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Asia Pacific: Perspectives is a peer-reviewed journal published on average once a year in April/May. It welcomes submissions from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities with relevance to the Asia Pacific region.* In keeping with the Jesuit traditions of the University of San Francisco, *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* commits itself to the highest standards of learning and scholarship.

Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. **Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.**

* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

The Maintenance of Imperial Shintô in Postwar Japan as Seen at Yasukuni Shrine and Its Yûshûkan Museum

by Richard Lambert, M.A.

Abstract

What is commonly known as "State Shintô" was put into place in the late 1860's by Japan's elites. The invention of a "modern" Imperial Shintô tradition resulted through a series of conscious political acts in the name of the Emperor. Hoping to unite the people to handle the challenges of modernization, Shintô was used as a political tool, drawing upon the old legends of Japan's origin together with a tradition predating the Meiji era (1868-1910) that I will call "Folk Shintô." The local power represented by thousands of small independent shrines throughout Japan carrying the authority of numerous divinities (*kami*), was cohered into national unity under State Shintô, with the Emperor proclaimed as religious and political head, resulting in what I call "Imperial Shintô." By examining the conditions that allowed a highly politicized Shintô to develop, we can more easily see how ingrained it had become by the time of Japan's defeat in 1945, and how difficult it was for the Occupation to extinguish. We can also see how some of these conditions continued into the current day thanks to institutions like Yasukuni Shrine and its attached Yûshûkan Museum. Both continue to exert undue political influence in a secular democratic society.

Background

Faced with the threat of being colonized from the West and following the defeat of the Tokugawa regime, a modernization program was put in effect in the name of the restored Emperor Meiji, sixteen years old in 1868. Until the end of the 19th century, a series of political acts instituted by Meiji elites laid the foundation for the "tradition" of an imperial mythology culminating in the establishment of State Shintô. The first step was promoting the doctrine of *saisei itchi*, decreed in 1868 by the Emperor, declaring that "the Way of the unity of religion and government shall be revived" (Holtom 1943:5). Next, the year 1869 saw the start of a series of government departments set up to control the religious future of Japan by taking over jurisdiction of Buddhism and Shintô (Bunce 1955:27). Third, the 1870 Great Teaching Campaign (*taikyô senpu undô*) attempted to propagate state ideology based on respect of the gods, love of country, and obedience to the Emperor. The campaign was afforded religious significance, and was influential in creating an awareness of Shintô as independent of Buddhism (Hardacre 1989:42).

The fourth significant political act was designed to reconfigure the way people regarded Buddhism, which had close ties to the ousted Tokugawa government. The Meiji period witnessed attempts by the newly unified Japanese state to weaken and redefine the authority that belonged to the heretofore Buddhist/Shintô amalgam (*shinbutsu shûgô*).

In March of 1868 the government issued the order of *shinbutsu bunri*, calling for the separation of Shintô and Buddhism. Shintô gods were no longer to be called *bosatsu* (bodhisattva), Buddhist priests were no longer to participate in Shintô services, and Shintô shrines were to eliminate Buddhist paraphernalia (IJCC 2004:8).

In May of 1875 a law was issued stating, "To the superintendent priests of all sects of Shintô and of Buddhism: As stated in the subjoined notice, the establishment of religious unions (*kyôin*) between the sects of Shintô and Buddhism is now prohibited" (Holtom 1922:16). The new laws (and periodic persecutions) never resulted in the elimination of Buddhism. But the results redefined, as explained by James Ketelaar in his book *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan – Buddhism and its Persecution*, what religiosity had been to the people over their history, and what it was to become in the new nation (Ketelaar 1990:76).

The State attempted to reduce further the status of Buddhist priests by interfering in areas that had heretofore been privileged. Ministry of State Order #133, April 1872, read, "Priests may do as they wish regarding the eating of meat, marriage, and the cutting of hair," breaking mutual obligations that had been maintained between the State and Buddhism (Ketelaar: 6). While the State was attempting to weaken Buddhism and strengthen state identity, the Conscription Law of 1873 was introduced that mandated four years of military service into the life of the common man.

Yasukuni Shintô Shrine was established in 1879 through the renaming of the Tokyo Shokonsha, a shrine built in 1869 to honor those who had died for the Emperor during the Meiji Restoration. With Japan being politically unified under Meiji, Yasukuni would continue this tradition. Yasukuni would gain spiritual as well as political importance as the designated state repository for the souls of those who would die for Japan during the ensuing expansion of the Empire.

In 1882, *Kokka* (State) Shintô was established by the state as officially non-religious, as differentiated from *Shûha* (religious) Shintô. *Kokka* Shintô received status, authority, and financial support from the state, but *Shûha* Shintô and the Buddhist faith was left to support themselves (Bunce: 30). State Shintô shrines free of Buddhist influence were built, while many local, religious Shintô shrines were purged of their Buddhist influence. State Shrines and Folk Shintô Shrines were merged in many regions, concentrating the power and influence of State Shintô (Hardacre: 85).

In 1882 Emperor Meiji delivered the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers (*Gunjin Chokuyû*), introducing a Meiji-era rendition of *bushidô* to conscripted soldiers. As pointed out by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, its most famous (infamous) passage stated that a soldiers' obligation of loyalty to the Emperor was heavier than the mountains, but with death being lighter than a feather (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 80).

The Imperial Rescript of 1881 promised a constitution, and the 1889 Constitution became an imperial gift to the nation. State Shintô would become the long term beneficiary, for as Carol Gluck declares in her 1985 work *Japan's Modern Myths*, "The Constitution would make imperial powers legally explicit for the first time in Japanese history" (Gluck 1985: 76).

One power benefiting State Shintô was education. The Education Code of 1872 set up the framework of an extremely efficient educational system. Emperor Meiji's promulgation in 1890 of the "Imperial Rescript on Education" (*kyôiku chokugo*) turned education into a tool of the Emperor, extending the state's ability to instill internal values into subsequent generations through Imperial Education. The Rescript affected the religious freedom nominally granted under the Meiji Constitution. By becoming "the pillar of prewar Japan's ethics and morality" and providing "an identifiable focus of unity for the populace as a whole and for the Shintô priesthood in particular," it turned the virtues of loyalty and filial piety into "absolute, universal values that could not be questioned or subordinated to anything else" (Hardacre: 122).

State Shintô would expand its official doctrine in future generations through Publication Law Article XIX, #15 of 14 April 1893, authorizing the Minister of Home Affairs "to prohibit the sale, and confiscate the draft of books and other publication, the contents of which are deemed injurious to peace and order or prejudicial to public morals" (Hall 1949C: 468). "Public morals" would come to be those as defined by State Shintô.

The 1899 Ministry of Education's Order Number 12 prohibited religious instruction in school, leaving State Shintô as the basis of moral education, while it eliminated competing spiritual values (Gluck:129). This was followed by the 1900 Public Peace and Order Police Law that prohibited membership in political parties by religious clergy, serving to depoliticize Buddhist, Christian, and religious (*kyôha*) Shintô. This set the stage for politics to be dominated by a growing "non-religious" State Shintô (Murakami 1980:65), paving the way for a unification of faith and politics, of religion and State.

By the turn of the century the road to the "Imperial Way" (*kôdô*) was well defined. Professor Helen Hardacre states in her study *Shintô and the State, 1868 – 1988*, that prior to the Meiji Restoration, Shintô as a religion independent of Buddhism scarcely existed. Its new sense of meaning and purpose was a modern, post-Meiji invention (Hardacre 1989: 19). In her presentation at the University of London for the "Shintô and Japanese Culture" symposium held in November 1994, Professor Carmen Blacker said this about Meiji-era State Shintô:

State Shintô was a recent aberration of the beliefs that had peaceably existed in Japan for centuries....Its story rams home to us the salutary lesson of the terrifying way in which the powerful symbols of myth and religion can be manipulated... not only to weld together a new nation state, but also to create one in which a totalitarian fanaticism utterly alien to the real tradition of the culture can drive that nation to disaster (Blacker 1994).

Fueled by the patriotic fervor of military victory over both China and Russia, and accompanied by a growing economy unmatched by any Asian country, subsequent generations were taught cultural superiority and a form of Japanese Manifest Destiny. As Japanese political scientist Maruyama Masao stated, whereas Western states had evolved from the dissolution of the "divine right of kings" into a

separation of church and state, "Japanese nationalism strove consistently to base its control on internal values of the people rather than on the authority deriving from external laws" (Maruyama 1969:3-4). The post-Meiji invention of State Shintô and an Imperial Emperor gave the State the authority to instill these values.

The Ministry of Education mandated morality (*shushin*) classes that illustrated the righteousness of Japanese values. The theme of Divine Origin and Divine Leadership were wrapped up in superior characteristics defined by a quasi-religious National Shintô, spelling out the Divine Mission of spreading Japanese morality to the world.

Superiority of material achievements was witnessed in Japan's rapid drive into modernization, resulting in a country able to compete with the Europeans and the United States. "Kokutai" (national essence/structure) supplied the ideology of a cultural superiority and human spirit that was used to explain the miraculous economic achievements of Japan's modernization. "Superiority" was evidenced by a new sociocultural order that had been able to adapt Western technology without succumbing to colonization as had its Asian neighbors. Dr. Morris-Suzuki feels that Japan's concept of its right to rule Asia was not because of racial superiority, but due to concepts expressed in terms of spirituality, morality, emotions and loyalty, with Japan holding itself as a more advanced form of modern civilization (Morris-Suzuki 1998: 87).

D.C. Holtom, in his 1943 study on Shintô, cites an article published by the Japanese Minister of War illustrating that righteous morality was used to justify acts of terror in neighboring countries. "Since the foundation of the Japanese Empire it has been the yearning of all Japanese to unite all the races of the world into a happy society. We regard this as the great mission of the Japanese people. We strive also to clear away from the earth injustice and inequality and to bring everlasting happiness to mankind" (Holtom 1943:22).

Maruyama wrote in his 1946 essay "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism" that prewar Japanese nationalism involved both spiritual and political power, with the state determining the ultimate moral code, acting for this collective morality, and channeling the spiritual power of the people into the state defined effort (Maruyama 1969: 8-9). The Emperor became the figurehead for this collective effort and whose presence justified the endeavor.

Righteous morality ennobled the acts taken in the name of the Emperor, with his agents gaining authority by acting in his name. From the *Asahi Shimbun*, February 6, 1943, Prime Minister General Tôjô commented on the question of dictatorship while addressing the 81st Diet Session.

People often refer to this as a dictatorial government, but I should like to make the matter clear...I am just the same as you. ...It is only when I am exposed to the light of His Majesty that I shine. Were it not for this light, I should be no better than a pebble by the roadside. ...This puts me in a completely different category from those European rulers who are known as dictators (Maruyama 1969:17).

Tôjô separated himself from his contemporary European despots by his affiliation to the Emperor, the repository and personification of Japanese *kokutai*, which allowed the general

his political authority. What the Meiji oligarchs had introduced as State Shintō for unification purposes had through ensuing generations been transformed into Imperial Shintō, with the nation operating under an Imperial Mission given it by the “superiority” of an “infallible” Emperor.

This came to a forced end in the 1945 defeat and post-war Occupation. Necessity saw the Occupation put much of the previous imperial bureaucracy back in control in order to rebuild the economy. Prewar bureaucrats had exercised the Emperor’s policy, with postwar bureaucrats working under the grace of the Allied Occupation. The pace of economic success and cold-war political tensions took precedent over democratic evolution. From the ratification of the constitution of 1947 to the present day, Japan has been dominated by one political party, continuing many of the policies introduced by the Occupation.

Yasukuni ’s Museum: A New Light on Japanese History?

The remodeled Yūshūkan, the museum dedicated to war memorabilia on the grounds of Yasukuni Shrine, reopened for visitors in July 2002; I visited in December 2002. Illustrations from the English text that explain the galleries will indicate the strengthened attempts by supporters of Yasukuni Shintō to build a contemporary patriotism from the defeated Imperial Cause. Contrary to calls for war apologies from Japan’s neighbors, the Yūshūkan portrays a view of history that attempts to justify prewar Japan as a liberator of Asia from the European colonialists. Though Imperial Japan was defeated, the museum depicts a just cause, ennobling the sacrifice of the nearly 2,500,000 souls enshrined at Yasukuni.

While nations reserve the right to mourn and revere their war dead, the constitutional conflict in matters concerning religious faith and politics is often pointed out when prominent politicians visit Yasukuni. Being a former imperial shrine and center of Imperial Shintō, it continues its political and religious association. That a museum of military memorabilia and artifacts is attached to Yasukuni while it continues its status as a Shintō shrine also seems inappropriate in a democratic secular society.

At the entrance to the Yūshūkan a Japanese language brochure entitled “*Yasukuni ni Daihyakka*” (Encyclopedia of Yasukuni) is available, which tells the visitor “in order to understand the truth about modern Japanese history, in July 2002, the Yūshūkan has been reborn” (my translation). Originally built in 1882, it was designed in a European style by an Italian architect in the spirit of the times. It was redesigned in 1932 in a Japanese style to reflect the change in attitude. On my last visit in 2000, I was impressed with the solemn display of war equipment, serving as a place to reflect on those who had died in battle. Its current renovation is lavish and modern. As stated in the English pamphlet “Yūshūkan,” it was rebuilt in order to present from its collection items “that shed a new light on modern Japanese history.”

Upon entry into the “Spirit of the Samurai” gallery, one is greeted by English translations of poems that stir feelings of nationalism from Japan’s past. A Nara era (710-794) poem is

displayed. Used in prewar times to instill patriotic fervor, many of those surviving elders educated in the prewar period can still recite it by heart: “We shall die in the sea, we shall die in the mountains, in whatever way, we shall be beside the Emperor, never turning back.” This set the tone for further galleries that quickly traced the history of European and American colonization efforts in Asia.

The 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education that provided the authority of the Emperor over education, is described simply: “School curriculum tended to overemphasize the cultivation of the intellect, a result of western influence. Japanese culture was virtually ignored. Inconsistencies in or the absence of moral education at the imperial universities and secondary schools worried Emperor Meiji,” resulting in the draft that became the Rescript on October 30, 1890. “Consequently the Japanese moral code was revived and became firmly implanted.”

The next exhibit displays a huge mural depicting the victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. It is accompanied by loud music featuring cannon sounds and men charging. Next is a gallery that describes how Japan was rebuffed by the League of Nations on its request for a provision abolishing racial discrimination even though siding with the allied powers in WWI. The rejection of racism, it is explained, was due to reluctance of the United Kingdom and the United States to support Japan’s position and growing power, “setting the stage for a new, US-dominated order in Asia.”

Prior to exiting this gallery, it is explained that China, motivated by the Russian Revolution, turned to nationalism and “focused their animosity on Japan. An anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria and discord within the Kwantung Movement resulted in the Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manchukuo.” The League of Nations, at the Lytton Commission (October 1, 1932) “recognized Japan’s interest in Manchuria, but not its right to act in self defense. It also proposed affording Manchuria autonomous status in China.” The rendition goes on to state that since the League had chosen to disregard “the events that had resulted in the incident, Japan could no longer avoid a confrontation with the League,” with Japan withdrawing from the League of Nations on March 27, 1933 when the League demanded that Japan remove their troops from China.

The next gallery was entitled “The China Incident,” referring to what is called in the dominant view outside Japan “The Nanking Massacre” or “The Rape of Nanking.” I quote from the English description available in the gallery that explains the events leading up to this incident.

After the Japanese surrounded Nanking in December 1937, General Matsui Iwane distributed maps to his men, with foreign settlements and the safety zone marked in red ink. Matsui told them that they were to observe military rules to the letter and that anyone committing unlawful acts would be severely punished. He also warned Chinese troops to surrender, but commander in chief Tang Shengzhi ignored the warning. Instead, he ordered his men to defend Nanking to the death, and then abandoned them. The Chinese were severely defeated, suffering heavy casualties. Inside the city, residents were once again able to live their lives in peace.

Most renditions of post-war history agree that some level of massacre occurred in Nanking. That the “Nanking Incident” is downplayed at the museum indicates the museum’s effort, as stated in its English pamphlet, to “shed a new light on modern Japanese history”. Creating a history in which the Japanese observed “military rules to the letter,” while at the same time defeating the Chinese and leaving the residents “able to live their lives in peace” can be seen as an attempt to maintain the integrity of the Empire and the Emperor on whose behalf imperial troops were dispatched.

The next gallery tells of Roosevelt’s strategy for war with his “Plan Victory.” Embargoes were used to force war with Japan, because, as is stated, “The US economy made a complete recovery (from the depression) once the Americans entered the war.” When the Hull Proposals faltered, peace negotiations were deemed a failure, and on November 19, 1941 it was decided that “Japan has no choice but to go to war against the U.S.,” and by November 25, “the US plan to force Japan into war is then set in motion.”

The Pacific War Years Gallery shows the portraits and highlights the sacrifice of many young and earnest Japanese who loved their country, dying in the Great East Asian War (*Dai Tōa Sensō*). Japan is shown attempting to negotiate surrender through the Russians to no avail. “But since the U.S. had no interest in bringing the war to an early end, no opportunities for negotiation arose.”

A separate display explains that the end of the war came about by Imperial Intervention at a War Council, presided over by the Showa Emperor (Hirohito). A poem credited to the Emperor is prominently displayed, supposedly to reveal his feelings in his decision to end the war: “Saddened by the loss of the precious lives of so many of my people, I ended the war. It mattered not what became of me.”

Historically it appears that surrender was delayed by last ditch efforts to protect the Emperor’s position in a post-war Japan. This delay extended the war several days, resulting in the loss of more civilian and military lives, and caused the Americans to drop another atomic bomb at Nagasaki. Secretary of State James Byrnes (1945–1947) wrote in 1947 that one day after the August 6 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the Japanese delivered a message through the Swiss government that they would indeed accept the Potsdam Declaration, but with the proviso that “the understanding that the said declaration does not compromise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of his majesty as a sovereign ruler” (Byrnes 1947: 209).

This insistence on the preservation of Imperial prerogative caused the Americans to reply that only full compliance with Potsdam was acceptable (unconditional surrender), with a second bomb falling on Nagasaki on August 9. On August 15, Hirohito made his radio broadcast, which the Americans granted as full acceptance and surrender, halting the horrific possibility of a third atomic bomb. In his prize-winning work on Hirohito’s war responsibility, Herbert Bix speaks of this hesitation to surrender and of Hirohito’s character. “In his single-minded dedication to preserving his position, no matter what the cost to others, he was one of the most disingenuous persons ever to occupy the modern throne” (Bix 2001: iv).

Post war galleries display Japan’s war efforts as focused on liberating Asia. One room prominently displays Indian Justice Radhabinod Pal of the Occupation War Tribunal, who declared that Britain and other white Europeans were the first colonizers of Asia. The gallery described the liberation of Asia as a vindication of Japanese policy:

Not until Japan began to accomplish victory after stunning victory in the Great East Asian War did the idea of independence enter the realm of reality. ... When the war ended, the people of Asia returned to their homes—to colonies that they considered their own territory. ... War for independence broke out in Malaya, French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.

The colonizers who had been defeated by Japan early in WWII could not suppress the ideas that Japan had advanced after WWI and were subsequently rejected—racial equality and self-determination for the peoples of Asia—with military force. One after another, the nations of Southeast Asia won their independence, and their success inspired Africa and other areas as well.

Prior to exiting the museum, a display room exhibits pictures and pictures of faces of those who died in service during World War II. Exhibits of war instruments, including “special forces” (*kamikaze/tokkōtai*) are presented. The exit is through the prayer room, where those who desire are able to write memorials to Yasukuni or loved ones. Portraits of a young Caucasian running through beautiful falling cherry blossoms opens onto a bookstore, with one exiting past a fully intact zero fighting plane.

A tour of the Yūshūkan does not give the impression that the type of Shintō seen at Yasukuni was a political creation almost purged in the defeat of war. Nor is the fact revealed that Shintō had to wait for Occupation acknowledgment to be recognized as a religion. Yasukuni Shrine strives to keep its own torch lit, afraid of the day that its flames might die out.

Spiritual Displacement in the Modernization of Japan

In the formation years soon after the Meiji Restoration, prior to the myth of Imperial Shintō becoming completely established, Fukuzawa Yukichii (1835–1902) wrote in his 1874 *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* of the necessity for national unity in order to maintain sovereignty. He also pointed out that for the past 700 years since the start of the Kamakura era (1192), the people had not paid much attention to the Emperor because military power had been maintained by the Shogun and Tokugawa forces. “But if today, as some imperial scholars would have it, the people were to be set under a ruler who united in himself both political and religious functions, the future of Japan would be very different” (Fukuzawa (1874) 1973: 22).

One might assume that he expected the worst outcome when he wrote of the National Learning (*kokugaku*) scholars whom he complained had no compunction about assigning the ruler a fictitious status, preferring sham to truth (Fukuzawa:174). He warned of the possibility that, “Power will be claimed by linkage to the gods of heaven, expressed as a theocracy prevailing at the expense of true governmental authority, by creating a fabrication that leads to blind attachments to false authority of which a government has no right

to avail itself" (Fukuzawa: 30). Fukuzawa was concerned about the possibility of false authority and Imperial Power exploiting the virtue of loyalty in dangerous ways.

Of the status of Shintō in his day, in 1874 he wrote, "it has been nothing but an insignificant movement, one which barely managed at the Meiji Restoration to avail itself of the lingering glory of the Imperial House; it is ephemeral and incidental" (Fukuzawa: 146). In just a few short years, the glory of the Imperial House would be restored, bringing with it a national Shintō that would prevail "at the expense of true government authority."

Just thirty eight years after Fukuzawa's comments, Basil Chamberlain (1850–1935), the translator of the 8th century Shintō text *Kojiki* in 1882, wrote an eleven page essay in 1912 entitled, "Invention of a New Religion." His essay spoke of a "Mikado-worship" in the process of being consciously or semi-consciously put together by the official class from "Shintō, a primitive nature cult, which had fallen into discredit." He wrote of the development of a pseudo history of Shintō that exploited and recast the Japanese myths, resulting in a situation that dumbfounded him. He noted political and religious change occurring at an unnatural pace. "Not even officials can be so stupid as to believe in things which they themselves invented. ... said one of them to us recently—'we believe in it, although we know that it is not true'" (Chamberlain (1912) 1933:5).

In his 1922 study on Shintō, D.C. Holtom recognized the efforts of the Japanese State to create a neo-Shintō myth using archaic mythology as a base. He stated that the government was attempting "to give support to the affirmation that the present organization of the Japanese State is the manifestation of a fundamental and unchanging historical principle" (Holtom 1922:236).

In other words, the official position may be taken to mean that historical investigation of the Japanese state cannot be carried back beyond a time when this fundamental principle was not in operation. ... The Japanese government is very plainly seeking to surround a doctrine of political absolutism with the final sanctions of religious belief" (Holtom 1922: 236).

Shintō as a religious entity was recognized by the Occupation in its passion to preserve religious expression. As a legitimized religion, Joseph Kitagawa said in 1966 that, "various attempts have been made by Shintō thinkers to formulate systematic treatises of Shintō theology. Thus far, however, no definitive work has appeared on the subject" (Kitagawa 1966: 287). The type of Shintō being expressed at Yasukuni is a construction based on the perversion of a Folk Shintō that had existed long before Yasukuni. Having gained authority through a political / religious relationship with the Emperor in the period prior to defeat, the vested interests represented by Yasukuni continue to take advantage of this special status.

Kuroda Toshio's 1981 article entitled "Shintō in the History of Japanese History," tells of the distortions that had occurred to Japanese religious philosophy by the doctrine of political absolutism that accompanied State Shintō.

The Meiji separation of Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*; 1868) and its concomitant suppression of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku*) were coercive and destructive "correctives" pressed

forward by the hands of government. With them Shintō achieved for the first time the status of an independent religion, distorted though it was. During this period the "historical consciousness" of an indigenous religion called Shintō, existing in Japan since ancient times, clearly took shape for the first time. ... Separating Shintō from Buddhism cut Shintō off from the highest level of religious philosophy achieved by the Japanese up to that time and inevitably, moreover artificially, gave it the features of a primitive religion. Hence, while acquiring independence, Shintō declined to the state of a religion that disavowed being a religion (Kuroda 1981: 26).

Separated from the religious constraints of the Buddhist/Shintō syncretism, State Shintō became an instrument of ultra nationalism justified through Imperial infallibility, allowing the concept of the Emperor's armed forces (*kōgun*). A Japan Times article of August 11, 2001, just days before Prime Minister Koizumi's first visit to Yasukuni, reviewed *Hei-tachi no Senso* (Soldier's War), historian Tadatoshi Fujii's book about the conscripted soldier of the Imperial army. The article told of Imperial Japan developing "ideological tricks" and "elaborate social devices" to validate the war for the common soldier. By linking him with the Emperor through the armed forces, holy war (*seisen*) would justify a soldier's aggressive spirit (*kogeki seishin*) in his efforts to accomplish his mission. To those killed in action came the honor of receiving the Order of the Golden Kite (*Kinshi Kunsho*), with enshrinement at Yasukuni (Kawabata 2001).

The Imperial Bureaucracy Finds New Meaning

Upon defeat in 1945, the American-led Occupation headed by General MacArthur had a brief opportunity to disable Japan's military capability and to deliver democracy to the people. They would try to undo generations of indoctrination in the seven years spanning 1945 – 1952. In retrospect we see that time, and policy decisions on the part of the Americans, cut this mission short.

From the start of the Occupation, it is apparent a policy was established whereby much of the preexisting imperial apparatus was used as a necessary tool to accomplish the rehabilitation of Japan. Robert Ward, in a 1987 article on the Allied Occupation of Japan, mentions documents written in 1943 taken from files of Harley Notter, a State Department official involved in the Occupation planning. Ward assumes that the existence of these documents indicate early on that maintenance of the Emperor was a consideration of the State Department, with these ideas manifested in MacArthur's Occupation Policy (Ward 1987: 4). An excerpt from the May 25, 1943 State Department memo was entitled "Status of the Japanese Emperor."

The survival of the emperorship would be a potential asset of great utility, as an instrument not only for promoting domestic stability, but also for bringing about changes desired by the United Nations in Japanese policy. The very fact that the power to initiate amendments to the Japanese constitution is reserved to the emperor makes orderly constitutional change more readily feasible if the approach is through the emperor. A non-militaristic governing group would be in a better position to make reforms effective if it could speak in the name and with the authority of the emperor (Ward: 4).

The “Japanese Developmental State” of mega-bureaucracies running massive state agencies influencing the economic development of post-war Asia had its authoritarian genesis approved by the American occupiers. While the Occupation indicted first tier officials and bureaucrats under the Emperor for war responsibility and punishment, the Emperor was kept above the fray to be used as a tool in Japan’s reconstruction. Along with his authority much of the heretofore imperial bureaucracy was retained and empowered by the Occupation forces and used to implement reforms for future democratic and economic development. Being allowed to retrench under the auspices of the Occupation returned to the bureaucrats prestige lost in the defeat, allowing them to maintain their authority.

John Dower, in his work *Embracing Defeat*, states that contrary to the direct military control which accompanied the German defeat, the Occupation of Japan operated through the existing infrastructure, entailing working through the bureaucracy and the imperial system (Dower 1999: 212). Dower goes on to say that perhaps because of this policy, the potential for democratization from below may not have been allowed to flourish, being seen as generosity from above (Dower: 221).

By the time the constitutional revision was complete in November 1946, the initial priority of the Occupation goals had started to shift. The American needed to confront growing nationalism in Asia, the rising power of Mao in China, and problems surfacing in Korea. This resulted in a “reverse course” of American policy (Pempel 1987: 168), shifting priorities from demilitarization and democratic reforms to a more expedient economic policy based on capitalism. Often the pace of economic development was accelerated through reliance on the experience of the pre-war industrial groups (*zaibatsu*) which the US chose to bring back. In the next decade these industrial groupings would be labeled a more benign “*keiretsu*.”

The 1947 Constitution gave the defeated political bureaucracy the framework from which to accomplish democratic reform. This reform was left up to the politicians answering to SCAP, but operating through a bureaucracy that had continued from before and during the war. In an article on postwar Japanese bureaucratic reformation, T.J. Pempel cites a memo dated January 25, 1946 to MacArthur’s aide Courtney Whitney that recognized Imperial influence. “The imperial bureaucracy has been one of the mainstays of totalitarian Japan. Now that the military clique is broken and the financial clique is tottering, the bureaucracy alone remains unimpaired, its power relatively greater than ever before. In the turmoil of politics, it had successfully outlasted its erstwhile allies, military and economic...” (Pempel: 165).

The Occupation favored economic progress over democratic reforms when they chose to leave intact much of the pre-war bureaucracy. Robert Hall, an Educational Reorganization Office during the Occupation, earned a Ph.D. in Education at Columbia after the war. Regarding the return of prewar bureaucrats in charge of education he wrote: “The Allied Powers, and the Japanese people, dare not preserve so dangerous a tool for the manipulation of the schools and the thought of the nation” (Hall 1949a: 292). About the Occupa-

tion treatment of the bureaucracy he noted that:

One of the most serious mistakes which Occupation officials at the time made was that of allowing their own position as political rulers to betray them into an underestimation of the sagacity of the docile and apparently naïve Japanese with whom they worked. The Japanese were experienced bureaucrats and were quite appreciative of the mistakes the Occupation bureaucracy made... (Hall 1949a: 478).

Former Prime Minister Nakasone, himself a wartime government official, confirmed the pre- to post-war bureaucratic continuity in a 1998 article. “In the aftermath of World War II, Japan’s bureaucrats, who had previously answered directly to the Emperor, became civil servants and were expected to look to elected government figures for direction” (Nakasone 1998: 41).

Maruyama Masao’s 1950’s comments written during the war’s aftermath seemed to question how much power was actually in the hands of the newly elected government figures.

...a revolution ‘from without’ and ‘from above’ has a fundamental limitation. It is popularly regarded as an open secret nowadays that the present leaders in politics and business have practically the same ideologies and basis of power as the pre-war politicians and businessmen... (and) are getting instructions and advice from them behind the scenes.” (Maruyama 1950: 24).

Victory in Defeat: Shintô Finds Religion

In his 1947 memoirs, Truman’s Secretary of State, James Byrnes, wrote of the difficulty of reforming a Japan that had suffered under years of ultra-nationalism and Imperial Shintô. “The spiritual disarmament of a people is a much more difficult task than their physical disarmament. To instill the democratic content of the individual in the Japanese requires a social revolution ... accomplished permanently only if we make certain that a whole new generation of Japanese is educated in accordance with this democratic ideal” (Byrnes: 225).

In the years leading to war, Imperial Shintô had achieved the functional equivalent of religion for many Japanese. As such, the Occupation felt its exercise was a decision best left up to the individual. But this concept was one rooted in the American premise (evidenced in the U.S. constitution) that there exists a separation of religion and State. The modernization of Japan had been accomplished under the concept and socialization of *saisei itchi* (unity of government and religion) where the norm was a respect for the Imperial Way (*Kôdô*) and The Way of the Subject (*shinmin no michi*). Democratic individualism was the foreign element that had been introduced. Simply declaring a separation of religion and State did not make it so.

Since Meiji, differences between the orientations of Folk Shintô and Imperial Shintô had become blurred. Folk Shintô had been exploited to harness its power of national acceptance and local presence for purposes of national unification as eventually expressed in State Shintô. But with the Emperor serving as the political head of state, as well as head of the Shintô myth, politics merged with religion, culminating in a theocracy. Imperial Shintô became the “unofficial” State

Religion embodying political extremism with the fervor of religion.

To ban Shintô entirely would have been unfair to those who found value in the traditions of Folk Shintô; the *matsuri* (a festival celebrating life) at local Shintô shrines and *harae* rituals (rites of purification) were established customs in Japan. But if indeed the Emperor was the embodiment of Shintô, his presence as head of State merged religion and State. Thus SCAP erred when it applied a “Western” concept of religious freedom together with “separation of church and state” as it applied to State Shintô.

The involvement of the Emperor brought politics into any form of Shintô. The Occupation avoided individual infringement of religious freedom and attempted to separate “church and state” by instructing the Japanese government to stop any support, participation, or sponsorship of Shintô. This ban also extended to the educational system that was ordered to stop the dissemination of Shintô ideology through the schools in 1945.

Writing in 1949, Robert Hall mentions that in the early summer of 1945 in SWNCC (State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee) directives, together with introduction of democratic principles, religious freedom was stressed. The “Initial Post-Surrender Policy” August 29, 1945 document did not specifically mention Shintô, and a further SCAP Directive AG350 (October 22, 1945) deleted all reference to Shintô on the grounds that the Potsdam Declaration had specifically guaranteed the establishment of freedom of religion. (Hall 1949a: 72).

In Kyoko Inoues’ book *MacArthur’s Japanese Constitution*, transcripts reveal that during the parliamentary debate on the MacArthur Constitution occurring between June – September 1946, members of Parliament were concerned about what would become of the status of Shintô under the new constitution. In response to a question regarding the status of shrines, Minister of Education Tanaka Kotaro said that until recently the government’s official position had treated the shrines as non-religious institutions. This followed from prewar government policy that classified State Shintô as “non-religious,” thereby upholding the Meiji Constitution’s guarantee of religious freedom.

Tanaka went on to say, “following the spirit of the Potsdam Proclamation, and as required by the GHQ directive, shrines and the state have been separated. Therefore shrines are now being treated as religious corporation” (Inoue 1991: 138). It appears that Tanaka’s position was that the Occupation edict of religious freedom would apply to both “non-religious” State Shintô, as well as Folk Shintô. This would mean that the Emperor’s Shintô would receive the same protection as Folk Shintô.

Hall’s comments on State Shintô as religion, taken from his 1949 study of the Japanese Ministry of Education’s 1937 publication *Kokutai no Hongi*, may have mirrored Occupation concerns about religious status.

But if it were a religion, however repugnant, it had to be granted the same protection accorded other religions. (p. 41).
... How could the masses of the Japanese people be delivered from the ideological bondage and financial burden of state

Shintô without violating the personal religious liberties of the millions who apparently held this philosophy as a religious faith? Could an attack be made on a pernicious ideology without religious persecution?” (Hall 1949c: 45).

The Shintô prevalent at the time of the Occupation was the conclusion of a phenomenon that had developed for political reasons under imperial Japan, becoming the state religion for political control. As Holton concluded in his 1922 study, “the official cult of the Shintô Shrines is the state religion of modern Japan. Shintô must be classified as genuine religion. ... it is also a religion to which the government, actuated by political motives, accords special protection and support” (Holton 1922: 299). Being a political manifestation with State support, it conflicted with the Occupation’s goals in matters of separation of religion and State. The Occupation’s reluctance to ban State Shintô gave it continued legitimacy into the postwar era, a position that a tool of the Imperial Kokutai System should not have received.

The Occupation avoided what may have been construed as religious persecution to those followers of Shintô, either State or Folk. The October 8, 1945 military newspaper “Stars and Stripes” proclaimed in bold letters “Shintôism Will be Eliminated as Jap State Religion.” The article went on to clarify that any policy “will not affect Shintôism in so far as it is a religion of individual Japanese” (*Stars & Stripes* 1945a).

MacArthur’s directive of December 15, 1945 (SCAP Directive entitled “Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control, and Dissemination of State Shintô”) attempted to separate state and religion. The December 17 issue of *Stars and Stripes* summarized this policy in an article called “SCAP Hits Core of State Shintôism,” detailing how free worship was to be cultivated, with a SCAP directive putting a stop to state financial support of, or participation in Shintô, and stopping its dissemination in the educational system, thus allowing Japanese “for the first time in 75 years ... to doubt publicly the deity of the Emperor.” The article explained that “State Shintô had corrupted a religious form that had been observed for many centuries,” and “Though the Emperor remains the spiritual head of the Shintô sect, he will no longer be able to visit shrines as part of a state function...but he will be allowed to visit the shrine as a private citizen” (*Stars & Stripes* 1945b).

As long as the emperor was the spiritual head of Imperial Shintô, he embodied the unification of religion and State, a concept contrary to the goals of the Americans. Hirohito was able to de-politicize himself to the satisfaction of MacArthur and his Occupation. Through his “Imperial Rescript Denying his Divinity,” of January 1, 1946, he obtained the status of an “individual private citizen”, broke the bonds of church and State, and deflected the possibility of further persecution against Shintô. Drafted by GHQ with translations and revisions by the cabinet and court (Bix 2001: 561), the proclamation allowed MacArthur to protect Hirohito from individual wartime responsibility and persecution, in return receiving the Emperor’s support in the reformation and democratization of Japan. Courtney Whitney, one of MacArthur’s top aides, wrote in 1956 of this occasion:

In a directive issued November 1945, MacArthur ordered state subsidization of Shintôism to cease. And on New Year's Day 1946 he received an unexpected assist from the Emperor, who voluntarily and publicly renounced the concept of his own divinity. ... MacArthur was doubly gratified because of the completely voluntary nature of the Emperor's action. ... Thereafter, in accordance with his principle of religious freedom, MacArthur permitted Shintô priests to continue their teachings, so long as church and state were separated (Whitney 1956:275).

Whitney writes that through this action MacArthur became one of the Emperor's chief supporters, even though the British and Russian allies wanted to include him in the lot to be tried as war criminals. "MacArthur stoutly resisted such efforts," advising Washington "he would need at least one million reinforcements should such action be taken," and "even more, the Emperor from the start became MacArthur's chief ally in the spiritual regeneration of Japan" (Whitney: 284).

By renouncing his divinity, Hirohito "officially" removed himself as theocratic agent of Shintô, satisfying the religious and political element of Occupation policy, with more aggressive persecution of State Shintô being cut short. In spite of the "official Rescript" of denial, to millions of Japanese indoctrinated in the post-Meiji imperial era, the Emperor was still a living kami central to their belief. To these the Emperor was a savior who had stopped the militarists and terminated the war. To MacArthur he was a tool to help in postwar rehabilitation. With Hirohito's survival the preservation of the chain from Imperial Japan to Democratic Japan was allowed to proceed unbroken. "Thus, at the very beginning of the Occupation the Japanese defensive strategy for protecting the kokutai and MacArthur's Occupation strategy coincided (Bix 2001: 545).

As pointed out in Kyoko Inoue's *MacArthur's Japanese Constitution*, instead of terminating the roots of Japanese ultra-nationalism (State Shintô), Hirohito's denunciation allowed these roots authority and eventual protection under the new constitution. The difference and separation between ordinary Shintô, spiritual in origin (*kyôha Shintô*) and shrine Shintô, political in function (*Jinja Shintô*) was blurred and confused (Inoue 1991: 126).

Expressing realization of the religious aberration that had been wrought upon Japan, the Kyoto philosopher Tanabe Hajime wrote in a letter dated August 27, 1945: "May there not possibly come a time when religion will be sought for the sake of people's spiritual peace and enlightenment? If so, it would signal that the period of repentance for the entire Japanese people had begun" (Tanabe 1986: xxxviii).

Yamato Spirit or Shintô Myth

From Meiji into the modern era, from feudalism to economic powerhouse, Japan has been unique as an Asian country able to compete head on with the Western powers. In the early days of modernization the ancient myths of *Yamato Damashii*, Japanese Soul or Spirit, uniquely Japanese, were used in the political modernization process to explain the unexplainable pace of material success, giving a sacred

context for the legitimacy for the new Meiji regime and setting the stage for Imperial Shintô.

The defeat of 1945 offered the opportunity to expunge both the legitimacy and myth of State Shintô. Instead the Allies and the Japanese civilian government endeavored to posit a lack of responsibility in the Emperor, blaming the war bureaucracy and gangster militarists (Dower 1999: 278) while not indicting the man in whose name the war was fought (Dower: 28). A new constitution established the Emperor as the symbol of the State, affording him the status and protection of the first eight Articles. The people received fundamental rights such as freedom of thought (Article 19), freedom of religion and prohibition on the State granting privileges or political authority to any organization (Article 20), freedom of speech (Article 21), and prohibition on the State expending public monies for the benefit of any religious institution (Article 89).

For some this freedom gave rise to a new form of deep contemplation that expressed apprehension about what had been misplaced and forgotten during the years State Shintô reigned. Japan's 1994 Nobel Prize winner Kenzaburô Ôe offers his opinion of the "Yamato Spirit" in his 1995 book *Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself*. He compares the war tainted "*Yamato Damashii*" with the same term referred to by Murasaki Shikibu in the world famous 11th century novel *Tale of Genji*. Ôe states that whereas Murasaki referred "to nothing more than a particular sensibility inherent in her fellow countrymen," not unlike "what Aristotle calls '*sensus communis*,' that is, a shared sensibility," the "Yamato spirit" after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was used to unify the "people's cultural consciousness in the interests of creating a modern state...by stressing the absolute nature of the Japanese culture, with the Emperor as its central feature." The Yamato spirit assumed a role as a slogan for imperialist Japan (Ôe 1995: 18-19).

Ôe blames imperial absolutism, "which showed none of the tolerance and sensitivity that characterized the spirit to which Genji was referring." He writes, "I know firsthand about such fanaticism, since it was instilled in me as a child. Like everyone else at that time, I was made to believe this mad conviction so alien to the 'Yamato spirit' of Murasaki Shikibu" (Ôe: 20).

Acknowledging a wide range of opinions among Japanese today regarding the emperor system, Ôe expressed, "it is alarming to see it regaining any popular support, for it has the kind of power that tends to override differing views" (Ôe: 37). He raises an alarm regarding popular support for the old Meiji constitution, "which posited an absolute power transcending the principle of democracy" (Ôe: 37). If the support became more than mere nostalgia it could overcome "the determination we made in the post-war ruins of our collapsed effort at modernization—that determination of ours to establish the concept of universal humanity" (Ôe: 120). The universal humanity that Ôe speaks of is the spirit of tolerance and sensitivity that existed in the past, prior to imperial absolutism. Jesuit brother Kakishi Kadokawa refers to this original spirit in his 1993 essay, and hopes that modern Shintô is able to return to it.

In order to rid themselves of that narrow racism and to gain a world vision, Shintōists must go back to the original Kami-experience and deepen the experience of "infinite life," broaden it and discover that the radical formative power they come to know there continues to form not only Japan but all the world and all its races. ... they will surely come to see that men who are formed by that selfsame fundamental power are all brothers and that the peoples of the earth form one global community (Kadowaki 1993: 89).

It is in this spirit that a contemporary Japanese patriotism should be built, based on the tolerance that exists in the accommodation of Buddhism and the adaptability of Folk Shintō, predicated on an understanding of the role Imperial Shintō played in Japan's modernization. This would indeed be a virtue from which the world could learn.

Conclusion

A glimmer of hope for democratic government existed at the start of Meiji. The rise of State Shintō and the invention of the Imperial Myth in Japan's modernization exploited the rights of the people to participate in their government and diminished this hope. Even in defeat a privileged and political status was given to the Emperor, validated by continued inclusion in the postwar constitution. As seen in the galleries of Yasukuni's museum, special interests still enamored by the privileged position afforded the Emperor continue to exert effort to vindicate the wartime actions of the Empire.

With the Emperor's continued inclusion in the first eight articles of the Japanese Constitution, his political prerogative is extended into future generations, blurring the separation of religion and State. As evidenced by Yasukuni, this has allowed political incursions into religious expression, mocking the intent of the constitution.

At the beginning of 21st century, almost sixty years after the institution of the "MacArthur" Constitution, Japan's political parties have focused on the need to re-examine the postwar constitution. Article 9, which renounced war and the right to use force to settle disputes, receives the bulk of attention in the United States. Inherent in any discussion of Japan's reasserting itself militarily is the question of Japan's past imperial aggression and the potential for renewed political extremism.

With the political status afforded the Emperor under the current constitution this concern remains valid. A revision removing mention of the Emperor from the constitution would for the first time in Japan's modern period provide constitutional detachment between Emperor and State, fulfilling the mandated separation of religion and state. Then, any modification of Article 9 in the future should be seen in the light of Japan's right as a sovereign nation to defend itself, detached from any imperial legacy. While the Emperor would continue to hold historical and cultural importance, being excised from the constitution would allow Japan to exercise positive political authority for the region commensurate to its economic power. It is hoped that its Asian neighbors would be mature enough to accept Japan as a democratic nation in the 21st century.

While Article 9 is foremost in thoughts among Western observers, expansion of democratic expression appears to be a more important consideration among Japanese citizens. John Nathan, in his recent book *Japan Unbound*, mentions a survey on constitutional amendment conducted by the *Yomiuri*, *Nikkei*, and *Mainichi* newspapers in the months August - September 2000. While the majority favored amendment, "the two thousand surveys indicated that amending Article 9 was not the most pressing concern. The majority of respondents wanted 'an amendment to allow citizens to vote directly for prime minister in a national election'" (Nathan 2004: 166).

If this survey represents a potential groundswell among Japanese electorate, for the first time in Japanese history the people are starting to demand the political privilege guaranteed them in the constitution. Direct elections on a national level would put a representative of the people at a level where action could be initiated, with the people being empowered by their democratic strength. It is time for Japan to express a new patriotism, proud of accomplishments but aware of past mistakes, ignoring the relics of Imperial Shintō as exhibited at Yasukuni and its Yūshūkan Museum.

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