution from that of a sacrosanct, divine sovereign as stated in the »Meiji Constitution,« which was valid until 1946, into a merely representative function in accordance with the post-war Constitution. Abroad as well as in Japan, the question was posed of whether in post-war and present-day Japan the emperorship could possibly take on a far more important function than commonly believed; and furthermore why Japan has such difficulties in defining for the world, and possibly also for itself, the position of the emperor in its society.

⁴⁵⁶ The scope of the discussions within Japan can be seen in the articles translated in the topical issues »The era of Shōwa-tennō, I« in the magazine *Kagami* (new series, volume XVI, issues 1/2, 1989; Antoni, Worm 1989).

⁴⁵⁷ The fact that the case drew such an unusual amount of attention can be seen, among other things, in a book that was published in Japan in 1990 with great success. It contains excerpts from a total of 7,300 letters that the mayor of Nagasaki was sent over the course of the affair by the Japanese people. Astonishingly, a majority of the letters express agreement with Motoshima's views (*Nagasaki-shichō e no 7100 no tōri no tegami. Tennō no sensō-sekinin o megutte*, Komichi shobō, Tōkyō 1990).

These irritations stem from the fact that the enormous economic success of the post-war era also marked the emergence of a new image of Japan in the international community. At that time, contrary to earlier clichés, Japan was seen by many as the embodiment of an exclusively economic and technological utopia, even as a »superstate.« But the international commentators appeared to have gone too far in imagining an exclusively Western and technologically oriented »modern« and rational Japan, since the international community was largely uncomprehending in the face of the events surrounding the imperial household since the fall of 1988. Suddenly, »traditional« or even »archaic« elements in present-day Japan were put forth by irritated commentators – factors that did not harmonize at all with the dearly held image of a coming »superstate of the 21st century.«

It became apparent that the area of intellectual and religious history cannot be neglected in viewing present-day Japan, and especially the imperial household, if an accurate picture of reality in Japan is to be drawn.

In this context, the deceased emperor's burial itself, and especially the question of the manner in which the state burial should be conducted, played a key role in the debate. The debate concentrated on details of the burial ceremony that appeared somewhat marginal, a circumstance that was often difficult for foreign observers to understand and thus requires explanation. But in fact, all of the problems of the separation of state and religion – also specified by the Constitution (Article 20, Section 3) – were contained in this single point. The concrete question was how the democratic nation of Japan should carry out the first burial of an emperor after the emperorship had lost its earlier position, which was based in Shintô. While the direct predecessors of Shôwa-tennô were buried according to the (State) Shintô ceremony with all its spiritual and ideological implications, those in power now had to face the complicated problem of which changes to make to the ceremony in order to make the changes stipulated by the Constitution clear to the outside world.

This meant that the details of the ceremony's progression played an eminently important, highly symbolic role and ultimately allow conclusions to be drawn regarding the position of the imperial household in present-day Japan.

For this reason, it is worth analyzing the ceremony in question. Aside from my own notes and observations, the main sources for this discussion of the ceremonies surrounding Shôwa-tennô's burial were reports from Japanese and international media (the press, TV and video). Additionally, official Japanese materials, which were provided to the author by the office of the Prime Minister, were also used (cf. Antoni 1991a: 190-239).

3. 1. 1. *The burial*

Already during the celebrations on the occasion of Emperor Hirohito's 86th birthday, on April 29, 1987, rumors of a supposed illness from cancer spread in Japan. But only one and a half years later, on September 19, 1988, did his serious illness become apparent. The emperor suffered a serious breakdown. But only after the emperor's death was it officially acknowledged that the emperor had suffered an incurable cancer of the duodenum. Crown Prince Akihito took over the official duties of his father, and the media prepared for the impending death of the emperor. But the emperor's fight for survival, extended by regular blood transfusions, stretched over several months, during which public life in Japan was entirely taken over by the event and nearly came to a standstill. Daily press reports with detailed medical bulletins, including the exact amounts of transfused blood and so on, kept the public in bated breath. To a degree wholly unexpected by international observers, the nation of Japan appeared to have turned again to the – now dying – emperor.⁴⁵⁸ Images of the hundreds of thousands of people who wrote their well-wishes in the lists that were made available or who knelt in silence before the Imperial Palace in Tōkyō were circulated around the world. Although at this point the debate within Japan about the imperial household had already begun, accompanied by occasionally rude attacks by the foreign, and especially the British, press (cf. Antoni 1991a: 192, note 4), the international community was generally given the impression that Japan again stood in unity behind its emperor. For this reason, one of the largest daily newspapers, *Mainichi shimbun*, wrote in September 1988 with consternation:

»If we do not react with more reserve, still other countries will begin to believe that Japan has not changed since the time before the war.« (*Mainichi shimbun*, September 28, 1989).

Along with the emperor's increasing agony, the political debate in Japan also intensified. Both sides accused one another of exploiting the situation for their own purposes, and depending on their position, of either supporting the revival of the imperial system of the pre-war era, or on the other side, seeking to completely abolish the emperorship. In this context, the relationship between the state and Shintō received increased attention. Already for some time before the emperor's illness, there had been repeated attempts to harmonize politics and politi-

⁴⁵⁸ Some in the press were of the opinion that the widespread interest was primarily the result of a »media event« without any true inner compassion among the people (cf. on this topic, among others, *Soto kara mita 'Tennōkyō'*, in: *Bungei shunjū*, March 1989: 402-409, especially p. 403).

cally oriented Shintô. Just one example of this is the previously discussed debate surrounding Yasukuni Shrine. In light of the situation, several conservative groups, such as the »Fellowship for fundamental questions of state,« which included 43 LDP representatives, now concentrated on the goal of reconciling the state with Shintô (cf. *Yomiuri shimbun*, October 17, 1988). Thus, it was evident that the impending death of the emperor was of great political importance to the various social groups in Japan.

3. 1. 1. 1. *The ceremonies up to the time of the burial*

On Saturday, January 7, 1989, Emperor Hirohito, posthumously known as Shôwa-tennô, died at 6:33 AM in Fukiage Palace in Tôkyô. Upon the emperor's death, the preparations for the burial ceremonies as well as the enthronement of the new emperor began. On the day of Shôwa-tennô's death, the transfer of the imperial regalia of the sword, copies of the jewels and the imperial seal to the 55-year-old Akihito took place already at 10:01 AM in a short ceremony (*kenjitô shôkei no gi*)⁴⁵⁹ in the *Matsu no ma* hall of the Imperial Palace. The ceremonial transfer was conducted as a state ceremony by order of the government. Akihito is considered the 125th emperor in the history of Japan according to the traditional chronology, the early history of which, however, is fictitious. The inclusion of the government in this ceremonial enthronement (*sokuï*) sparked criticism; in this context reference was also made to the upcoming religious festival of the *daijôsai* in the following year, in which the government had also announced its participation.⁴⁶⁰ On the afternoon of the same day, in accordance with legal regulations from 1979 (the so-called »*gengô* law«), the government announced the name for the Akihito era: *Heisei*, meaning »widespread peace.« The following day, Sunday, January 8, was declared the first day of the new era. On January 9, the new emperor gave the constitutional oath in a ceremony before an audience of representatives of the state (*chôken no gi*).

At the same time, preparations for the state burial and mourning began. The Imperial House Act (*Kôshitsu tenpan*) stipulates in § 25 that upon the death of the

⁴⁵⁹ Article 4 of the Imperial House Act (*Kôshitsu tenpan*) states that upon the death of an emperor the crown prince is to immediately (*tadachi ni*) ascend to the throne, although no procedural details are given (cf. Kami 1989: 106).

⁴⁶⁰ The »Great Thanksgiving Festival« (*daijôsai*) marks the high point of all the enthronement celebrations. In a secret ritual, revolving around the mystical communion of the new emperor with the sun goddess and other deities, the emperor receives spiritual legitimation for his rulership. Cf. Murakami 1990: passim; on the question of the original religious significance of the *daijôsai* cf. Antoni 1988: 177-195.

emperor a »great burial ceremony« (*taisô no rei*) is to be carried out.⁴⁶¹ However, the law makes no mention of the procedure and details of the burial; the job of determining these points is given over to a »burial committee« (*taisô no rei iinkai*) that is to be formed immediately. Already on the morning of January 8 the cabinet voted for the appointment of such a commission under the leadership of Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru. February 24 was decided on as the day of the burial.⁴⁶²

Until that time, according to the regulations of the Imperial Household Agency (*kunaishô*), various religious ceremonies were to take place.⁴⁶³ A comprehensive program of ceremonies for the burial itself on Friday, January 24, 1989, was determined, which consisted of a series of interrelated private, religious ceremonies for the imperial family and secular, state ceremonies.

Since Article 7, Section 10 of the Constitution allows the emperor the »practicing of ceremonial celebrations,« there is no fundamental obstacle to combining Shintô ceremonies with those of the state. However, the planned combination of these heterogeneous elements in the case at hand entailed fundamental problems and led to fierce controversy. For example, the Japanese Communist Party declared its refusal to participate in any of the ceremonies. In November of the previous year, while Shôwa-tennô was still alive, Chief Cabinet Secretary Obuchi Keizo of the Takeshita government declared that a burial of the emperor would be conceived in harmony with the dictates of the Constitution as well as the traditions of the imperial household. Already at this time, scholars of constitutional law had voiced their concerns regarding such a combination.⁴⁶⁴ Extremist conservative circles, on the other hand, expressed the opposite demand to the government to carry out the burial ceremonies in complete agreement with the precedents of the ceremonies for the Emperors Taishô and Meiji, and thus according to the supposedly historically traditional form. In this context, it was argued – in complete agreement with the maxims of the nationalist State Shintô of the pre-war era – that Shintô was not a religion, but rather the expression of the »customs

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Kami 1989: 106. The use of the expression *taisô* for a burial has been limited, since the war, to the emperor, the empress and the mother and widow of the emperor. Before the war, the term *taisôgi* was applied to an extended circle within the imperial family.

⁴⁶² This information comes from various Japanese newspapers; among these the reports in the *Mainichi shimbun*, most of which are signed Iwao Mitsuyo, proved to be especially valuable and detailed.

⁴⁶³ According to *Mainichi-gurafu-kinkyû-zôkan* 1989: 145.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Kusaoi Akiko's detailed discussion of the topic (»Constitution's principles raise questions as imperial funeral and accession loom«) in: *The Japan Times*, November 12, 1988.

and ways« of Japan. According to this logic, a Shintô state ceremony would not violate the constitutional mandate separating the state and religion.⁴⁶⁵

The government's decision to combine both the official and private ceremonies of the imperial family represented a compromise between the two fundamentally opposed demands.

3. 1. 1. 2. *The ceremonies on February 24, 1989*

Already on January 11, 1989, before the program for the ceremonies was decided, construction work began in the imperial gardens, Shinjuku gyôen in the district of Shinjuku, Tôkyô, for the location of the most important ceremonies of the burial festivities: the temporary funeral hall (*sôjôden*). On January 12 the group responsible for carrying out the »chapel rites« (*sôjôden no gi*) was determined; 86-year-old Nagazumi Torahiko, a companion of the emperor's since kindergarten, was appointed as its leader. On January 16 the condolence lists were closed. A total of 4,729,728 people had written in them since January 7 (Iwao Mitsuyo in *Mainichi shinbun*, February 22, 1989). In the period from January 22 to 25, the people were given the opportunity to pay their respects to the deceased emperor. On the first day alone more than 160,000 people crowded into the part of the palace that was opened for this purpose.

On January 24, the burial committee made its final decision on the procedure of the funeral rites. The ceremony was divided into seven sections, four of which were considered private acts of the imperial family, and the remaining three official state ceremonies.

The funeral area in the garden of Shinjuku gyôen was similar in design to the historical examples of the Taishô and Meiji eras. The funeral hall (*sôjôden*), which was built entirely out of Japanese cedar and corresponded in its construction and function to that of a Shintô shrine, measured 20 meters long, 10 meters deep and 12 meters high. Up until the beginning of the state *taisô no rei* ceremony, a *torii* was placed in front of the funeral hall, in front of which two large *ômasakaki* branches were placed, both of which are prominent symbols used in Shintô ceremonies. The area for the funeral guests was separated by a folded curtain (*manmon*). The entire funeral area was surrounded by a temporary fence (*manmaku*) in black and white. Perpendicular to the funeral hall there were two open tent halls (*akusha*) for the funeral guests invited to take part in the ceremonies.

⁴⁶⁵ Kusaoi Akiko is also the author of an informative and critical article on this topic: »Two-part funeral leaves both sides dissatisfied,« in: *The Japan Times*, February 24, 1989.

Although the motorcade, which was designated part of the state ceremony, was consciously kept simple in its conception, the short funeral procession (*toho soretsu*), which led from the entrance of the funeral area to the funeral hall, was based on historical examples and Shintō ritual. The beginning of the procession, which can only be discussed in its main features, was formed by the ceremonial ornaments (*igibutsu*) of the imperial household: five banners in the colors white and orange, two shields, four halberds and two imperial banners with the symbols of the sun and moon. These ceremonial ornaments were followed by two large *ōmasakaki* branches, priests and two artfully designed containers (*gyosenpitsu*) for the transport of the two kinds of offerings: foodstuffs (*shinsen*) and cloth goods (*heibutsu*). These were followed, along with more priests, by court musicians playing traditional court music (*gagaku*) on classical instruments. At the center of the parade was the massive sedan (*sōkaren*) carrying the emperor's coffin, a palanquin in the classical (originally Chinese) style carried by 51 attendants, measuring 7 meters in length and weighing 1.5 tons.⁴⁶⁶ One of the emperor's chamberlains followed the sedan on foot wearing a pair of white shoes. Finally a group of officials was followed by the members of the imperial household headed by the new emperor in his formal role as the chief mourner. The end of the procession, which consisted of a total of 225 participants and was 150 meters long, was taken up by a member of the funeral committee.

The remainder of the ceremony followed the program as previously discussed. The core of the *sōjōden* ceremony consisted of, in addition to the offerings, the eulogy by the new emperor in his function as the chief mourner.

As dictated by the program, following the imperial family's private *sōjōden no gi* ceremony a seemingly insignificant change took place that was actually of great importance for the entire proceedings: the Shintō ceremonial symbols of the *torii* and *ōmasakaki* were removed, and shortly thereafter the ceremony was continued, but now as an official state ceremony without any openly religious character. However, there was no change of location, nor were any further adjustments made to the facilities. The *sōjōden* funeral hall, the central location of the proceedings, as well as the other elements including the *akusha* tent halls, the *manmaku* fences and so on, were kept without making any changes. Only the removal of the *torii* and the *ōmasakaki* served to signify the end of the religious part of the proceedings and the secular character of the *taisō no rei* ceremony that was to follow.

⁴⁶⁶ *Sōkaren*: historically a covered, closed sedan (*koshi*) reserved for use by the emperor and select members of the imperial family, also called *sōka no koshi*. The name, which refers to the shape of an onion (*negi no hana*, or *sōka*) is attributed to the onion-shaped golden roofs of the sedans.

After the completion of this ceremony, which involved the largest showing of royalty, heads of state and other foreign guests of honor ever seen in Japan, the emperor's coffin was transferred back to the hearse (*jisha*), a black automobile, and the motorcade proceeded to bring the coffin to its final resting place, the Musashino mausoleum at the Imperial Musashi Cemetery (*Musashi ryô bochi*) in the town of Hachiôji, which belongs to the metropolis of Tôkyô. Like the journey from the Imperial Palace to Shinjuku-gyôden Park, this trip over a distance of about 45 kilometers was considered an independent state ceremony (*taisô no rei gosoretsu*).

Upon arriving at Musashi Cemetery in Hachiôji, which until then had only housed the mausoleums of the parents of Shôwa-tennô (Taishô-tennô and his wife Teimei - Meiji-tennô having been buried according to his own wishes in Momoyama, near Kyôto, as discussed above) the coffin (*reikyû*) was brought in a procession to its final resting place. However, it remained in the hearse and was not transferred to a *sôkaren* palanquin. The following rites and ceremonial acts, as well as the burial itself, proceeded according to the program.

In front of the gravesite itself, a building (*osuya*) in the form of a Shintô shrine was constructed at the time of the burial that resembled the *sôjôden*, the temporary funeral hall in Shinjuku-gyôden Park. After the conclusion of the ceremonies and a period of time in which the people could pay their respects at the graveside, this building was removed and the area around the grave was closed to the public. Only after the completion of the mausoleum was the area reopened.

The burial took place in the presence of only the closest members of the imperial family. This included transporting the coffin to the location of the elevated stone chamber on specially constructed tracks (cf. *Mainichi shimbun*, February 22, 1989). Supposedly 100 items were included with the coffin as burial objects (cf. *Yomiuri shimbun*, February 23, 1989).

Already on the day before the burial, February 23, the spirit of the deceased emperor had been ceremonially brought into a special chamber of the grave (*gon-den*, or *karidono*, the »temporary residence«) in a Shintô ritual to remain there until the burial mound was complete.

The removal of the burial objects (*teppeisen*) in front of the temporary grave structure (*osuya*) marked the end of the 14-hour-long burial ceremonies. During the first year of mourning a large number of other ceremonies and ritual acts were to take place, but the ceremonies of February 24, 1989 represented a whole complex of events that now came to an end.

3. 1. 2. *The historical dimension*

As previously discussed, the preparations for the funeral and the state burial were accompanied by a variety of public discussions. Since the ceremonial element carries a highly symbolic weight, the question of the separation between the »private« and »state« parts of the ceremonies was of great importance. Yet the more closely we examine this question, the more difficult it becomes to determine a true, clear separation between these two areas. Besides the unusually large financial contribution from the state even for the ostensibly private events held by the imperial family, this is due among other things to such obvious circumstances as the burial site's location and official name having been determined by the government, although this should be a purely private matter of the imperial family. But the ceremonial aspect of the burial festivities themselves, the proceedings of which were briefly sketched in the preceding discussion, proves upon closer examination to be by no means split into these two areas as the program states. This situation, however, cannot be viewed solely from the perspective of the burial of Shōwa-tennō; only upon comparison with the historical antecedents does the extent of continuity and discontinuity that characterized the burial become apparent. Thus let us turn to a short comparison with the burial of Taishō-tennō (cf. Antoni 1990b).⁴⁶⁷

3. 1. 2. 1. *Excursus: the burial of Taishō-tennō*

On the morning of December 25, 1926, Emperor Yoshihito, posthumously known as Taishō-tennō, died in the Hayama Imperial Villa. Upon Yoshihito's death, the honor of the emperorship went to Crown Prince Hirohito. The burial took place on February 7, 1927, according to the legal provisions established on October 21, 1926 (*Kōshitsu fukumorei* and *Kōshitsu sōgirei*). After the ritual paying of respects at the Imperial Palace, the funeral ceremony was conducted in Shinjuku-gyōden Park in Tōkyō. It took place, according to tradition, at night. The transfer of the coffin from the Imperial Palace to the funeral area was accompanied by more than 10,000 people in an official funeral parade following the hearse. Along with representatives from the armed forces, the police, government officials and members of the burial commission, Taishō-tennō's funeral parade included the symbols already known from the burial of Meiji-tennō: halberds,

⁴⁶⁷ A compilation of the relevant legislation concerning the funerals of Emperor Meiji and Taishō can be found in *Gendai hōrei zenshu*, ed. Suehiro Itsutarō, Tōkyō 1937, Volume 1, No. 8: 297-355.

white and yellow banners, *ômasakaki* branches as well as banners with the symbols of the sun and moon, which were a clear reference to the position of the imperial household within the state at the time and to the fact that the entire ceremony, in accordance with the State Shintô ideology of the *kokutai*, had the character of state religion.

A two-wheeled, black lacquered wagon in the Chinese style (*karabisashi*)⁴⁶⁸ pulled by four decorated oxen served as a *jisha*, or hearse, on the way from the palace to the funeral area. The hearse was followed by a porter carrying the emperor's sandals. Then followed Shintô priests, followed in turn by twelve *gagaku* musicians and military bands in the Western style. Only the new emperor was not present in the parade, and was represented by the Imperial Prince Takamatsu (see above). The emperor himself awaited the arrival of the funeral parade in front of the funeral hall (*sôjôden*) in Shinjuku-gyôen Park.

Especially the apparently ancient hearse drew attention among the people; the correspondent from the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Leopold Winkler, wrote in a powerfully eloquent report in February of 1927:

»And for a long time all ears, strangely touched, have been turned toward the distance: a groaning, moaning, whimpering makes its way through the night, never heard, perhaps in a clouded dream as a child, deeply primitive from the grey dawn of life, and yet cutting into the flesh like the mournful song of an old tree in a storm, or the helpless moaning of thousands of poor creatures – now all eyes fall upon this strange song of suffering. Very slowly, the heavy, powerful and dismal hearse rolls forward, pulled by four black buffalo in white straps, on only two enormous wheels. [...] Above all of this drones the great cracking and creaking of the wheels. [...] The inside of the wagon is hidden from view by blinds made of bamboo straw.«

At 8 PM the parade reached the funeral area, where a Shintô shrine served as a temporary funeral hall (*sôjôden*), in front of which there were two large, open-sided tent halls (*akusha*), each accommodating 5000 funeral guests. They also housed the foreign guests and the entire diplomatic corps. The entrance to the funeral area as well as the funeral hall itself were each marked by a large *torii*.

The further proceedings ran according to the already customary practice of the Shintô burial ceremony: *tensenpei*, the traditional offerings of cloth and foodstuffs, were brought forth; the *norito* was read, followed by the parting remarks of the

⁴⁶⁸ Also called *karabisashi no kuruma* or *karaguruma* (»chinese car«), this vehicle is a two-wheeled covered oxcart (*gissha*) that was used during the Nara and Heian periods and reserved for use by the emperor and empress. Vehicles of this kind fell out of use during the Kamakura period and were later only used for certain ceremonies and events. The design and name of the vehicle point to the strong influence from China in this area.

new Emperor Hirohito to his deceased father. Then followed parting remarks from the other members of the imperial family, led by the widowed empress. Then the representatives of the 55 states taking part in the burial ceremony proceeded in front of the funeral hall, followed by the members of the Japanese government. This marked the end of the ceremonies at the *sôjôden* funeral hall. At 11 PM the curtain in front of the funeral hall was closed.

At midnight the coffin, which had been transferred to a palanquin (*sôkaren*), was carried by 103 people to a specially built, temporary section of Sendagaya station, which was located next to the park. The bearers of the palanquin during the procession were again made up of young men from the town of Yase near Kyôto, the so-called *Yase-dôji*. The burial itself then took place at Taishô-tennô's gravesite, called Tama no ryô, at the Imperial Musashi Cemetery in Hachiôji.

As for our question regarding the examples for the burial of Shôwa-tennô, this account reveals that the 1989 funeral ceremonies largely followed the pattern of the State Shintô ritual since the Meiji period. The customs of imperial burials at the time were a hybrid mix of elements of varied provenience, as artificial as modern »State Shintô« itself, and more the expression of a modern, religiously argued ideology than of an ancient religious tradition.

The defeat in World War II represented the official end of this ideology, and the burial of Shôwa-tennô on February 24, 1989, might have brought with it the possibility of rethinking this actually still young tradition of the modern imperial burial. On the contrary, those responsible decided on very cautious, merely formal changes to the ceremony that on the surface acknowledged the demands for the separation of state and religion, but left no doubt as to the apparent ties to the burials of the Emperors Meiji and Taishô.

3. 2. *The daijôsai of Emperor Akihito in November 1990*⁴⁶⁹

Regarding the question of a renewed convergence of Shintô and the state in present-day Japan, as mentioned at the beginning of the discussion, the enthronement ceremony of the new emperor is of particular importance, including the *sokui no rei* of November 12, 1990, and especially the *daijôsai* of November 22 and 23, which was extremely controversial in the Japanese political debate. These ceremonies were given a great deal of attention in the Japanese as well as the foreign press. It is astonishing that in light of these rituals, especially the *daijôsai* (»Great Thanksgiving Festival«) itself, previous concepts in the form of a sacral

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. among others *Neues aus Japan*, volume 331, November/December 1990: 2-15 and *Neues aus Japan*, special edition: *Beginn einer neuen Ära, Heisei – Frieden und Eintracht* (no year, no date).

interpretation of the emperorship, and thus the idea of the *kokutai*, were publicly and officially propagated in a form that had not been considered possible since the end of the war.

A detailed analysis of the ceremony of the succession to the throne in November, 1990 has not yet been undertaken; Peter Fischer (1991) offers a discussion of the political function of the rituals. The special importance of the *daijôsai* for the problem of the *sacred* interpretation of the imperial household – and thus implicitly the problem of the *kokutai* – is generally recognized by recent research. Thus, Peter Fischer states as a summary of the aforementioned study (Fischer 1991: 117):

»Especially the enthronement ceremonies opened the door for a renewed convergency, or rather combination, of Shintô and the state more than at any other time in the post-war era.«

Ernst Lokowandt (1992: 15f.) remarks on the aspect of constitutional law:

»The position of the emperor is, as is now apparent from the procedure of the *daijôsai*, the first Shintô thanksgiving ceremony during the reign of an emperor, contradictory and ultimately unclear. [...] Article 20 [of the Constitution of Japan] requires a strict separation between the state and religion and prohibits any religious acts by the state. However, this article was violated by the *daijôsai*, which even the government was obliged to admit was a religious ceremony. This infringement is made all the more serious by the fact that the *daijôsai* is not just any religious ceremony, but one of the three ceremonies that establish the very position of the emperor. Thus, it can be asserted without exaggeration that the holding of the *daijôsai* marked the *rescinding* [my emphasis] of Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution of Japan.«

Finally the political scientist Paul Kevenhörster (1993: 23) writes clearly in a publication on this topic:

»The connection between Shintô, the continued state support of which is prohibited by the new Constitution, and the position of the emperor is a politically sensitive question. In contrast to the intentions of the Constitution, the ceremonies of imperial succession after Emperor Akihito's (Heisei-tennô) accession to the throne in November 1990 again drew objections that they carry on and further establish the traditional mandate to power of the imperial household. In light of this tradition of rule and its historical and cultural basis, any renewed convergence of Shintô and the state must be seen as a danger to the democratic basis of legitimation in the Constitution: the more the position of the emperor is justified on religious grounds, the farther removed it becomes from the basic constitutional principles of democratic sovereignty.«

In the secret ritual of the *daijōsai*, the very sacred foundation of the emperorship that appeared to have been renounced on January 1, 1946 was revived. The *daijōsai*, of religious importance as an sacrifice of first fruits and holy communion between deity and man, transforms the profane nature of the person called upon to rule by right of ancestry, the new emperor, into a sacred form of existence (cf. Antoni 1988: 183-185). Through the ritual connection of genealogical and mythical legitimation by the *shinchoku* (the divine mandate from Amaterasu ōmikami to her »heavenly grandson« Ninigi no mikoto) with the holy rite of communion, the emperor is elevated to the status of a »living god« (*arahitogami*). It is simply not possible to deny the existential and religious character of this ceremony for political reasons. Thus, even a state proclamation purely motivated by constitutional law cannot nullify the deeply religious nature of this ritual, which, regardless of its historically broken lineage,⁴⁷⁰ at its core (the central ceremony in the *Yuki-* and *Suki-den*) belongs to the authentic religious traditions of the imperial household. Despite the doubtless breaks in tradition, the *daijōsai* in particular is not merely an invented tradition in the sense of Eric Hobsbawm's conception of the term, but rather a ceremony that has been altered and made ideologically useful in a »traditionalistic« sense (see discussion above) which was originally a real religious ceremony. The *negation* of the religious character of this ceremony therefore reveals an ideologically motivated interpretation according to the State Shintō doctrine of the *kokutai* from the Meiji and early Shōwa periods.

What true value – the question is posed here in polemical exaggeration – can the relinquishment of the emperor's divinity in 1946 be seen as having when the new emperor nonetheless conducted the secret ritual of the »Great Thanksgiving« (*daijōsai*) in 1990, a rite that is deeply rooted in the mythical and religious tradition and in which the designated ruler communes with the heavenly deities, thus receiving divine legitimation for his rule, and in this way also his sacred status?

Thus, Akihito's *daijōsai* represented the renewal of the supposedly unbroken divine legitimation of the Japanese imperial household. In this context the uncritical use of the mythically founded chronology of the imperial family is also worth noting, according to which the emperor was welcomed as the 125th emperor. The official Japanese news organization *Neues aus Japan* remarked:⁴⁷¹

»On November 12, 1990 Emperor Akihito acceded to the throne in a festive ceremony at the Imperial Palace as the 125th Japanese monarch. [...] The ceremonies reached a second high point with the enthronement, which stretched

⁴⁷⁰ For the origins of the *daijōsai*, cf. Antoni 1988, chapter C. 5; for the historical continuity of the *daijōsai*, cf. Liscutin 1990: 43-51.

⁴⁷¹ *Neues aus Japan*, volume 331, November/December 1990.

over several days, with the Daijosai festival of rice offerings made by the emperor to his ancestors in the night of November 22 to 23.«

Following this, rites and ceremonies that were carried out in this context are described in detail. The new emperor is introduced here as »the 125th Japanese monarch,« thus implicitly recognizing the traditional genealogy of the imperial household as found in the *Kojiki* and especially in the historical work of the *Dainihonshi*, which was canonized by the Mito School. This legitimation also of the present emperor is thus rooted – in the sense of a »sacred monarchy« – in the ancient and traditional foundations of Shintô, including »traditionalistic« components from the Meiji period.

Overall the conclusion can be drawn that the state's efforts were successful in their essential⁴⁷² goal of maintaining the two main pillars of the *kokutai*: the unbroken unity of people and emperor as well as the religious affirmation of the emperorship through ritual means, as modern Japanese theoreticians and ideologues had formulated since the days of the Mitogaku and Kokugaku.

⁴⁷² In this context the Japanese term *seika*, meaning »essence, quintessence,« or »flower, glory,« which had a constant presence in the *kokutai* debate, is fitting (cf. *Kokutai no hongî* 1937: 9, line 3).

4. KOKUTAI AND NIHONJINRON

Japan's defeat in World War II and the resulting end of the sovereign position of the ruler struck a lasting blow to the idea of Japan's exceptional *kokutai*, but as we have seen in the previous discussion, essential aspects of this Shintō-based dogma have managed to survive into the present day.

But even outside the area of the state, remnants or altered forms of modern *kokutai* thought in present-day Japan can be observed. Especially in the wake of the country's economic development in the post-war era, which was viewed as sensational not only abroad but also in Japan, since the 1970s the growth of a new national confidence has become apparent that can clearly be seen as a variety of *kokutai* thought.

But here it is not the emperor alone, in the sense of classical thought, who stands at the center of this conception, but rather it is the question of the supposed anthropological exceptionality of the entire Japanese nation that moves the spirits.

This debate, which is known by the name *Nihonjinron*, or »theories about the Japanese,« is related to *kokutai* thought in particular as an intellectual position that postulates specific characteristics of national singularity and applies them to the analysis of complex historical, economic and sociological problems as relevant categories, thereby emphasizing specific, supposedly purely Japanese traits that are not shared by other countries and cultures and on the basis of which Japan's exceptional economic success is supposed to have been made possible. Thus we return to the area of cultural images and national stereotypes that were mentioned in the introduction (Chapter I: 2. 4) as being so relevant to this context.

The sociologists Sugimoto and Mouer remark on this topic:

»In the Japanese market of ideas, theories on the Japanese (*nihonjin-ron*) are in full bloom. One topic has been taken up in more or less the same way as the main assertion of these theories: how unique are the Japanese? There is probably no other society outside Japan in which so many hundreds of books have been published that highlight the uniqueness of their own national character and furthermore in which so many of these books have become best-sellers.« (Sugimoto et al. 1980: 25)

Sugimoto and Mouer see continuity and common patterns of thought in regard to the *nihonjinron* theories of the pre- and post-war eras, »and an arc can be seen pointing to the assumption that from the indefinite past on into the present, in all

corners of the country, beyond time, space and the barriers of class, all Japanese possess a common form of thought and behavior (Sugimoto et al. 1980: 27).

Obviously this is based on an approach already pioneered by the national Shintô philologists of the 18th and 19th centuries, namely the nativistically oriented question of the definitively characteristic traits of Japanese culture (cf. Naumann 1987: 173-191), posed in light of what was perceived by Japanese society to be a challenge from abroad in the form of foreign values and ways of life.

The changes to the Constitution and the political development of the post-war era caused the ideology of the *kokutai* to become largely obsolete only outside nationalist Shintô circles. In 1967, Mitsuma Shingo was able to declare at the »Second International Conference for Shintô« (Sasaki 1967: 69f.):

»The national character of Japan is the solidification of each individual's common mind, which is rooted in *Kannagara no michi*. [...] In short, our national character keeps: 1. The unity of Shintô worship and government. 2. The reign of the emperor of one dynasty. 3. The oneness of the emperor and his subjects.«

And the politician Hasegawa Takashi writes about Ise Shrine in 1985 in the publication of the Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberal Star*, vol. 14/159, April 10, 1985: 15), in the manner of his predecessors:

»Today, we in Japan must recognize the roots of our prosperity and must regain the faith of our spiritual past. Ise Shrine is very moving both in its beauty and its power; it represents the stability and continuity of all the emperors who have served it since the birth of our nation.«

4. 1. *On the image of the emperor in post-war Japan*

The Japanese historian Suzuki Hiroo remarked on the image of the emperor in Japan of the 1980s:

»Only a few Japanese in their mid-forties or older hear the word *tennô* without being deeply moved. The variety and intensity of feeling depends on one's personal background and experiences. Younger Japanese, on the other hand, feel nothing special in the word *tennô*, especially since they have been given a negative image of the emperor in history class in school during the post-war era.« (Suzuki 1980: 31)

Opinion polls appear to confirm this development. Three times after the war, the Japanese newspaper *Asahi shimbun* conducted a survey on the question »How

much sympathy do you have for the imperial family?» during Emperor Hirohito's life. In the first survey in 1959, a vast majority voiced great sympathy for the emperor. Nearly two decades later, however, in 1978, the proportion of Japanese between the ages of 20 and 30 who voiced »sympathy for the imperial family« fell to only 20%, and, as the journalist Chikushi Tetsuya remarks in his study, among those between 30 and 40, »not even the 30% mark was reached. A shift had taken place,« (Chikushi 1983: 65). Finally in 1982, sympathy for the emperor had fallen even further to 15% among those between the ages of 20 and 30.

The more the consensus in Japanese society has been seen as endangered, however, the more probing the questions of the historical and cultural basis for social consensus become. And it appears as though the emperor, as in earlier times, has been rediscovered as a unifying bond, to use the words of the Shintō specialist Ashizu Uzuhiko.

»Already during the turbulent times after the defeat in the war, His Majesty tacitly took on the task of bringing peace to Japan. And to this day he embodies this role of unifying the people. The symbol lies especially in this aspect of tacit duty.« (Chikushi 1983: 69)

Remarkably, this development also appears to include the young. Despite all data on the disinterest of young people for the emperorship, the previously mentioned journalist Chikushi Tetsuya does not agree with the prevailing opinion that the imperial system has lost its importance for the younger generation and also belongs to the »nationalist core« of the past. He mentions research by Irokawa Daikichi, then professor of modern history at the Tōkyō University of Economics, who reached this surprising conclusion:

»Into the 1970s I thought that the imperial system would simply dissolve. However, the beginning of the 1980s marked a change in circumstances: I clearly noticed a certain fascination for the imperial system among young people.«

He continues:

»Young people, exhausted by a society based on competition and tending to lose sight of themselves, began to adopt the order of the imperial system as a spiritual support.« (Chikushi 1983: 66)

He writes that this trend appears to be taking hold especially among elementary school students. According to a representative survey, in 1983 54% of the elementary school students in their fifth school-year who were surveyed belonged to the »supporters« and only 21% belonged to the »non-supporters« of the

emperor; social psychologists such as Saito Tetsuo attribute this development surprisingly to the fairly large influence of grandparents on the generation of their grandchildren. He writes:

»The imperial system of the pre-war era has thus quite unexpectedly flourished among children and has thus, under the guise of power, authority and morality, been able to return repeatedly to prominence.« (Chikushi 1983: 67)

Opinion polls from November, 1990 support this trend; according to them, in the intervening years a »vast majority of Japanese support the institution of the imperial family,« (*Neues aus Japan*, no. 331, 1990: 14f.).

A social process may be underway that fundamentally follows the traditional historical pattern: while in ancient times it was Chinese culture and in the 19th century European culture that swept Japan, after 1945 the United States has taken over this function. After a phase of nearly uncritical enthusiasm for the new, Japan's discomfort with the values of this Western culture of the late 20th century appears to be growing. With the age-old and yet eternally new question of the allegedly »true essence« of »the Japanese« we return again to the topic of the emperorship.

It becomes apparent that the debate about the »essence« of the term »Japanese« leads directly into the question of the modernization of Japan in history and the present. The necessity for adaptation and modernization that resulted from contact with the outside world – with China, the West and others – was already at work in ancient Japan and was always accompanied by the intention of defining an alleged spiritual basis of Japan's own culture in contrast to the foreign one. The fact that the imperial household played a central role in this ideological context is one of the recognizable constants in Japanese history.

It appears that even within the present-day Japanese self-understanding, the emperor will again play an important role as a unifying symbol.

A minor anecdote from recent times symbolically shows that this is not mere speculation. The topic of the decorative calendar that was sent by the Japanese foreign trade organization JETRO in 1988 to its trade partners abroad was not the country's economy or science or art, but rather an unusual-seeming topic: the title reads »Yamato: The nostalgic home of the Japanese.« The accompanying text in four languages (English, German, French and Spanish) covers a song from the most ancient reaches of Japanese tradition, in which the mythical hero of early history Yamato-takeru no mikoto, the »brave man from Yamato« mentioned in the previous discussion of education and war propaganda before 1945 (see above), sings of his love for the homeland Yamato. It is clearly expressed by this

official organization that the idealized era of ancient Japan with its mythical, legendary emperors and heroic figures who unified the country, among whom Yamato-takeru takes a prominent place, could again serve as a model for Japan in the present and future. This example should not be over-interpreted, but the fact that the official Japanese foreign trade organization JETRO declared of all things a historical figure such as the legendary conquerer Yamato-takeru internationally to be the new guiding star of Japan appears from a historical perspective to be not unproblematic. At the very least, reference should be made to the fact that Yamato-takeru, the »brave man from Yamato,« of whom his own father, Emperor Keiko, was terrified due to his wildness, was only stopped after he sided against the gods in his blind urge to conquer.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷³ Cf. the battle of Yamato-takeru with the snakelike mountain deity whom he takes to be that deity's servant and thereby insults (*Nihonshoki*, Keiko 40 / 10/7 = NKBT 67: 308/309, cf. *Kojiki*, Keiko: NKBT 1: 218/219).

CHAPTER VI

SHINTÔ AND THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE ON CULTURE

1. THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL DEBATE

Not only to pessimists does the world at the beginning of the 21st century present disturbing, or at least confusing, images. As if the developments of the 20th century did not even take place, the present day is more reminiscent of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century. National conflicts and religious and ethnic problems that were believed to be long forgotten surface from the past, and categories such as »ethnicity,« »cultural identity,« »traditional value systems« or »national religion« once again represent relevant criteria of international debate.

It was the American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008) who pointed out and theoretically sketched this development with great clarity in a controversial and much discussed essay in the summer of 1993 entitled »The Clash of Civilizations?«⁴⁷⁴ (cf. Antoni 1996). The author writes in the introduction, under the title »The next pattern of conflict,« that in his view, future international conflicts will mainly be based on neither ideology nor economic factors, but rather be »culturally« based (Huntington 1993: 22). The »velvet curtain« of culture (Huntington 1993: 31) now replaces the fallen »iron curtain« of ideologies. The criteria for differentiation between these cultural spheres, according to Huntington, are determined by the history, language, culture and, most importantly, the religion of the cultural spheres in question. »The differences,« Huntington writes (1993: 25), »are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes.« The author repeatedly emphasizes the role of religion in this context.

According to Huntington, the world today is undergoing a fundamental process of change. Anyone who does not belong to one of the cultural spheres he postulates will slip into an isolated, and thus necessarily vulnerable, position. Here too the author writes with remarkable clarity. He defines seven or eight global »major civilizations« on whose borders future conflicts will arise. These comprise the cultural spheres of the »West,« »Confucianism,« »Islam,« »Hinduism,« »Slavic orthodoxy,« »Latin America« and possibly also the »African world.« It quickly becomes apparent that these entities are in fact – geographically as well as culturally – extremely large and internally heterogeneous, dividing the earth into cultural continents, without regard to problems with the details.

⁴⁷⁴ Huntington (1993: 23) gives the following definition: »A civilization is a cultural entity.«

And apparently the author identifies the geographic sphere of »East Asia« with the cultural sphere of »Confucianism.«

Against this background it appears all the more remarkable that Huntington counts a further »civilization« among the cultural spheres already mentioned, in third place according to his ranking, after the »West« and »Confucianism,« which by no means fits the image of a civilizational continent: Japan.

Indeed, the author mentions Japan as the only nation-state, of equal standing with and isolated among the other major cultural spheres, on whose borders future global conflicts will develop. All other nation-states, nations and peoples of the earth are comparatively more rooted in their own cultural horizon, which provides them with an internal identity and external protection. Huntington (1993: 24) remarks:

»A civilization may include several nation states, as is the case with Western, Latin American and Arab civilizations, or only one, as is the case with Japanese civilization.«

Huntington (1993: 28) laconically remarks on the reasons underlying Japan's isolated position that »Japan is a society and civilization unique to itself.«

This is the decisive keyword in this context: according to this view it is the »uniqueness« of Japan that prevents a connection with the other global cultural spheres – as the only national state in the entire world.

The postulation of an indigenous, isolated Japanese »cultural sphere« by Samuel Huntington shows how influential the traditional ideas and images, the clichés and stereotypes regarding Japan (both within and outside the country) actually are. In exact accordance with the general theory of stereotypes, the extremely complicated interplay between cultural images of the self and the other, autostereotypes and heterostereotypes, also plays a crucial role in the question at hand. Though Huntington's unequivocal isolation of Japan can hardly be justified in factual terms, from the perspective of stereotype theory it is the only sensible conclusion. The Japanese self-image provides legitimacy here in a special way, since it represents an authentic, and thus – from an outside perspective – apparently credible firsthand cultural statement. Thus, the Japanese image of the self is highly influential to the view of Japan abroad. Huntington could hardly have been aware of the fact that his categorization directly coincides with the Japanese autostereotype, that is to say, with modern Japan's image of itself. Like a boomerang, this image of a disconnected, isolated Japanese culture now returns to Japan.

It thus becomes apparent that an analysis of this author's theories is especially important in regard to Japan, since he isolates Japan as the only national state in

the world from all other cultural spheres. In a later publication Huntington explicitly and laconically calls Japan »The Lonely Superpower«. ⁴⁷⁵ It now appears pertinent to investigate the deeper origins and background of the widespread view of Japan's supposed cultural isolation that, according to Huntington, makes it the loneliest country in the world.

1. 1. Culturalism, Asianism, *Nihonjinron*

The name Huntington has become a synonym for the epitome of the present-day »cultural debate.« But Huntington is ultimately only one representative of a now current – or perhaps merely fashionable? – discourse that, since the end of the antagonism of East and West, places the idea of culture at the center of public as well as academic debate. An article on this topic in the magazine *The Economist*⁴⁷⁶ published on November 9, 1996, points to the complexity of this debate. It states that in addition to the Huntington school there are three other schools of culture that differ merely in their areas of focus: 1) »culture and the economy,« 2) »culture as social blueprint,« 3) »culture and decision-making.« Of these three groups, the first is the most important. Probably the oldest »culturalist« school, it postulates a genetic relationship between cultural factors and the economic success (or failure) of a society. The Asianization or Asianism debate of the late 1990s was an offshoot of this school, which can be traced back to Max Weber's theory of the Protestant work-ethic. At its core, the concept of Asianism postulates the existence of certain Asian values that are usually equated with the values of »Confucianism« and are cited as reasons for the economic behavior of Asian countries.

In the case of Japan, it is especially interesting that in the discussion of Asianism arguments are advanced that have long been used in the context of *Nihonjinron* discourse in Japan. Just as the special position of Japan in the international context has long been justified on the grounds of its unique cultural foundation, we find similar, often even identical arguments advanced to explain the general Asian, and usually East-Asian, reality. In both cases it is the specific cultural values that are emphasized in contrast to the Western system, and often Western decadence. In this sense, international culturalism, Asianism and the Japanese theory of *Nihonjinron* are deeply interwoven.

⁴⁷⁵ Samuel P. Huntington: »The Lonely Superpower«. In: *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1999 issue.

⁴⁷⁶ »Cultural Explanations: The man in the Baghdad Café« in: *The Economist*, November 9, 1996: 25-32

1. 2. *Religion and culturalism*

So-called »values« play a central role within all of the discourses mentioned here. The term »values« is taken to mean the traditional norms of a society that are usually seen in stark contrast to Western universalism. This is the foundation of cultural particularism. Thus, it is hardly surprising that, as if in a further logical step, the traditional values of a culture are identified with their equally traditional framework, religion. Religions play a central role in this context, often to the great astonishment of the social sciences, which had long since categorized religion as a cultural or social phenomenon. In this seemingly ancient world with which we have suddenly been confronted again at the start of the 21st century, the religious basis of culture, as well as the cultural basis of religion, are suddenly being paid a great deal of attention in the cultural debate.

Huntington also views history, language, and, most significantly, religion as the most important criteria for differentiating between the cultural spheres he postulates. In *The Clash of Civilizations* the author even dedicates an entire chapter to this question; he calls it, after Gilles Kepel, significantly »*La Revanche de Dieu*« (»The revenge of God,« Huntington 1996: 95-101). Huntington argues that there has been a general renaissance of religions at the end of the 20th century, a revival of religion that »far transcends the activities of fundamentalist extremists,« (Huntington 1996: 96). »The cultural resurgence,« the author remarks regarding the development in East Asia, »in the secular Confucian culture takes the form of the affirmation of Asian values but in the rest of the world manifests itself in the affirmation of religious values« (l.c.). The ubiquity and relevance of religion, he writes, has become dramatically apparent in the formerly Communist states. Finally he concludes, »Religion takes over from ideology, and religious nationalism replaces secular nationalism« (Huntington 1996: 100).

The overall criticism of Huntington's book has tended to be quite negative. In particular he has been accused, not without reason, of creating new concepts of an enemy.⁴⁷⁷ However, these criticisms must be examined for hidden motives, since the »culturalist« or »cultural« approach radically questions the achievements of previous methods of interpretation. In our case it is only the structure of the interwoven arguments on which this debate is based that is of interest, espe-

⁴⁷⁷ Cf., among others, Christoph Bertram: »The search for a new enemy. Samuel Huntington promises an up-to-date system of coordination for international politics. But he merely dredges up old fears of the foreign«. In: *Die Zeit*, no. 50, December 6, 1996: 3.

cially the reciprocal relationship between the factors of culture and religion. Religion is equated with cultural identity, and religion offers a frame of reference for a society's values that are thought to be of essential importance. A Turkish guest commentator in the *Asahi Evening News* even recommended that Japan return to the *Kokutai no hongî* as a moral guideline in contrast to the West!⁴⁷⁸

2. 1. Religions according to the Japanese culturalist interpretation

Religions thus have a crucial function in the international cultural debate: they are seen as the frame of reference for values and cultural identity. Japan's exceptional position, which led to Huntington's – by no means original – claim that Japan is the loneliest country in the world, is also based on this concept. But we also know that this view not only stems from Western ignorance and arrogance, but also from Japan's image of itself, which propagates itself internationally and finally makes its way back to Japan.

Especially in the 1980s, when the debate on the Japanese economic success was at its height, proponents of the Japanese theory of *Nihonjinron*, on one side, and their grateful recipients and interpreters in the West, on the other, advanced their arguments and ultimately created a kind of »virtual« Japan that, due to its incomparable distinctiveness, fulfilled the need for (self-) mystification and exoticism both within Japan and abroad. However, in the academic world serious attempts have been made and are still being undertaken in order to sound out the role of traditional culture and especially religions over the course of the modern age in Japan.

The Indian technical scientist Arunoday Saha (1994), who has also spent much time researching and teaching at institutions in Britain and the United States, offers an interesting contribution in this context, which will be sketched here *pars pro toto*. In 1994 he wrote an essay entitled »Culture and Development of Technology in Japan« in which he comparatively examines the role of religions and traditional value systems. In his concluding remarks he writes:

⁴⁷⁸ *Asahi Evening News* (online edition), 27. Juli 1997, article: »'Clash of civilizations' argument is preposterous«; the unnamed author, »a scholar from Turkey, is a professor of cultural anthropology at Harvard University and a member of Asahi Shimbun's 'Create 21, Asahi' Forum.« He refers to the »famous work 'Kokutai no Hongi'. There has been much written about this work as being merely propaganda and the prelude to Japanese militarism in World War II. But rereading it after the interval of 70 years suggests that it is also an effort to express the will of the people of a major Asian civilization to resist Western domination.«

»Traditional Japanese culture has had a marked impact on that country's initial absorption and later development of Western technology.«

In his essay, the author explains in detail his theory that especially three elements of Japanese culture – Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintô – made an indigenous Japanese contribution to the acceptance of modern technology in Japan. The remarkable thing about this model of explanation, which is presented in a serious manner and without sensationalism, is the fact that his theory is based on the same religious and intellectual trinity that is familiar to us from the traditional Japanese self-regard: Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintô. And even more remarkable is the fact that he relates these elements to one another using aspects of indigenous Japanese culture. This general view, Saha writes, is exemplified by one of the areas covered in his essay and which is especially relevant to our present context: Shintô. In harmonious agreement with similarly stated arguments, he presents the image of a timeless, ahistorical and essentialist Shintô that functions as part of the similarly timeless, ahistorical and immutable culture of Japan. According to the technical scientist Saha's construction, this conception of Shintô serves to cover the area of »sensitivity« in Japanese culture.

Saha (1994: 238) offers in only a few lines the perfect image of a mentally disposed, ahistorical Shintô that accordingly makes its contribution today to economic and technological development. It would not be difficult to present further examples of this kind. In 1994 a dissertation by the sociologist Miyasaka Masahide was published in German in Würzburg under the title *Shintô und Christentum: Wirtschaftsethik als Quelle der Industriestaatlichkeit* (»Shintô and Christianity: economic ethics as the source of the industrial state«) in which »Shintô« even serves as the key to the mysteries of Japanese economic practices, similar in this aspect to a remarkable article by Michael Ashkenazi (1996) on the topic: »Some Influences of Shintô on Japanese Business Practices.«

The static view of culture, religion, and ultimately Shintô has the consequence of presenting similarly formed models as images of reality. Not only the superficial observer gains the impression that these constructions actually represent reality. In connection with the Japanese tendency toward clichéd self-interpretation, it results in autonomous stereotypes that are viewed internationally as categories of reality. In this case the image of Japan as the »loneliest country in the world« is not far. But let us focus on the case at hand, the role of »Shintô« in this discourse. At the very beginning, as the first sentence of his remarks on the contribution of Shintô to the Japanese culture of technology, Saha presents an apodictic view that apparently requires no questioning and serves to legitimate his writings as a sheer matter of course. The author begins with the axiomatic statement, »Shintô,

Japan's indigenous religion ...« In nearly the same words, Ashkenazi writes in his article from 1996, »The indigenous religion of the Japanese people, Shintô [...].« Miyasaka (1994: 72) even writes in this context, using a terminology that is not unproblematic, that Shintô must »[above all] be described as a religion of the people.« These remarks touch on the most crucial area: the definition of »Shintô« as Japan's quasi ethnically defined national religion. This labeling of Shintô reveals the well-known argument which claims that an ethnic conception of Shintô is merely another name for the whole of Japanese culture, or as another author programmatically writes in the title of his book, that Shintô is the »Way of Japan« itself (Ross 1983).

1. 3. *Shintô - the »national religion« of Japan?*

As previously discussed in our examination of the Meiji period, Basil Hall Chamberlain presented a polemical work on the topic of modern Shintô as an »invented religion« in 1927 (first published in 1912), decades before Hobsbawm's monumental investigations of invented traditions. In present-day research, a historically critical view of the question of whether Shintô can be viewed in essentialist terms as a timeless, immutable, ethnically defined national religion of Japan has prevailed. In a programmatic essay on the historical development of Shintô, Kuroda Toshio (1993: 26f.) remarks that this conception of Shintô developed at the same time as the rise of modern nationalism: beginning with the Kokugaku up to Meiji-era State Shintô and the »separation of gods and Buddhas« (*shinbutsu-bunri*). In light of the still dominant ahistorical, holistic and static view of Shintô,⁴⁷⁹ these kinds of academically founded approaches and historical and critical views rarely reach broad recognition and can hardly influence public opinion in Japan or abroad.

Especially the problem of the extent to which ideological constructions since the Meiji period have influenced the present-day image of Japan, often unconsciously, remains to be analyzed. In the previously mentioned article by Ashkenazi (1996: 143) the author also touches on the question of the nature of the relationship between the Shintô he describes and the ideology surrounding the concept of »Japanese uniqueness« in general and *Nihonjinron* discourse in particular. On this subject he reaches the following remarkable conclusion:

⁴⁷⁹ The concept of Shintô as a timeless Japanese »national religion« was also advanced in modern times by researchers of Japanese ethnology, including Yanagita Kunio (*koyû-shinkô*, cf. Kawada 1992); see also Göbel 1991: 40, 44ff.; on the contribution of Japanese ethnology to the debate on identity in modern Japan cf. Naumann 1987.

»Shintô lies at the center of the Japanese uniqueness storm because from the time of Hirata Atsutane, it has emphasized the mystic cohesion and unique nature of the Japanese [...].«

However, the author views the influence of (Shrine) Shintô, which from the Meiji period until the end of the Pacific War was based on this school, as insignificant in the context of his culturalist thoughts. »This is, at most,« he clearly remarks, »a minor factor.« (l.c.)

It is necessary to voice significant doubts about such a statement. One wishes to recommend a text such as Basil Hall Chamberlain's work of 1927 (see chapter IV: 3. 1.) as required reading for the present-day proponents of ahistorical culturalist panaceas, which also include the aforementioned views on the role of Shintô in the Japanese economy. But it is not surprising that this illuminating work by Chamberlain was only added to a single edition of his popular *Things Japanese*. Demystification and deconstruction of ideological structures are of far less general interest than mystifying generalizations and supposedly holistic expert opinions. Indeed, an investigation of the role of Shintô in the modern age would have to begin with the analysis of the Hirata School, which Ashkenazi so grandiosely sweeps aside; following this, it would have to focus on the development of the various schools of Shintô orthodoxy in the Edo period in historical regression, before finally analyzing the practical application of these concepts since the Meiji period. But such a philologically and historically oriented deconstructive analysis is far more complicated an undertaking than a grand culturalist outline. As Chamberlain postulates in his polemical outcry, the only escape here is the arduous path of investigating the historically authentic tradition. In order to recognize the constructions of the modern era, we must turn to the »unfiltered« pre-modern era, the language and literary and documentary tradition of ancient and classical Japan, in order to comprehend the extent of »historical editing« that has caused pre-modern Japan to disappear as if behind a partition since the Meiji Restoration. In the context of Chinese intellectual history, the necessity of considering the »editing« of the Han period when viewing the classics is well known. In my view we have not yet fully comprehended the full importance of the Meiji era as a period of »editing« or rewriting and falsification of the Japanese pre-modern era. The most striking example of this process can be seen in the events surrounding the *shinbutsu-bunri* decree of 1868. Warnings such as Chamberlain's at the eve of World War I take on a special significance in the present situation, in which Japan is increasingly forced into an isolated position in the international culturalist debate and this process is furthermore justified using direct, supposedly legitimating statements from Japan. In this question, Japanese studies, as a historical

and critical cultural science, must make its contribution to enlightenment. At the latest since the debate on Huntington's work, it has become all too clear that this is not merely an academic game. Simplistic and holistic images are becoming ever more powerful and are beginning to overpower the recognition of the complex reality. Huntington presents the image of the »lonely country« of Japan, and this image makes its impression on the global public like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Images create their own reality.

CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY AND EPILOGUE

1. GENERAL SUMMARY

The subject of Shintô⁴⁸⁰ marks one of the essentials of Japanese cultural history. Inside and outside of Japan, Shintô is not only seen as the Japanese national religion, but it is often used as a metaphorical expression for the alleged immutability of the Japanese culture or even for the Japanese national polity (*kokutai*) itself. To give a popular example of this common view, let me cite Joseph M. Kitagawa, who wrote in the *Japan-Handbuch* (Hammitzsch 1981: 1633):

»Shintô is in fact the underlying value orientation of the Japanese people, because it is a combination of divergent and yet unique Japanese sensitivities, religious principles and cultural attitudes, which have shaped completely the experience of the Japanese people from the earliest time until today.«

Definitions like this one show the great dilemma of an approach, which tries to preclude the historical changes and fractures, unreflectingly postulating an ahistorically valid Shintô. Yet, this religious system has developed historically, and has united most heterogeneous elements throughout the course of its development up to the ideology of the religiously based Japanese nationalism of the modern age (Kokutai Shintô).

A generally valid Japanese national religion as postulated by Kitagawa and others, can therefore only be verified as an ideology and a construction of modern times. One author, the already mentioned Miyasaka Masahide, remarks in that context restrictively, that the term Shintô might only be used for the designation of religion in a narrower sense. He elaborates that »The term Shintôism on the other hand is only to be used if it concerns the shintôistic oriented social or national thought which developed out of ideologization and politicalization, respectively.« (Miyasaka 1994: 236, n. 214). Yet, such a differentiation, which sets a politically free Shintô – in the sense of a religiously indigenous folk religion – apart from its negative ideologically contaminated counterpart – the Shintô of modern times –, misjudges in my opinion the facts relating to its ideological and political history. The political aspect is constituent for the Shintô system from the beginning on, and it cannot be separated from an idealized Japanese religion. Both concepts represent two sides of the same coin, having originated during the nativist movements of the Edo period, after which they were finally put into practice during the Meiji period and intensified to the point of absurdity during what is now

⁴⁸⁰ For this section see also Antoni 2002.

known as the ultra-nationalist era of the 1930s and '40s. Precisely such seemingly value-free assertions, like the one brought forth by Miyasaka in his work of scientific standard, show how in the present time it is absolutely necessary to have a historical-critical study of this subject.

Dealing with the Shintô, much more than with any other subject, means to question Japanese culture and its self-conception: Is it a national religion or a construct of the modern age? Is it archaic ancestor worship or an all-Japanese folklore? Is it an esoteric doctrinaire religion or syncretistic ritualism? Or, is it eventually an ethno-centrist nationalism or peaceful nature worship?

Any cliché with regard to Japanese culture will also be found in the debate over Shintô: Shintô in the ideological development of the modern age has to function as a nativist synonym for the 'unaltered', 'homogeneous', 'unique', and finally ultimate Japanese culture, which is freed from all foreignness, allowing a view into allegedly true Japan. In this respect, the postulation of a Japanese national religion implicitly freed from all foreign elements, is already a product of this modern Japanese auto-stereotype, which, as the allegedly authentic form of cultural self-expression, is able to shape Japan's image - also abroad - until this very day.

On the whole, it demonstrates that an evaluation of the claim made by Shintô to represent Japan's virtually natural national religion is not possible without a thorough examination of the historical development, as this study tried to point out.

1. 1. *Historical foundations*

Regarding the roots of political Shintô in antiquity, the mythologies of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* played a crucial role, as was pointed out in the introductory chapter of this study. But this mythology was only in later historical periods turned into a sacred tradition by Shintô theologians and ideologists. A homogenous »indigenous« religion as postulated by the Kokugaku (»National School«) of the Edo period, cannot be found in the old records. Shintô at the dawn of its well-known history presents itself in an ambiguous and manifold appearance - at this very early point, there was no hint of a uniform thread of a homogenous indigenous religion of Japan. Thus, if subjected to a thorough examination, the source materials show the diverse origins and homogenous character that were made into this allegedly single, uninterrupted tradition of mythological tradition by the compilers of the official documents in the 8th century.

The modern Shintô doctrine of one homogenous tradition primarily referring to the *Kojiki* – which was adopted by the Kokugaku of Tokugawa times and realized in the Meiji period – is an illusion from its beginning on: something that was created artificially for the purpose of political authentication.

Equally the idea of an incomparable unique national polity (*kokutai*) was eventually entirely based on legitimatizing statements of handed down mythology from records of the 8th century. Apparent from several cases, an objective scientific research of these myths – especially in an ethnological-comparative sense – was predestined to collide with the sacrosanct understanding of the state from the Meiji period to the year 1945: Any proof of connections between the native mythology to traditions of the continental mainland or the southern archipelago shook the dogma of a self-sufficient »land of gods«.

Post-war research provided the comprehension of an extremely complex and historically thoroughly graded genesis of the Japanese culture, whose origins have been liberated from the artificially constructed isolation of the modern age after the year 1868 and put in an overall context, not only of the East-Asian history but also of human history in general. Therefore, the idea of Japan's homogeneity, ideologically justified and rooted in the traditionalistic constructions of pre-modern times, cannot be upheld anymore.

A specific theology of Shintô did not evolve until the Japanese middle ages (cf. Naumann 1994). Although the emperor lost the direct ruling power to the military aristocracy and the *bakufu*, which ruled nominally in the name of the imperial house and continued to maintain this rule until the year 1868, a more and more prominent idea of Japan as a country under special protection of the gods (*shinkoku*) developed among circles of the Shintô theology. Extreme supporters of this way of thinking eventually concluded from the handed-down myths that not only the imperial house is of divine descent, but the whole Japanese nation (see above). For them, Japan was a country whose nature was different from all other parts of this world, being endowed with a unique, indigenous Japanese spirit – *Yamato-damashii*, the »spirit of Yamato«.

On this basis, Shintô theology turned to politics since the 17th or 18th century at the latest.

1. 2. *Shintô in early modern and modern times*

1. 2. 1. *Confucian Shintô*

At the beginning of this process stood Shintô-Confucian syncretism or Confucian Shintô (*juka shintô*), which on a level of theoretical-theological discussions to

a large extent succeeded the Buddhist Shintô of the middle ages. The conception of a unity of Shintô and Confucianism (*shinju-itchi*) made (neo-) Confucianism the spiritual core and developed a definitely opposing attitude towards Buddhism (*haibutsu*).

Influential Confucian philosophers of that period like Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619) and Hayashi Razan (1583-1657), were representatives of this newly Confucian oriented Shintô. The doctrines of Watarai- (Ise-) and moreover Yoshida Shintô of the middle ages were reinterpreted as well, and hence further developed in the sense of the new power relations in the Edo period. The house of Yoshida considerably shaped the development of Shintô in the early Edo period under the influence of new social and political structures. The Yoshida doctrine logically also went through far-reaching developments in that context, at the end of which stood a Neo-Confucian shaped Shintô of modern times that hardly showed any correspondence to the medieval doctrines of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511).

Moreover, the Yoshida house received its outstanding importance for Edo-period Shintô due to its particularly powerful position in the system of Shintô shrines, as well as due to its early-achieved closeness to the Tokugawa's center of power of.

1. 2. 2. *The National School* (Kokugaku)

Confucian Shintô, on the one hand, which flourished together with Confucianism of modern times, developed into the mainstream of Edo-period Shintô. Yet on the other hand, a new interpretation of Shintô in the context of the National School (Kokugaku) slowly developed since the middle of the Edo period.

The Kokugaku originated in a countermovement to the increasing advancement of Japan's Sinicization. This school - represented by its main supporters Kada no Azumamaro (1668-1736), Kamo Mabuchi (1697-1769), Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and finally Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) - developed in the course of the Edo period from a purely philological-literary school to a deliberately political-agitational ideology.

The Kokugaku mainly chose native classical literature of Japan as their research objective. The study of the literature of Japanese ancient times, especially the *Kojiki*, by Motoori Norinaga, a student of Kamo Mabuchi, led to the pushing aside of hitherto syncretistic interpretations of Shintô. Thus a nativist doctrine developed, i.e., a philosophical-political Shintô, which began to contest with the Confucian-Shintô syncretism over predominance.

On the basis of its philological and theological studies, the Kokugaku towards the close of the 18th century eventually tried to convert its postulates into politics by greatly emphasizing a renaissance of the Japanese emperorship according to the shintôistic doctrines of the imperial house's genealogical origin.

The Kokugaku regarded the principle of historical truth and reality of the old records, including the chapters concerning the »era of the gods« in the oldest Japanese documents, as their theoretical axiom.

These traditions were understood, in its lexical meaning, as facts (*jijitsu*): the accounts on the origin of the world, the gods of heaven and earth, the establishment of an emperorship, the origin of the powerful noble lineages – for the philosophers of the National School all these mystic occurrences became descriptions of realities in a historical sense. When in that context Hirata Atsutane, an extremely influential theorist and ideologist of the late Kokugaku, called Japan the 'land of the gods', he thus followed a literal understanding of the handed-down written records in the sense of a shintôist fundamentalism – if it was more scheming or yet naïve remains to be seen. In Atsutane's case, this viewpoint led to fanatical nationalism and to the conviction of Japan's special status above all other countries. He was convinced, that »we all are undoubtedly descendants of the gods«. Therefore, even the people were elevated to divine descendants, and they regarded themselves adopted into the lineage of the Emperor as an *arahitogami*, i.e., 'a deity that is presently visible as a human being'.

1. 2. 3. *The conception of national polity (kokutai)*

By the end of the Edo period, Kokugaku ideology entered into an astonishing combination with Confucian ideology, and again we meet the handed-down structures of Japanese syncretism. The core of those national-religious speculations of the *bakumatsu* period was formed by the idea of a national polity (*kokutai*). This idea described all those national characteristics that a country ought to have. Japan's national polity was seen to be based on the allegedly unique fact of being a »divine country« (*shinkoku, kami-no-kuni*), founded by the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, and being ruled by her direct descendants – the human emperors. Thus, the divine Tennô became the personification of Japanese identity.

Historical analysis shows that the usage of the term *kokutai* as a synonym for Japan was already common at that time, at least in the circles of the imperial court of Kyôto. It should also be recalled that already Hirata Atsutane saw the true Shintô (*makoto no shintô*) embodied in the *kokutai*. Yet, the adoption of this concept

as a national religious state ideology by the majority of the people did not take place until after the Meiji Restoration.

Three phases of *kokutai*-ideology can be clearly identified in my view: (1) formative phase (approx. 1825-1890); (2) classic phase (1890-1937); (3) phase of hubris (1937-1945). The beginning of the formative phase was the early 19th century, documented by Aizawa Seishisai's work *Shinron* of 1825. The end of that period came in 1890, the year of the proclamation of the *Kyôiku chokugo* (»Imperial Rescript on Education«), which was decisive for the further development and which marked the beginning of the second, the classic, phase.

By looking on these particular dates, it becomes clear that this first, formative phase falls into the era of the great transformations of Japanese history: the decline of the Tokugawa state, the opening of the country to the outside world, the establishment of a modern Japanese empire with the Tennô being the sacrosanct head of state – even placed above the Constitution – as an incarnation of the state itself.

As is generally known, the philosophers of the so-called Mito School (Mitogaku) had a substantially spiritual and political influence. Through their interpretation of the National School, they broadened the land-of-the-god-doctrine of Shintô by the canon of Confucianist maxims, which dominated at that time. Herein lies the intrinsic difference to the purist national school, which strictly opposed all things of Chinese origin.

In combination with the shintôist land-of-the-gods-ideology of the national school, this ended in a familistic conception of *kokutai*: a definition of the Japanese nation as a society of real descent, as a family of commonly divine origin with the emperor being the natural head.

1. 2. 4. Religion and ideology in the Meiji period

The spiritual core of modern Japan's national idea was therefore last but not least given in the ideological-religious postulate of a homogeneous Japanese family state. This idea found its formulation since the Meiji period in the concept of familism (*kazoku-shugi*), i.e., through the comprehension of Japan as a nation-state whose people are united by being one single family. At the head of this family, in the role of the father, stood the Tennô. It seems remarkable that the most radical version of familism did not understand this intimate relationship between *tennô* and people as family in a figurative sense, but more as a real ethnical-genetically defined extended family whose members are connected with each other through their same origin in the divine ancestors.

The picture of a Japanese culture that we can find with philosophers such as Inoue Tetsujirô, as being manifested in Shintô and excelling due to its history throughout which at its core stood the person and institution of the *tennô* who is inseparably connected with the – homogeneous – people by a quasi genetically transmitted national ethic (*kokumin-dôtoku*), was spread especially by the commentaries on the Imperial Rescript on Education from 1890 until its nationalistic climax with the publication of the *Kokutai no hongî* in the year 1937.

Insights into the historical reality, which stood apart of the ideology of *Kokutai Shintô*, remained to a large extent unheard in this context. In the Meiji period it has been successfully ideologically dismissed that throughout the whole course of its historical development Japan always was a country mainly marked by complexity and disintegration in cultural, social, territorial, and especially religious regards – to an extent that the new view of an ethnically and culturally homogenous country could rise to the absolute dogma of *Kokutai Shintô*.

Precisely because the country was always divided in particular groups, the utopia of homogeneity appeared very promising from the viewpoint of a new, central state in the Meiji period. In that context Shintô occupied a key position, because this religious world that used to be heterogeneous and complex, comprehended now as the only authentic Japanese religion, was more and more identified as spiritual core and foundation of the construct of a homogeneous Japanese culture. Logically, this ended in a concept of Shintô embodying Japanese culture itself, as it shaped the country from late Meiji period until the decline in the year 1945.

Despite the official renunciation of his divine status by Shôwa-tennô on January 1, 1946, the Japanese emperorship receives its whole spiritual and religious authority, now as before, from the religious-political ideology of Shintô. On a regular basis opinion polls proof the Japanese people's great approval of the institution of the Tennô. According to this concept, Japan can be sure of its inner unity as long as the emperor resides in the mysterious seclusion of his palace, like on an island in the middle of Tôkyô, and performs his daily rites.

1. 3. *Résumé*

In the present study, the early historical process unfortunately could not be considered in more detail.

Yet even a very short introduction to the problem conveys at least an impression that an ahistorical-static approach cannot contribute to the understanding

and explanation of this question. It shows that Shintô just like Buddhism, Confucianism and other complex systems, is neither clearly defined nor an invariable entity. However, it is still possible to determine characteristics, which document an undoubted continuity of the 'system Shintô'. At the center of this continuity lies the function to legitimize the ruling position of the imperial house since the days of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. This political purpose – which outshines everything else – is the actual core of what we call Shintô. It can be seamlessly followed through the history of Shintô: from the constructions of a standardized mythology of ancient times, via the *shinkoku* ideology of the middle ages and the nativist ideological concepts of the Kokugaku, up to the modern conception of *kokutai*. Of central importance in this context is the perception that the philosophical structures of modern-age Japan have their own differentiated development, reaching far back into pre-modern times, and are only to be comprehended from there.

Thus, the philosophical structures of the Japanese modern age are founded on the development in Japanese pre-modern times – drawn up by theological and philosophical circles of Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintô – and were put into practice only since the Meiji period together with imported conceptions of the Western modern age. The world of Shintô was attributed with a decisive importance for the identity formation of modern Japan.

As cultural scientists, we are called upon to undertake the arduous work to reveal these lines of traditions and fractures. In order to understand the constructions of the modern age, we have to turn to the authentic sources of pre-modern times: the language and literary-documentary traditions of ancient and classic Japan. Thus, the hermeneutical analysis of pre-modern times supplies the most certain basis for the comprehension of the present. Even though such a philological-hermeneutical approach is much more complicated on the whole than a great ahistorical design in the sense of Kitagawa's definition of Shintô quoted above, science cannot withdraw from this challenge. Most of all, Japanology has been attributed with an extremely important function. As a science about Japan, it is supposed to pursue unbiased fundamental research about this subject. A Japanology however, which closes its eyes to the research of historical processes and their philological resources, cannot accomplish this task.

2. EPILOGUE

In a review article with the title »State Shintô: an 'Independent religion'?'« its author, Mark Teeuwen (1999), a noted researcher on medieval Shintô, offers a completely different view on Shintô than that of the book under review, which was nothing else than the original version of the present book (Antoni 1998).⁴⁸¹ In fact, we might say that two highly diverse lines of argument met – or clashed? – here, and that the differences between them show some general problems of recent academic trends in understanding Shintô, and also point to some fundamental difficulties with such understanding. Thus, it seems worthwhile to have a closer look at the reviewer's arguments. Actually, the basis of those arguments became clearer to me only some time after the review was published, because of a further book on the topic, called *Shintô in History: Ways of the Kami*, co-edited by Teeuwen himself, and revealing the intrinsic background of the fundamental criticism voiced in his review from 1999 (cf. Breen, Teeuwen 2000). Only through reading this later book did it become possible, with the benefit of hindsight, to realize and understand the deeper meaning of his criticisms, which point to a fundamental difference in our respective understandings of the subject.

First of all, it is important to note that Teeuwen's objections were not founded so much on any disagreements over facts. Rather, it is the general message of my study which the author rejects. He particularly criticizes its presentation of Shintô history as a straight, continuous development from pre-modern times to modern governmental State Shintô. He makes the following statement, as a negative critique from his point of view: »The consequence is a narrative that depicts the development of State Shintô as an historical necessity, the logical, indeed inevitable, outcome of trends established in the Edo period or even before« (Teeuwen 1999: 113). Teeuwen is quite correct here: this is indeed one of my principal contentions! Although such an extreme reduction does not do justice to the full content of the work, nonetheless it is true that the display of religious, political and especially ideological continuities in the history of Shintô between the pre-modern and modern ages in fact forms the major »plot« of my work. My purpose was – and still is – to show the deep links between pre-modern and modern Japan in the intellectual history of Shintô and religious thought, especially by investigating the function of Shintô as a religious system to legitimize political, i.e., imperial power, a trend which culminated in the concept of a specific Japanese national

⁴⁸¹ For this section see also Antoni 2004.

polity (*kokutai*) during late Tokugawa and early Meiji times. Though the main caesurae in the historical development of modern Japan, e.g. the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the end of World War II in 1945, play a predominant role in this context, my objective was to demonstrate some religious and ideological continuities which are of much greater importance in this respect than those historical fractures postulated especially by western researchers on Shintô. Western modernization theories posit that modern Japan was almost entirely based on western influence, especially in its idea of the nation-state. In contrast to this axiomatic and, I am convinced, historically incorrect viewpoint, it should be understood that the indigenous intellectual and ideological roots were at least as important for the formation of the modern Japanese nation-state as the intellectual imports from abroad. Within this context it was mainly the ideas and ideological concepts elaborated by nativist Shintô - and Confucian - thinkers during the Edo period which were transformed into political reality in modern Japan.

Teeuwen also objects to my alleged neglect of Buddhism within the process of modern Shintô thought. He contends that I do not adequately portray the role of Shinshû Buddhism within the context of Meiji ideology. On the Shintô side, some peculiar structural problems concerning shrines and priests during the Meiji period are also said not to have been taken into consideration. Both points of criticism are based on the arguments of two Japanese scholars of Shintô, Nitta Hitoshi (2000) and Sakamoto Koremaru (2000), as set forth in the above-mentioned work, *Shintô in History*, which was not published until nearly two years after his review. Nonetheless, his argument against traditionalist continuity of Shintô political thought becomes fully intelligible only after one has read the two articles by Nitta and Sakamoto in *Shintô in History*.

2. 1. *The Kuroda School's View of Shintô history*

In his essay in *Shintô in History*⁴⁸², Nitta Hitoshi, professor at the Kôgakkan-University in Ise, focuses on the importance of the administrative bureaucrats and especially points out the »Buddhists' role in the creation of what we now know as State Shintô,« coming to the conclusion that »it is clear [...] that the arguments defining Shinto as non-religious were the creation of Shinshû Buddhists [...]« (Nitta 2000: 10, 267). Nitta's essay is highly instructive, in particular in its obvious purposes. The author regards the debate over »the expansion of the

⁴⁸² Since I have already published a review of this book in the *Journal of Japanese Studies*, there is no need to present a detailed discussion of the whole work here again. See Antoni 2001c.

meaning of State Shintô and its application« to be generally »a result of the occupation policies,« concluding polemically that: »State Shintô is, indeed, a case of ‘in the beginning was the word; all creation came from the word; nothing came into being that was not of the word’« (p. 268); therefore the idea of a real historical foundation of what is called »State Shintô« is rejected by the author in principle.

But in fact not only the concept but also the term »State Shintô« goes back far beyond the »so-called *Shintô shirei* (Shintô directive’) issued by the American army of Occupation,« as Nitta contends. This is proven, interestingly enough, by another contributor to the same book, Sakamoto Koremaru, Professor at Kokugakuin University. He shows that the term *kokka shintô* was used in Japan as early as 1882 (Sakamoto 2000: 273), but then argues that it was not earlier than 1940 that »for the first time, ideology had been implanted in what had been State Shintô in purely institutional terms. Only now we can talk about State Shintô in the sense in which it is referred to in the 1945 Shintô Directive« (p. 289). So Sakamoto concludes that »the institution of State Shintô could only function as an institution. It had no authority in the spheres of thought or ideology« (p. 290).

Such an elegant and clever argument implicitly liberates »real« Shintô from all contamination with the dark spheres of ideological »State Shintô,« which here is constructed as merely a bureaucratic conspiracy without any authentic connection to the world of Shintô. The character of this argument is clearly shown by the author’s own conclusion:

»The fact that after the war, not a single bureaucrat or priest from the Jingiin was ever purged is a sure proof of just how far removed the institution of State Shintô was from the ideologies of ‘ultra-nationalism’, ‘expansionism’ and ‘militarism’« (p. 291).

Here we are confronted with an apologetic and historically white washing construction of political Shintô, which is represented as generally not responsible for any involvement in politics and especially in the militarist ideology of the 1930s and 1940s.

The view of Shintô as a seemingly »innocent« nature cult that was abused by sinister ultranationalist political and ideological forces in modern Japan is characteristic of some other, though not all, contributions to the book *Shintô in History*. This is especially true for the article by a particularly important contributor, Sonoda Minoru, Professor at Kyôto University and Chief Priest of Chichibu Shrine in Saitama, who focuses on the relationship between shrine cults and »nature,« which is seen by him »as one of the enduring traits of *kami* cults« (Breen, Teeuwen 2000: 8). This essay has a definite political and ideological connotation

as well, as when the author laments over the alleged »spiritual confusion« of present-day Japan: »In the 1990s this has undoubtedly been one of the reasons for the frequent occurrence throughout Japanese society of events that borders on the pathological« (Sonoda 2000: 44). Sonoda recommends a rediscovery and reevaluation »of Japan's ancient animistic view of life« (p. 45), taking »the recent grand rebuilding of the Ise shrines – which are representative of all shrines in the country« as a model. Sonoda thus draws a deliberately culturally pessimistic picture of contemporary Japanese society, reminding one more of essentialist *Nihonjinron* discourses than of serious historical research.

As becomes clear, »Shintô in history« as conceived by this book hardly deals with the history of the political ideas of Shintô, which, of course, reach far back into pre-modern times. This kind of a general denial of »genuine« Shintô thought is also shared by Mark Teeuwen himself. His argument starts from a completely different point of view, but nevertheless meets Sonoda et al.'s line of argument on the crucial point of the historical liability of Shintô.

In Teeuwen's view a Shintô without Buddhism seems unimaginable, since, according to him, it was the »new brand of Buddhist *kami* thought that lay at the basis of the first schools of Shintô thought'« (Teeuwen 2000: 96). Generally he sees Shintô as a mere product of esoteric Buddhism, an interpretation which basically rests on the well-known teachings of the late historian of thought, Kuroda Toshio (cf. Kuroda 1993 (1981)). This leads Teeuwen to ignore the main ideas of Shintô thought itself, as well as other forms of historical impact through Buddhism, not to mention Confucianism (and Daoism). Teeuwen clearly can be recognized as a general supporter of Kuroda's theses, not only in the present work but also in some of his other writings (cf. Teeuwen, Scheid 2002).

Not surprisingly, then, the editors' introduction presents Kuroda's view »that Shintô as the distinct, autonomous and independent religion we know today is an invention of the nineteenth century Japanese ideologues. Before the Meiji policy that authorized the separation of Shintô and Buddhism, Japanese religious culture had been to all intents and purposes defined by Buddhism. Shrines and shrine-based practice were nothing more than Buddhism's 'secular face'; kami, for their part, were understood to be manifestations of the Buddha'« (p. 4). In accordance with this fundamental claim that »Japanese religious culture had been to all intents and purposes defined by Buddhism,« the first contribution to the book, by Tim Barrett (2000), already formulates an axiomatic conclusion which can be readily applied to key parts of the entire work. Barrett too relies heavily on the investigations of Kuroda Toshio, elaborating Kuroda's alleged central importance for today's Shintô studies. He claims, for instance, that Kuroda's investiga-

tions have »the greatest direct bearing on our understanding of the nature of Shintô itself« (p. 13).

In a more recent publication, Norman Havens (2006) speaks of such a fundamentalist interpretation as the »onion« definition of Shintô. »This definitional approach claims that once relieved of its historical accretions, little remains of an immutable entity worthy of the name Shinto, at least not until the creation of Shrine Shinto in the modern period. Needless to say, the person most closely associated with this kind of description is Kuroda Toshio« (Havens 2006: 18). Thus, Havens chooses for this part of his recent article on Shintô the ironic title »History begins at Kuroda.«

With Kuroda and his followers pre-modern Shintô is reduced to a religious world of popular beliefs and practices, ultimately embossed by esoteric Buddhism until the dawn of modern times. In their view modern Shintô received its peculiar character only through the indeed infamous constructions of the Meiji bureaucratic ideologues, which finally culminated in a nationalistic and imperialistic »State Shintô.« The entanglement of Shintô into the gloomy chapters of modern Japanese history might thus be seen as a kind of historical accident, as clearly shown by the fact that Shintô was declared an »independent religion« during the Meiji period. All its political and ideological elements, in particular the distinct and central emperor cult, are thus exposed as an artificial invention of the modern age. From this point of view, the idea of the historical continuity of political Shintô therefore becomes axiomatically impossible, since, according to the Kuroda school, a Shintô that was in any way politicized simply did not exist in pre-modern times.

2. 2. *The denial of Shintô's intellectual and ideological history*

The »orthodox« viewpoint on Shintô – as expressed, for instance, in the *Nihon-jinron*-style writings of Sonoda Minoru (2000) – initially takes a completely opposite position to that of Kuroda Toshio, arguing that Shintô did exist from the very beginning as inconvertibly a Japanese ethnic religion. Nevertheless, this orthodox line of argument ultimately comes to a very similar conclusion on the question of political Shintô as the Kuroda school. In its »essentialist« interpretation, Shintô is reduced to a static, ever-existing set of ancient customs of nature-worship and ancestor cults, of animistic spiritualism and of a primeval world of gods and divine emperors, all of which supposedly provided the Japanese nation with a distinct

and essentialist spiritual character throughout its history. The orthodox school takes those postulates for granted.

Where could the link exist between these two interpretative worlds – in other words, between the »Kuroda faction« and the orthodox views of Sonoda Minoru? I think it can be found in one basic idea which is common to both approaches: both jointly reject the existence of a political, ideological and intellectual history of Shintô thought and, consequently, understand modern political Shintô as just a perversion of the historical fundamentals. In the eyes of traditionalists like Sonoda Minoru, »real« Shintô has to be understood as just a nature-loving spiritualism, a completely non-political set of religious emotions and rituals, only having suffered radical political abuse in the modern age, through contamination with post-1868 politics and nationalism. The Kuroda school, on the other hand, regards pre-modern »Shintô« (always put in quotation marks by these scholars) as a mere spiritualistic world, incomprehensible without the framework of esoteric Buddhism. Both views are strongly in agreement that Shintô in history did not contain any authentic religious, ideological or even intellectual thought. This denial of Shintô's own intellectual development, its always utopian and in fact highly political core of thought, ultimately opens the way for an exculpating interpretation that seems to be politically favored by some interpreters – particularly because such an exclusively »spiritualistic« Shintô must be regarded as by definition free of all historical contamination with political ideology.

This double strategy to »liberate« the world of Shintô thought from its political and ideological aspects – which are, in fact, an integral part of its fascinating historical complexity – conforms quite well to the general restorative and conservative tendency within present Shintô studies, which openly aims to revalue Shintô and rescue it from its »dark« historical associations.

2. 3. Political power

After years of research into the topic, I am convinced, contrary to Kuroda's and Teeuwen's interpretations, that it is in fact the political aspect of Shintô thought which forms a constituent frame for the whole system of Shintô throughout history. This is not meant, of course, in the above-mentioned orthodox sense that understands Shintô as a static and essentialist »native« and »ethnically« determined national religion of Japan. Historical analysis shows that Shintô, like Buddhism, Confucianism and other complex systems, is neither a clearly defined nor an invariably set entity, but rather has constantly changed throughout history.

Yet it still seems to be possible to determine some fundamental characteristics by documenting a continuity in the main features of Shintô thought. At the very center lies the idea of the legitimization of political power, detectable since the days of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*.

It is not the idea of Shintô as the eternal »national religion« of Japan as allegedly reflected, according to the orthodox view, in the historical facts; rather the central core of what must be summarized as »Shintô« should be understood as a never-ending »invention,« a continuity of constructs, the main purpose of which was the deification of the emperor in line with the utopian ideal of the ruler as a living god. From this viewpoint, the development of Shintô as a political construct may be traced back to antiquity, even to pre-Nara Japan or, more particularly, to the reign of Emperor Tenmu (reigned 673-686), as Nelly Naumann (1996: 6-8) has already pointed out. Interpretations of Shintô's political-dynastic aspects as mere modern »erroneous aberrations« from an originally spiritualistic or esoteric-Buddhist nature cult therefore must be regarded as historically unfounded. Shintô existed and, above all, was politically motivated ever since the days of early Japan, re-inventing its political functions again and again under different historical conditions over the centuries. This »political purpose« of Shintô was stressed by, among others, the late scholar Ôbayashi Taryô, a prominent Japanese ethnologist and specialist of comparative cultural studies at Tôkyô University. Ôbayashi always made clear his awareness that the role of »Shintô in history« was definitely political in nature, and that this political Shintô took shape in antiquity, not during the few years of State Shintô in modern Japan.

2. 4. Summary

In my view historians are wrong to think that religious nationalism in Japan started only after contact with the West in the second part of the 19th century. Of course it is true that the European idea of the nation-state and romantic nationalist ideologies deeply influenced modern Japanese nationalism since the Meiji period. But a Eurocentric view of Japanese intellectual history is unable to account for the astonishing fact that, during Tokugawa times and even earlier, Japanese thinkers themselves had developed their own kind of ethnocentric »national idea.« It centered on the construct of a Japanese sacred community, seen as the *shinkoku*, »the country of the gods« (cf. Nawrocki 1998: 21-63), and later manifested as the idea of a distinct Japanese *kokutai*, »national polity,« under the emperor's rule. Among Shintô scholars and ideologists it was in particular the con-

struct of a common origin of the Japanese people that was fundamental to this concept. This was based on the myth of the «Age of the Gods», which was transmitted through history and eventually elaborated into political radicalism most notably by Hirata Atsutane and his school. Though a religious concept, it always contained within it a clearly political dimension.

The subject of »Shintô« therefore must form an essential part of any discourse on Japanese culture, but we must also be aware that this subject can easily give rise to clichés regarding said culture. This clearly shows the need for substantial scholarly research on the topic, and it also shows, implicitly, the great hurdle to understanding Shintô created by any approach that tries to preclude the dimension of its historical development and change. I very much doubt that the idea of political Shintô itself is purely an invention of modern times. All sources show the opposite: the enormous historical depth of this world of ideas. Meiji-era State Shintô was an invention in that it transmuted the political ideas of Shintô thinkers of the Edo and pre-Edo periods into the practical politics of the modern Japanese nation-state, painting the highly ideological picture of a Japanese national polity of divine origin. This was a completely new idea for modern Japan as a nation-state, but a very old one for political Shintô thought itself.

It is mostly the exoticism, in many cases the self-exoticism, of Japan that prevents international research from regarding the Japanese case as extremely valuable for comparative analysis in general. Speaking about Shintô in this context means explaining it as an extraordinarily convincing example of a religious ethnocentrism which spawned a political and religious ideology that was able to found a modern nation-state like Japan. To declare that Japan is unsuitable for comparative research means to construct a self-sufficient *nihonjinron* exoticism. As many cases show, the study of Shintô at present often seems to return to such self-sufficient Japanocentrism, excluding the world and any comparative approach from our understanding of Shintô. Since the days of Yanagita Kunio and earlier, the idea of Japan as not being comparable to the »outside« world formed a main pillar in the traditionalist discourse on Japanese identity. Historical scholarly research should analyze this as a part of the problem, but not use it as a base for its own understanding.

To return finally to the initial questions raised by Mark Teeuwen's review of the German edition of the present book and by his later co-edited volume, *Shintô in History*, it seems to me that, in order to do full justice to the historical development of Shintô, consideration must be given to the above-mentioned fields of political and intellectual Shintô. In particular, the centrally important relationship between Shintô and Confucianism should be taken into account, as well as the

highly relevant but complicated topic of nativism; in other words, Kokugaku, Mitogaku, and *kokutai* ideological constructs and political thought in pre-modern Shintô should be treated in a historically appropriate manner. More specifically, scholarly treatments of Shintô political history should aim for an objective representation of the ideology of *shinkoku* thought, which has not only been a pillar of Shintô orthodoxy since the days of medieval times, but has even made its presence felt in recent international debates thanks to some politically thoughtless comments about »Japan as a divine nation« by a Japanese prime minister (cf. Nawrocki 2002). There is a saying that the only constancy in history is the constancy of change. This is especially true for Shintô history. Denying the pure existence of Shintô, as does the »onion« model inspired by Kuroda Toshio, does not promote our deeper understanding of its historical process. The contributions of Kuroda Toshio to the field have been extremely valuable, since they opened our eyes to the importance of Shintô-Buddhist amalgamation during the Japanese Middle Ages.

Nonetheless, it is also surely true that the history of Shintô does not »begin at Kuroda.«

SUPPLEMENT

ABBREVEATIONS

BJO	<i>Bochumer Jahrbuch zur Ostasienforschung</i>
GR	<i>Gunsho ruijû</i>
HdO	<i>Handbuch der Orientalistik</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
JDZ	<i>Jigen Daishi zenshû</i>
JJS	<i>The Journal of Japanese Studies</i>
JJRS	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i>
KBKS	<i>Kindai bungaku kenkyû sôsho</i>
KCKKS	<i>Kyôiku chokugo kanpatsu kankei shiryôshû</i>
KEJ	<i>Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan</i>
KGS	<i>(Shinchû) Kôgaku sôsho</i>
KSSMR	<i>Kokusho sômokuroku</i>
KT	<i>Kokushi taikai</i>
MKS	<i>Meijishi kenkyû sôsho</i>
MN	<i>Monumenta Nipponica</i>
MNZ	<i>Motoori Norinaga zenshû</i>
MOAG	<i>Mitteilungen der (deutschen) Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens</i>
MOS	<i>Münchener Ostasiatische Studien</i>
MSS	<i>Minshû shûkyôshi sôsho</i>
MZ	<i>Mitogaku zenshû</i>
NKB	<i>Nihon kyôiku bunko</i>
NKBT	<i>Nihon koten bungaku taikai</i>
NKST	<i>Nihon kindai shisô taikai</i>
NKT	<i>Nihon kyôkasho taikai</i>
NMBS	<i>Nihon mukashibanashi shûsei</i>
NMBT	<i>Nihon mukashibanashi taikai</i>
NnR	<i>Nihon no rekishi</i>
NOAG	<i>Nachrichten der (deutschen) Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens</i>
NRS	<i>Nihon rekishi shinsho</i>
NSH	<i>Nihonshi shohyakka</i>
NST	<i>Nihon shisô taikai</i>

OAG	(Deutsche) Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens
OE	<i>Oriens Extremus</i>
OJ	Ômiwa Jinja
SKS	<i>Shinchô koten shûsei</i>
SKT	<i>Shôgaku kokugo tokuhon</i>
SNT	<i>Sôgo Nihonshi taikai</i>
SSS	<i>Shintôshi sôsho</i>
ST	<i>Shintô taikai</i>
TASJ	<i>Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan</i>
UMI	<i>University Microfilms International</i>
YB	<i>Yûhôtô-bunko</i>
YKZ	<i>Yanagita Kunio zenshû</i>

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