

# The Meanings of Shintō<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The majority of Japanese people participate in both ‘Shintō 神道’ and ‘Buddhist’ occasions in the course of their lives, experiencing Shintō-Buddhist overlap in areas such as worship, pilgrimage, amulets and folk-religious practices and beliefs. It makes little analytical sense to regard Buddhism and Shintō as competing or separate religions. For this reason, some time ago I started to use the term ‘Shinddhism’ to describe the entwined traditions. My aim was to help my undergraduate students understand better the nature of mainstream Japanese religion.

This holistic representation of ‘Buddhism + Shintō = Shinddhism’ was at least an advance on the view that Buddhism and Shintō are two separate religions, between which Japanese people have in some way to choose. Such a misconception is perpetuated by widely-quoted statistics for separate Shintō and Buddhist adherence which add up to near double the Japanese population. However, the simple use of an English neologism such as ‘Shinddhism’ is not sufficient to resolve two serious problems affecting a proper characterisation of Shintō (and Buddhism) in the context of Japanese religion. These problems are:

- a) That the term ‘Shintō’ has no agreed meaning.
- b) That the term ‘religion’ is problematic in the Japanese context, particularly when used in relation to Shintō.

These are hardly new observations, but in this paper I am not going to indulge in a postmodern-ish methodological lament about the inadequacy of any and all categories and definitions in Religious Studies. My purpose is to enquire into the meanings of ‘Shintō’.

## 2. What is Shintō?

A few years ago I was asked by the Curzon Press to write an introduction to Shintō in the form of a reference dictionary.<sup>2</sup> I was attracted to this project for a number of reasons which are only worth spelling out here because I suspect that they may be shared by others interested in understanding the nature of religion in East Asia, and particularly Japan.

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1 The initial version of this paper was presented at the XVII International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions in Mexico City, 1995.

2 Published as Brian BOCKING, *A Popular Dictionary of Shintō* (London: Curzon Press, 1996).

Firstly, I felt that an accessible and reasonably objective ‘Religious Studies’ account of Shintō was needed. Despite the growth of interest in Eastern religions generally and the explosion of interest in Japan and Japanese culture from the 1980s onwards, English language books devoted to Shintō have been few and far between, especially in comparison with the steady stream of books and articles concerned with Buddhism (particularly Zen) and with the ‘new religions’ of Japan. When in the late 1970s I started teaching in the UK about Japanese religions there were only two post-war books on Shintō in print which seemed at all suitable for students of religion. One was Ono Sokyō’s *Shintō, the Kami Way*<sup>3</sup>, a brief and somewhat idealised presentation of Shintō which has been reprinting now for nearly forty years. The other was the French scholar Jean Herbert’s *Shintō: At the Fountainhead of Japan*<sup>4</sup>, a substantial but unwieldy work packed with detail but lacking any kind of critical perspective. Neither book, for example, seriously addressed the radical transformations of Shintō following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (a lacuna subsequently first filled by Helen Hardacre’s excellent *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988*<sup>5</sup> to which I will return). Even now, some popular introductions to Shintō continue to present a naive view of Shintō, reflecting aspects of the ideology of pre-war Japanese nationalism such as that Shintō is the ancient, unchanging indigenous religion of Japan.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, I wanted an opportunity to clarify some problems in the understanding of Shintō which had remained unresolved in my own mind for too long. The main issue for me was simply, what *is* Shintō? I understood that the modern idea of Shintō as a national religious tradition separate from Buddhism could be traced to the Meiji Restoration, but it was not clear to me how pre-Meiji Shintō should be characterised. So much of Japanese tradition was invented, modernised or refashioned beyond recognition in the Meiji period that there is good reason to ask if ‘Shintō’ as we know it now, existed at all before then. Associated with this problem were questions about Shintō’s historical origins and its relationships with rather better-defined historical religious traditions such as Buddhism and Confucianism on the one hand, and folk traditions of Japan and East Asia on the other. These are the staple concerns of contemporary Shintō Studies.<sup>7</sup>

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3 ONO Sokyō, *Shintō: The Kami Way* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle & Co., 1962).

4 JEAN HERBERT, *Shintō: At the Fountainhead of Japan* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967).

5 HELEN HARDACRE, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988* (hereafter *Shintō and State*) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

6 Meiji 明治 ideologues successfully promulgated the view that Shintō is Japan’s ancient and unchanging indigenous religion. This idealised view seemingly continues to serve the needs of European ‘orientalism’. See e.g. “Shintōism” in the recent anthology by Ian MARKHAM, ed., *A World Religions Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Aimed at school and undergraduate audiences, the volume uncritically reproduces the prewar image of Shintō. See also the discussion of Hirai below

7 See for example the Introduction to JOHN BREEN and MARK TEEUWEN, eds., *Shinto in History. Ways of the Kami* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000).

Thirdly, I was aware that how we approach, understand and most importantly teach about Shintō is not an issue of merely ‘academic’ significance. The political aspect of Shintō has often been ignored by Western writers on Japanese religion. This was so even in the pre-1940s heyday of ‘state Shintō’<sup>8</sup> but there is a continuing debate inside and outside Japan about Shintō’s relationship to Japanese nationalism and national identity, a debate which has not only domestic but also international ramifications because of the global economic power wielded by today’s Japan. Shintō is currently being promoted outside Japan by elements of the Shintō establishment as an environmentally-conscious tradition with a special regard for nature and with a universalist potential,<sup>9</sup> rather than as a tradition which is narrowly Japanese. In November 1994 a conference organised by the newly founded International Shintō Foundation was held at London University (SOAS: The School of Oriental and African Studies) on the theme of ‘Shintō and Japanese Culture’. The symposium began with an address by Carmen Blacker, the distinguished scholar of Japanese religions and folklore, who drew a distinction between Shintō proper, which is concerned with the holiness of nature, and the ‘aberrant’ nationalist Shintō of the pre-war period. Dr. Blacker argued that a renewed interest in Shintō should not be interpreted as a revival of ultranationalism. Now, there is no doubt that Shintō can be understood in part as a form of paganism or nature religion which has the potential to provide, in Blacker’s phrase the “inviolable metaphor for nature” lacking in much monotheistic Western religion. Even so, the Japanese government (LDP) has tried on at least five occasions in the post-war decades in the face of domestic and international protests to secure parliamentary approval for state patronage of the Yasukuni shrine in central Tokyo.<sup>10</sup> Yasukuni Jinja 靖國神社 is probably the best-known Shintō shrine in Japan. It forms the symbolic apex of the national network of prefectural *gokoku* 護國 (nation-protecting) shrines for the war dead and was built early in the Meiji period (1868-1912) for the novel purpose of enshrining, by non-Buddhist rites, the spirits of soldiers killed in battle. Initially the intention was to memorialise the contribution of those who had fallen on the side of the victors in the civil wars which paved the way for the modernising Meiji government. Subsequently the spirits of millions of military personnel killed in Japan’s international conflicts have been enshrined and since the 1970s these have included a number of ‘class A’ convicted war criminals from World War II.<sup>11</sup> To ignore the current political dimension of Shintō by representing institutions such as the Yasukuni shrine as peripheral to ‘Shintō’ would itself be a

8 On this issue see Michael PYE, “Shintō and the Typology of Religion” (hereafter “Typology”), *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 1.2, (1989), 189 and the same author’s “Diversions in the Interpretation of Shintō”, *Religion* 11.1, (1981), 61-74.

9 The contemporary argument that Shintō has universalistic traits is considered and discounted by PYE in “Typology”, 193.

10 For an official introduction visit the URL <http://www.yasukuni.or.jp>

11 See Klaus ANTONI, “Yasukuni Jinja and Folk Religion”, in *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*, ed. by Mark MULLINS, SHIMAZONO Susumu and Paul SWANSON (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993) for the interesting argument that the Yasukuni shrine functions also to protect Japan *from* the potentially vengeful spirits of the war-dead.

political act, however well-intentioned. Any account of Shintō as a whole must surely address such deep contradictions.

### 3. Challenging the ‘standard’ view of Shintō

An account of Shintō that is found with minor variations in many popular introductions to Japanese culture and history runs somewhat as follows.

Shintō is an ancient tradition indigenous to Japan based on shrine-worship and devotion to the ubiquitous *kami* 神 (spirits, gods). Originally nameless, it adopted the name ‘Shintō’ only to distinguish itself from the newly introduced Buddhism. The pre-eminent Shintō *kami* is the ‘Sun Goddess’ Amaterasu 天照, ancestral deity of the Imperial house. Shintō was strong enough to survive the influx of Buddhism and Chinese culture around the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Indeed, it was the innate Shintō mentality of the Japanese which throughout history has helped decide which elements of ‘foreign’ culture and religion were appropriate to Japan and which were to be rejected. Despite various ups and downs, Shintō maintained a working relationship with Buddhism over many centuries up to the present. This was possible because Buddhism and Shintō functioned, with some overlap of course, in different areas of human life. To borrow a Japanese expression, one is ‘born Shintō but dies Buddhist’<sup>12</sup>. Shintō (according to this understanding) deals with life, growth, food, dance and song, fertility, nature, festivals, prosperity, spirits and in general the things that make up this world, whereas Buddhism, originally a foreign religion which became quite Japanese over the centuries, is preoccupied with more sombre and reflective concerns such as death, funerals, doctrines, iconography, the afterlife, ancestors and meditation. In the Meiji Restoration of 1868 Shintō too was ‘restored’ to its ancient rightful position above Buddhism and other foreign religions. Although the true character of Shintō was temporarily eclipsed by politics and ultranationalism in the 1930s and 1940s – an aberrant period about which the less said the better – Shintō remains fundamental to Japanese culture and is expressed through local and national shrine festivals, rites of purification and a love of nature and harmony (and so on ...)

This is, for example, the portrait of Shintō offered by the Shintō scholar-priest Hirai Naofusa<sup>13</sup> in the first of three different ‘Shintō approaches’ subsequently analysed by Breen and Teeuwen in the introduction to *Shinto in History*.<sup>14</sup> It is the type of account vigorously promoted since the Meiji period by Shintō authorities and scholars in Japan, such as those associated with the Jinja Honchō

12 “Born Shintō...” “Die Buddhist...” are used as titles for the ‘Shintō’ and ‘Buddhism’ chapters in Ian READER, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (London: Macmillan, 1991). The phrase seems to be recent and probably dates from 1970’s newspaper reports on Japanese religion (personal communication from Ian Reader).

13 For example, Hirai writes in the *Encyclopedia Britannica (EB)* on Shintō: “The term Shintō, in its proper historical usage, does not encompass the earliest manifestations of Japanese religion. It does not appear in the literature until the latter part of the 6th century of the Western era. In its more remote states of development Shintō as a system appears to have been nameless. The designation came into existence after the introduction of Buddhism into Japan and was evidently created in order to distinguish the Way of Kami from the Way of the Buddhist Law.” *EB CD-ROM 1997*, “Shintō”.

14 BREEN and TEEUWEN, *Shinto in History*.

神社本庁 ('Shrine HQ')<sup>15</sup> and the Shintō Kokugakuin 國學院 and Kogakkan 皇學館 universities. Hirai for example identifies three strands of Shintō: 'shrine Shintō', 'sect Shintō' and 'folk Shintō', of which shrine Shintō has existed throughout history as a national cult and unites the other two aspects of Shintō. According to Hirai, the history of Shintō after its initial domination by Buddhism and Chinese thought fifteen hundred years ago was marked by an increasing independence of the indigenous tradition from Buddhism and Confucianism, leading eventually in the modern period to a full recovery of ancient concerns such as emperor veneration and the mystical power of creation.<sup>16</sup>

A second approach to Shintō is represented by the anthropologist Hori Ichirō. Hori<sup>17</sup> agrees with Hirai that there is a distinctive and continuous 'religious entity' which can be discerned through Japanese history, but he identifies this more with folk religion than with Shintō (or indeed Buddhism, Taoism or any separate religious tradition). Characteristic of this Japanese 'religious entity' is its propensity to change and develop, absorbing new influences from a variety of indigenous and overseas traditions. In other words, for Hori, there is a basic, continuing form of Japanese religiosity but it cannot be identified simply with what we now call Shintō, nor is it purely Japanese since it contains much that is universal, found in folk and popular religion elsewhere.

A third approach is that of the historian Kuroda Toshio who in an important 1981 article entitled "Shintō in the History of Japanese Religion"<sup>18</sup> pointed out that the term 'Shintō' (= Chinese *shendao*) meant in the past something quite different from the centralised system of shrine-based kami-worship and mythology focusing on the imperial family that is meant by 'Shintō' today. For example, 'shintō' in the 8th century *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicle of Japan) may have meant either non-Buddhist popular beliefs in general or possibly Taoism. Terms usually regarded as central to Shintō such as *tennō* 天皇 (emperor), *daiwa* 大和 (=Yamato, the centre of Japan), *jingū* 神宮 (the shrine of Amaterasu 天照 at Ise 伊勢) and *naikū* 内宮 and *gekū* 外宮 (the inner and outer shrines of Ise respectively) were Taoist.

Kuroda's approach, which radically opposed the 'standard' account offered by Hirai and others, deconstructed completely the notion of a continuous archaic tradition of Shintō. This, Kuroda claimed, was no more than a "ghost image" conjured up by post-Meiji Shintō apologists. Kuroda is critical even of Hori Ichirō for proposing any kind of continuous intuitive native religious tradition,

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15 Jinja Honchō means "Shrine HQ" and to the Japanese ear has governmental connotations. However, the official English translation of Jinja Honchō is invariably given as "Association of Shintō Shrines". This is an example of the way in which official Shintō appears differently inside and outside Japan.

16 BREEN and TEEUWEN, "Introduction: Shintō Past and Present", in BREEN and TEEUWEN, eds., *Shinto in History*.

17 See HORI Ichirō, *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*, ed. by Joseph KITAGAWA and Alan MILLER (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968).

18 KURODA Toshio, "Shintō in the History of Japanese Religion", *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7.1, (1981), 1-21 (hereafter "Shintō"). Reprinted in MULLINS et al., eds., *Religion and Society*, 7-30.

even if not known under the name of Shintō.<sup>19</sup> For Kuroda, the real context within which changes in popular beliefs and practices including those relating to *kami* occurred was the sophisticated, self-aware and indisputably imported medieval Buddhist *kenmitsu* 顯密 (exoteric/esoteric) tradition, developed and maintained principally by the Tendai and Shingon schools. *Kenmitsu* provided the theoretical basis, through ideas such as *honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹 (real essence-trace manifestation) and *hongaku* 本覺 (innate enlightenment)<sup>20</sup> for the development of both Yoshida Shintō 吉田神道 and Ise (Watarai 渡會) Shintō 伊勢神道 teachings and practices as sectarian movements. These may be described retrospectively as ‘Shintō’ schools but in reality they were, on Kuroda’s reading, esoteric lineages of *kenmitsu* Buddhism which happened to focus on shrines. Such sectarian developments, located within a broadly Buddhist world-view, led much later to the idea that Shintō might be seen as a separate, non-Buddhist teaching.<sup>21</sup>

The strength of Kuroda’s argument is that it dissolves the notion of a ‘Shintō’ tradition which is *both* continuous *and* truly indigenous. Its weakness is that it seems unable to account for the apparent continuity of at least some aspects of shrine-based, *kami*-centred ritual activity attested to not only by *kokugaku* 國學 (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century ‘National Learning’) scholars and post-Meiji Shintō nationalists, but also by the findings of modern historical research.<sup>22</sup> Even if many of the features of the Japanese religious landscape now classified as ‘Shintō’ were originally imported, to deny them ‘indigenous’ status when they have persisted unconscious of their origins for more than a thousand years is surely nothing but inverted racism. How long does it take for a cultural element which was originally ‘Indian’ or ‘Chinese’ to become ‘Japanese’, and what standard of indigenous purity would ever satisfy someone who adopts Kuroda’s position?

For example, which of the following is more important? That the Ise shrines derive their architectural style from Chinese or Polynesian storehouses and therefore had ‘foreign’ origins, or that the ceremonial rebuilding of the Ise shrines has in fact taken place at Ise about every twenty years, of course with interruptions, since time immemorial? Many of Japan’s major shrines, like Ise, have existed for more than a thousand years. Or consider the idea of the *ujiko-ujigami*; that a community member is a “child of the *kami*” (*ujiko* 氏子) of that community’s protective deity (*ujigami* 氏神). Before 1871 it had been the practice to designate only high-status or long-standing members of a community as *ujiko* of that community’s *ujigami* but the introduction of universal *ujiko* status<sup>23</sup>

19 KURODA, “Shintō”, 2.

20 KURODA, “Historical Consciousness and *Hon-jaku* Philosophy in the Medieval Period on Mount Hiei”, in *The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture*, ed. by George TANABE (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1989) (hereafter “Historical Consciousness”). Also KURODA, “Shintō”, 12f.

21 KURODA, “Shintō”, 11ff.

22 See e.g. Mark TEEUWEN’s doubts about Kuroda’s thesis in relation to Watarai Shintō in *Watarai Shintō: An Intellectual History of the Outer Shrine in Ise* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996), 402f.

23 HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 83, 59. The initial scheme for ‘shrine registration’ (*ujiko shir-*

was arguably more compatible with the character of ancient, locally-based *kami*-worship than the ‘traditional’ compulsory registration at Buddhist temples introduced a mere two hundred years earlier to help suppress Christianity.

Against these examples of traditions perhaps rather revived than reinvented, it is of course possible to bring a multitude of counter-examples lending support to Kuroda’s radical scepticism about a tradition of ‘Shintō’. A number of Japan’s most significant Shintō shrines are post-Meiji and thousands of smaller ones were ‘merged’ (i.e. destroyed or completely changed in character) in the early 1900s. The most blatant example of disruption of tradition is that during the Meiji Restoration long-established Buddhist-Shintō cultic centres, including great temple-shrine ‘multiplexes’ such as Kasuga 春日<sup>24</sup> were brutally ‘separated’ by government decree from 1868 onwards in the process known as *shinbutsu bunri* 神佛分離 or “the dissociation of *kami* and Buddhas”. This ‘cleansing’ of ancient *kenmitsu*-style cultic centres required a judgement to be made (sometimes by crowds of hooligans) about what was Buddhist and what was not. This did not mean that the elements identified and separated out as ‘non-Buddhist’ somehow formed a ready-made and coherent system of faith and practice which could be dubbed ‘Shintō’. In fact the dissociation of *kami* and Buddhas<sup>25</sup> is best seen as two separate processes. First was the subjugation (under the slogan *haibutsu kishaku* 廢佛毀釋 ‘Destroy the Buddha! Kill Śākyamuni!’) of Tokugawa Buddhist institutions, many of them ancient shrine-temple complexes (*jisha* 寺社) and including the great *yamabushi* 山伏 or mountain-religion centres. Second was the initially erratic but ultimately thoroughgoing imposition of a new Meiji civic religious system which came to be called Shintō, whose structure eventually included shrines, central and local government administration, schools and religious sects of every kind.

That ‘Shintō’ in the sense of ‘shrine-based ritual’ was radically transformed as a consequence of the Meiji restoration cannot be in doubt. Before the Meiji period there were around 170,000 shrines and temples in Japan. Most shrines formed part of a temple-shrine complex governed by Buddhist clergy. Even in and around Ise, which in theory was a Buddhism-free zone, there were three hundred Buddhist temples.<sup>26</sup> ‘Shintō’ ideas and practices were thoroughly integrated with Buddhism. The best evidence of this is that the National Learning (*kokugaku*) movement was founded on the claim that they should not be. If by ‘Shintō’ we now mean a tradition separate from Buddhism, then modern Shintō was indeed imagined and envisioned by National Learning scholars and activists and implemented in the Meiji period. But the new Shintō was not instantly ‘restored’ by *kokugaku* visionaries like Fukuba Bisei based in the newly-created

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*abe* 氏子調) was abandoned in 1873 but formal *ujiko* (parishioner) status remained an element of local government up to 1945 (ibid., 29).

24 Allan G. GRAPARD, *The Protocol of the Gods: a study of the Kasuga cult in Japanese history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), esp. chapter 5.

25 Allan GRAPARD, “Japan’s Ignored Cultural Revolution”, *History of Religions* 23.3, (1984), 240-265, esp. 240-247.

26 HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 14.

Department of Divinity (and rapidly marginalised for being too backward-looking by the Meiji oligarchy).<sup>27</sup> In practice it was institutionalised piecemeal over decades, introduced opportunistically by a modernising government whose thinking was influenced by, but by no means controlled by ‘National Learning’ ideas. The Meiji government used such ideas to break the power of Buddhism, as part of its overall programme to uproot Tokugawa feudal institutions, but the ‘Shintō’ teachings promulgated nationwide in the early Meiji period under the label of ‘Taikyō’ 大教 or ‘Great Teaching’ were not ancient and by no means pure *kokugaku*. They were designed for a nineteenth-century nation in the process of creating itself in the image of the Western powers. The teachings of the ‘Great Promulgation Campaign’ (*taikyō senpu undō* 大教宣布運動) of 1870-1884 included not only loyalty and devotion to the ‘restored’ emperor but also exhortations to pay taxes and import Western knowledge and culture.<sup>28</sup> Taikyō, or Shintō as it became known, was not traditional *kenmitsu* belief, but neither was it the barbarian-expelling ‘pure’ Shintō envisaged by the champions of National Learning.

#### 4. Shintō since 1945

It is now over fifty years since Japan’s defeat in the Pacific war. That defeat led to a six-year occupation by a foreign, mainly American administration which undertook root and branch reforms of Japan’s religious laws. New religious legislation enshrined in the post-war Constitution was aimed particularly at ‘state Shintō’ (*kokka Shintō* 國家神道), understood by the occupation authorities as a government-sponsored quasi-religious system that, in emphasising ritual obedience to the divine emperor, had fostered ultranationalism and an undemocratic ethic of civil obedience. The occupying forces (SCAP) first redefined Shintō as a religion and then wrote into the new constitution US-style clauses on separation of church and state and protection of religious freedom intended to prevent a recurrence of the pre-war alliance between Shintō and the state.

In theory, ‘state Shintō’ would be destroyed by these reforms. However, despite the anxieties of Shintō authorities early in the Occupation, very little destruction of Shintō resources occurred. Under the terms of the 1945 Shintō Directive a number of public war memorials which had attracted ultranationalist sentiments were removed, but these were not Shintō shrines as such.<sup>29</sup> Devotional pictures of the Emperor and copies of the Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) were eliminated from the nation’s schools, in which they had been reverently enshrined since October 1890. Ultranationalist ethics

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 42ff.

<sup>29</sup> War memorials were often built in school playgrounds or similar public areas, not necessarily in shrines. Some partly took the place of local shrines removed after 1906 by ‘shrine merger’. See SAKURAI Haruo, “Tradition and Change in Local Community Shrines”, *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture (Tōhō Gakkai)* 51, (1987), 62-77.



textbooks such as *Kokutai no Hongi* 國体の本義 (Cardinal Principles of the National Entity) were also purged. However, Shintō shrines, including all significant national and prefectural shrines built by the government since the Meiji restoration of 1868 to further its policy aims, remained untouched. Along with other religious bodies, shrines were now denied national or local government funding but granted the same legal status as other voluntary religious bodies under the Religious Juridical Persons Law of 1951.

The post-war reforms dismantled some of the more extreme manifestations of 1940s ultranationalism, an ideology which had permeated all religious groups including Buddhist and Christian ones, and indeed every facet of Japanese society, mainly through the education system.<sup>30</sup> However, seen against the backdrop of the profound structural changes and ideological developments which had transformed 'traditional' Japanese religion in the 77 years since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it could be argued that the Occupation regime's religious reforms hardly scratched the surface of 'state Shintō'. The following features survived in some form:

1. The 'separation' of Shintō and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*) of 1868 which consciously dissociated Buddhism from *kami* beliefs and rituals. The separation was not reversed, though new syncretic movements developed.
2. Development of an administrative infrastructure which incorporated all shrines within a national hierarchy of shrines headed by the *Ise Jingū* 伊勢神宮, the ancestral shrine of the Imperial House. The government's role was largely taken over by *Jinja Honchō* which promotes the 'spiritual leadership of the Ise shrine'.
3. The extension of the status of *ujiko* or parishioner of both the Ise shrine and a local shrine to all citizens, in place of registration with a Buddhist temple. The sense of civic *ujiko* status remained, expressed in the felt obligation of local 'parishioners' to contribute to the shrine's upkeep.
4. Termination of the hereditary shrine priesthood tradition and its replacement by a centralised training and licensing system for Shintō priests. Training is (still) carried out through *Jinja Honchō* and the Shinto universities, if not through the Ministry of Education.
5. Construction of major national and prefectural shrines including the Yasukuni shrine and its associated *gokoku-jinja* 護國神社 (nation-protecting shrines for the war dead), the Meiji shrine and a number of branches of the Ise Jingū (called *Kōtai Jingū* 皇大神宮)<sup>31</sup> which coupled Shintō ritual with ideals of military adventure, self-sacrifice and divinisation of the war dead. The war dead remain enshrined, and Yasukuni Shrine is a major fo-

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30 I have discussed the dissemination of 'state Shintō' in more detail, and compared it with recent educational reforms in Britain, in Brian BOCKING, "Fundamental Rites? Religion, State, Education and the Invention of Sacred Heritage in post-Christian Britain and pre-War Japan", *Religion* 25, (1995), 227-247.

31 HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 62.

cus for Shinto supporters including major politicians while *gokoku* shrines receive tacit official support.

6. Extension of participation by Shintō priests in many areas of Japanese life including life-cycle and communal rituals previously performed by the household or by lay people. The expectation that Shinto priests will officiate at events such as weddings and new-build ceremonies remains.
7. The dismantling and removal by 'shrine merger' (*jinja gappei* 神社合併) of tens of thousands of long-established local shrines on the principle of 'one village one shrine'. Minor restoration of 'merged' shrines has occurred, but the shrine map of Japan remains essentially post-Meiji.
8. The dissemination of myths of imperial legitimacy which subordinated the Japanese people to the demands of the *kokutai* (national entity of Japan) and the leadership of a divine emperor. This is no longer taught as history in schools but often identified as an ancient element of 'Japaneseness'. The imperial family has not reverted to Shingon Buddhist rites.
9. Inculcation of the view that Shintō was 'not a religion' (*hi-shūkyō* 非宗教) but superior to religions, and that participation in Shintō rites was a matter of civic, not religious, duty. Despite the intentions of the new Constitution, the customary status of Shinto rites vis a vis religion is still ambiguous even in law, as successive cases have demonstrated.<sup>32</sup>

## 5. Approaches to Shintō: Michael Pye and Helen Hardacre

In the remainder of this paper I will consider two examples of approaches to the meanings of 'Shintō' and make some suggestions of my own about areas which might usefully be explored further. The approaches are those of Michael Pye in a paper entitled "Shintō and the Typology of Religion"<sup>33</sup> and Helen Hardacre in her book *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988*. Pye's paper is brief and theoretical while Hardacre's work is a more detailed and well-documented thematic and historical account. In an ideal world, Pye's theory of Shintō would fit Hardacre's history of modern Shintō.

With the general aim of refining comparative categories in the study of religions, Pye sets out in his article to identify a suitable descriptor for Shintō within the holistic typology of religions (among terms such as 'primal religion', 'salvation religion', 'great/little tradition' etc.). His goal is a term which does not lose or distort "the real spirit or character of Shintō".<sup>34</sup> Pye points out that any holistic consideration of Shintō must take account of three factors: firstly the difficulty of defining Shintō ("the nearer one comes to Shintō, the more difficult it is to grasp it in conceptual summary"), secondly the political or national import of Shintō ("it shares a common area with the set of values and symbols which to-

<sup>32</sup> See MULLINS et al., *Religion and Society*, 79.

<sup>33</sup> In *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 1.2, (1989), 186-195.

<sup>34</sup> PYE, "Typology", 187.

gether make up the Japanese national feeling or identity”) and finally recognition of Shintō’s “historical depth”. By historical depth Pye means not the mere fact of historical longevity but rather *a sense of history* within Shintō which he dates to the time of the *kokugaku* (National Learning) school. In other words, despite Shintō appearing to have the characteristics of a primal religion, modern participants in Shintō have at their disposal a relatively sophisticated awareness of Shintō as *deliberately* primal in character. In Pye’s words, those followers of Shintō who are historically sophisticated “are able to enjoy the rough, archaic elementariness of much of the religion while fully knowing that they do so from a historically advanced and adjusted standpoint”.

Pye describes the quality of religious awareness in ordinary primal religion as follows: it is socially inclusive within a defined geographical or kinship range; it celebrates as worthwhile (in Shintō’s case through *matsuri* 祭り, festivals) the ordinary processes of life such as conception and harvest; and it seeks to disarm disease and disaster by methods such as purification. In primal religion “ritual action linked to life-processes is regular and satisfying”. Pye concludes that in modern Japan we encounter in Shintō not primal religion but “adjusted primal religion”; that is, it embodies its own awareness of lost innocence. In the modern Shintō festival, says Pye, “there is a realisation that the celebration of primal value is our present responsibility ... for all its constructedness (and the construct, which is also a throw-away, is a regular feature of Japanese primal religion) this adjusted primal religion has, unlike the yearnings of pan-symbolists and structuralists [a reference to Eliade and Lévi-Strauss], a real relationship to its own history”.<sup>35</sup> Shintō has therefore retained its particularism (its identity with Japan) and can rightly be said to form a distinct, though not necessarily unique, category in the typology of religions.

Pye’s account raises at least two questions to which I shall return in section 6 below. First, what exactly does ‘adjusted’ mean? Since the question of how far modern Shintō represents either continuity or discontinuity with Japan’s real past is a key area of controversy in Shintō’s political dimension, does the notion of ‘adjustment’ (with its suggestion of change, but only a slight change) settle the argument about the indigenous and native character of modern Japanese Shintō, or does it perhaps deflect attention from this problem? Second, whilst Pye is undoubtedly right to be sceptical of the relentlessly ahistorical perspective of Eliade, might we not still consider the possibility that a Shintō festival may be understood by some of its Japanese participants as a re-enactment of events *in illo tempore*, if by that phrase we mean not a return to an *Eliadean* primordial time, but rather an indigenised (Sino-Japanese) *Confucian* sense of the recovery of original purity?

Helen Hardacre’s *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988* is an impeccably documented account of the complex relationships between different aspects of ‘Shintō’ and the national and local organs of the Japanese state following the Meiji Restoration. It is impossible to summarise the content here, but in terms of

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35 Ibid., 193.

‘approach’ to Shintō it is possible to identify two major perspectives. Quite evident in Hardacre’s discussion of contemporary issues such as the Yasukuni shrine question is her sympathy with democratic opposition to any resurgence of government-supported right-wing Shintō nationalism. She sees, but clearly does not celebrate, the deliberate ‘particularism’ of this aspect of Shintō. In her discussion of more distant events of the Meiji period however, the approach is more equivocal. Central to Hardacre’s understanding of developments in Meiji is an appreciation of the impact of Western ideas of ‘religion’ in key areas of policy development relevant to the emergence of ‘state Shintō’.

This is a very difficult area to research and write about, because a distinctive feature of the early Meiji period was, as Grapard has pointed out, linguistic: “... the changes that occurred in religion in Meiji were accompanied by rather drastic changes in language and [this was] not by chance”.<sup>36</sup> What I have elsewhere<sup>37</sup> described as a form of “political correctness” operated in the early Meiji period; traditional discourses were marginalised by a mainstream political vocabulary evolving rapidly (largely through the use of borrowed Western terms) to meet the fearsome pressures placed on Japanese government and society by exposure to the West. Grapard has in mind changes in the names of *kami* to eradicate their Buddhist identity, but it is also true that when Meiji bureaucrats argued that ‘Shintō is not a religion’, the meaning of *both* ‘Shintō’ and ‘religion’ (*shūkyō* 宗教) were relatively new to Japanese debates on such issues. These terms were still evolving their meaning into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> ‘Shintō’ though a word hitherto rarely used, was one of the terms used for the new government-supported, ‘separated’, emperor-based teaching which was itself involved in a long-drawn-out process of self-definition, partly through devices such as the declaration that it was non-religious (*hishūkyō*).<sup>39</sup> The English word ‘religion’ (for which translators eventually used the Buddhistic term *shūkyō*) normally meant ‘Christianity’ in Meiji government documents. It came to be extended to Buddhism and other religious groups in the context of debates on religious freedom surrounding the lengthy drafting of the first (1889) Meiji constitution. The key point to note here, however, is that these traditions were described as ‘religions’ mainly to identify them as ‘not-Shintō’.

The evolving meaning of ‘Shintō’ is for Hardacre tied up with the evolving meaning of ‘religion’ in Japan, and she identifies this latter concept as a purely Western import. “When ideas about religion originating in Europe and America came to Japan, they entered a society that had no equivalent concept or term, no idea of a distinct sphere of life that could be called religious, and no idea of a generic religion of which there might be local variants like Christianity, Buddhism

36 GRAPARD, “Japan’s Ignored Cultural Revolution”, 243.

37 In BOCKING, “Fundamental Rites”.

38 HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 34, 63-67. The issue of terminology is thoroughly covered by Hardacre and the problem is more complex than my examples here suggest.

39 To proponents of Shintō this meant that Shintō was supra-religious; to those more influenced by Western models of religion it implied that Shintō was not even a religion. *Ibid.*, 65, 77.

and so on.”<sup>40</sup> According to Hardacre’s account, the Western meaning of religion (which privileged doctrine, faith and religious experience) “eventually superseded Japan’s heritage, in which liturgical-communal praxis was central”. It was the Western definition of religion which Shintō administrators had in mind when they declared that Shintō was superior to, and not itself, ‘religion’.<sup>41</sup>

It is not very clear to me whether Hardacre’s view is that the ‘non-religious’ character of Shintō represented a continuity of pre-Meiji traditions (albeit stripped of Buddhist elements) or a completely new situation in which ‘Shintō’ had acquired a new identity created in reaction to the imported notion of ‘religion’. Probably posing the question in this either-or manner does no justice to the subtlety of her account. But the insistence that before Meiji the Japanese had no conception of a generic ‘religion’ suggests a break with the past in this vital area of the self-definition and modern self-awareness of Shintō, because the notion of what a religion *is*, is of course intimately linked with the notion of what a religion is *not*. If Hardacre is right, the allegedly legitimate sense of ‘historical depth’ in modern Shintō, which Pye identifies as being available to the historically sophisticated modern Shintōist becomes indeed a chimera; what Kuroda called a ‘ghost image’ (and Kuroda’s view would surely have been endorsed by Basil Hall Chamberlain). Yet I find myself questioning what Hardacre says about the notion of religion on a number of counts. Perhaps too much weight is being placed on the Western (Christian-derived) idea of religion as a determining factor in the evolving conceptualisation of Shintō after Meiji. I say this for four reasons.

Firstly, Japan had been involved with Christianity before, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries and indeed in early Meiji there were still laws directed against the practice of the Christian religion. Dutch Protestants had been allowed to trade from Deshima after the proscription of Christianity because their Japanese hosts understood them to be capable of separating trade from religion. The Meiji period was not the first occasion for Japanese intellectuals and government officials to think about the problem of competing or foreign religions.

Secondly, as Michael Pye reminds us, the writings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Japanese rationalist Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715-1746) embody a theory of religious development which shows that a sophisticated understanding of religion as generic phenomenon, manifesting in specific ways according to time and circumstances, could emerge quite independently in Japan by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup> Tominaga, whose achievements were praised by the great *kokugaku* scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), no doubt represented an unusually sophisticated view of the nature of religion, but it could be argued that his understanding only carried forward what was implicit in the self-conscious ‘three religions’ (*sankyō* / *sanjiao* 三教) concept imported from China early in Japan’s history.

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40 Ibid., 63.

41 Ibid., 65-66.

42 Michael PYE, *Emerging from Meditation* (London: Duckworth, 1990).

Thirdly, the Confucian tradition embodied from its Chinese origins onwards “a conscious ‘sociological’ awareness of the function of rites for society”<sup>43</sup> which, while agnostic as far as the existence of the gods was concerned, regarded communal religious praxis as socially beneficial. Communal rites were not merely tolerated by governments but were intellectually validated by the ancient Confucian understanding that correctly observed religious ritual is one of the foundations of the social and moral order. Sectarian developments (e.g. in Buddhism) were often distrusted as teachings which *were* legitimately religious but differed in character from the communal rites and therefore had to be carefully controlled. Communal rites were in Confucian terms superior to sectarian religion (*shūkyō*). This distinction was not new to the Meiji period.

Finally, I am not, as a native-speaker, convinced that the English term ‘religion’ has ever had quite the generic reach Hardacre attributes to it, outside of modern Religious Studies of course. Perhaps the valency of the term has been different in America, but in my experience the term ‘religion’ in the English-speaking world has only recently acquired in ordinary speech – and then only for some people – a meaning which goes much beyond ‘Christianity’. There used not so long ago to be an academic debate, which now appears quite sterile, about whether Buddhism should be defined as a religion because Buddhists (it was said) did not believe in a supreme being. The United Kingdom, unlike Meiji Japan or the United States, does not yet have a written constitution and the meaning of the term religion has never been publicly clarified. As used in the UK 1944 Education Act it was still generally understood to mean ‘Christianity’. When ‘religion’ acquired a more generic multicultural meaning in the 1970s and 1980s the government attempted in its educational legislation to articulate a notion of ‘religion’ separate from Christianity, yet has seemed unable to achieve this.<sup>44</sup>

Japanese people when questioned today do not generally identify themselves as belonging to a ‘*shūkyō*’ even though they may be devout Buddhists or follow Shintō rites. In much the same way British people are not usually comfortable with the term religion, tending to prefer ‘way of life’ for their own faith.<sup>45</sup> The term remains, in the sense indicated by Hardacre, highly technical; part of a scholarly discourse rather than that of ordinary people or politicians. I am therefore sceptical about the degree of influence any particular interpretation of the *English* term ‘religion’ exerted in the Meiji period, and I would be inclined rather to look to Confucian, National Learning and other ‘indigenous’ Japanese notions (under the variety of names for religious teachings and ways available to Meiji thinkers<sup>46</sup>) for the basis of the world-view which, from the beginning of the Meiji

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43 Ronald DORE, *City Life in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 327ff. Cited by Richard Gombrich in Peter CLARKE and Jeffrey SOMERS, eds., *Japanese New Religions in the West* (London: Curzon Press, 1994).

44 BOCKING, “Fundamental Rites”. See also *DfE Circular 1/94* (Religious Education) (London: Department for Education, 1994).

45 More recently, ‘spirituality’ is preferred to ‘religion’.

46 Such as *kokkyō* 國教, Shintō, *taikyō*, *honkyō* 本教, *hongaku*, *kyōhō* 教法. See HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 64ff.

period and in accordance with National Learning priorities, placed ‘Shintō’ above ‘religion’. My own preferred translation of ‘*hishukyō*’, the term used to describe Shintō from the 1880s onwards and usually translated ‘non-religious’, is ‘non-denominational’. This was the English term used to refer to the kind of schools’ religious education (not identifiable as any form of institutional Christianity; this was explicitly prohibited) legislated for in UK state-funded schools from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>47</sup> There may even be a historical connection between the contemporaneous terms ‘*hishūkyō*’ and ‘non-denominational’.

## 6. Nationalism, Confucianism and the meanings of Shintō

I would like finally to focus attention on the role of nationalism as a force for radical change and Confucianism as a platform of continuity in Japanese religion, including Shintō in its various guises before and after the Meiji restoration. In the years since the collapse of Eastern European communism after 1989, the religious or quasi-religious character of modern nationalism has attracted enormous scholarly interest and has been quite exhaustively investigated. The fact that 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism has functioned and continues to function as a religion of the oppressed (or of those who regard themselves as oppressed) is no longer in doubt. From the standpoint of an emerging nation such as Japan in the mid-nineteenth century it was obvious that a country that did not have its own strong sense of inviolable national identity, backed up by a powerful monarchy, army, navy and shared system of politico-religious values would very soon have someone else’s imposed, so the requirement to build a strong nation on the European model and to foster nationalist sentiments among the people was absolute. It is not at all surprising that modern Shintō was developed in the service of nationalism, though nationalism is only part of the story of modern Shintō. The demands of modern nationalism alone can account for much of the radical rejection of Japan’s past, including its religious past, that occurred in the Meiji period.

Despite acknowledgement that Confucian thinking exerted influence in the creation of Meiji Shintō, there seems to be some reluctance to acknowledge its role as a stratum of continuity in the history and development of modern Japanese religion. Perhaps this is because Confucianism is a ‘blind spot’ in contemporary Shintō studies. Since Confucianism has no constituency in Japan, it is of advantage neither to rightists who favour a revival of Shintō, nor to Marxists, liberals and religionists who wish to attack the claim that Shintō embodies an unbroken indigenous Japanese tradition, to draw attention to Confucianism. In

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47 ‘Non-denominational’ religion was invented by the British Parliament for use in new schools funded entirely by central or local government. Existing government-aided church schools were (and are) allowed to continue teaching their own religion, which is not non-denominational. See BOCKING, “Fundamental Rites” for a fuller discussion of this issue.

the concluding part of this paper, I would like to suggest some lines of further enquiry into the role of Confucianism in the development of modern Shintō.

Firstly, we should not forget that Meiji Shintō followed Tokugawa Confucianism. Kuroda's thesis about the late emergence of Shintō as an independent tradition focuses on medieval *kenmitsu* Buddhism, which assimilated miscellaneous local *kami* into the Buddhist world-view as trace-manifestations (*suijaku*) of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and thereby raised their status to that of secondary Buddhist divinities. Subsequently, the development of the Buddhist doctrine of *hongaku* 本覺 or innate enlightenment made possible the so-called '*han-honji-suijaku* 反本地垂迹' or 'reverse *honji-suijaku*' theory according to which interpreters could claim that the *kami* as trace-manifestations were in fact the primary essence of enlightenment.<sup>48</sup> However, the Meiji period in which Shintō finally emerged as a 'separate' tradition followed on not from the heyday of Medieval Buddhism but from two centuries of Tokugawa rule. Under the Tokugawa, Neo-Confucianism rather than esoteric Buddhism came to constitute the dominant intellectual discourse. Within Neo-Confucianism the ethics of the 'Way' (of the *bushi* 武士, of tea, etc.) spread in the towns, from the samurai to the merchant classes and beyond.<sup>49</sup> Within Japanese Confucian thought of this period emerged the notions of the ruler-subject relationship taking precedence over that of father-son; of reverence for the emperor; of Japan as the land of the *kami*, and the concept of the Way itself (the *-tō* in 'Shintō') as a transcendent moral or political norm.<sup>50</sup>

Kuroda mentions the 'Confucian Shintō' of Hayashi Razan and Yamasaki Anzai but dismisses these as "nothing more than theories of the educated class subordinating Shintō's true nature to Confucianism. Actual belief in the *kami*, however, as found among the common people at that time, remained subsumed under Buddhism".<sup>51</sup> Against this view it may be said that while the National Learning movement was indeed an elite intellectual movement, the Meiji oligarchy included Shintō administrators heavily influenced by National Learning, and state Shintō in the Meiji period was an ideology of the *educated* masses, disseminated through a modern educational infrastructure. Meiji Shintō was not in any sense a grass-roots populist movement. This was evidenced as late as 1906-1912 by the deep unpopularity of the shrine-merger policy. Nevertheless the shrine merger policy succeeded. The potential gulf between elite and popular religion had been bridged by mass education. Surely, therefore, we should not discount the power of the 'educated class', and hence of Confucian thought, in the development of modern Shintō. Marginalising the contributions of Tokugawa Confucian intellectuals and propagandists accentuates the discontinuity between Medieval Buddhism and post-Meiji Shintō, no doubt. But perhaps an opportunity is thereby missed to consider a layer of developing, reflexive Shintō

48 KURODA, "Historical Consciousness", 145.

49 Robert BELLAH, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York: The Free Press, 1985 [1957]).

50 KURODA, "Shintō", 19.

51 *Ibid.*, 19.



self-awareness which has contributed to the sense of 'historical depth'. As we have seen above, Pye identifies this feature of Shintō as something available since the time of the *kokugaku* scholars to the 'historically sophisticated' – that is, to *educated* people.

Secondly, we should note that the core of Meiji Shintō teachings was Confucian loyalty and filial piety. As Hardacre observes, "Shintō priests ... preached on loyalty, filial piety and the cult of tutelary deities and linked these to the attitude of respect for the kami. This complex of ideas, cults and attitudes was justified as a continuation of tradition."<sup>52</sup> And: "In the realm of ethics, most priests seemed to assume that they could adopt the core Confucian values of the Tokugawa era as the ethics of Shintō. No-one was prepared to answer the accusation that these values originated not in Shintō but in Confucianism. Similarly, the fact that these ideas were the standard fare of sermons by Buddhist priests passed without serious effort at justification by shrine priests. Nor did shrine priests draw a connection between these values and the ritual life of particular shrines."<sup>53</sup> Here again, there is evidence of continuity with the diffused Neo-Confucian spirituality of the Tokugawa period rather than discontinuity with pre-Meiji values.

Thirdly, the young Emperor Meiji had a Confucian tutor, Motoda Eifu, whom he asked to comment on a draft of the Meiji Constitution produced in 1878 by a Council of Elders (*genrōin* 元老院) committee including Fukuba Bisei. The draft contained a clause guaranteeing limited freedom of religion. Motoda

... attacked the provision for religious freedom. His preferred version stipulated that subjects could believe in any religion so long as it did not contravene civil and governmental conduct, and so long as it did not run counter to the religion of the state. He proposed that Confucianism be established as the state's religion and that the emperor rule over the religion and morality of the people. Thus Motoda's draft constitution ... gave the emperor theocratic powers, advocated the unity of state and religion, and hence precluded the principle of religious freedom.<sup>54</sup>

It was pressure from Motoda, too, that lay behind the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890. From the immediate elevation of the Imperial Rescript to the status of a sacred object and the increasing emphasis on devotion to the emperor as a divinity in subsequent years we may see that Motoda's notion of an imperial theocracy was in fact substantially realised in state Shintō, despite the provisions for religious freedom contained in the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

Fourthly, the various National Learning enterprises themselves originated in a nostalgic Confucian-style concern to uncover the Japanese equivalent of the golden age of the Duke of Chou and Confucius. Motoori Norinaga and other *kokugaku* scholars strove to 'recover' the idealized mentality of the early Japanese.<sup>55</sup> The pre- and post-Meiji theme of 'restoration' (*fukko* 復古) which empha-

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52 HARDACRE, *Shintō and State*, 73.

53 *Ibid.*, 77.

54 *Ibid.*, 116.

55 *Ibid.*, 16.

sised the apical role of the Emperor or his heavenly ancestor Amaterasu is prototypically Confucian. The notion that Japan's destiny is to *restore* things to the way they should be, overtly informed the development of state Shintō up to 1945. Perhaps a reference to Confucian nostalgia should not be ruled out when analysing the type of deliberate, reflective 'adjusted primal' religiosity engendered in the modern, often urban, shrine rites and festivals on which Pye bases his interpretation of Shintō. Local and particularistic though these may be, they are taking place within an East Asian cultural sphere in which the value of a return to origins of a Confucian, not necessarily an Eliadean, kind is culturally appreciated.

Finally, Confucian thought emphasises, as earlier mentioned, the 'sociological' value of rites, especially rites of respect and veneration for the ancestors. Within a Confucian hierarchy the highest status is attributed to those who perform the highest status rites, namely those for the emperor, or by extension the nation. Despite one strand of popular National Learning, represented by Fukuba Bisei, which conceived of restoration Shintō as a popular movement involving priests in preaching, pastoral work and communal rites of transition such as funerals, the majority of shrine priests in the Meiji period wished to be seen, presumably in imitation of the Ise priesthood or the emperor himself, as non-pastoral ritual specialists responsible for "the nation's rites and creed".<sup>56</sup> A reluctance to stoop to doctrinal and pastoral matters in a local community makes perfect sense for a high-status agent operating within a Confucian world-view. This is another factor to be taken into account if the 'primal' character of post-Meiji Shintō religiosity is to be equated with 'an emphasis on ritual as opposed to conceptualisation', particularly since Shintō priests remain as ritualists somewhat aloof, as Pye observes, from the rest of the participants in a *matsuri*.<sup>57</sup>

In conclusion, we might hazard that 'Shintō' in both the pre- and post-Meiji periods has a rather more Confucian meaning than today's accounts seem willing to recognise. It may also be that a greater emphasis on continuity with Confucian ideas of the Tokugawa period would help to mediate the polarisation between pro-Shintō and anti-Shintō approaches which we find in modern Shintō studies. Finally, an appreciation of some of the Confucian (and to that extent wider East Asian) features of contemporary shrine Shintō might throw further light on the meaning of 'adjusted' in Michael Pye's description of modern Shintō as 'adjusted primal religion'.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 35, 37.

<sup>57</sup> PYE, "Typology", 191-192.