



Shintō & Nationalism in Japan

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Outline

- ▶ Definitions of Shintō and nationalism
- ▶ Early forms of state-centered veneration
- ▶ Buddhism's role in the state
- ▶ Constitutional and religious nationalism
- ▶ Shintō and modernity
- ▶ Shintō and religion
- ▶ The spirituality of nationalism
- ▶ The 'Dark Valley'
- ▶ Post-war changes
- ▶ Nakasone > Koizumi > Abe
- ▶ The future and Nippon Kaigi



Key Definitions of Shintō



- ▶ Locations of shrines
- ▶ Material symbolism
- ▶ Ritual practices
- ▶ Imperial connection

明治神宮全景



Meiji Shrine

What is/are *kami*?



- ▶ Anything seen or sensed that is full of power, mysterious, marvelous, awe-full
- ▶ Uncontrolled, strange, beyond comprehension
- ▶ Humans can be defied if their actions warrant it
- ▶ Story of Sugawara Michizane > Tenjin
- ▶ *Kami* embody anxiety about relationship w/ natural world
- ▶ Most *kami* were place specific until Meiji restructuring, then national
- ▶ *Nigimitama* (beneficial power)
- ▶ *Aramitama* (wrathful power)

Metaphors for Shintō



- ▶ Like the air breathed by the Japanese people
- ▶ Like a pearl formed around an imperial center
- ▶ Like a doll dressed by its owner
- ▶ Like an empty plate that holds favorite foods
- ▶ Like an onion with many layers but an empty center

What's up with the term "Shintō"?

- ▶ The word "shinto" has virtually no meaning to the majority of Japanese people
- ▶ The common Japanese does not affiliate with Shintō religion; but does relate to shrines (*jinja*) and deities (*kami*)
- ▶ "Shintō" is what the contemporary shrine establishment and spokesmen would have the common person think and do
- ▶ " Shintō is the indigenous religion of Japan, continued in unbroken line from ancient times till today. Shintō also upholds Japan's polity, focused on the imperial institution"



The Weight of Buddhism



Shigisan, Osaka region

- ▶ Since 538, Buddhist rituals, organizations, orientations, priests, have always protected state and society
- ▶ Buddhism's appropriation of *kami* veneration is primary (*honji suijaku*)
- ▶ During Edo period (1603-1868), imagine the Grand Shrine of Ise with 200+ Buddhist temples !
- ▶ “Shintō” is both a non-Buddhist ritual tradition, but also a national institution of *kami* ritual under the control of the imperial court

▶ (M. Teeuwen)

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'Nationalism'

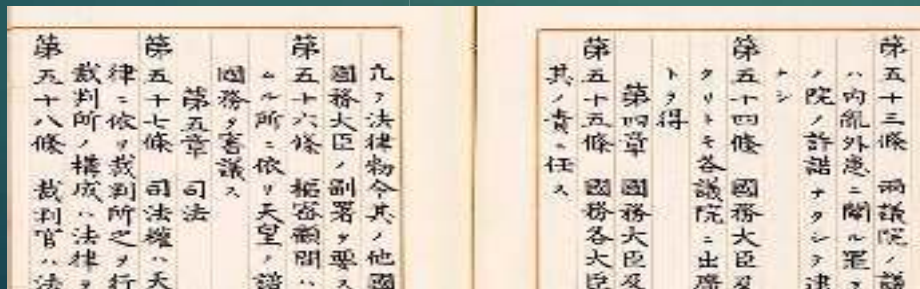
- ▶ each nation should govern itself
- ▶ the nation is the only rightful source of political power (and popular sovereignty)
- ▶ N. aims to build and maintain a single national identity to promote national solidarity
- ▶ N. crystallizes and organizes feelings, motives, and actions that otherwise remain rudimentary and undirected
- ▶ N. evokes the forces of patriotism, ethnocentrism, exclusivism, and racism
- ▶ N. as ethnic, civil, religious, folk, and so on
- ▶ (Smith 2010, Yack 2010)



Parade in Osaka, 1935

In Japanese, linguistic usage complicates definitions by using its own terms...

- ▶ *kokuminshugi* () Civic nationalism
 - ▶ " -ism as a principle, doctrine, or rule"
- ▶ *kokkashugi* (□) State-centered nationalism
- ▶ *minzokushugi* () Ethnic nationalism
- ▶ *kokusuishugi* () Extreme nationalism
- ▶ *kokkashijōshugi* () State supremacy



From the Meiji Constitution, 1889

State-centered attention in Japanese history



- ▶ Shōtoku Taishi (574-622 CE)
 - ▶ Clan from Korea; defeated Mononobe
 - ▶ Constitution states that a smoothly functioning state requires the harmony of each man who knows his place (Confucianism)
- ▶ Mongol Invasions (1274, 1281)
 - ▶ Fighting for “Nippon-no-kuni”
 - ▶ Personal glory transcends state concerns
- ▶ Meiji Revolution (1868)
 - ▶ Aizawa Seishisai and *Shinron* (1825)
 - ▶ *Kokutai* as a key term: “the nation’s body”
 - ▶ Shintō as the delivery vehicle for new values
 - ▶ *Kokutai no hongi*: “Cardinal Principles of the National Body (1937)

Creating National Unity



“White Rooster” (Kawamura, 1929)



Meiji Emperor, 1878
Meiji period, 1868-1912



“Hyaku sen, Hyaku shō,” Nihon
Manzai Book (100 Collected Laughs)
on Russo-Japanese war, 1904

Japan from Meiji to Taishō Periods

- ▶ Government moved to enhance Shintō as the religion that validated imperial rule
- ▶ Japanese constitution of 1889 guaranteed religious freedom
- ▶ Rescript on Education (1890)



- ▶ The state needed a world-class economy, army and navy, and respectable standing in the family of nations, plus a docile, hard-working citizenry supporting that façade

Shintō and Modernity

- ▶ *Shinron* published 1825
- ▶ British victors in Opium War (1839-1842)
- ▶ Matthew Perry appeared in 1853; treaty 1854
- ▶ Japan's reaction? *Sonnō joi!*
- ▶ Ise talismans falling from sky (1867)
- ▶ Civil War in Japan (1867-68)
- ▶ New government 1868; Shintō is on stage! Shōkonsha started in 1868, Kyoto; moved to Tokyo in 1869
- ▶ Dept. of Shrine Deities (1868), replaced by Ministry of Shrine Deities (1871), replaced by Ministry of Religions (1872), replaced by Bureau of Shrines and Temples (1877), then Bureau of Shrines and Bureau of Religions (separate institutions, 1900 >)



1888

Shintō and Modernity (continued)



Hibiya welcomes Emperor
after conclusion to 1904-05 war
with Russia

- ▶ Shintō chosen to serve as the spiritual tradition at the heart of the new government
- ▶ Buddhism was forcibly separated from Shintō shrines



“Breaking Temple Bell” by Tanaka Nagane (1907)

Shintō and Modernity (continued)



Minatogawa Shrine, Kobe 1900

- ▶ Shintō chosen to serve as the spiritual tradition at the heart of the new government
- ▶ Buddhism was forcibly separated from Shintō shrines
- ▶ Japanese constitution of 1889 guaranteed religious freedom
- ▶ But Shintō is not a religion!
 - ▶ It has "foundational" rituals and patriotic symbols
 - ▶ **shrine mergers** from 1906-1912; from local to state shrines
 - ▶ Shintō changed away from local deities to a faith of Japan's national identity, and the sacred character of its emperor
 - ▶ 1913 regulation identified *all* Shintō priests as employees of the state

Is Shintō a Religion?



- ▶ Religion is now seen as a system of language and practice--belief and action--that organizes the world and society in terms of what is considered sacred.



- ▶ The sacred is culturally constructed and can thus have any content.

- ▶ Wm. Paden, *Religious Worlds*



Overseas Shrines



조선신궁 牌단



location of Chosen Jingu (Korea Shrine) on Namsan,

Overseas Shrines



Figure 6: Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall on the former site of Chōsen Jingu (Korea Shrine) on Namsan, Seoul. Source: "Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall / Yeonghwan Lim Sunhyun Kim." ArchDaily.

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- ▶ **The spirituality of nationalism**



The Spirituality of Nationalism



Yasukuni Shrine, Main Sanctuary



Map of Yasukuni Shrine, 2019



Emperor at Yasukuni
1935



Ad for Yasukuni Shrine

“Aoge chukon, mamore yo, Izoku”

□ook up and venerate the spirits, Izoku kai!”

Izoku-kai • Bereaved Families Association

State Shintō at Local Sites

- ▶ “State Shintō” begins in early 1900s
- ▶ All shrine priests became state employees in 1913
- ▶ All shrines now become national institutions
- ▶ Many state shrines had no parishioners at all
- ▶ Local priests embraced new function as centers of community education
- ▶ Shrines represented the only religion able to renew the people in body and spirit
- ▶ It can purify society because of its deep roots in citizens’ inner being



Ueno Park torii, 1930s

Sophia University, 1932

- ▶ Yōhai incident of 1929
- ▶ Catholic apostolic delegate said don't do it because not ordered
- ▶ Huge scandal, Nagasaki to Tokyo
- ▶ Uneasy compromise
- ▶ Sophia est. as a university in 1928
- ▶ 3 Catholic students did not join in a group trip to Yasukuni in 1932
- ▶ What does “*reverence at shrines*” (*jinja sanpai*) mean to schools?
- ▶ “...none other than to express patriotic commitment and sincere loyalty” (Min. of Education)



High School Baseball Tournament, 1937

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The 'Dark Valley' by 1944...

- ▶ all-inclusive state control of society and government
- ▶ shrines certainly but also temples and churches support the war
- ▶ no dissidents in society
- ▶ education, media, consumer, religious cultures all work for the emperor and state
- ▶ everyone has *already* lost a loved one in the war and the bombing of Japan (in which 425k+ died, 8.5 million homeless) is yet to begin



Firebombing Campaign, March 1945 >



Hamamatsu 1945



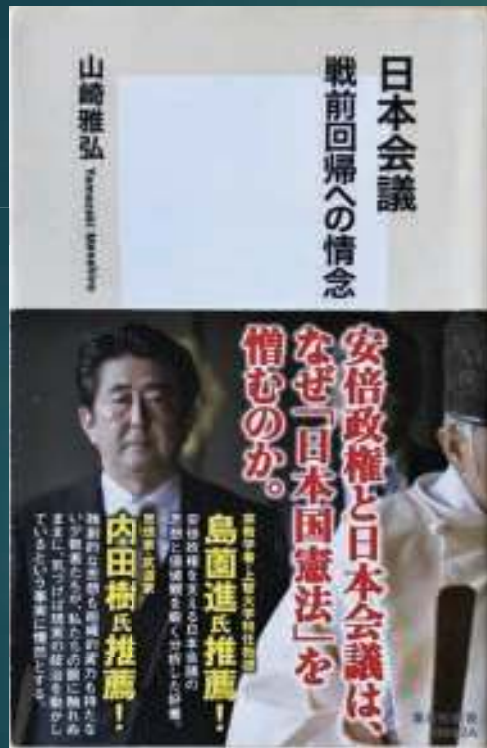
Tokyo 1945

Postwar Repositioning



- ▶ Allied Occupation's "Shintō Directive" (1945)
- ▶ Shintō seen as **social propaganda**, used as a tool of **ultra-nationalism** and a disguise for **militarism**
- ▶ U.S. support is crucial to stabilizing Japanese industry and society; **Korean war** (1950-53)
- ▶ Yasukuni can continue as solace for citizens, and yet it becomes the hub of nationalism
- ▶ Nationalism reemerges in late 1950s and 60s
- ▶ Izoku-kai (Bereaved Families Assn.) becomes dominant at Yasukuni and advocates for **secret enshrinement** of Class A war criminals (1978)
- ▶ New religions begin, but Shintō shrines—under Central Assn. of Shrine's (*Jinja Honchō*) direction—carry on

Nippon Kaigi • “Japan Conference”



“Nippon Kaigi’s Passions to Return to Prewar Japan” (2015)



“Nippon Kaigi and Shrine Association” (2016)



“Nippon Kaigi’s Human Networks” (2016)

Nippon Kaigi's Agenda (2019)

- ▶ To rebuild the might of the armed forces
- ▶ To revise wartime history to include Japan's liberation of East Asia during World War II
- ▶ To assert Japan did not fight a war of aggression...
- ▶ ...nor did the rape and pillage of Nanjing in China, which historians estimate killed up to 200,000 people, ever happen
- ▶ To keep women in the home
- ▶ To promote revision of Japan's pacifist constitution
- ▶ To restore the status of the emperor to a prewar position



To Summarize...



- ▶ “Shintō” begins as a Chinese term used by Buddhists to explain non-Buddhist rituals, deities, and practices (Teeuwen)
- ▶ For much of its lifetime, it is syncretic with but different from Buddhism. Both traditions protect the state, ruler, emperor and, by extension, society
- ▶ “**State Shintō**” is an **invented tradition**, at odds with the affiliation of common people to shrines and *kami*
- ▶ Nationalism resonates in how national and political unity is promoted via various strategies
- ▶ Shintō and nationalism come together in the 1820s, then develop after the Meiji period begins in 1868
- ▶ State Shintō becomes a non-religious tradition, serving state, society, imperial household in totalizing ways (1913 >)

So you never know!





▶ End