

**OF KAMIKAZE, SAKURA, AND GYOKUSAI:
MISAPPROPRIATION OF METAPHOR IN WAR PROPOGANDA**

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Introduction

When Japan's Meiji Emperor assumed the throne and replaced the Tokugawa shogun system in 1868, the new government and military began to radicalize Shintoism, the ancient Japanese pantheistic belief system. Leaders of the Meiji Restoration created and enforced a new "state" Shinto, one in which thousands-year-old myths, rituals, and aphorisms all became the tools of propaganda promoting patriotism, nationalism, and worship of the Emperor while encouraging the Japanese to go to war with China and Russia—and eventually with the United States of America. This co-optation of Shinto lasted until the postwar Occupation, when Allied rulers, insisting that the Japanese separate the sacred (Shinto) from the secular (government), dismantled the hybrid religion and many of its manifestations.

Japanologists have long since unraveled the fabric by which Shinto and the state had become "largely an invented tradition" (Hardacre 1989): the misappropriation of practice and place in the name of a new nationalism. Less attention has been paid, however, to the linguistic connections between Shinto and the state leading up to and during World War II, when Japan's leaders borrowed unabashedly from Shinto scripture and distorted sacred language to promote the nation's plans for regional and, eventually, global domination. Consequently, after the surrender of Japan in 1945 and during the Occupation that followed, the Shintoism that Allies found was unrecognizable from its original form. Breen and Teeuwen (2003: 268) traced the phrase State Shinto, "its popularization, and its application to the study of the whole prewar religious history" to the "so-

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called *Shinto shirei* [Shinto directive] issued by the American army of the Occupation.” The Occupation command required that the Japanese separate their government from the bastardized religion and eliminate State Shinto altogether. The land reform stripped shrines of their lands and assets. Amid the crackdown, worshippers and donors turned away from religion. Although some Shinto rites and festivals—weddings and shrine visits, for example—linger, very few Japanese today identify themselves with Shinto. Currently, although most Japanese seem to have little religious faith, they continue to live their lives in a culture that manifests a mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism.

This article seeks to fill a gap in the scholarship of the history of Japanese State Shinto by identifying propagandistic slogans, songs, speeches, and symbols that composed a vocabulary of war and tracing them to sacred ideas. It illuminates and analyzes particularly how the language of Shinto was misappropriated and exploited by the Meiji government for secular, nationalistic purposes, with dire consequences for Shinto, its ancient shrines, and consecrated lands. In so doing, this study also reconnects State Shinto to the ongoing Yasukuni Shrine controversy and the rise in right-wing nationalism and militarism to contemporary Japan, which have implications for the nation’s tenuous relations with China and other Asian countries that have suffered historically from Japanese imperialism.

This article begins with a brief discussion of certain assumptions and definitions of both Shinto and propaganda that inform the study. Next, examples of Shinto scripture used in Meiji and 20th-Century war propaganda are provided and discussed. Finally, the notion of State Shinto’s legacy and lingering effects on right-wing Japanese nationalism is addressed.

Background

Assumptions/Definitions

In examining the use of propagandistic slogans appropriated from Shinto writing by the Japanese government and military beginning in the Meiji Era, this study was informed by several assumptions and guided by certain definitions that deserve explanation here to clear the conceptual underbrush. Among these are the identification of Shinto as a religion and of its writings as sacred texts; and of Meiji proclamations about religion and religious education.

Is Shinto a Religion? Frost (1943: 348) adamantly stated that Shinto “is in no sense a religion but is rather a patriotic cult.” Shinto gods—

depending on the scholarly source, they number between 80 and 800 (Frost 1943: 348)—were conceived as local communal gods to protect the people (Okada 2009: 4). Shinto mainly concerns ritual observances (Berthon 1991). It has “no creed, no dogma” (Herbert 1967: 33). It lacks a Jesus, a Buddha, or a Mohammed—a supernatural individual necessary to change Shinto into “a vital religion” (Ichiro and Yoshio 1956: 55). Yamakage (2006: 39–40) argued that, “without a founder, Shinto is also without any systematic doctrine connected to a founder’s teachings. Therefore, there are no dogmas, absolute codes, orders or laws applying to Shinto as a whole” and that Shinto does not require “standardization of belief and practice.” Still, religion experts have agreed with Herbert that “...when I linked everybody’s sayings together, I can see one philosophy...” (ctd. in Yamakage 2006: 41). Whether a religion or not, Shinto “has unquestionably made a significant contribution to the political theory and national stability of Japan” (Frost 1943: 347).

Defining Shinto as merely a system of rituals and beliefs permitted the Meiji state to establish itself as a “theocracy” (Koyasu 2004: 158). It is understood that by “becoming a non-religious entity, state-Shinto was able to rule over the population and to function as an organ of national ideology” (Inoue 2006: 27). Inoue (1998: 5) also argues that “religious systems are formed and transformed in close interaction with the society in which they partake;” and though *kami* worship “distinguishes Shinto from other religious traditions and gives it continuity through the ages,” its amalgamation with Buddhism radically transformed the substance of Shinto and caused it to lose its distinct character. In practical effect, Japan has no dominant orthodox religion like other nations (Noda 1995); their religion is practiced in their way of life.

The term State Shinto applies to the years 1868–1945—from the beginning of the Meiji Era to the end of the War in the Pacific—when, as Fridell (1976: 548) described it, “Shinto elements came under a great deal of overt state influence and control as the Japanese government systematically utilized shrine worship as a major force for mobilizing imperial loyalties on behalf of modern nation-building.” State Shinto was a component of a larger belief in what Woodward (1972: 11) termed the Kokutai Cult: “Japan’s emperor-state-centered cult of ultranationalism and militarism.” This was not Shinto itself or a form of Shinto, but rather, it “included elements of Shinto mythology and ideology and it utilized Shinto institutions and practices” (11). The Kokutai Cult became increasingly explicit over the prewar decades, reaching its culmination in the

ultranationalistic period from the early 1930's to 1945" (Fridell 1976: 553). Yet Kasulis (2004: 138) noted that State Shinto could hardly be considered irreligious. Although *kokutai* is commonly translated into English as "national polity," Kasulis argued that the word applied "to the purportedly unique form of Japan's political/spiritual/imperial structure" (139), with the Emperor as "chief priest of Shinto" (138).

Scripture and Sacred Writings. Shinto does have its own holy scriptures, including sacred writings that began with the Genesis-like *Kojiki* [Record of ancient matters], dating to 712 A.D., and *Nihongi* [Chronicles of Japan], dating to 720 A.D. The former tells of the gods before man was created and of the earliest emperors. Some passages, including the creation myth, were deemed so morally objectionable to Christians and other Westerners that translators refused to render them into English and turned to Latin instead (Frost 1943: 348). The latter comprises tales of the emperors, their genealogies, and their pronouncements. A third document also considered Shinto scripture is *Engishiki* [Procedures of the Engi Period], a tenth-century work that tells the story of the rise of the Shinto cult and includes two dozen ceremonial prayers (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 189; Frost 1943: 348). Some intellectuals were inspired also to formulate and articulate Shinto thought during the Tokugawa era (Breen and Teeuwen 2003).

Herbert (1967: 34–35) maintained that Shinto had "no sacred book which in size, importance and authority can be compared to the Christian Bible or the Muslim Koran." A seventeenth-century Japanese wrote that "in truth, there is no original Shinto Scriptures of Nihon" (ctd. in Herbert: 35). A large body of Shinto literature exists, "although without any trace of that bibliolatry which in some other religions attaches to Holy Scriptures" (35). Still, he claims that their "teachings and records need not be accepted blindly" (35), and that "even the high priests of the most important temples may put upon what little there are in the way of Holy Scriptures interpretations which amount to disbelief" (33). Antoni (2007) credited Motoori Norinaga's (1730–1801) commentary *Kojiki-den* [Commentaries on the *Kojiki*] with elevating the *Kojiki* to the status of a holy book under State Shinto in modern Japan. Konoshi (2000: 64) argued that *Kojiki* became famous and important as a holy scripture of Shinto in modernity only because of Norinaga and company declaring it as authentic and rendering it into an ancient and sacred Japanese narrative.

Yamakage (2006: 39) rebutted the idea that *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* were "sacred texts akin to the Bible or the Koran," averring that full of

myths, political twists, and literary embellishments, these texts must be read and interpreted carefully “because every word is not necessarily considered as sacred.” He also argued that “Japanese generally don’t believe in words very much” (40):

They understand that it is wrong to consider human language as absolute, recognizing that human existence is very small and limited when compared with the great nature. The Western mentality that treats human knowledge and language as absolutes is, from Shinto’s perspective, a form of human arrogance...words cannot contain either the world of great nature or the world of the spirit of Kami. In Shinto, it is important...not to use language to force others to believe in a certain way (Yamakage 2006: 41).

Propaganda and Slogans

Propaganda. Ellul (1965: 61) defined propaganda as “a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulation and incorporated in an organization.” Propaganda, he argued, suppressed autonomy. Black (1977: 97) suggested that the manifest content of propaganda contained characteristics “associated with dogmatism.” Among its characteristics are:

- undue reliance on authority figures and spokesmen, rather than empirical validation;
- use of unverified abstract nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, rather than empirical validation;
- a fixed view of people, institutions, and situations;
- simplistic cause-effect relationships, ignoring multiple causality;
- under- or over-emphasis on the past, present, or future as disconnected periods.

Slogans. The term *slogan* represents an alteration of *slogorn*, itself derived from the Gaelic *slough-ghairn*, or “army cry” (Inouye 1997: 279). Slogans as ““social symbols’ have united, divided, and even converted. In

so doing, slogans have become a direct link to social or individual action” (Denton 1980: 10). Inouye (1997: 274) asserted further that as a call for action, rather than a call for thought, a slogan erases or naturalizes the theory that created it and “denies the orderly connection of syntax and the precision of thought that follows from sustained dialogue.... Perhaps this is why, as is true of Japanese sentences generally, the subject is absent but aggressively implied.” The “elliptical nature” of a slogan “persuades by virtue of its incompleteness” (274–275).

Inouye asserted that the “most powerful of Meiji slogans” was the Emperor himself: *Meiji tenno* (277). Between 1872 and 1885, the Emperor appeared for the first time to the Japanese, touring the country, first meeting the troops and then his people. He became a literal and visual display of power: “Like a slogan, he was also a sign of synthesis, oriented toward action and inviting participation” (278). Soon thereafter, the Emperor became invisible again to his people—although his image was ubiquitous, like a religious icon—until after World War II “so their act of completing the slogan with their devotion could take place” (278).

Translated into words, his image became the ultimate utterance of the new phonocentric culture of the modern Japan: “*Tenno Heika, banzai!*” “Long Live the Emperor!” By way of this hooray he became logos...The statement “Long Live the Emperor” is central to the logocentrism of Meiji Japan and to its warlike spirit. Patterned after Western practice, the shouting of his name in public represents a new linguistic custom, a new mode of aggressive thought (279).

His subjects were compelled to action and not thought, as both Inouye and Ellul (1965: 61) suggested.

Findings

Kasulis (2004: 138) observed that State Shinto was “certainly ‘spiritual,’ not only in its praxes, but also in the use of terms like ‘*tama*,’ ‘*tamashii*,’ ‘*mitama*,’ and ‘*kami*.’” The Emperor was called *akitsu mi kami* [divine emperor] or *arahitogami* [*kami* in human form]. Beyond that basic glossary, the terminology associated with Shinto was appropriated by the State in more systemized fashion that bolstered ideas and authorized the military’s goals. To find examples, this study relied on original sources in

Japanese newspaper and magazine articles and columns, as well as print and broadcast advertisements that were reproduced in secondary texts. In this section, the use of Shinto language to advance Japanese militarism and nationalism is divided into the categories of slogans, songs/poems, speeches, and symbols/metaphors. Examples are provided in each category, and their connection to Shinto language is illuminated.

Slogans

Four particularly popular and potent Japanese wartime propaganda slogans may be traced to Shinto language. The slogans are listed and analyzed below:

- *Hakko Ichiu* [All the world under one roof];
- *Yamato Damashii* [Indomitable spirit of Japan];
- *Shichishou Houkoku* [Serving one's country for seven lives];
- *Kokumin Seishin Sou Douin* [Let all Japanese spirits work together].

Hakko Ichiu. Edwards (2003: 292), who analyzed the inscription of this slogan on a monument erected in 1940 in Miyazaki and researched its history, noted that its use “as a wartime slogan is well known.” Although the Shinto scriptural reference to the phrase designated “a philosophy of universal brotherhood, the notion of ‘all the world under one roof’ came to signify Japanese domination of Asia as part of a divine mission to unite the entire world under imperial leadership” (292). *Hakko Ichiu* was first decreed by Emperor Jinmu, who in Shinto cosmology was the first Emperor of Japan (which was then called Jomon), during the occasion of his ascension around 660 B.C. In a passage that appears in Book III, Section 3 of *Nihongi*, Jinmu, heir to the throne, is quoted, describing his intentions:

Now I have heard from the Ancient of the Sea that in the East there is a fair land encircled on all sides by blue mountains... I think this land will undoubtedly be suitable for the extension of the Heavenly task, so that its glory should fill the universe. It is, doubtless, the centre of the world (Aston 1972: 110–111).

In translating the work, Aston confirmed that “the heavenly task” was “further development of the Imperial power” (111). Jinmu would have been

referring to the lands closest to Jomon (the name for Japan then), and Aston's annotations to *Nihongi* describe the "world" as "the six quarters, N., S., E., W., Zenith, Nadir" (111).

Six years later, his expedition successfully completed, Jinmu announced that he would "reverently assume the Precious Dignity"—become Emperor:

Above, I should then respond to the kindness of the Heavenly Powers in granting me the Kingdom, and below, I should extend the line of the Imperial descendants and foster right mindedness. Thereafter the capital may be extended so as to embrace all the six cardinal points, and the eight cords may be covered so as to form a roof (Aston 1972: 131).

Aston noted that "the character for roof also means universe. The eight cords, or measuring tapes, simply mean 'everywhere'" (131). Edwards (2003: 292) agreed that the original Chinese characters in *Nihongi* were "awkward to translate."

Opportunists in Japan's militaristic government used *Hakko Ichiu* as imperialist propaganda to their advantage beginning in the Meiji Era, and by the twentieth century, they interpreted Jinmu's vague decree in creating the State Shinto belief that Japan should achieve its rightful destiny as center of the world, with its ruler a divine being descended from Amaterasu, the sun goddess and original *kami*.

Ishiwara Kanji, a mid-rank Army officer, used the concept of *Hakko Ichiu* to justify his disobedient plot to carry out the invasion of Manchuria in 1931—to the feigned dismay of the Japanese military and government (Edwards 2003: 305). Instead of being executed, Ishiwara was promoted and eventually served as general. The Japanese military was beset by sedition under the slogan *Hakko Ichiu*. Shillony (1970: 25) noted that "younger officers set their will against that of their seniors...high-ranking officers were assassinated; the officer corps seemed on the verge of breaking up into a number of factions; and the *Imperial Precepts to the Soldiers and Sailors* given by the Meiji Emperor were patently disregarded."

Hakko Ichiu also became the justification for the Second Sino-Japanese War, beginning in 1937, and through the end of the War in the Pacific in 1945. The slogan became popular among the Japanese people

after the prime minister, Fumimaro Konoe, used it in a speech on January 8, 1940 (Beasley 1991: 226–227) and after it appeared in a white paper titled “Fundamental National Policy,” in which Konoe advocated “the establishment of world peace in conformity with the very spirit in which our nation was founded” (Edwards 2003: 309). *Hakko Ichiu* spread further that year, which was designated by government-directed historians as the 2,600th anniversary of Jinmu’s ascension to the throne, at a ceremony in the northern city of Miyazaki. The slogan, in the form of Prince Chichibu’s calligraphy, was carved into the front of a monument unveiled April 3, 1940 (Earhart 2008: 63).

Yamato Damashii. Hearn (1904: 177) noted the direct connection of *Yamato Damashii* [Indomitable spirit of Japan] to Shinto:

For this national type of moral character was invented the name *Yamato-damashi* (or *Yamato-gokoro*)—the Soul of Yamato (or Heart of Yamato)—the appellation of the old province of Yamato, seat of the early emperors, being figuratively used for the entire country. We might correctly, though less literally, interpret the expression *Yamato-damashi* as “The Soul of Old Japan.”

Shichishou Houkoku. This spiritually derived phrase, which translates as meaning “serving one’s country for seven lives” appeared in a 1936–1937 print advertisement meant to raise support for the war effort (Kashima 2000). A related slogan, *Nihon Seishin o Jissen no ue ni*, translates as “Let’s mobilize Japanese spirits practically.”

Kokumin Seishin Sou Douin. In the same years, 1936–37, state-run NHK Radio sponsored a magazine ad that included this slogan, which translates as “Let all Japanese spirits work together” (Kashima 2000: 53). In October 1937, Prime Minister Konoe also proclaimed via NHK: “Western people are materialistic, but Japanese people are spiritual, more sacred, sincere, and clean people who seek a spiritual culture.”

Songs/Poems

Kimigayo. Upon the Meiji Restoration, the government sought a new national anthem to inspire the nation to become wealthier and stronger (Ohnuki-Tierney 1991: 205). John William Fenton, a British Army music leader, was asked to write the melody for the poem *Kimigayo*, which had been composed during the Heian Era (794–1192). Fenton’s Western

melody, however, did not appeal to the Japanese public, so Hayashi Hiromori composed a more Japanese melody. *Kimigayo* became the national anthem in 1880, though not formally so until the 1930s (Murakami 1977: 128–131):

*Kimigayo wa,
chiyoni yachiyo ni,
sazare ishino,
iwa o to narite,
koke no,
musu made*

Kimigayo means “Emperor” as well as “the entire Japanese people.” *Chiyoni yachiyoni* means the “desire for the continuation for thousands and thousands of years.” *Koke* means “moss.” *Musu* is a Shinto word meaning “procreation.” “*Kokeno musumade*” signifies the “desire for the moss to be created (taking many years to come)” or “the rock of Japan,” or *sazare ishi no iwa*.

British Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain (1982: 336) translated it as follows:

A thousand years of happy life be thine!
Live on, my Lord, till what are pebbles now,
By age united, to great rocks shall grow,
Whose venerable sides the moss doth line.

Kokudo. Meiji schoolchildren sang this song, which translates as “Homeland” (A Collection 2000), the lyrics of which refer to Shinto mythologies:

aogumo tooku, yoriaite
(Slightly blue gray colored crowd are gathering)
utsukushiki kana, yamakawa wa
(How beautiful the mountains and rivers are!)
kami no umaseru, ooyashima
(This is the *Yamato*, the land with many islands,
where *Shinto* Goddess was born)
tokowaka ni shite, yutaka naru
(It is a forever young, wealthy nation)

warera ga sei no, minamoto o
 (That's where our life comes from)
ima atarashiku, kanngeki su
 (We are reminded again of our appreciation for it)

Symbols

Sakura. The ancient anthropogenic myth propagated in the Japanese chronicles regarded as the earliest articulation of Shinto beliefs—the *Kojiki* (Philippi 1969) and the *Nihongi* (Aston 1956)—the progenitor deity Ninigi weds a beautiful tree that, though originally unspecified, has traditionally been identified by Shinto priests as a cherry blossom tree. According to folklorist Origuchi Shinobu (1928), ancient Japanese belief in Shinto's agrarian gods carefully observed *sakura* in the spring to help predict and calculate the amount and the timing of the fall rice harvest. Throughout Japanese civilization and in Shinto beliefs and rituals, *sakura* have been accorded a status in nature second only to rice.

Japanese militarist ideology seized upon the cherry blossom as not merely symbolic but actually transubstantive of the souls of the brave war dead; they would be literally reborn as cherry blossoms at the Yasukuni Shrine. "Cherry blossom propaganda" thus was spread in the planting of trees as well as in songs and poems and even military insignia. Foremost, it was embedded in the indoctrination of soldiers sent to sacrifice themselves for their Emperor. In a critique of the aesthetics of the Japanese military's secularism of Shinto, Ohnuki-Tierney (2002) explored the influence of such government propaganda on *tokko-tai*, or Japan *kamikaze* pilots, and concluded that unlike their widely perceived image as ultranationalist zealots, they were reluctant to die for their Emperor; rather, the compass, for most, was patriotism, a willingness to die for country. *Sakura* [cherry blossom] was used ubiquitously for the names of military ships, airplanes, bombs, and troops. Military units were given nicknames such as *ouka* [cherry blossom] and *yamato* [Japan]. *Shikishima* and *asahi* derived from a *haiku* by Motoori: "*Shikishima no yamato gokoro o hito towaba asahi ni niou yamazakura bana* [If someone inquires about the Japanese soul of these Blessed Isles, say mountain cherry blossoms, fragrant in the morning sun]" (Ohara 1975: 130–131).

A military-school anthem, *Douki no dakura* [Companion Cherry Blossoms], written in 1938 as a popular song with roots in Shinto reverence for *sakura*, was revised by the military in 1944 and played on the radio for

the nation for the first time the next year. It promoted the idea that soldiers and sailors and pilots were petals from the same cherry blossom tree:

“You and I are cherry blossom petals,
 as we entered the army school in the same year.
 We bloomed together in the same army school garden,
 and we are ready to fall since we started to bloom.
 Let’s fall beautifully [successfully] for the sake of our country.”
 “We are the same cherry blossoms,
 bloomed in the same army garden.
 We do not share our physical body or blood,
 but somehow, we became bosom friends.
 It’s very hard to say goodbye.”

“We are the same cherry blossoms,
 bloomed in the same air force garden.
 The first [*kamikaze*] plane which left
 in the sunset of the southern sky has not returned.”

“We are the same cherry blossoms,
 bloomed in the same air force garden.
 Why did you die and fall without waiting for the day,
 which we promised that we would survive?”

“We are the same cherry blossoms.
 Even if we fall separately,
 let’s meet when we bloom in spring
 at the flowery heaven of Yasukuni Shrine.”

Kamikaze. Near the end of the Kamakura Period, Japan was attacked by Mongolians twice, in 1274 and 1281 (Imai 2003). Powerful typhoons sank the attacking ships both times, and Japan was spared Mongolian conquest. Many Japanese today still believe that Shinto gods protected Japan by sending these typhoons. The notion of these *kamikaze* [god’s winds] was revived in 1942 to describe the divine force that inspired, in the religious sense, certain pilots who sacrificed their lives by diving their planes into U.S. ships as weapons (Ohara 1975). This matter of expediency coincided with a diminishing Japanese arsenal. Military leader Tojo Hideki began, also in 1942, to emphasize spirituality over physical

resources; beautiful words and phrases replaced the typical military nomenclature (Nagasawa 2004: 38). The suicidal attack, “*totsu geki*,” became known as *seika* [spiritual flower]; bombs carried by *kamikaze* pilots were referred to as *sakura dan* [cherry blossom bombs].

Other Nomenclature. Shinto language abounds in the naming of Japanese ships, planes, bombs, and troops. World War II Warships were named after Shinto gods or shrines. The Katori-class cruiser *Kashima*, for example, was named after a shrine whose god was identified in *Kojiki* as “the protector of Japan against foreign violence” who “break[s] the spear points of heavenly demons and of Earthly demons” (Frost 1943: 351). The oracle of the god of *Kashima* warned in *Kojiki* that “when devout men are few, my powers dwindle, my heart is distressed and the demon powers gain vigour while the divine power is weakened” (351). Other ships and submarines also were named after Shinto shrines: *kashima*, *katori*, *gokoku*, and *yasukuni*, for example. Ancient Emperors’ names, such as *Jinmu* and *Shomu* appeared as ship names. Shinto ideologies were specified as *seishin* [true spirit] and *sekicho* [solid spirit], while fighting planes were often named after birds such as *washi* [eagle] and *hayabusa* [falcon].

Gyokusai. The word may be translated as “shattered jade,” “broken pearls,” or “scattered jewels.” *Gyoku* means “pearl”; *sai* means “crushed into pieces.” The military used *Gyokusai* as a euphemistic metaphor to glorify and prettify a suicidal attack in the face of imminent defeat. The concept was based on a passage from the *Book of Northern Qi*, the official history of a Seventh-Century Chinese dynasty: “A great man should die as a shattered jewel rather than live as an intact tile” (Hosaka 2005: 61). Thus, the slogan *Ichioku Gyokusai* (the shattering of the hundred million like a beautiful jewel) became popularized in the final year of the war when, as Kieman (2007: 484) noted, “The regime was prepared if necessary to send 100 million Japanese to their deaths.” *Gyoku* also was used to refer to the Emperor at the dawn of the Meiji Era; *gyoku* started to signify nobility. *Gyokusai* came to mean one’s sacrifice of his life for the sake of the Emperor.

Speeches/Polemics

Language expressing other Shinto ideals were integrated into wartime propaganda. In their addresses to the nation, Tojo and other military officers unveiled a new vocabulary, beginning in November 1941, that included referring to Japan as *Kou Koku* [the Emperor’s country] (Hosaka 2005: 61). Soon, the word *kou* was prefixed to nouns to signify

that everything belonged to the Emperor. For example, the army, which for thousands of years before the Meiji restoration had been under civilian rule, was now called *kou gun* [We, the Emperors' army]. The structure of the very beginning of sentences changed to *Tenno no Ikou* [Thanks to the Emperor's glory, we...]. The Emperor himself was now referred to as *dai genshi heika* [Supreme Leader]. As the winds of war turned against the Japanese, journalist-polemicist Tokutomi Ichiro (1944: 1) borrowed from the ritual language of Shinto purification ceremonies to assert that while Americans "were fighting to preserve their own luxury...for the Japanese, the Greater East Asia War is a purifying exorcism, a cleaning ablution." Japanese leaders turned a religious ideal into fighting words: war propaganda. Their subjects were susceptible, believing that they possessed superior blood and soul because they were the children of the Shinto goddess.

Conclusion

Japan's nationalist and ultranationalist movements today, embodied in a half-dozen right-trending conservative political parties, may be traced to the growth of imperial militarism and patriotism fueled by the legacy of samurai and bushido culture and intertwined with the emergence of cult and State Shinto during the late Meiji Era. The turmoil of rival religions against the backdrop of one civilization's most dramatic political and cultural upheavals allowed for the misappropriation of Shinto and its original beliefs. Nationalists effectively used sacred scripture for propaganda, shortened and simplified into slogans.

Yasukuni and Nationalism. Yasukuni Shrine is rooted in Shintoism but was transformed into Japan's notorious national memorial to the war dead by the Meiji government. At Yasukuni, "religion, patriotism, and nationalism coalesce into one and the same attitude" (Masaaki 2005: 41). Yasukuni represents both religious and political ideals. At first, a little shrine was erected on a sacred mountain east of Kyoto as a memorial for worship by fallen loyalists at the end of the Tokugawa regime. According to Masaaki, the first private memorial service was held there for victims of the Ansei Purge: political leaders and samurai who had been opposed to the shogunate's policy to open the country to the West. To the victors go the spoils: the fallen troops of the imperial army that had launched a military campaign against Edo and which was instrumental in establishing the Meiji government were honored for their sacrifice in service of the Emperor. They became *saishin* [enshrined deities] to be perpetually commemorated.

A site for Yasukuni was secured in 1869 in central Tokyo, and the shrine was built in 1872. It was established as a national shrine with special status in 1878; unlike the Grand Shrine of Ise, which is dedicated solely to the imperial dynasty, at Yasukuni, imperial lineage and troops who died in service to the Emperor are commemorated together. Tellingly, in prewar Japan, jurisdiction over Yasukuni belonged to the Ministry of the Military, whereas other shrines were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Emperor himself traditionally paid his respects there.

In 2009, Prime Minister Taro Aso sent an offering to a Tokyo war shrine seen by Asian neighbors as a symbol of the country's past militarism (AFP 2009). Aso had avoided visiting the controversial Yasukuni shrine, which honors 2.5 million Japanese war dead, including 14 top war criminals from World War II. Among Aso's immediate predecessors, Shinzo Abe had chosen to stay away from the shrine, and Yasuo Fukuda openly opposed visits to the shrine by political leaders, instead advocating reconciliation with other Asian countries. Right-wing politicians and their followers, however, along with many military veterans, have aggressively pursued an agenda promoting worship at the shrine.

Today, proponents and defenders of Yasukuni demand memorial worship for all military war dead and insist that the Emperor and prime minister attend. Yasukuni parties continually seek legislation establishing government sponsorship of Yasukuni as a religious organization and to change the Constitution accordingly, a stance Masaaki (2005) characterized as "political-religious conservatism"—"the same nature as Yasukuni's status in prewar Japan." Other religious conservatives, however, are among the antagonists of the Yasukuni stance.

Japan's prime ministers and its Emperor represent intermediate positions. Some, while basically supporting Yasukuni, have sought to downplay Shinto characteristics of war-dead worship and have suggested either decoupling the worship or excluding the so-called Class-A war criminals. Masaaki (2005) has suggested that "religious awareness of the Japanese people is thin and unfocused" and that "common people should develop a civil-religious consciousness and enhance their concern with respect to the war-dead memorials."

Moral/Intellectual Weakness. Others have cited weakness among modern Japanese intellectuals and blamed them for a lack of moral authority in pointing out the logical impossibilities advocated in State Shinto. Tatsuo Arima (1969: 12–13) found it "difficult to believe that competent university scholars of this century could preach the idea that the

‘prehistoric period’ of Japan consciously formed...the sacred authority of the emperor.” Maruyama (1996: 256) labeled Japanese intellectuals a “community of contrition,” with a shared sense of remorse for failing to oppose the expanding militarism in prewar days. Toyota (1994: 184) observed that, after WWII, westernization and democracy ascended to god-like status, just as Shinto perpetuated its hundreds of gods.

Breen and Teeuwen (2003: 268) concluded that, “State Shinto is, indeed, a case of ‘in the beginning was the word; all creation came from the word; nothing came into being that was not of the word.’” Returning to Ellul’s (1965) and Black’s (1977) definitions of propaganda, the key for the Japanese, it would seem, is in how they decide, as a people, to create and receive messages. Japan’s tragic past of passive participation through psychological manipulation suppressed its autonomy due to unwarranted reliance on authority figures and spokesmen who used unverified and unverifiable abstractions of language rather than empirical validation. Japanese intellectuals and leaders should consider the current long-running controversy over textbook treatment of Japan’s war atrocities as symbolic.

The year 2011 marks the centennial of the Southern-Northern Courts controversy over the fact that school textbooks failed to say which court had been legitimate in the fourteenth century (Brownlee 1999). The controversy was significant for historians, who, since the 1892 Kume Kanitake incident—in which a historian was fired for questioning the validity of State Shinto—had conceded to the imperial government the right to decide what to discuss in textbooks (Hardacre 1989: 39). Should intellectuals again abdicate the moral authority of truth and knowledge in such matters, the Japanese are at risk of falling prey to a dangerously growing nationalism.

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