Deconstructing Shinto

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Introduction: Approaching "Shinto"

When setting out to define the word "Shinto," it is indeed difficult to know where to begin. A 1938 text on Shinto shrines by the Japanese Board of Tourist Industry begins by explaining to its English readers that "the ancient Japanese people, like any other nation of the world, worshipped many nature gods and goddesses…the Sinto pantheon, of the so-called "eight million gods" [including] the deities of the sea, river, mountain, wind, fire, etc"[1]. In his 1956 text *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era*, Dr. Hideo Kishimoto simply refers to Shinto as the "Japanese polytheistic folk religion which goes back to the beginning of history"[2]. Such views as these, which understand Shinto to be an ancient, indigenous religion of the Japanese people, are seen echoed again in the later work of Japanese-American professor Joseph Kitagawa, who in his 1966 book *Religion in Japanese History,* attempts to define Shinto for his readers in the following way:

> Underlying the peculiar ethos of the early Japanese was their attitude toward life and the world and their religious outlook, not so much in a systematic philosophical sense as with respect to what Anesaki once called the "sympathetic response of the heart"…Because of the lack of a better term, I resort to the expression "early Shinto" to refer to the religion of the Japanese people of this period. The term Shinto, literally "the Way of the kami or gods," has many meanings. It could mean the magico-religious beliefs and practices of the Japanese, derived from the kami. Sometimes this term is used to designate a certain ideology or theology, which implies some

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[1] *Sinto Shrines (Zinsya) (With A Brief Explanation of Sinto Ceremonies and Priesthood).* Japan Board of Tourist Industry, 1938. Print.

[2] Page 4

> normative principles for ethics and other aspects of individual and communal life. Here I use the term loosely to refer to the not too well systematized, indigenous religious tradition of the early Japanese.[3]

Kitagawa may seem to be taking a slightly more cautious approach than the first two authors in stressing the insufficiency of the term "early Shinto" and in pointing out the lack of any defined/orthodox system of belief in ancient times, but the main crux of each of these three descriptions is essentially same. All seem to agree that Shinto is an ancient religious tradition particular to the Japanese people and centered around the innumerable *kami*, or "indigenous deities" of Japan.

The consistency of such depictions of Shinto as these may naturally lead one to believe that they are well attested to by historical evidence, but a closer examination reveals a far more problematic situation than the one presented by these three authors. Beginning in 1981 with the publication of Toshio Kuroda's seminal work *Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion*, scholarship around Shinto has increasingly tended away from such popular understandings of Shinto as an indigenous Japanese religion, instead aiming to present a more nuanced view of the forms it has assumed throughout history. Despite this recent wealth of scholarship which has begun the arduous task of dismantling these popular narratives of Shinto, one need look no further than such heralds of public opinion as *Wikipedia* (Japanese or English) to see that understandings similar to those presented above are still widely accepted by the majority of people. This paper will thus ultimately aim to synthesize the major scholastic breakthroughs in Shinto studies of the past few decades, presenting a general summary of the pushback against its more traditional narratives and hopefully helping to tilt the scales of public opinion in a new direction. This synthesis will be presented both through a critique of the 20th century scholarship on the subject, and also through a historical deconstruction of the popular narratives that present Shinto as an indigenous religion of Japan.

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[3] Page 11

Method:

When looking at such traditional depictions of Shinto as those mentioned above, a number of misleading assumptions immediately become visible. How, for example, can a Japanese “people” and “nation” be invoked in remote times when the histories of these respective concepts span, at most, a few centuries? For the vast majority of its history, Japan has not been a unified country, but rather a multitude of smaller fiefdoms; the very concept of “Japanese-ness” thus represents an identity that could only have emerged following the unification of Japan into a modern nation state. It should also be noted that this concept could not have emerged without some foreign (i.e. non-Japanese) entity to contrast itself against, and consequently implicit in the very definition of the term is the existence of the “other” (i.e. non-indigenous). In this attempt to place this modern conception of self—one in which the individual is understood to be a member of the greater Japanese people/nation—then, in a period of history where it certainly does not belong, we see the first of many problems present in the traditional scholarly approach to Shinto; namely, a constant series of subjective re-intepretations that inevitably distort/conceal the actual historical reality. For this reason, the notion of Shinto’s “origins” will be largely neglected in this paper, and focus will instead be placed precisely upon these frequent changes in definition and interpretation that, over a long and complicated historical process, eventually combined to produce the modern-day phenomenon known as “Shinto” or “Shintoism”. By thus presenting a detailed historical genealogy of Shinto side by side with its popular depictions (both academic and non-academic), the hope is that many of the inconsistencies present in these traditional narratives will become clear, and that a new understanding of Shinto will become possible.

As a natural result of this approach, all arguments which posit Shinto as an "ancient religion" or claim any semblance of consistency across time (i.e. a "tradition") will necessarily be treated with intense suspicion. Even the briefest of investigations into the historical genealogy of Shinto reveals that popular claims of its having existed—in a more or less defined form—from ancient times down to the present are just as dubious as its claim to "Japanese-ness". The oldest records of Japanese society that survive today are the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712 CE) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720 CE), but when one looks at the earliest occurrences of the term Shinto 神道 in the *Nihon shoki,* it becomes immediately clear that meaning of this word at the time in which these texts were written was vastly different from the one associated with it today. At the time these texts were originally produced, the two character term *shintō* was likely used to refer to the popular religious beliefs of the common people (which were by no means necessarily indigenous), and the term consistently appeared *only* in sentences where it served to contrast those views against Buddhism[4]. In light, then, of this undeniable gap between the "Shinto" that one discerns in such early historical texts and the one that is presented today—mostly through 20th century scholarship—it would seem beneficial to begin any investigation into Shinto by first intensely questioning such traditional narratives as those presented in the introduction of this paper. Indeed, in order to attain any true understanding of "Shinto", one must first, as a natural prerequisite, begin by removing any later interpretations that have been anachronistically superimposed over its actual historical existence.

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[4] To be discussed in detail through an examination of Kuroda's *Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion*

In addition to this first major obstacle—i.e. that of constant change and re-interpretation—the second problem that presents itself to the scholar attempting to grapple with Shinto is one of terminology. The term religion 宗教 (*shūkyō*), for example, did not exist in the Japanese language until the latter half of nineteenth century, and when it did emerge it caused a radical shift in both Japanese psychology and thought. In his article *How "Religion" Came to Be Translated as Shūkyō: Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan,* Hans Martin Krämer discusses the historical circumstances surrounding the entry of this term in the Japanese lexicon. In this work, he argues that to all outward appearances, it seems that the emergence of the word *shūkyo* (literally "sectarian teachings") created for the first time in the Japan a conceptual dichotomy between personal, individual "religion" (*shūkyō)* and public, shared "civic morality" (道徳*dōtoku*). Here Krämer refers to the work of scholar Isomae Jun'ichi, who argues that:

> [U]nder the encroaching cultural dominance of the West [...] following the principles of Western-style enlightenment, 'religion' (*shūkyō*) was entrusted to the sphere of the individual's interior freedom, while the 'secular' sphere of morality (*dōtoku*) was determined to be a national, and thus public, issue. With a clear differentiation between the religious and moral categories being made along the private–public dichotomy, Western modernity came to be comprehended in terms of a dual structure. From the beginning, the very

> notion of an individual with an interiority was for the first time made possible as a form of self-understanding only through the transplantation of Christianity and the related concept of religion.[5]

The relatively recent "transplantation" of both the term and the *concept* of "religion" into the Japanese language that is described above should, at the very least, problematize those definitions of Shinto that aim to present it unequivocally as an "ancient Japanese religion". Indeed, there were many scholars and government officials in the Meiji period who, after coming into contact with this new idea of *shūkyō* for the first time, argued emphatically that Shinto was *not* a religion at all. In order to further highlight the problematic nature of referring to Shinto as a religious tradition, then, this paper will also trace the genealogy of the term "religion" in Japan from the time of its introduction in the late-Tokugawa/early-Meiji period down to the present day, examining how the discourses that took place around this newly assimilated Western concept played a key role in once again re-defining Shinto.

Though the problems introduced in the preceding paragraphs have been discussed only very briefly, they should nevertheless highlight the pressing need for caution when approaching Shinto from a scholarly position. There are a wealth of what I will call "traditional narratives" (as represented by the three accounts seen above and to be elaborated on below) that present us with the popular/prevalent view of Shinto—that is, of a tradition which developed from the loosely organized indigenous religious practices of the ancient Japanese people into more modern, structured manifestations such as State Shinto 国家神道, interacting with other religions such as Buddhism and Christianity along the way, but ultimately remaining separate from them, down to the present day. As has already been pointed out, such accounts of Shinto are both historically inaccurate and highly misleading; this is not to say, however, that they are completely without meaning or value. These interpretations represent the most recent understanding of the historical phenomenon known as Shinto and they have undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping both academic/non-academic perspectives on the subject. What is crucial, however, in approaching Shinto, is that one always keep in mind the fact that these accounts present *only the most recent of its numerous historical manifestations* and are not necessarily factually accurate simply by virtue of being widely believed.

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[5] Krämer, Hans Martin. *How "Religion" Came to Be Translated as "Shūkyō": Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan*. Japan Review No. 25 (2013): 89-111. JSTOR. p. 90

In light of the many difficulties facing the scholar attempting to define Shinto—a notoriously elusive and hard-to-define term—the approach I thus wish to advocate in this paper is a postmodern lens drawing mainly on the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. For reasons that will be discussed in further detail below, it will be argued that the respective methods of these two scholars fill a unique and very important need in modern Shinto studies—that of a systematic and ruthless re-examination of all past scholarship on the subject. Much of the scholarship pre-1981—the year in which Kuroda's article was first published—tended to do no more than play into the popular myths surrounding Shinto, thereby furthering the numerous misconceptions present in these accounts. This generation of scholars failed to challenge the "indigenous religion" narrative of Shinto and instead presented it as a historically accurate depiction—in this way, they perhaps did more than anyone else to solidify this particular understanding of Shinto in Japan and the greater world. Now, however, that the numerous insufficiencies of this view of Shinto have been effectively brought to light, what is needed first and foremost in modern Shinto studies is an unrelenting critique of the narratives that these scholars helped to popularize. In this regard, the author believes that the respective approaches of Derrida and Foucault have much to offer the scholar of Shinto.

New Perspectives: An Introduction to Derrida and Foucault

While still living, Derrida pioneered a new style of scholarship in which the object of study was first approached in a negative manner and broken apart from singular (i.e. neat, coherent) narratives into its respective components in order to demonstrate the lack of any essence beneath a concept/idea. This process, popularly referred to as "deconstruction," was then similarly applied to each of these individual components, and so on ad infinitum, for there was in Derrida's mind no "core" to be finally arrived at—only complete disparity. Through this scholarly approach of "deconstruction", then, Derrida aimed to demonstrate two important facts: first, the historical reality of a phenomenon is *always* more complicated than popular understanding presents it to be. To state this in other words, lying beneath every succinct and persuasive historical narrative is a far more chaotic and convoluted historical reality. And second, no historical occurrence can be traced back to a single cause/origin. For Derrida, history was not a neat progression of concepts/ideas from one to another, but instead a violent series of interactions and conflicts between a myriad of different factors—all of which are themselves illusory/lacking in substance. The entire aim of deconstruction, then, is to take popularly-believed, coherent narratives—as typified by Kitagawa's description of Shinto seen above—and to demonstrate the constructed nature of these myths by systematically dismantling the basis upon which they are built.

In the work of Foucault, on the other hand, one sees an application of the genealogical approach first pioneered by Nietzsche to a number of different historical events. In this genealogical approach, it is not the vague idea of an object's “essence” or its popular understanding, but instead *how* the term/concept in question has *actually* functioned throughout history which is of interest to the scholar. Foucault aimed in his work to create an “effective history”—one that does not serve as a “handmaiden to philosophy…[allowing us] to discover the roots of our identity, [but one which instead] confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference”[6]. He argued that while we tend to treat concepts as containing some “essence” which is being slowly revealed over time, they are in fact empty of meaning and thus capable of being re-appropriated and wielded differently any number of times throughout history. These different historical points of re-appropriation—which Foucault called “emergences”—can be identified through an examination of historical shifts in power/discourse, and the process of locating and plotting these countless emergences across time is the practice of genealogy. By demonstrating in this way the lack of a consistent narrative/understanding behind any historical concept, Foucault’s genealogical approach effectively argues for the abandonment of all “traditional narratives” of history, as they consistently fail to present an accurate vision of historical events, but instead only gloss over the *actual* series of events that compose their respective genealogies.

The value that the respective methods of Derrida and Foucault offer to the scholar of Shinto should be somewhat apparent from the above, albeit brief, descriptions of their scholarly approaches. Modern Shinto studies remains trapped within the confines of a number of problematic terms that warrant deconstruction in the Derridean style; first and foremost among these, of course, is the term “Shinto” itself, but many other terms commonly used to describe Shinto (e.g. religion, cult, and ritual) also deserve our attention. By breaking down such ostensibly singular terms as “Shinto” and “religion” into their component parts—thereby demonstrating the fact that they are *not* in fact as coherent as they are presented to be—the likewise *seemingly* consistent narratives that these terms combine to compose will in turn become problematized. It is only *after* this diagnostic/curative process of “deconstruction” is complete that any positive historical account of Shinto can be presented. As regards this positive approach, a “new history of Shinto” will be presented in the Foucauldian genealogical style. Rather than attempting to re-trace the natural development of Shinto from its pre-historic form down to its modern day existence, this paper will instead examine the various points of “emergence” throughout history where the term “Shinto” was re-appropriated and bent toward some new purpose/meaning. Through the construction of such a genealogy of Shinto, many of the common misconceptions surrounding the term will be exposed and a more accurate image of the true role it has played in history will begin to emerge. Before any of this can take place, however, a more detailed introduction to the thought of Derrida and Foucault is necessary; the following sections will thus attempt to succinctly present these respective thinkers thought and elaborate on their connection/value to modern Shinto studies.

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[6] Foucault, Michel, and Paul Rabinow. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon, 1984. Print. pp. 89-90.

Deconstructing "Religion" in Japan

Derrida is most famously known for his appropriation of the word "deconstruction" in order to signify what he described as "an operation bearing on [and dismantling] the structure or traditional architecture of the fundamental concepts of ontology or Western metaphysics"[7]. In short, Derrida aimed to demonstrate that the multitude of concepts upon which the great bulk of Western scholarship is built in fact have no essence and cannot be reduced to a "simple element" or an "indissoluble origin"; they are each themselves capable of being broken down into smaller components that are, likewise, also deconstructible. In Derrida's scholarly approach, then, the term "religion," too, is nothing more than yet one more concept to be deconstructed, and the starting point of Derrida's deconstruction of religion is seen in his assertion that the term itself is inseparable from the language/culture that originally gave birth to it—Latin.

Derrida describes the problem of defining "religion" in the following way in:

> [When we use the term *religio*] we are already speaking Latin…[for religion] was named in Latin, [and] let us never forget it. Does not "the question of *religio,*" however, quite simply merge, one could say, with the question of Latin? By which should be understood, beyond [merely] "a question of language and culture,"[also] the strange phenomenon of Latinity and it's globalization. We are not speaking here of universality, even of an idea of universality, only of a process of universalization that is finite but enigmatic. It is rarely investigated in its geopolitical and ethico-juridicial scope,

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[7] Olson, Carl. *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*: A Selection of Critical Readings. Australia: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003. Print. p.585

> precisely where such a power finds itself overtaken, deployed, its *paradoxical* heritage revived by the global and still irresistible hegemony of a 'language', which is to say, also of a culture that in part is not Latin but Anglo-American. For everything that touches religion in particular, for everything that speaks 'religion', for whoever speaks religiously or about religion, Anglo-American remains Latin. "[8]

The argument that Derrida presents here can be summarized simply in this way: the question of religion *must necessarily* take into account the Latin culture—and the associated corpus of concepts/terms of that particular culture—from which it first emerged. He goes on later to explain why he believes this to be the case, in all of his characteristic complexity, arguing:

> Religion in the *singuluar*? Response: 'Religion is the response.' Is it not there, perhaps, that we must seek the beginning of a response? Assuming, that is, that one knows what *responding* means, and also *responsibility*. Assuming, that is, that one knows it—and believes in it. No response, indeed, without a principle of responsibility: one must respond to the other, before the other and for oneself. And no responsibility without a *given word*, a sworn faith <*foi jurēe*>, without a pledge, without an oath, without some *sacrament* or *ius iurandum*. Before even envisaging the semantic history of testimony, of oaths, of given word (a genealogy and interpretation that are indispensable to whomever hopes to think religion under its proper or secularized forms), before even recalling that some sort of 'I promise the truth' is always at work, and some sort of 'I make this commitment before the other from the moment that I address him, even and perhaps above all to commit perjury',

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[8] *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*: p.588

> **we must formally take note of the fact that we are already speaking Latin.** We make a point of this is order to recall that the world today speaks Latin (most often via Anglo-American) when it authorizes itself in the *name* of *religion*.[9]

Derrida is here discussing the etymological roots of the term *religio*, and he goes out of his way to highlight terms such as *responding, responsibility, sacrament*, etc. in order to draw the readers attention to the fact that such terms as these—upon which the definition of *religio* is undeniably built—are each themselves particular to Latin culture and its sphere of influence. In Derrida's mind, the concept of religion can correspondingly only be truly comprehended—or comprehendable—in those linguistic realms in which these terms are also present. Derrida does not stop his process of deconstruction here, however, by simply breaking the term religion down into such component parts as these, but instead goes on to explain how the concept of responsibility itself cannot exist without the component concepts of "a *given word*, a sworn faith <*foi jurēe*>… a pledge… an oath… [a] *sacrament* or *ius iurandum*"[10]. Here one begins to see the process of deconstruction—a seemingly automatic and unending process—in action, as the ostensibly coherent concept of religion, today so freely utilized across the world and with no regard for cultural/linguistic boundaries, gradually becomes more and more problematic and particular in its scope of meaning.

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[9] Derrida, Jacques, and Gianni Vattimo. *Religion.* Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. Print. pp. 26-27. Emphasis added

[10] Derrida, Jacques, and Gil Anidjar. *Acts of Religion.* New York: Routledge, 2002. Print. p. 64

Derrida takes a moment here to again remind his readers of the uniquely *particular* nature of the term religion by pointing out the fact that by even invoking the term at all, we are simultaneously also invoking all of its component terms. As mentioned above, one of the component terms which makes up of *religio* is the uniquely Latin understanding of a "sworn promise" or solemn "oath," and this concept is undoubtedly a crucial part of the foundation for any true understanding of religion. But any sort of promise or oath (i.e. *sacrament*) necessarily requires a witness, and, as Derrida explains, for this reason, the act of swearing necessarily "presupposes God *as* [this] witness"[11]. Here again, deconstruction is seen in action breaking down the concept of a sacrament/testament into its component parts and as before, the process of deconstruction continues naturally, for by presupposing God as witness to the oath, a multitude of other component concepts cannot also help but be presupposed in the process. Derrida describes this process in further detail, explaining that:

> Presupposed at the origin of all address, coming from the other *to whom it is also addressed*, the wager <*gageure*> of a sworn promise, taking immediately God as its witness, cannot not but have already, if one can put it this way, engendered God quasi-mechanically. *A priori* ineluctable, a descent of God *ex machina* would stage a transcendental addressing machine. One would thus have begun by posing, retrospectively, the absolute right of anteriority, the absolute 'birthright' <*le droit d'aînesse absolu*> of a One who is not born. For in taking God as a witness, even when he is not named in the most 'secular' <*laïque*> pledge of commitment, the oath cannot *not* produce, invoke or

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[11] *Acts of Religion.* p. 65

> convoke him as already there, and therefore as unengendered and unengenderable, prior to being itself: unproducible… Without God, no absolute witness. No absolute witness to be taken as witness in testifying. But with God, a God that is present, the existence of a third (*terstis, testis*) that is absolute, all attestation becomes superfluous, insignificant or secondary. Testimony, which is to say, testament as well…God: the witness as 'nameable-unnameable', present-absent witness of every oath or of every possible pledge. As long as one supposes, *concesso non dato*, that religion has the slightest relation to what we thus call God, it would pertain not only to the general history of nomination, but more strictly here, under its name of *religio*, to a history of the *sacramentum* and of the *testimonium*. It would *be* this history, it would merge with it.[12]

As is made clear here by Derrida, when we invoke the term religion—regardless of whether or not this is in an academic or non-academic setting—we are also *necessarily* invoking a veritable mountain of other concepts and terms that are *particular to the Latin culture and its sphere of influence*. This is evidenced above by Derrida's deconstruction of religion, which reveals under the surface of the seemingly simple term a complex system of thought which is extremely nuanced and unique to the phenomenon of "Latinity". The question that remains for any scholar of religion, then, upon acceptance of this fact, is whether or not the term religion can be properly applied to any sort of "religious" phenomena that falls *outside of* this sphere of Latin influence, as this would essentially amount to the forced transplantation of these foreign concepts into a linguistic/cultural matrix where they (at least historically speaking) do not belong. Here we must seriously reconsider the question of whether or not Shinto can/should properly be called a Japanese "religion".

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[12] *Acts of Religion.* p. 64-65

Derrida himself believed that though Latin society itself was long gone, the Latin culture and language continued to live on and spread around the world in an "irresistible and imperial fashion"[13]. Derrida describes this phenomenon of "Globolatinization*"* in *Religion,* arguing that:

> *Religion* circulates in the world, one might say, like an *English word <comme un mot anglais>* that has been to Rome and taken a detour to the United States. Well beyond its strictly capitalist or politco-military figures, a hyper-imperialist appropriation has been underway now for centuries. It imposes itself in a particularly palpable manner within the conceptual apparatus of international law and of global political rhetoric. Wherever this apparatus dominates, it articulates itself through a discourse on religion. From here on, **the word "religion" is calmly (and violently) applied to things which have always been and remain foreign to what this word names and arrests in history.** The same remark could apply to many other words, for the entire "religious vocabulary", beginning with "cult," "faith," "belief," "sacred," "holy," "saved," "unscathed" … But by ineluctable contagion, no semantic cell can remain alien, I dare not say "safe and sound," "unscathed," in this apparently borderless process…*Globolatinization* (essentially Christian, to be sure), this word names a unique event to which a meta-language seems incapable of acceding, although such a language remains, all

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[13] *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*: p.588

> the same, of the greatest necessity here. For at the same time that we no longer perceive its limits, we know that such a globalization is finite and only projected. What is involved here is a Latinization and, rather than globality, a globalization that is running out of breath <*essouffēe*>, however irresistible and imperial it still may be. What are we to think of this running out of breath? Whether it holds a future or is held in store for it, we do not know and by definition cannot know. But at the bottom of such non-knowing, the expiring breath is blasting the ether of the world. Some breathe there better than others, some are stifled… The co-extensiveness of the two questions (religion and worldwide Latinization) marks the dimensions of what henceforth cannot be reduced to a question of language, culture, semantics, nor even, without doubt, to one of anthropology or of history.[14]

When one looks at the case of Shinto, Derrida appears to be spot on in his assessment. The term "religion"—translated into Japanese as 宗教 (*shūkyō*)—crept gradually into the Japanese vocabulary through exactly such a process of "ineluctable contagion" (greatly through political dialogue with Western powers/discourse around Christianity) until it eventually found itself being "violently" appropriated to describe "things which have always been and remain foreign to what [the] word names and arrests in history"—namely, Shinto itself. As Derrida's deconstruction of the term religion demonstrates, the very use of this term alone implies a multitude of concepts and ways of understanding the world that are, historically speaking, completely absent in Japan. The scholar of Shinto should thus be exceedingly wary of using the term *shūkyō*, undeniably a very recent entry into the Japanese language, in describing historical events that occurred almost exclusively in a time period where this concept had yet to emerge/assume any sort of agency in Japanese history.

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[14] *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*: p.588-589. Emphasis added

Let us here return to Kramer's article *How "Religion" Came to Be Translated as Shūkyō: Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan,* where the author dicusses the entry of the term *religio* (*shūkyō*) into Japan. Here Kramer argues that:

> We are well advised to be wary of assumptions that Western ideas were "introduced" or "transplanted" to Japan; instead, we might rather consider the notion of "appropriation" to grasp the complex processes of cultural transfer and translation at work between the West and Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. 1870s Japanese elite representatives appropriated a certain understanding of religion, and they did so for their own purposes and with their own agendas.[15]

While Kramer here highlights a notable difference in opinion among scholars as to whether the term religion was forcibly "introduced" or, rather, actively "appropriated" by Japanese individuals, the underlying assumption for either scenario is the same—the term religion is, until the early Meiji period, a completely foreign and unused term that must be explained/defined for the Japanese audience. In this early period following its appearance, perhaps no person did more to help popularize the word *shūkyō* in Japan than the Buddhist intellectual Shimaji Mokurai, and evidence of an active appropriation of the term on his part—as argued for above by Kramer—is readily discernible in much of his writing from the early- to mid- 1870's. While traveling abroad in Paris, Shimaji reflected that:

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[15] Krämer: 90

> The difference between politics (*sei* 政) and religion (*kyō* 教) should never be obscured. Politics is a human affair and only governs outward forms. Moreover, it separates countries from each other. Religion, however, is divine action and governs the heart. […] How is it possible that, although the form of government of each country is different, their religion is the same? … With religion one makes people good, with politics one makes people invest effort. […] That both Japan and China have traditionally erred in [the relationship between politics and religion seems to me to stem from their having frequently confused the two. In the old days, the Europeans had erred [here] as well, and their culture was enormously backward. In recent times, however, they have come to see this and have now reached great results. I wish this for our country as well.[16]

In this essay, Shimaji is both attempting to define "religion" for a Japanese public that is encountering the term for the first time, and also simultaneously arguing for the Japanese government to recognize the legitimacy of *his particular interpretation* of the new term (and the political/religious dichotomy it implies). Implicit in Shimaji's argument is his personal desire for a separation of religion and politics in Japan similar to the one he witnessed in his travels across Europe, and here one sees a hint of what Kramer is referring to when he argues that the term religion was often appropriated by the "1870s Japanese elite" for some ulterior agenda. As regards the scholar of Shinto, however, far more important than the individual motivation of Shimaji himself is the undeniable evidence that his writing offers for the recent introduction of this term "religion" into the Japanese language. When one considers that not even 150 years have passed since Shimaji's early attempts to define the term "religion" for a Japanese audience, definitions of Shinto such as the one mentioned earlier by Dr. Kishimoto— which present it as an "ancient" and "indigenous *religion*" of Japan—become very problematic indeed.

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[16] Krämer: 91-92

After Shimaji, undoubtedly one of the greatest shapers of the meaning of the term "religion" in Japan was Anesaki Masaharu, the first chair of Tokyo University's newly founded religious studies department and the man generally credited with founding the discipline in Japan. Anesaki had spent time abroad in Europe, and his personal definition of religion was highly influenced by the Western concept of *sui generis* religion—that is to say, the belief "that religion or religious experience is of a kind wholly unique and thus irreducible...incomparable with any other social institution or practice"[17]. He believed that there was some essential core to all religious experience, and that any differences between the religions of the world amounted to nothing more than peculiarities of form. In his article *The Discursive Position of Religious Studies in Japan: Masaharu Anesaki and the Origins of Religious Studies,* Isomae Jun'ichi argues that:

> For Anesaki, who treated religion as a primary human activity, differences were no absolute, but merely variatons in the expression of phenomena which belong to the same "religious consciousness". Anesaki understood religion to be a twofold matter comprised of phenomena and essence,

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[17] "Department of Religious Studies." Department of Religious Studies. University of Alabama, Web.

> whereby each "developed religion" was simply a phenomena, while the essence of religion was found in the religious consciousness of the individual...[18]

To hear Anesaki define his views on religion in his own words, we need look no further than his 1900 publication *of A General Introduction to Religious Studies*, in which he states that:

> In the majority of cases, if we can recognize the unity of human nature, then we must also search for unity in the development of religion. Furthermore, the reason for its variety of changes to arise may be explained, and their specificity may be used to explicate the position they occupy with respect to religious development in general. As a psychological fact, we must observe how religion functions for the human mind (*jinshin*), and from the two standpoints of comparison and history, we must study the fundamental principles religion expresses in society.[19]

Owing to his position as the chair of a newly founded academic discipline, as well as to the general lack of a fixed definition of religion at this point in Japan's history, Anesaki was presented with a unique opportunity to interpret the term in essentially whatever way he pleased. In other words, no matter what interpretation of *shūkyō* Anesaki ultimately chose to adopt, it was almost guaranteed to have a lasting impact on future generations of Japanese scholars just by virtue of the position in which he found himself. Indeed, when one examines the scholarship of 20th century religious studies in Japan, it is readily apparent that Anesaki's understanding of *sui generis* religion was not to disappear with him when he passed away in 1949, but instead would be adopted by the next generation of religious scholars as the standard interpretation of the term for decades to come.

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[18] Isomae (2002): p. 25

[19] *Shukyo-gaku Gairon* (Anesaki Masaharu Chosakushu, 6). Tokyo: Tokyo Senmon Gakko. (1900).

Deconstructing "Japanese Religion"

Now that we have successfully identified the early Meiji period as the entry point of the term *shūkyō* into the Japanese language and discussed its gradual crystallization of meaning through early used by such Buddhist intellectuals as Shimaji and in the work of Anesaki Masaharu, let us next turn our attention to the phrase "Japanese religion" (日本の宗教 *nihon no shūkyō*) and trace a general outline of its genealogy in Japan. In his *Deconstructing "Japanese Religion": A Historical Survey*, Jun'ichi Isomae argues that:

> The phrase "Japanese religion" did not appear until the end of the Meiji period (1868-1912), considerably later than the emergence of either "Japanese" or "religion," which had already appeared separately at the beginning of Meiji and are Western in origin. The word "Japanese" (namely, "of Japan") denotes things related to the nation-state. "Religion" originated within Christianity but for those following Anesaki's ideas, it has come to mean a psychological towardness to unlimited beings, so it now encompasses non-Christian beliefs found in Buddhism, Islam, and Shinto. Since some of these religions are not confined to the boundaries of the one nation-state of Japan, it became necessary to connect the terms "Japanese" and "religion" as a means to distinguish "Japanese religion" from all other religions. (Hence, the combined term "Japanese religion" emerged much later than its component terms.[20]

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[20] *Deconstructing "Japanese Religion": A Historical Survey* Jun'ichi Isomae, Japanese Journal of Religious Studies Vol. 32, No. 2, Essays from the XIXth World Congress of the IAHR, Tokyo, March 2005 (2005), pp. 235-248

While the earliest uses of the term *shūkyō* are found in Japan from the 1850s onwards, Isomae points out that it was not until the early 20th century that scholars first began to formally use the phrase "Japanese religion". In this same article, *Deconstructing" Japanese Religion"*, Isomae presents to his reader a detailed genealogy of the phrase in order to trace its development in Japan; in this endeavor, he again chooses as his starting point the work of his predecessor at Tokyo University, Anesaki Masaharu. Isomae explains that:

> The phrase "Japanese religion" first appeared as an academic term in 1907 in an English-language leaflet entitled *The Religious History of Japan, an Outline*, written by Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治... Like Nitobe Inazō's 新渡戸稲造 *Bushidō*: *The Soul of Japan* (1907) and Okakura Tenshin's 岡倉天心 *The Book of Tea* (1906), this book was originally written for readers of English and was not even translated into Japanese until 1912 (Anesaki 1912). Although Analysis of "the West" and its influence on "Japanese religion" can be quite problematic, it seems clear that the very concept of Japanese religion has only recently appeared under the gaze of the Western world. It could be said that this concept emerged in reaction to Western religious concepts in order to present clear distinctions between them, and to form its own identity and boundaries in relation to them.[21]

It is not at all insignificant that this text, containing the first-ever printed use of the phrase "Japanese religion," was originally written for a Western audience. The number of Japanese individuals at this time who would have been able to understand the concept of *shūkyō*, which brought with it a whole new corpus of related concepts/terms hitherto foreign to Japan, would have been very limited indeed. In order to partake in the conversation at all, one would have first needed to become fluent in this new discursive realm that the term religion had introduced to Japan. So even if we were to identify 1912 as the year which heralded the beginning of this new discourse around "Japanese religion" in Japan, we should still be *highly* wary of assuming that this term was at all commonplace/well-known by the greater Japanese population, to whom it would have been an esoteric "technical term" (専門用語 *senmonyōgo*) at best.

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[21] Isomae (2005): 236

There is an additional problem inherent in this term "Japanese religion," or *nihon no shūkyō*—namely, the ambiguity of the Japanese possessive particle *no*. This issue is discussed in detail by Isomae, who observes that:

> The tension of concepts within the term "Japanese religion" gives the phrase a dualistic meaning: Both religions *particular to* Japan as well as religion *in* Japan. The idea of religion *particular to* Japan emphasizes the uniqueness of "Japanese religion" as an ahistorical, unified facet of "Japaneseness." In this sense, the non-national character of "religion" is assimilated into the boundaries of the nation-state. On the other hand, the idea of religions *in* Japan stresses the co-existence of different religious beliefs, making Japan a hybrid space where religions have both emerged and been introduced, and have then influenced one another… Most Japanese scholars have

> deliberately avoided the term in the former, inclusive [i.e. *particular to*] sense.[22]

There is present in any use of the phrase “Japanese religion” a fundamental ambiguity which makes it unclear if one is referring to the religions *of* Japan [i.e. indigenous], or simply those present *in* Japan. Anesaki was the first scholar of religion to attempt to grapple with this problematic term “Japanese religion,” but by the time he was succeeded by his protégé Hideo Kishimoto at the University of Tokyo, there was already a considerable consensus among scholars that the term “Japanese religion” should be avoided wherever possible for its double meaning and suggestions of an “indigenous” or “particular” religion of Japan. Isomae describes this steady sea change in scholarly opinion away from Anesaki’s use of the phrase in the following way:

> Unlike his predecessor, Kishimoto's general treatment of "Japanese religion" lacks the unified theme of religion particular to Japan, but rather is a collection of five independent chapters written by different authors about religions in the early modern era, including Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, and new religions. Like Kishimoto, almost all Japanese scholars have avoided describing the indigenous nature of "Japanese religion:' since for them the term carries a nationalistic connotation of religion particular to Japan that emphasizes its uniqueness, as in Anesaki's work. They prefer to limit their use of the term to contemplation on religions in Japan and to make arguments about different religions. Avoiding the indigenous nature of "Japanese religion" seems to be a common tendency, especially after the

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[22] Isomae (2005): 235-236

> publication of Kishimoto's book. It seems that although Japanese scholars have suspected the tensions inherent within the term "Japanese religion"' most have limited its usage, even if unconsciously.[23]

Despite the significant steps Kishimoto took away from the work of Anesaki in his *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era*, he still ultimately ends up defining Shinto in this text as the “Japanese polytheistic folk religion which goes back to the beginning of history” (4). Thus even in the context of a text which is lauded as being among the first to treat the idea of indigenous Japanese religion with a healthy skepticism, the final step is not taken to argue that Shinto is in fact *not* a Japanese religion at all. Any number of explanations as to why this is the case could be offered—perhaps foremost among these was Kishimoto’s proximity to and close relationship with Anesaki himself—but for whatever reason, this interpretation of Shinto as an indigenous religion was to remain more or less immune to skepticism for another 30 years to follow, despite an increasing trend away from describing “indigenous Japanese religion” across Japanese academia.

Before moving on to examine the term Shinto 神道 itself, let us first make some final considerations about the nature of the terms “religion” and “Japanese religion” in Japan. Given the highly recent introduction of these terms into the Japanese language, the question presented to the scholar of Japanese religion seems to be one of whether or not they should they be utilized at all in referring to pre-modern times. Derrida would of course say no, but he would also go beyond this to argue that the term religion not only should not be applied to any period pre-1850s, but should not be used to describe anything that is not explicitly *Christian*. He presents this argument in the following way, saying:

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[23] Isomae (2005): 237

> In any case, the history of the word 'religion' should in principle forbid every non-Christian from using the name 'religion' in order to recognize in it what 'we' would designate, identify and isolate there. Why add here this qualification of 'non-Christian'? In other words, why should the concept of religion be solely Christian?... Whatever side one takes in this debate [over the two proposed etymological sources of the Latin word *religio*—i.e. *relegere* or *religare*] it is to the ellipse of these double Latin foci that the entire modern (geo-theologico-political) problematic… refers. Whoever would not acknowledge the legitimacy of this double-foci or the Christian prevalence that has imposed itself globally within the said Latinity would have to refuse the very premises of such a debate.[24]

Thus in the mind of Derrida, the term religion and its close historical relationship with the particularities of Latin culture and society necessarily exclude it from being utilized to describe any non-Christian (i.e. non-Latin) phenomenon. The author tends to agree with Derrida here, as even such a brief deconstruction of the term religion as the one presented above reveals innumerable component concepts that are unique to "Latinity"—e.g. God as omnipresent, interested witness to any testament or solemn oath, the corresponding concepts of *sacramentum, ius iurandum*, etc. When one uses the term religion to describe a phenomenon existing outside of this Latin sphere of influence, one is thus necessarily projecting these concepts into a matrix where they do not belong, and this must be doubly the case when approaching Shinto as the term “Japanese religion” has been demonstrated to have its roots in scholarship as recent as the mid 20th century.

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[24] *Acts of Religion*: 72

Isomae, however, unlike Derrida, believes that there is the possibility of a constructive use of the term “Japanese religion” in religious studies—a position he elaborates on in the conclusion of his *Deconstructing Japanese Religion*:

> It can be said that discourse on “Japanese religion” emerged only as modern Japanese society was exposed to Western concepts of religion. As mentioned above, distinct elements are juxtaposed within the term “Japanese religion,” and a new communicative space has been opened…It is noteworthy that the study of “Japanese religion” has been promoted by the intersection of many diverse disciplines of study, including historiography, sociology, anthropology, Buddhist studies, Shinto studies, theology, folklore, and so on, whereas the science of religion (*shūkyōgaku* 宗教学), in its narrow adherence to sui generis religion, has made no significant contribution, except in the case of scholars like Anesaki and Kishimoto. It is essentially impossible to fix the content of “Japanese religion” to any one academic definition, so its discursive nature urges diverse disciplines to participate in heterogeneous discussion and negotiation from a standpoint free of the Western notion of sui generis religion, which the science of religion has tried to transplant into Japanese society as an agent of the idealized West.[25]

From the above quote it is apparent that Isomae believes the term “Japanese religion” can only be of value to scholars of religion *after* they have become aware of the mainly Western hermeneutical biases that have thus far dominated the majority of scholarship on the subject. In his mind, by moving away from the *sui generis* understanding of religion, it will become possible to view Shinto not as some evolving entity with an essential core, but instead as a highly complicated phenomena that has been re-interpreted countless times throughout history. If we are not yet ready to cease using the term religion to describe Shinto, then this goal of Isomae's is, at the very least, a solid step forward. The new, more nuanced understanding of religion which Isomae is here advocating for, in conjunction with a more detailed understanding of the genealogy of the terms "religion" and "Japanese religion" in Japan, will hopefully serve to aid the modern scholar of Shinto who is concerned with uncovering its historical actuality beneath the mountain of problematic—whether foreign, anachronistic, or just plain fictional—concepts that have gradually built up around it.

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[25] Isomae (2005): 243

Deconstructing Shinto—An Intro to the Genealogical Approach

Now that we have seen the process of deconstruction in action through our Derridean approach to the terms "religion" and "Japanese religion" and in our analysis of their respective genealogies in Japan, the logical next step is to apply this same method to the term Shinto 神道 itself as well as to any component terms that may happen come to light in the deconstruction process. In addition to this, we will also attempt to construct a Foucaldian genealogy—or an "effective history"—of Shinto in order to challenge its traditional narratives, and so before beginning this deconstruction process a more detailed introduction to Foucault's method is warranted. It is undeniable that Foucault drew the majority of his inspiration in the genealogical approach from Nietzsche, who originally created this technique and in his own work applied it to such historical concepts as "good," "evil" and "guilt" in order to show that they had a distinct point of emergence in history, and were not some suprahistorical ideal existing beyond time. The method which Nietzsche laid out in his *On the Genealogy of Morality* was to become the core of Foucault's approach to history, and he would attempt in his own scholarship to apply this genealogical approach to a number of different subjects including the Western—mainly European/French—concepts of sexuality, insanity, and punishment. In the process of constructing the genealogies for these and a number of other specific historical phenomena, Foucault also sketched out a more general outline of his view of what "effective history" looks like, and how a historian should approach his object of study. For the clearest visions of this new type of "philosophical ethos" that Foucault believed should become the guiding principle in our attempts to create an effective history of humanity, one need look no further than his 1971 essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*. [26]

In order to truly understand genealogy and its value to the historian/scholar of religion, we must first identify the preexisting historical approach it sought to set itself in opposition against. In *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, Foucault criticizes the prevailing approach of his time indirectly by presenting his reader with a clear description of what genealogy is *not*; in this regard he argues that:

> Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.[27]

From the above quote, we can conclude that one of the approaches to history that genealogy is seeking to distance itself from is the "progressive view"—i.e., the approach which supposes gradual but consistent development over time, culminating in some sort of ultimate "fulfillment" or "destiny". In this regard, the historical perspective of Christianity comes to mind in the way that it supposes all of history to be working toward some final pre-destined state of attainment. In this view of the world, all of history essentially functions as nothing more than a series of varied intermediary stages along the path to this final realization. Foucault addresses this approach to history in a slightly more direct/antagonistic manner later on when he argues that:

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[26] *The Foucault Reader*: 47
[27] *The Foucault Reader*: 81

> The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events….The historian's history finds its support outside of time and pretends to base its judgments on an apocalyptic objectivity. This is only possible, however, because of its belief in eternal truth, the immortality of the soul, and the nature of consciousness as always identical to itself. Once the historical sense is mastered by a suprahistorical perspective, metaphysics can bend it to its own purpose, and, by aligning it to the demands of objective science, it can impose its own "Egyptianism." On the other hand, the historical sense can evade metaphysics and become a privileged instrument of genealogy if it refuses the certainty of absolutes. Given this, it corresponds to the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses; that is capable of liberating divergence and marginal elements—the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through

> which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past...[28]

In attempting to understand genealogy, it is crucially important to first have an understanding of what sets it apart from other approaches to history. In Foucault's mind, the genealogical historian should avoid all types of suprahistorical narratives superimposed over actual historical events; he warns fellow scholars to be wary of following into the trap of "Egyptianism" that the metaphysical perspective offers, and instead advocates an understanding of historical happenings as essentially accidental/meaningless.

Foucault's understanding of history is, for most people, not a very reassuring one, as it seeks to demonstrate that history is in fact wholly accidental—not part of some larger "plan" or "destiny". Foucault explains that:

> The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events. If it appears as a "marvelous motley, profound and totally meaningful," this is because it began and continues its secret existence through a "host of errors and phantasms." We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events...[29]

In addition to this stated goal of undermining all such comforting visions of history, genealogy is also a detail-intensive enterprise and, at a surface level, far less enticing than many of these *seemingly* more-coherent narratives offered by, for example, the progressive view. Foucault describes the somewhat unappealing nature of the genealogical approach in the following way:

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[28] *The Foucault Reader*: 86-89

[29] *The Foucault Reader*: 89

> Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times… genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles… [It] consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material. Its "cyclopean monuments" are constructed from "discreet and apparently insignificant truths and according to a rigorous method"; they cannot be the product of "large and well-meaning errors." In short, genealogy demands relentless erudition. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for "origins." [30]

For the majority of people, the genealogical approach will always remain a far less appealing view of history than those of such narratives which attempt to imbue meaning through the weaving of accidental happenings and random occurrences into a coherent story. For the historian, however, the genealogical approach is without a doubt a fundamentally necessary component of any worthwhile scholarship. Without it, one can little help but fall prey the temptation of the metaphysical perspective and thus accomplish nothing more in one's work than to play "handmaiden to philosophy". The true work of the historian/scholar, then, in Foucault's perspective, is to introduce into history *dis*continuity—a disparity that comes from the realization that there is no providential hand at play in history, "only the iron hand of necessity shaking the dice-box of chance"[31]

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[30] *The Foucault Reader*: 76-77

Rather than a view of history in which events follow one another in a logical progression, Foucault wishes instead for us to see history through an analogy of struggle. Because historical events are in and of themselves empty of meaning, they are consequently capable of being wielded (i.e. imbued with meaning) toward any number of different ends across time, and this series of numerous, violent appropriations is what the genealogical approach sets out to document. The entire method thus revolves around this central concept of "emergence," a term which Foucault utilizes in order to refer to the different points in history where a term/concept is re-interpreted in a novel way in order to further some particular agenda. By tracing the different historical points of emergence underlying any one phenomenon, we begin to see a much more problematic vision of history than that which is present in more popular narratives. Foucault describes emergence and the singularly important role it plays in the genealogical approach in the following way:

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[31] *The Foucault Reader*: 89

> …emergence designates a place of confrontation, but not as a closed field offering the spectacle of a struggle among equals. Rather, as Nietzsche demonstrates in his analysis of good and evil, it is a "non-place," a pure distance, which indicates that the adversaries do not belong to a common space. Consequently, no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice. In a sense, only a single drama is ever staged in this "non-place," the endlessly repeated play of dominations…Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. The nature of these rules allows violence to be inflicted on violence and the resurgence of new forces that are sufficiently strong to dominate those in power. Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules."[32]

When one considers popular depictions of Shinto—which undoubtedly fall under the progressive/evolutionary view of history—the value that the genealogical approach can offer in helping to dispel these meta-narratives should be more or less apparent. Acting under the belief that the true historical reality of Shinto is a far more problematic/complex existence than these popular narratives suggest, we will thus attempt to trace a genealogy of Shinto through a search for its different historical points of emergence. In doing so, our aim will be to definitively demonstrate both the lack of any historical consistency in popular understandings of Shinto, as well as those ulterior motives which lurk unseen under each of these different points of “emergence”.

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[32] *The Foucault Reader*: 84-86

Toward a New Genealogy of Shinto

The logical place to begin our deconstruction of Shinto is to look for the earliest occurrences of the two-character compound in Japanese history. It should first be stated, however, that from this point on the italicized "*shintō*" will be used to refer to *the term* which appears in historical texts, while "Shinto" will continue to refer to our more modern understanding of the term as a concept/object of scholarship. In his *Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion* Japanese scholar of religion Toshio Kuroda describes the first three uses of the term *shintō* in Japan in the early 8th century text known as the *Nihon shoki*, which are presented below:

> 1) The emperor believed in the teachings of the Buddha (*Buppō* or *hotoke no minori*) [仏法] and revered Shinto (or *kami no michi*) [神道]. (Prologue on Emperor Yomei)
>
> 2) The emperor revered the teachings of the Buddha but scorned Shinto. He cut down the trees at Ikukunitama Shrine. (Prologue on Emperor Kotoku)
>
> 3) The expression "as a kami would" (*kamunagara*) means to conform to Shinto. It also means in essence to possess one's self of Shinto. (Entry for Taika 3/4/26)...[33]

Kuroda here Romanizes the two-character compound 神道 as Shinto or *kami no michi,* and this ambiguity over which reading was used contemporaneously is not an insignificant point. Because Japanese utilizes ideographic Chinese characters, scholars have to make guesses at what the historical pronunciation of such terms as *shintō* might have been. Speculations on the possible *meanings* of the term at the time of use are somewhat more evidence-based than attempts to pinpoint historical pronunciations, but are still significantly limited by the infrequent number of its occurrences in early Japanese history. In this regard, Kuroda refers back to the work of Tsuda Sōkichi, who in his own earlier examination into the etymology of *shintō* posited six possible interpretations of the term, but intentionally chose not to make a definitive judgment on which one was most likely to be correct. The six interpretations Sōkichi presented as possible meanings of *shintō* were:

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[33] Kuroda (1981): 4

> 1) [the] “religious beliefs found in indigenous customs passed down in Japan, including superstitious beliefs"; 2) "the authority, power, activity, or deeds of a kami, the status of kami, being a kami, or the kami itself"; 3) “concepts and teachings concerning kami”; 4) “the teachings propagated by a particular shrine”; 5) "the way of the kami" as a political or moral norm; and 6) “sectarian Shinto as found in new religions”.[34]

Utilizing this list of possible interpretations of *shintō* first put forward by Sōkichi to approach these three first occurrences in the *Nihon shoki,* Kuroda reflects on the possible meanings of the term in the context of this 8th century compilation. In his analysis, he refers frequently back to the pioneering work of Tsuda:

> In examples one and two it is possible to interpret Shinto as distinguishing "Japan's indigenous religion from Buddhism," but that need not be the only interpretation. Tsuda himself indicates that in China the word Shinto originally meant various folk religions, or Taoism, or sometimes Buddhism, or even religion in general. Therefore, the word Shinto is actually a generic term for popular beliefs, whether of China, Korea, or Japan, even though in examples one and two it refers specifically to Japan's ancient customs, rituals, and beliefs, regardless of whether they were Japanese in origin. Since the *Nihon shoki* was compiled with a knowledge of China in mind, it is hard

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[34] Kuroda (1981): 4

> to imagine that its author used the Chinese word Shinto solely to mean Japan's indigenous religion…[35]

Here already we see Kuroda problematizing our current understanding of Shinto, which says nothing about the fact that the term originally developed in China and was only later adopted into Japanese as well. He also takes care to point out that the authors of the *Nihon shoki*, a text which was compiled largely through reference to prior, related Chinese texts, would not have used this term *shintō* without an awareness of its meaning in China. Already we can begin to see an apparent and steadily growing gap between the *shintō* which appears in history and the Shinto that we encounter today.

Kuroda goes on to describe the possible meanings of the first two uses of *shintō* presented above, elaborating on the holes he perceives in Tsuda's interpretation:

> Though there may be some validity in what Tsuda says, the word Shinto by itself probably means popular beliefs in general. In examples one and two Shinto is used in contrast to the word *Buppō*, the teachings of the Buddha. Tsuda takes this to mean "Japan's indigenous religion," but there are other possible interpretations of this without construing it to be the name of a religion. For example, it could mean "the authority, power, activity, or deeds of a kami, the status of kami, being a kami, or the kami itself," Tsuda's second definition of Shinto. In fact, during this period the character *dō* or *tō* [道], which is found in the word Shinto, meant not so much a road or path but

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[35] Kuroda (1981): 5

> rather conduct or right action. Hence, Shinto could easily refer to the conduct or action of the kami. [36]

Indeed, when one keeps in mind our earlier discussion on the extremely recent transplantation of the term religion into Japan, it is highly unlikely that the original author of this section of the *Nihon shoki* meant for *shintō* to be understood as a “religion”. Without saying that this is *definitively* the case, it nonetheless seems far more plausible that, as Kuroda here is arguing, the term *shintō* is instead referring simply to the kami themselves and their actions, and not to any sort of organized “religion” or “religious tradition” of the Japanese people. With this sort of interpretation of the term in mind, Kuroda next moves on to tackle the third and final use of *shintō* in the *Nihon shoki*, explaining that:

> In example three there are two instances of the word Shinto. While it is not unthinkable to interpret them as "popular beliefs in general," Tsuda's second definition, "the authority, power, activity, or deeds of a kami..." is perhaps more appropriate, since the word *kamunagara* in the quotation means "in the nature of a kami" or "in the state of being a kami." The sentences in example three were originally a note explaining the word *kamunagara* as it appeared in the emperor's decree issued on the day of this entry, and according to Edo period scholars it was added sometime after the ninth century when the work was transcribed. Therefore, it is not reliable as evidence for what Shinto meant at the time the *Nihon shoki* was compiled. Even if it were, it is more likely that the compiler did not use the same word

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[36] Kuroda (1981): 5

> in two different ways but rather applied the same definition, "the authority, power, activity, or deeds of a kami…" in all three examples.[37]

As we can see from the above discussion over the possible meanings of the term *shintō* in the early 8th century, the lack of definitive historical evidence for the term's definition leaves room for any number of possible interpretations. As we have already seen above, there is a huge variety of scholarly interpretations of *shintō*'s meaning in the *Nihon shoki*, but ultimately none of them is able to offer much more than conjecture in support of their claim. While it is thus impossible to decidedly answer this question of *shintō*'s meaning in such an early period, it is possible, however, to make a few negative statements on what *shintō* was *not.* In order to accomplish this, we will require some further historical data and alternate interpretations of *shintō* to work with.

Kuroda continues the search for further historical evidence which might reveal *shintō*'s contemporary meaning by looking at some of the other terms that were—in addition to this originally Chinese word *shintō*—incorporated into Japan in this early period of its history. From the results of this investigation, Kuroda eventually makes the claim that "another possible interpretation of Shinto in the *Nihon shoki* is Taoism"[38]. He elaborates further on this claim and his alleged evidence for it later, explaining that:

> Based on recent studies, it is clear that Shinto was another term for Taoism in China during the same period. Moreover, as Taoist concepts and practices steadily passed into Japan between the first century A.D. and the period

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[37] Kuroda (1981): 5-6

[38] Kuroda (1981): 6

> when the *Nihon shoki* was compiled, they no doubt exerted a considerable influence on the ceremonies and the beliefs of communal groups bound by blood ties or geographical proximity and on those which emerged around imperial authority. Among the many elements of Taoist origin transmitted to Japan are the following: veneration of swords and mirrors as religious symbols; titles such as *mahito* or *shinjin* [真人］(Taoist meaning—perfected man, Japanese meaning—the highest of eight court ranks in ancient times which the emperor bestowed on his descendants), *hijiri* or *sen* [聖] (Taoist—immortal, Japanese—saint, emperor, or recluse), and *tennō* [天皇] (Taoist—lord of the universe, Japanese—emperor); the cults of Polaris and the Big Dipper; terms associated with Ise Shrine such as *jingū* [神宮］ (Taoist—a hall enshrining a deity, Japanese—Ise Shrine), *naiku* [内宮］ (Chinese—inner palace, Japanese—inner shrine at Ise), *geku* [外宮］ (Chinese—detached palace, Japanese—outer shrine at Ise), and *taiichi* [太一] (Taoist—the undifferentiated origin of all things, Japanese—no longer in general use, except at Ise Shrine where it has been used since ancient times on flags signifying Amaterasu Omikami); the concept of *daiwa* [大和] (meaning a state of ideal peace, but in Japan used to refer to Yamato, the center of the country); and the Taoist concept of immortality.[39]

Kuroda's argument is compelling because such terms as those he has listed above are undeniably present in Japan, and at the same time are without a doubt of Daoist origin. Considering that each of these terms was successfully incorporated into Japanese from Chinese in this early period of Japanese history—with their meanings slightly changed—and keeping in mind the fact that *shintō* has already been demonstrated to have Chinese roots, is it not possible that this term was originally used in Japan simply as a cognate for its Chinese counterpart? Acting under the assumption that *shintō* was indeed functioning in a similar role in Japan as it was contemporaneously in China—i.e. as another term for Daoism—Kuroda explains the hypothetical cultural context in which *shintō* might have been used at the time of the compilation of the *Nihon shoki:*

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[39] Kuroda (1981): 6

> Early Japanese perhaps regarded their ceremonies and beliefs as Taoist, even though they may have differed from those in China. Hence, it is possible to view these teachings, rituals, and even the concepts of imperial authority and of nation as remnants of an attempt to establish a Taoist tradition in Japan. If that is so, Japan's ancient popular beliefs were not so much an indigenous religion but merely a local brand of Taoism, and the word Shinto simply meant Taoism. The accepted theory today is that a systematic form of Taoism did not enter Japan in ancient times, but it is not unreasonable to think that over a long period of time Taoism gradually pervaded Japan's religious milieu until medieval times when Buddhism dominated it completely.[40]

It must be re-stated here that this claim by Kuroda is—as he too affirms through his use of the phrase “another possible interpretation”—only one of a multitude of possible meanings *shintō* might have possessed in this time period. While this interpretation is speculative, however, one fact which remains extremely significant to our investigation is that one can do very little to prove Kuroda’s above conjecture

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[40] Kuroda (1981): 6-7

wrong. Given the available evidence we cannot say that the scenario he postulates was definitely a reality, but for this same reason—i.e. lack of evidence—we must continue to entertain this possibility as eminently plausible. The lack of definitive indicators of the early meaning of *shintō* allows us to offer any number of conjectures about what it might have signified—and even to make a few negative statements in good confidence—but not to make any *final* statements about it. For this reason, we must here begin to re-question those popular narratives of Shinto which make extremely decisive statements about its origin/early history without—as we have shown—the proper historical evidence to back these claims up. It would appear to the author that, at the very least, however, we can definitively label these over-confident depictions of Shinto as untrue for their complete disregard for the complex and murky nature of an effective history of the term *shintō*. Indeed, as the famed astronomer Carl Sagan once said in regard to UFO sightings, "extraordinary claims [must be] supported by extraordinary evidence," of which, in the case of these traditional narratives, there seems to be none whatsoever[41].

Much in the same style as Kuroda, scholar Mark Teeuwen also presents his readers with a list of possible alternative understandings of the term *shintō* as it is used in the *Nihon shoki*, and does an admirable job of synthesizing scholarship on the early etymology of *shintō* into his work. In his article *From Jindō to Shinto: A Concept Takes Shape*, Teeuwen spends the greater part of his introduction summarizing the prior work of Kuroda and Sōkichi in laying the grounds for a systematic deconstruction of the term Shinto, but is also very vocal in pointing out the places where their respective scholarship falls short. He stresses first and foremost the limited number of references/sources in these two respective scholars' works, and goes on to also argue the following in regard to their arguments about *shintō*:

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[41] Sagan, Carl, and Ann Druyan. *Encyclopaedia Galactica*. Cosmos: A Personal Voyage. PBS. Television.

> A point that would appear obvious but that is seldom made, is that in all instances, these phrases [which make reference to the term "*shintō*"] relate to the tale of the establishment of Buddhism in Japan. Bidatsu (572-585), Yōmei (585-587), and Kōtoku (645-654) all played some critical role in this tale… Together, these three emperors form a set of central characters in the early history of Japanese Buddhism. It is true that some other emperors, who are not introduced by phrases like these, also played a role in this drama (notably Kinmei, whose reign saw the first attempt at introducing Buddhism to Japan). Even so, it is quite clear that where these phrases occur, *shintō* plays second fiddle in what basically is an account of the establishment of Japanese Buddhism. The context in which the term occurs in the *Nihon shoki*, then, suggests strongly that it was introduced by a Buddhist monk who participated in the project of compiling this national history, and who was in charge of editing the entries that related to the early history of Buddhism in the country.[42]

Teeuwen again reminds his reader that while he believes this scenario is highly likely, it is still speculative. There are simply not enough uses of the term in early Japanese history to make any sort of definitive statement.

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[42] Teeuwen, Mark. "From Jindō to Shinto: A Concept Takes Shape." Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 29.3/4, Tracing Shinto in the History of Kami Worship (2002): 233-63. JSTOR. p.238

Indeed, Teeuwen feels it necessary to point out the speculative nature of *all* interpretations of this early term, stressing that:

> These occurrences of the term *shintō* are extremely isolated. The word *shintō* does not occur anywhere else in the *Nihon shoki*. In its sequel, the huge *Shoku Nihongi*, it occurs only once... The word does not occur at all in any other contemporary official compilations or documents-neither the *Kojiki*, the *Man'yōshū* or the *Fudoki*. In the genre of official texts, the word was very rare indeed.[43]

Because of this significant lack of early uses of the term to analyze, there is of course a strong divide in scholarly opinion on what *shintō* might have meant. Still, Teeuwen chooses to describe the most prevalent interpretation of the use of the term *shintō* in the *Nihon shoki* among the scholarly community of the time, repeating the commonly-held view that:

> [because] the word was used only in the *Nihon shoki* [and] because this was a state document, written with an audience of foreign (Chinese) diplomats in mind… it should be regarded [accordingly] as diplomatic jargon… Shinto was a political term, invented to give expression to the new national identity of Japan, with the kami-born emperor at its head. Since the term was a term of international relations, there was no use for it in documents for domestic use… [44]

Teeuwen takes opposition to this interpretation, however, instead positing *shintō* to be a term used *exclusively* for domestic purposes. He presents his counter-stance against this "diplomatic jargon" interpretation below, arguing that

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[43] Teeuwen (2002): 240

[44] Teeuwen (2002): 240

> It cannot be a coincidence that the term *shintō* occurs only in those parts of the *Nihon shoki* that deal with the establishment of Japanese Buddhism, and that are likely to have been drafted by a Buddhist monk. Rather than diplomatic jargon, it would [instead] seem logical to think of the term as Buddhist jargon"[45]

In any case, even in an investigation as exceedingly brief as the one presented above, has offered us interpretations of *shintō* that portray it to be, alternatively, Daoist, Buddhist, or simply referring popular beliefs in general. With such a wide variety of possible interpretations we are unable to make any final statements on the meaning of the term *shintō* itself in this time period, but one point has become abundantly clear—we should be *highly* skeptical of any depiction of Shinto which claims to understand its early/pre-historical nature, as there is little to no historical evidence that one might call upon to support such decisive claims. As a corollary to this point, we must continue to consider all historically plausible interpretations as within the realm of possibility until some sort of evidence arises which definitively proves them to be wrong. Because this early historical period which provides us with little to work with in our attempt to create an accurate genealogy of the term *shintō*, let us move on to examine the centuries immediately following the publication of the *Nihon shoki* to see if these later uses of the term cannot shed some light on this question of its possible early meanings.

As time passed and the number of written sources of Japanese history grew, uses of the term *shintō* in Japan also increased correspondingly. Teeuwen points out that the next written use of the term after the compilation of the *Nihon shoki* was not until 788, when it appeared in a document referring to the temple-shrine of Tado (founded in 763), known as the *Tado jingūji garan engi narabi ni shizaicho* (多度神宮寺伽藍縁起并資財帳)[46]. The use of *shintō* which appears in this text is as follows: "At that time, a certain person became possessed by the deity and said: 'I am the kami of Tado. I have created evil karma through many kalpas, and received the karmic retribution of *shintō*'"[47]. Teeuwen also references another early use of the term which appears in the late 9th century biography of Saichō, patriarch of the Tendai school of Buddhism in Japan, where we learn that the "Great Master climbed the mountain of Kaharu 賀春 and "warmly saved the *shintō*" who dwelt there [親切に山の神道を救った]"[48]. Needless to say, to the modern reader who is accustomed to hearing Shinto be described in a very particular manner—i.e. as indigenous religion of Japan—such uses of the term *shintō* as these are very strange to say the least. What exactly these respective authors mean to say through their use of *shintō* is unclear to us at the moment, but it does seem safe to say that both of the above uses refer to the kami in a negative manner as a foil to the power of the Buddha's teachings. Looking here at a few early appearances of the term *shintō* in the centuries following its first use in the *Nihon shoki*, and taking note of the fact that it *consistently* appears in opposition to Buddhism/the Dharma, Teeuwen's argument that *shintō* was, originally, a Buddhist term is beginning to seem more and more compelling.

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[45] Teeuwen (2002): 240

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[46] Teeuwen (2002): 240
[47] Teeuwen (2002): 241
[48] Teeuwen (2002): 241

In an attempt to offer some more tangible proof for his hypothesis, Teeuwen goes on to discuss the more recent scholarship of Kazuhiko Yoshida, which was unavailable to both Sōkichi and Kuroda in their own lifetimes. In his scholarly work, Yoshida focused on such texts as the above mentioned *Tado jingūji garan engi narabi ni shizaicho* where the term *shintō* appears and aimed to demonstrate not only the Chinese origin of the term itself, but also a similarity in style/logic between these and many similar Chinese texts. Teeuwen describes the importance of Yoshida's scholarship in the following way:

> Scholars have always assumed that the phenomenon of domesticating the kami by Buddhist means [e.g. Saichō "saving" the *shintō*] constituted a clear departure from Chinese Buddhism, and was a core element of the Japanization of Buddhism. Yoshida, however, points to a whole list of passages in *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧伝 and *Xu gaosengzhuan* 続高僧伝 (collections of biographies of eminent Chinese monks), where the term *shendao* [神道] is used in exactly the sense of "non-Buddhist deities who obstruct Buddhism, or deities who are domesticated by Buddhist monks." Phrases such as "receiving the karmic retribution of *shintō*" [see above] stem directly from these sources. It was argued by Tsuda Sokichi already in 1950 that at least the first of these biographies, the *Gaosengzhuan* (519), was used as reference material for the editing of the *Nihon shoki*'s account of the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. When we now find that the same source was used in documents explaining the Buddhist domestication of the kami,

> we can hardly conclude otherwise than that *shintō* was, indeed, a Buddhist term, adopted in Japan from Buddhist sources such as the *Goasengzhuan*.[49]

This presence of the term *shendao*, written with the same two Chinese characters as *shintō,* in numerous Chinese texts and in very much the same context as we see in early uses of the term in Japan should, at the very least, make any argument for a purely indigenous religious tradition highly problematic. As we have seen from all early uses of the term thus far, in early times *shintō* appears to mean little more than simply the kami themselves/the nature of these kami, often with a negative connotation. In addition to this, it appears that the term functioned exclusively within a Buddhist context, and was consistently portrayed *in opposition to* Buddhism as a means of highlighting the wisdom of the Buddhist teachings. Indeed, in all of our investigations to this point, while we have seen a definite presence of the word *shintō* itself, there has been a decisive lack of any sort of use/meaning similar to the one we ascribe to it today.

If it is the case, then—as all available evidence seems to suggest—that the term *shintō* does not, historically-speaking, refer to an independent, indigenous religious tradition of Japan, then by what process precisely did it come to possess this meaning? There are a number of theories as to the "emergence point" of Shinto as an independent religion, and Teeuwen does an admirable job of presenting each of these respective views in his *Comparative Perspectives on the Emergence of Jindō and Shintō*. He begins this text by highlighting the two polar ends of the spectrum in approaching Shinto—the first being represented by the indigenous, Japanese religion approach, and the second by the complete iconoclastic/constructed-myth view of Kuroda—and then goes on to add a number of more nuanced voices to this chorus of scholarly opinion. One of these is scholars is Mori Mizue, whose view that Teeuwen describes as perhaps the most widespread interpretation of Shinto's origins:

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[49] Teeuwen (2002): 242

> The late seventh century saw the importation of a system of Chinese law, known in Japan as *ritsuryō*. This signaled the beginning of the classical period. Under this legal system, rule over the country was centralized to an unprecedented degree, leading also to a centralization of kami ritual under a special government office, the "Ministry of Kami Affairs" (Jingikan 神祇官). It is at this point that, for the first time, we can speak of "Shinto" as a religious system that is linked directly (if remotely) to the Shinto of today.[50]

Mori makes a very important distinction here between kami worship, which is evidenced as far back as the Yayoi period and "Shinto" as an independent "religious system," because in his mind they represent two totally distinct—if historically connected—phenomenon with very different points of emergence. Mori goes on to make the following claims about Shinto and its true historical place, stating that:

> It would certainly be an oversimplification to state that the Japanese islands first gave rise to kami cults of different types, which grew and developed naturally within local communities, and then gave birth to Shinto in some kind of natural progression. Rather, it was the Yamato court that, under the influence of Chinese notions of kingship, consciously chose sun worship as

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[50] Teeuwen, Mark. *Comparative Perspectives on the Emergence of Jindō and Shinto.* Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London.Vol. 70, No. 2 (2007): 373-402. JSTOR. p. 376

> the linchpin of its ritual activities. [...] It was this consciously and deliberately constructed cult that provided the impetus leading to the emergence of Shinto as a religious system. [51]

To frame Mori's argument in a Foucaldian lens, then, the worship of kami represents an empty "system/set of rules" that predates Shinto and which is later re-interpreted by the Yamato court for their own personal ends, in the process essentially becoming a new and distinct entity. In Mori's mind, the choice to adopt these *ritsuryō* laws, based on the Chinese *shiryō* or *tz'u-ling* code, was the most significant point of emergence in the development of Shinto as its own independent religious tradition, and thus correspondingly all arguments which posit Shinto as existing before this point in time are erroneous. At the risk of over-repeating our position, we must stress once again here that that this is only *one possible* understanding of Shinto's historical development. Let us now look at an opposing perspective which directly challenges Mori's interpretation and argues for a different point of historical emergence.

The ethnologist Takatori Masao argues in his 1979 text *Shinto no seiritsu* 神道の成立 (The emergence of Shinto) that it was not the importation of the *ritsuryō* code which triggered Shinto's emergence as an independent religion, but instead a well-known incident in the imperial court which served to sour many peoples' opinions of Buddhism that played the largest role. Any scholar of Japanese religions will of course already be familiar with the Dōkyō incident of the 8th century, but for those who are unfamiliar with this event Teeuwen describes the story in detail:

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[51] Teeuwen (2007): 377

> In the 760s Empress Shōtoku fell under the spell of the monk Dōkyō, and under his influence she implemented numerous Buddhist policies; among them was the building of a shrine-temple (*jingūji*) at the ancestral fane of the imperial line, the shrine of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu in Ise. Shortly after she attempted to have Dōkyō appointed as her successor to the throne, but established aristocratic clans resisted this unprecedented step (which would destroy the principle of hereditary power that applied also to their own lineages), and after Shōtoku's death in 770 Dōkyō soon lost his foothold at the court. Dōkyō's "coup" sent shock waves through the system that took generations to settle. After Shōtoku's death, great changes occurred at the court in an atmosphere of general upheaval and unrest. Most dramatically, there was a shift in the imperial line: Shōtoku was the last in Tenmu's line, and with the next emperor, Kōnin (r. 770- 781), the throne returned to the lineage of Tenchi, Tenmu's older brother. In connection with this dynastic shift, the capital was moved first to Nagaoka and then to Heiankyō (Kyoto), both during the rule of Kōnin's successor, Kanmu. [52]

In Takatori's mind then, it was the chaos that this one rogue monk Dōkyō managed to create in the Japanese imperial court which played the greatest role in sparking the emergence of Shinto as an independent religion. It was, in his mind, the resultant reactionary attempt to control Buddhism on the part of those who found themselves in power which unmistakably set the stage for its future historical development. Teeuwen describes Takatori's view of the action these new leaders took in order to prevent a second Dōkyō incident from occurring again:

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[52] Teeuwen (2007): 378-379

A number of innovations and experiments in court ceremonial suggest that the new leaders of the court were interested in strengthening imperial ritual and, in Dōkyō's wake, especially ritual of a non-Buddhist nature. In Tang China it was customary for princes who became incumbents to the throne under unusual circumstances to visit the shrine of the imperial ancestors (Ch. *zongmiao* 宗廟) in person. Worship at this shrine was one of the two main pillars of imperial ritual at the Tang court; the other consisted of rites honouring heaven (Ch.*jiaosi* 郊祀). In Japan, Shōtoku's successors Kōnin and Kanmu both sent their crown princes to Ise (in 778 and 791), and the shrine temple that had been built there was first moved (772) and then dismantled (780) after Dōkyō's fall from power. As another innovation, the *jiaosi* ritual was performed twice during Kanmu's reign (in 785 and 787). In Takatori's view, these events highlight a renewed interest in Chinese rituals that could strengthen the imperial succession, leading to a reinterpretation of the Ise shrines as the *zongmiao* (Jap. *sōbyō*) of the Japanese emperors. The removal of Buddhist elements from Ise served to prepare the shrines for this role; so did the detailed codification of Ise ritual shortly afterwards (in *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* 皇太神宮儀式帳 and *Toyuke-gū gishikichō* 豊受宮儀式帳 both submitted to the court in 804). Takatori points to these events as a decisive moment in the emergence of Shinto. It was at this time, he argues, that Confucian/Daoist (that is, explicitly non-Buddhist) ideas and rites from the Chinese tradition came to be applied to Japanese kami, turning these kami into the "religious foundation on which the secular order of the state was based"[53]

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[53] Teeuwen (2007): 379

Takatori is essentially arguing then that in the aftermath of the Dōkyō incident the leaders of the Japanese imperial court looked to China in order to emulate their non-Buddhist, imperial rituals, which Teeuwen tells us, “served to limit the power of Buddhism in Tang China”[54]. The evidence for the court’s desire to distance themselves from Buddhism is borne out evidentially by such historical events as the dismantling of the *jingūji* built by Empress Shōtoku at Ise and the subsequent attempt to isolate imperial shrine ritual from Buddhism known as 神仏隔離 (*shinbutsukakuri*), making Takatori’s view on the emergence of Shinto as an independent religion a very compelling one indeed. While we cannot say that Takatori’s understanding is definitive, it does seem to be the most consistent and historically evidenced interpretation thus far and so this paper will treat it as a tentatively accurate understanding of Shinto’s emergence.

No matter which side one takes in the debate over the historical development of Shinto, all scholars of Japanese religion will surely be familiar with the term *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 (lit. the syncretism of kami and Buddhas/Shinto and Buddhism). To say that these scholars are familiar with this phenomenon is, of course, not to say that they are all in agreement over its full meaning/historical implications. There are, generally speaking, two overarching understandings of *shinbutsu shūgō*, and the divide between the two is unsurprisingly contingent upon each individual scholars understanding of Shinto itself. The first type of view, which represents the stereoptypical “traditional narrative” understanding of *shinbutsu*

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[54] Teeuwen (2007): 379

shūgō, can be seen on its *Wikipedia* page; from this description of the historical phenomenon we learn that:

> The *Shinbutsu-shūgō* (神仏習合 lit. "syncretism of kami and buddhas"), also called *Shinbutsu-konkō* (神仏混淆 lit. jumbling up or contamination of kami and buddhas), a term which however has a negative connotation of bastardization and randomness, is the syncretism of Buddhism and kami worship which was Japan's religion until the Meiji period. When Buddhism was introduced through China in the late Asuka period (6th century), rather than discard the old belief system the Japanese tried to reconcile it with the new, assuming both were true. As a consequence, Buddhist temples (寺, *tera*) were attached to local kami shrines (神社, *jinja*) and vice versa and devoted to both kami and Buddha. The local religion and foreign Buddhism never quite fused, but remained however inextricably linked all the way to the present day, always interacting. The depth of the resulting influence of Buddhism on local religious beliefs can be seen for example in the fact that much of Shinto's conceptual vocabulary and even the types of Shinto shrines today, with a large worship hall and religious images, are themselves of Buddhist origin. [55]

The above description of *shinbutsu shūgō* should be called "traditional"—and subsequently treated with suspicion—for a number of reasons, but the most apparent reason is seen in its claim that Shinto existed as an independent "belief system" before the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th century. In this understanding, Shinto and Buddhism gradually mixed over the centuries through the process of *shinbutsu shūgō*, never quite fully integrating with each other but each undergoing significant changes nonetheless. The author cedes that—as Teeuwen also argued above—the majority of Shinto's "conceptual vocabulary and even the types of Shinto shrines…are themselves of Buddhist origin," but unlike Teeuwen, he/she attributes this to the overwhelming influence of Buddhist thought on the indigenous religion. It has already been argued why this view of Shinto existing as an independent and organized tradition in pre-modern times is problematic, and the point will not be re-stated here; however, if we are to reject such understandings of *shinbutsu shūgō* as the above, we must naturally offer an alternative understanding of this historical phenomenon. Let us then return to the work of Kuroda in order to see an example of the second type of view of *shinbutsu shūgō.*

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[55] *Shinbutsu-shūgō*. Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation,Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

In his explanation of *shinbutsu shūgō,* Kuroda stresses that, rather than the statement "Shinto and Buddhism gradually coalesced with one another," a far more accurate way to describe this phenomenon would be to state that "between the late eighth century and the eleventh century…veneration of the kami was absorbed into Buddhism through a variety of doctrinal innovations and new religious forms"[56]. This difference may seem subtle and rather unimportant, but its implications are crucial to our investigation. In making this statement Kuroda is, in line with the majority of scholars we have examined in this paper thus far, drawing a clear and unmistakable line between "Shinto"—organized religion/system of belief—and "kami veneration," which, as we have stated before, is archaeologically evidenced from the Yayoi period onwards. What Kuroda is aiming to present to his readers is not the image of two independent religions mixing over time, but instead that of the kami gradually being absorbed into a Buddhist matrix and understood through a Buddhist conceptual vocabulary/worldview. Kuroda elaborates on this view later, arguing that:

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[56] Kuroda (1981): 9

> Among the doctrinal explanations of the *kami* [in this period] were the following: 1) the *kami* realize that they themselves are trapped in this world of samsara and transmigration and they also seek liberation through the Buddhist teachings; 2) the *kami* are benevolent deities who protect Buddhism; 3) the *kami* are transformations of the Buddhas manifested in Japan to save all sentient beings (*honji suijaku*); and 4) the *kami* are the pure spirits of the Buddhas (*hongaku*). Among new religious forms were the *jinguji* (a combination shrine and temple) and *Sōgyō Hachiman* (the *kami Hachiman* in the guise of a Buddhist monk). Such religious forms are exemplary of ceremonies and objects of worship which could not be distinguished specifically as Shinto or as Buddhist. The first stage in this process…covered the late eighth and early ninth century. During that period the first two doctrinal explanations of *kami*, mentioned above, became current. It is only natural that at this stage people became more cognizant of the *kami*, [though] especially in relation to the Buddhas.[57]

Here we see that the definition of kami/*shintō* has already begun to move away from an association with Buddhism which, as we have seen above, served mainly to portray it in a negative manner—i.e. Yoshida's description of the term as meaning

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[57] Kuroda (1981): 9

"non-Buddhist deities who obstruct Buddhism, or deities who are domesticated by Buddhist monks." As Kuroda argues, the kami are in this period coming to be understood within the overarching Buddhist matrix as students/protectors of Buddhism, or in another word, as concrete representations of Buddhist virtues.

Kuroda goes on to offer evidence for this understanding of *shinbutsu shūgō*, stating:

> …In the *Shoku Nihongi* [続日本紀 lit. continuation of *Nihongi* or *Nihon shoki*],,,the entry… for 782/7/29 states that Shinto cannot be deceived and that numerous recent calamities are retribution meted out by the great *kami* of Ise and all the other *kami* in return 'for the negligent use of mourning garb widespread among men. Such disrespect for decorum, and by extension for the *kami*, indicates implicitly the popularity of the Buddhas over the *kami.* Another example from the *Shoku Nihongi* is an imperial edict of 836/11, which states that there is nothing superior to Mahayana Buddhism in defending Shinto and that one should rely on the efficacy of Buddhist practices to transform calamity into good. This passage indicates that it is the Buddhas who guarantee the authority of the *kami*. These examples reflect a heightened awareness of *kami* during this period, but they by no means imply that Shinto was looked upon as an independent and inviolable entity. On the contrary, there was more of a sense that Shinto occupied a subordinate position and role within the broader scheme of Buddhism.[58]

The above depiction of *shinbutsu shūgō* rejects the notion of two independent religions—Shinto and Buddhism—slowly coalescing with each other over time, and instead argues that the wholly unorganized practice “kami veneration” was absorbed into Mahayana Buddhism, causing *shintō*—in its *Nihon shoki* sense “as a collective noun referring to “the realm of the (non-Buddhist) deities”—to be understood as a *part* of Buddhism. Kuroda makes reference to similar patterns of absorption of folk belief by Mahayana Buddhism such as Tibet in presenting his view on the evolution of *shintō* through this process of *shinbutsu shūgō*.

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[58] Kuroda (1981): 9

Let us now look at the third explanation Kuroda presents for kami during the *shinbutsu shūgō* period—that of *honji suijaku*—as this concept was to become central to the medieval understanding of *shintō* and to persist in Japan until the time of the Meiji restoration. Looking first at the term itself, we see that it can be broken apart into two two-character compounds: the first, *honji* 本地 referring the “true form of a Buddha” and the second, *suijaku* 垂迹 meaning “traces of” or, specifically in connection with *honji,* “a temporary manifestation of the Buddha in the realm of duality”. In the theory of *honji suijaku*, the kami were understood to be the “traces of a Buddha,” or his “manifestation” in our world for the sole purpose of guiding/teaching humanity the way of the Dharma (*buppō*). Kuroda offers his readers his own perspective on the *honji suijaku* understanding of kami, arguing:

> According to this theory [which was originally a part of Tendai doctrine], the *kami* are simply another form of the Buddha, and their form, condition, authority, and activity are nothing but the form and the acts by which the Buddha teaches, guides, and saves human beings. Shinto, therefore, was independent neither in existence nor in system of thought. It was merely one

> means among many by which the Buddha guides (*kedō*) and converts (*kegi*) sentient beings.[59]

This understanding of the kami as simply one way in which the Buddha acts to guide and save human beings is built upon the concept of *Upāya* (Jap. 方便 *hōben*) present in Mahayana Buddhism, which essentially argues that the buddhas and Boddhisattvas use all "expedient means" available to them in order to impart the teachings of Buddhism to humanity. Because they are possessed of total compassion, these enlightened beings are capable of both perfectly understanding the needs of ordinary people, and then of presenting the teachings of the Buddha in the most readily understandable manner. Through the *honji suijaku* theory, then, the kami were understood to be simply one of these "expedient means" through which buddhas were able to guide those ordinary human beings incapable of understanding the teachings of Buddhism as they truly exist, beyond all duality. By manifesting in this world as a kami—capable of being seen and understood by human beings—the Buddha/boddhisattvas were able to effectively lead humanity in the direction of enlightenment, and the kami were thus venerated *primarily because of their connection to the buddhas*. With this drastic change in popular understanding of the kami, there was a resultant shift in the meaning of much of the related terminology as well. Let us next return to the work of Teeuwen to look more in depth at the evolving meaning of the term *shintō* in this period.

Believing that the modern pronunciation of *shintō* did not emerge first until the 14th century, Teeuwen consistently argues that the term should instead be correctly read in the soft *go-on* 呉音 reading that was traditionally used with all Buddhist terminology, and for this reason refers to *shintō* in all of his work instead as *jindō*. In summarizing the general pattern of changes that this term *jindō* underwent in Japan from the time of its introduction from Chinese until the emergence of the *honji suijaku* theory, Teeuwen argues:

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[59] Kuroda (1981): 12

> In the earliest sources, the term often carried a negative connotation: it labeled local deities as non-Buddhist, and therefore as troublesome and in need of Buddhist conversion. Later, when *honji suijaku* became established as a combinatory system, *jindō* came to be used as a technical term for kami in their capacity of *suijaku*: the concrete, local traces of abstract, distant buddhas.[60]

In Teeuwen's opinion, *jindō* has always been a term used *exclusively* in a Buddhist context and not ever referring to some sort of indigenous religious tradition. Thus in his mind, the only major change which has occurred in the meaning of the term up until this point in history is a shift from a negative connotation (as seen in the *Nihon shoki*) where the kami are an impediment to Buddhism to a positive understanding of the kami/*jindō* as *serving* the cause of universal enlightenment. Teeuwen too, like Kuroda, traces the earliest appearance of this new interpretation of the kami to the Tendai school of Japanese Buddhism, citing a passage from the *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 in which we learn that:

> In 859, the monk Eryō 恵亮 of Enryaku-ji petitioned for two annual ordinands who were to read specified sutras for the kami of

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[60] Teeuwen (2002): 247

> Kamo and Kasuga. In arguing for these appointments, Eryō identified the kami as "expedient aspects" (*gon* 権) or "traces" (*suijaku* 垂迹) of the Buddha, and stated that "the *jindō* cuts through troubles solely by relying on the sword of wisdom [of the Buddha who] subdues and controls [evil].[61]

Here one sees undeniable evidence for a new use of the term *jindō/shintō*—one in which the kami are portrayed as the Buddha's "sword of wisdom"; as a practical tool for fighting ignorance and evil in the world. Through the long-lasting prevalence of the *honji suijaku* theory in Japan, this understanding of *shintō* would persist for centuries to come.

Later on in this same article, Teeuwen makes reference to the writing of 11th century intellectual Oe no Masafusa (1041-1111), whom he believes to be the first to offer an explicit explanation of the *honji suijaku* theory originally set in motion by Eryō. In one of his early uses of the term *shintō*, Masafusa declares that

> In truth, the moon of the presence of original enlightenment [本覚 *hongaku*, see above: Kuroda's fourth understanding of the kami in the period of *shinbutsu shūgō*] illuminates the Lotus Seat in the state of Buddhahood; but the sun, who dims its brightness and mingles with the dust, descends to the assembled shrines in the [form of] *jindō*"[62].

In regard to the above quote, Teeuwen argues that:

> It was [here] in the eleventh century that this doctrine [of *honji suijaku*], which in Japan can be traced back to Eryō's request for kami

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[61] Teeuwen (2002): 243-244

[62] Teeuwen (2002): 246

> ordinands quoted above, began to be applied to individual kami [and it is undeniable that] Oe no Masafusa played a central role in this development"[63].

Whereas in the time of Eryō this theory of *honji suijaku* was still in its nascent stages of development and many people likely still understood the term *shintō* by its more negative, older interpretation, in the time of Masafusa the new meaning of the term *shintō* was clearly becoming crystallized through its concrete and systematic applications to such kami as those of Ise, Kumano, Kamo, Matsuo, Inari, Kasuga, Sumiyoshi, Hie, Gion, Kitano, and Aso (all of whom are connected with the *honji suijaku* theory through the writings of Masafusa).

As further evidence for this sea change in the popular understanding of *shintō* and the kami, Teeuwen also makes reference to a 12th century text known as the *Nakatomi harae kunge* 中駆訓角率, in which we see the following use of the term:

> Although within and without [the Buddhist teachings] the words are different, [kami and buddhas] are identical as means of salvation. Kami are the spirits of the various buddhas; the buddhas constitute the essence of the various kami. Therefore it is written in a sutra: "The buddhas dwell in non-duality, and they always manifest their traces in the *jindō*.[64]

As previously stated, the *honji suijaku* theory teaches that the buddhas and the true essence of the Buddha's teachings cannot exist in the realm of duality; it is thus primarily through manifestation as kami that the buddhas attempt to reach us in this world. In the above quote, however, the author argues that it is *always* [i.e. only] through the *shintō* that the buddhas can "manifest their traces". Commenting on this use of the term, Teeuwen observes that:

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[63] Teeuwen (2002): 246

[64] Teeuwen (2002): 246-247

> Here, the *jindō* is presented not only as a form, but as the only form in which communication with the buddhas is possible in Japan. Because they are "non-dual," the buddhas do not appear in our dualistic world, and the kami are our only channel to the salvation embodied by the buddhas"[65].

In such descriptions of *shintō* as those offered through the *honji suijaku* theory, we see definitive evidence that in the time between the writing of the *Nihon shoki* and the writing of Masafusa, a complete re-interpretation/transformation in both meaning and popular understanding of the term has taken place. This change should be understood as the second major point of "emergence" in our genealogy of Shinto.

As the aim of this paper is to identify the *major* points of emergence/changes in discourse around the term *shintō* throughout history, we will only briefly discuss its evolution in meaning in the period between the 12th century and the early Tokugawa period (17th century). The author believes that there was no re-interpretation in this period of the size/influence of the two identified thus far (i.e. early use in the time of the *Nihon shoki* and later transformation in the period of *shinbutsu shūgō*), though this span of history certainly warrants a far more detailed and nuanced genealogical examination than this paper can offer. With this said, let us look at a few uses of *shintō* in this medieval period in order to speculate on what significance it might have held contemporaneously. In beginning this examination, it should be mentioned that while the meaning of *shintō* had, by this point in history, undoubtedly undergone a major transformation in meaning, its prior interpretation had not yet *completely* disappeared from use. Kuroda points out the following two references to *shintō* in the *Konjaku monogatarishū* 今昔物語集—also compiled around the 11th century: "First, an old woman in China was possessed with heretical views: she served Shinto and did not believe in Buddhism. Second, there was an outlying province in India which was a land of *kami*, and to this day the words of Buddhism have not been transmitted there"[66]. Here the terms *shintō* and kami are still undoubtedly being utilized in a negative manner in contradiction to Buddhist teachings. We are well accustomed to seeing such uses in the time of the *Nihon shoki*, but given the new emergence in meaning identified above, it is surely surprising to see that this interpretation of the term has also persisted. Kuroda comments on this phenomenon, commenting that these references "show [us] that even in this period the word Shinto was used in its classical sense, as it was in China and in the *Nihon shoki*"[67]. We should thus keep in mind as we move forward that this new emergence of Shinto had yet, in the 11th and 12th century, to fully finish its process of crystallization.

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[65] Teeuwen (2002): 247

Let us now compare the above two uses of the terms *shintō* and kami to a later appearance in order to determine whether or not this older interpretation was able to persist in the presence of the new understanding. In the *Hieisha eizan gyōkōki* of the early fourteenth century, we read that:

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[66] Kuroda (1981): 9-10

[67] Kuroda (1981): 10

> There are identical as well as differing aspects in the method of conversion used by the *shinmei* (*kami*) [神明] in other lands and that used by Shinto in our own land. Our land, which is a land of the *kami,* is superior in that human beings are benefitted by "the light of the Buddha melded to become one with our world of dust" (*wakō dōjin*, i.e., the power of the Buddha harmonized with our mundane world and manifested as *kami*)[68].

As in the two stories mentioned above from the *Konjaku monogatarishū*, the term kami is here being used to describe deities *outside of Japan*, making the indigenous religion narrative all the more problematic. Clearly the term kami is functioning in both accounts as a more general term which designates local, non-Buddhist deities, regardless of location; but more important to our investigation is the unmistakably positive nuance *shintō* has come to take on in the second example. From a heretical old woman who “served Shinto and did not believe in Buddhism” we now see the power of the Buddha manifesting itself in the form of kami to the benefit of all humanity. This new alignment of Buddhism and the kami in the singular goal of spreading the teachings of the Buddha is one of the key components of the *honji suijaku* theory and resultantly of the greater medieval understanding of *shintō*, and it is visible in countless historical accounts from this period.

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[68] Kuroda (1981): 13-14

So in exactly what manner would the kami of this time have been understood by ordinary people? Kuroda elaborates further on the popular views of the kami in medieval Japan, describing their relationship to humanity in the following way:

> *Suijaku*, as understood by the common people in medieval times, was not the abstract or philosophical idea found in the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism but was mythological in nature or perhaps associated with concrete places or events. The term *suijaku* literally meant to descend from heaven to a given spot and to become the local or guardian *kami* of that spot. Hence, at that spot there would arise a legend of the mysterious relationship between men and *kami*, and the very area enshrining the *kami* would be looked upon as sacred ground where profound doctrinal principles lay concealed. The history of this manifestation—that is, its development over time—was related in the form of an *engi* (a historical narrative), and the positioning of its enshrinement—that is, its location in space—was depicted in the form of a mandala (a rational layout). This indicates that the legends, the architectural form of early shrines, and the rituals of worship were interpreted as mysterious principles expressing Buddhist philosophy.[69]

The defining line between the kami/*shintō* and Buddhism has become very hard to distinguish at this point in our investigation. Since the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, local kami worship has been effectively appropriated and re-interpreted so that it is now understood through a conceptual vocabulary that is undoubtedly Buddhist. Furthermore, that the use of *shintō* and related terms extends beyond solely the geographical boundaries of Japan is clearly evidenced in their appearance in a number Chinese texts. When one considers then, that along with these originally Chinese terms', the entire vocabulary and architecture surrounding the kami in Japan are also foreign (Buddhist) in origin, the indigenous narrative of Shinto's development seems to reveal itself a fundamentally skewed historical understanding. In all of the historical evidence we have examined thus far, the contours of Shinto as an "independent religion"—that is, as an organized system belief and its corresponding institutions—have been noticeably absent, and as we have already demonstrated there are multiple, unique understandings of the term across history. It is also significant that the *suijaku* theory was not understood contemporaneously to be simply one emergence in a long series of re-interpretations, but instead was viewed in a "mythological" manner—in other words, the people of this period probably took it for granted that the *suijaku* theory had been in place since the "the beginning of time," in much the same way many today claim that Shinto dates back to pre-historic times. This point will become highly relevant when we reach the modern period of our genealogy of Shinto, but before this, let us first examine a few more of its waypoints in the medieval period.

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[69] Kuroda (1981): 14-15

In trying to delineate where exactly the difference in the duties/nature of the kami and the Buddha lies, Kuroda points out the highly secular nature of the kami in this time. He explains that:

> Many of the representations of *kami* familiar to people in the medieval period were secular in form. Admittedly, there were also numerous examples of syncretism with Buddhism, for instance, Sanskrit letters used to symbolize invisible *kami* or a Buddhist image enshrined in the

> inner sanctuary (*shinden*) of a shrine, or again *Hachimanshin* portrayed as a Buddhist monk, or Zaō Gongen as the Buddhist deity Myōō (Skt. Vidyārajā). Nevertheless, in many of the Shinto statues, portraits, and narrative drawings that survive today, *kami* were depicted in such secular guises as noblemen, ladies, old men, young boys, Chinese gentlemen, travelers, and hunters. A number of these became formalized iconographically during the thirteenth century...[70]

Because the kami were secular in nature—and, as mentioned above, also intimately linked with the locations which they had "descended from heaven" upon—there was correspondingly a great diversity in the depictions and narratives of kami from different geographical locations. Competition among shrines to demonstrate how their kami best manifested the characteristics of the Buddha also led to the proliferation of many tales recounting the deeds of these kami as they worked to save humans in the realm of duality. One famous collection of those tales is the *Shintōshū*, which is believed to have been compiled in the fourteenth century. Commenting on the *Shintōshū,* Kuroda explains that:

> The *Shintōshū* contains about fifty tales in which the Buddha takes on the form of a *kami* and saves human beings. The word Shinto in its title presupposes this meaning—i.e., conversion by the Buddha. With Shinto interpreted in this way and with people's beliefs based on this kind of interpretation, individual Shinto shrines sought to emphasize the distinctive capacities and lineage of their own *kami* as a manifestation (*suijaku*) of the Buddha, as well as the unique teachings and practices passed down in their

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[70] Kuroda (1981): 14

> shrine or school. These claims were expanded through complicated doctrines and tortuous theories into a class of teachings now called sectarian or shake Shinto (Tsuda's fourth definition of the word Shinto, "the teachings propagated by a particular shrine"). Ryōbu Shinto of the Shingon tradition and Sannō Shinto of the Tendai tradition are typical examples of such teachings. Individual shrines in different areas adapted these teachings in such a way that during the medieval period countless theories of Shinto arose.[71]

The *Shintōshū* is some of the most comprehensive and detailed evidence we have for the pervasiveness of the *honji suijaku* theory through the medieval period of Japanese history. Drawing as it does on a number of different shrines and their respective kami's legacies, the *Shintōshū* shows that this understanding of the kami—in which they gain their legitimacy only from their status as a "manifestation" of the Buddha—was not localized but was more or less uniformly shared across Japan. This interpretation of *shintō,* as simply one component of the overarching Buddhist matrix in which it functioned, was to persist in much the same form until the Tokugawa period, where it would undergo yet another drastic transformation in meaning.

Kuroda goes on to describe some of the major changes which Shinto underwent in the Tokugawa period, explaining the cultural setting of the time in the following way:

> Beginning in the seventeenth century a Confucian theory of Shinto, with much the same structure as medieval theories, was formulated by Hayashi

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[71] Kuroda (1981): 12

> Razan and other Edo period scholars. Based on this interpretation of Shinto, the definition of Shinto as the indigenous religion of Japan, as opposed to Taoism, Buddhism, or Confucianism, became firmly fixed. Moreover, the Confucian concept of *dō*, the way, also influenced the word Shinto, imbuing it with the meaning of "the way, as a political or moral norm" (Tsuda's fifth definition of Shinto). Of course, Confucian Shinto amounted to nothing more than theories of the educated class subordinating Shinto's true nature to Confucianism. Actual belief in the *kami*, however, as found among the common people at that time, remained subsumed under Buddhism.[72]

We see here that while a distinct concept of Shinto has begun to emerge, independent and definitively separate from its former Buddhist matrix, this interpretation is still limited only to the elite/educated class, while to the common people the understanding of kami as manifestations of the Buddha remained virtually unchanged. There are a number of Tokugawa-era intellectuals whose work we could focus on in attempting to see what this new understanding of Shinto might have looked like, but perhaps no individual was more influential in steering the course of its development than Motoori Norinaga. Norinaga was a physician and part-time poet/teacher of poetry who undertook the arduous task of writing a commentary to the entire text of the *Kojiki*—known today as the *Kojiki-den*. In doing so, Norinaga successfully *read into* this ancient work his own subjective understanding of the kami, *shintō*, the eternality of the imperial line, etc., and in the process re-interpreted the text from an eighth century imperial court history—as it was originally written—into a mythological history of the origins of the "Japanese people". Drawing again, heavily, on Foucault's theory of emergence, we will analyze this appropriation of the Japanese classical myths by Norinaga and attempt to present it as one of the major points of transformation in our genealogy of Shinto.

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[72] Kuroda (1981): 19

In his 2000 text *Reappropriating the Japanese Myths: Motoori Norinaga and the Creation Myths of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki*, Isomae Jun'ichi discusses the possible motivation behind Norinaga's choice to write a detailed commentary on the *Kojiki*. Here Isomae argues that:

> Norinaga selected the *Kojiki* because the construction of the text made it possible for him to introduce his own style of emotionality, to read into it his theory of *mono no aware*. This did not mean that the *Kojiki* itself had been created as a tragic tale. Indeed, as Hans Robert Jauss has pointed out, "Only with the mediation of the reader does a work... enter into the constantly changing horizon of experience" (1970; in KUTSUWADA 1976, p. 30). One must always make a distinction between the text itself and the commentaries that are applied to it. What can be understood from an interpretation is in the end less the text itself than the worldview of the interpreter. For at the time of interpreting, the interpreter chooses and compiles a text that makes possible the projection of his or her own worldview…[73]

In Isomae's opinion then, when we read the *Kojiki* through the lens of interpretation that Norinaga first lent to it, we are learning less about the actual text itself than we are about the subjective worldview of the man himself. Isomae mentions *mono no aware* as one example of a concept being anachronistically inserted into a historical matrix where it has no place, and he goes on to discuss this constant and problematic tendency in the greater practice of interpretation, arguing:

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[73] Jun'ichi, Isomae. *Reappropriating the Japanese Myths: Motoori Norinaga and the Creation Myths of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki. Japanese* Journal of Religious Studies 27.1/2 (2000): 15-39. JSTOR.

> On the whole, interpreters unknowingly impose their own value norms on a past of a different character. The words of Karatani Kōjin explain this concisely: "When we read what is called premodern literature," he writes, "we feel as if it lacks 'depth.'... What does it mean to say that their literature has no 'depth'? We cannot return to their 'reality' or 'inner feelings,' nor should we forcibly read a 'depth' into their literature. On the contrary, we should inquire what 'depth' is and by what it is achieved" (1988, p. 191). Especially in research in intellectual history, there is a startling tendency "to familiariz[e] the unfamiliar" in the name of tradition (HAROOTUNIAN 1978, p. 67). Clearly, this tendency has given birth to the dogmatization of the worldview of the textual interpreter. What is needed now is to avoid imposing our own gaze once again. We must instead recognize that the viewpoints that have become so widespread were actually the personal ideas of the interpreters themselves.[74]

With this understanding of Norinaga's interpretation of the *Kojiki* in mind—namely, that it does not reflect the actual historical reality of this time so much as it represents his own, personal worldview and understanding of the Japanese classics—let us move on to examine some of the ramifications of Norinaga's actions in the Tokugawa period and beyond.

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[74] Isomae (2000): 15

Isomae points out that Norinaga's interpretation of the relationship of humanity to the kami/*shintō* is heavily dependent on his theory of the "Ancient Way" 古道論 which Isomae describes in the following way:

> What Motoori called the Ancient Way, or "the way of sincerity," was a selfless attitude in which "in general, one does not depend upon one's personal judgment for any action" (*Tamakushige*, in *Norinaga zenshū*, v. 8, p. 321). Based on this attitude, "when both vassals and the common people... identify with the emperor's will and, earnestly respecting the imperial court, obey the rule of the emperor,.., then those above and those below will be in harmony, the realm will be auspiciously governed" (*Tamakushige*, p. 321) and order will be introduced into the world.[75]

Norinaga's idea of "harmony" (i.e. his ideal vision of political arrangement) is clearly predicated on an inherent faith in the legitimacy and nobility of the emperor. Surely there was some Confucian basis for his belief in such a system—in which the rulers and ruled are clearly separated, the commoners know their own places, and all honor the political arrangement for the sake of political harmony—but as we shall see, Norinaga also drew heavily upon the Japanese classics in order to justify this vision of an ideal society.

Isomae explains how "Norinaga found a mythological basis for the emperor's status as sole sovereign of the realm in the foundation myths and the myth of the descent of the imperial grandson of Amaterasu, " citing a passage from the *Tamakushige* in which he writes that:

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[75] Isomae (2000): 18-19

> Heaven and earth, all the gods and all phenomena, were brought into existence by the creative spirits of two deities Takami Musuhi no Kami and Kami Musuhi no Kami. The birth of all humankind in all ages and the existence of all things and all matter have been the result of that creative spirit.... It was the original creativity of these two august deities which caused the deities Izanagi and Izanami to create the land, all kinds of phenomena, and numerous gods and goddesses at the beginning of the Age of the Gods…Amaterasu Omikami directed her imperial grandson to govern the Abundant Reed Plain (*Ashihara nakatsu kuni*, i.e., the earth), so he descended from the heavens to the land,"…In the oath that Amaterasu Omikami made at this time [to her grandson, Ninigi], she pronounced the reign of the imperial throne coeternal with heaven and earth. This oath is itself the great, fundamental essence of the Way[76].

This passage clarifies for us where Norinaga understands the emperor's political power to have derived from, but the connection between this oath of Amaterasu and "the great, fundamental essence of the Way" that is mentioned at the end still remains ambiguous/hard to discern. On this note, Isomae clarifies for his readers that:

> According to Norinaga, actual history proved the unbroken continuity of the imperial line as foretold by Amaterasu. "Although the great imperial country—as stated in the sacred oath of its eternal existence—has persisted through ten thousand generations," he wrote, "lords are still lords and vassals are still vassals. There has been no change in their positions"[77].

In Norinaga's mind, the fact that class distinctions in his own time still bore a clear resemblance to those depicted in these ancient Japanese texts was proof of the eternality of Amaterasu's oath (and thus of the legitimacy of the imperial line). While he clearly believed that this fictional, harmonious past of Japan was continuing to animate the present world in which he lived, it appears that Norinaga was in fact doing nothing more than superimposing his idealized view of the present over the actual reality of the past. With this clear understanding of Norinaga's particular view of the Japanese classics and their importance in our minds, then, let us next move on to examine why such interpretations by Norinaga have come to be labeled problematic by Isomae and so many other scholars today.

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[76] Tsunoda, Ryusaku, et al., eds. Sources of Japanese Tradition. New York and London. Columbia University Press. 1958. p. 521
[77] Isomae (2000): 20

The first issue one comes across when attempting to deconstruct Norinaga's personal interpretation of the Japanese classics is the fact that he pick and chose from an assortment of texts in order to craft a narrative which successfully bore out his own beliefs. Isomae comments on this tendency of Norinaga's, arguing that:

> Norinaga's redactions of the myths, beginning with the scene of the creation deities at the opening of his history of the age of the gods in the *Kojikiden*, were modeled primarily on the *Kojiki*, with alternate texts from the *Nihon shoki* deployed at important junctures. The epitome of this mixing of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* is his treatment of Amaterasu Omikami's sacred oath. This oath, which Norinaga considered the guarantee of an eternal imperial line, appears not in the *Kojiki*, nor even in the main text of the *Nihon shoki*, but is taken from an alternate variant in the *Nihon shoki.* Likewise, by introducing an alternate variant into the myth that relates the ceding of the land by the reigning deity, Okuninushi no mikoto, to Amaterasu's grandson, Norinaga transformed the myth into a covenant

> assigning the "visible world" (*arawenigoto* 顕事) to Ninigi and the "invisible world" (*kamigoto* 幽事) to Okuninushi no mikoto.[78]

Norinaga surely could not have been unaware of the fact that he was welding these very different texts into a new, cohesive narrative—a new story of the ancient history of Japan which could not properly be referred to as the *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki* but was instead Frankenstein-esque amalgamation of the two. It is apparent from such actions as this that Norinaga had a clear vision of Japanese pre-history in mind *before* he began the process of interpreting, all of his claims in regards to these texts must be treated with an according amount of scholarly criticism/suspicion. One question that remains to be answered, however, is what precisely Norinaga's aim was in so dramatically re-casting Japanese history.

At the time when Norinaga first set out to grapple with these ancient Japanese texts, they were by no means popularly understood—as they are today—to be a mythological history of the origins of the "Japanese people". Indeed, as Isomae points out,

> In contrast to Norinaga's interpretation, in antiquity the common people appeared only as objects of the rule of the Yamato court. In ancient times, there existed a solemn distinction between the subject that narrated the myths and the object that was related in the myths. The kingship myths of antiquity were creations of the governing body called the court [for the sole purpose of legitimizing those rulers right to govern]; they were not the product of the folk [i.e. some mythological account of the people's "origins"] (TSUDA 1963, pp. 317-688). Because of their political functions, the myths

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[78] Isomae (2000): 20

> were possessed exclusively by the court. Given the situation in antiquity, it becomes even more obvious that the relationship of humans and myths in Norinaga's thought is an apolitical ideal tht lacks the restrictions of a social collectivity. This apolitical idealism and the attendant emancipation of the constituency of the myths in early modern interpretations first materialized due to the loss of real political power of the royal court centered on the imperial household[79].

What Isomae is arguing above is essentially this—the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which both Norinaga and the great majority of individuals today understand to be mythological histories of the ancient Japanese people, were originally written not for this purpose, but were instead constructed intentionally to function as a legendary history *of the imperial court families alone* in order to justify their claim to power. These texts essentially remained the possession of the imperial court alone until a point in time where this political function of the texts had disappeared—i.e. until the rulers whose governance these texts had served to legitimize were no longer in power—only after which point the possibility of a universal interpretation the likes of Norinaga's became possible. Such an interpretation thus necessarily ignores the original function and contemporary understanding of these ancient texts, and re-interprets them to have served this myth function from the point when they were first written down until the present day. As with accounts of Shinto that attempt to present it as an ancient tradition which has persisted in an independent form from ancient times, we should also treat Norinaga's understanding of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* not as an authoritative account, but rather as simply one—albeit very significant—emergence in a long series of historical re-interpretations.

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[79] Isomae (2000): 27

While we have demonstrated why Norinaga's interpretation of the Japanese classics are historically inaccurate, they are indeed by no means to be understood as historically *irrelevant*. This new political ideal and sense of Japanese national identity that Norinaga so successfully read into the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* had major ramifications in Tokugawan society. Susan L. Burns of the University of Chicago describes the cultural matrix that Norinaga would have lived within, explaining that:

> In Tokugawa Japan, philosophical discussions of community had, for the most part, been framed by Confucian theory, which explained human society as a network of interlocking hierarchical social relationships—ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, teacher and student, and so on—that ideally were to be infused with benevolence from the superior and respect, even reverence, from the inferior…[80]

The de-legitimizing effect that Norinaga's veneration of the emperor/imperial system would have had on the above-described social order (under the Tokugawa shogunate) should be more or less apparent. Less readily obvious, however, is the radical way in which Norinaga's understanding of these ancient texts was to shape the future development of the nascent Japanese identity. In approaching the Japanese classics, Norinaga asserted that there was a native Japanese tradition, a "natural community [which had] gradually disappeared…after the beginning of cultural contact with China," but which still remained visible in these ancient writings[81]. This new interpretation of the *Kojiki* was radical because, in placing this still-yet-to-crystallize conception of a distinct Japanese identity in the pre-historical setting of the *Kojiki*, Norinaga was also implicitly suggesting that this national identity was coeval with the creation of the world. In the preface to Ann Wehmeyer's translation of Motoori Norinaga's *Kojiki-den*, Naoki Sakai writes that “Norinaga reconstructed the entire *Kojiki* on the assumption that Japanese national or ethnic language existed when it was originally written, and he thereby turned the *Kojiki* into a self-consciously Japanese text”[82]. In this seemingly harmless act of re-interpretation, one sees the laying of the foundation for the intense nationalist fervor which we retrospectively know is about to burst onto the historical stage.

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[80] Burns, Susan L. Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print. p. 3

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[81] Burns: 1

[82] Motoori, Norinaga, and Ann Wehmeyer. *Kojiki-den*. Ithica, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell U, 1997. Print. p. vii

The Emergence of Modern Shinto

Within seventy years of Norignaga's death, the effects of his particular interpretation of the Japanese classics and the writings of the greater *kokugaku* (nativist/national studies) movement were to set in motion a radical social upheaval that has since come to be known as the Meiji Restoration. In this revolution of the late 1860s, samurai primarily from the domains of Satsuma and Chōshū united under their respective leaders in order to help overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate and "restore" the imperial system via the installment of the young Meiji emperor as sovereign. Upon their victory, the ascendant Meiji regime began a series of major reforms that would drastically transform the face of Japanese society. Mark Teeuwen and John Breen describe this period in their *A New History of Shinto*, observing that:

> The radical reforms of 1868 drew on a wave of nostalgic nationalism that idealized Japan's age of antiquity as a divine era of natural harmony and innocence. Japan needed to make a fresh start; to do this, it had to rid itself of the accretions of history. Many branded Buddhism, which had enjoyed a privileged status under the Tokugawa shogunate, as one of the corrupting influences that had undermined Japan's ancient vigor. In a sense, this was a simple result of the changing times. In spite of the shogunate's continued support, Buddhism had already lost its former position of intellectual dominance to Confucianism by the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century it had become a popular target of Confucian condemnation. The Meiji revolution itself was fueled by a heady mix of Confucian ethics and

> imperial patriotism, in which Buddhism was either marginalized or refuted.[83]

This newfound disdain for Buddhism—stemming partly from the intellectual trends of the late Tokugawa period (i.e. the popularity of Confucian teachings), but also from Buddhism's longstanding and intimate relationship with the shogunate that had now fallen from power—led to a series of decrees from the Meiji regime ordering the forced separation of "Buddhism and Shinto" 神仏分離 (*shinbutsu bunri*; lit. separation of kami and buddhas). These decrees themselves triggered a corresponding wave of violence against Buddhist institutions known as the *haibutsu kishaku* (lit. abolish Buddhism and destroy Shākyamuni) in which countless Buddhist temples were ransacked or destroyed. Breen and Teeuwen estimate that as many as 18 thousand temples were destroyed in the four years following this decree (1868-1872)[84]. Professor Sarah Thal explains the logic behind this decree in greater detail, describing how:

> The Meiji nativists defined a sharp distinction between "native" kami and "foreign" buddhas. Beginning in 1868, they enforced a "separation of kami and buddhas" that identified sites of worship as either shrines (*jinjya, jingū*) exclusively devoted to ancient, native kami or as temples (*tera*, or, in a combining form, *-ji*) preaching the Buddhist law. They thus split asunder two categories that had previously been intertwined. Moreover, their terminology has persisted until today, forcing everyone who tries to speak

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[83] Breen, John, and Mark Teeuwen. *A New History of Shinto*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Print. p. 12

[84] John Breen; and Mark Teeuwen, ed. (July 2000). Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. p. 230

> or write of the gods to reinforce the separation by referring to "kami," to "buddhas," or to "kamis and buddhas," still distinguishing between the two—and to relegate the many tengu, foxes, and other powers of popular faith to the lesser status of "spirits." As the nativists provided legitimization for the Meiji Restoration, then, they revolutionized the religious landscape of Japan, establishing an exclusive, nativist Way of the Gods (*shintō*...) in conjunction with the new, imperial state.[85]

While Thal here uses the phrase "split asunder two categories that had previously been intertwined," perhaps a more accurate way to explain the actions of the Meiji elite would be to say that they took a component of Japanese Buddhism—namely the *honji suijaku* understanding of kami/*shintō*—and then artificially isolated it from its greater Buddhist matrix, effectively re-appropriating it in order to support their new political agenda. In the Meiji Restoration we see a textbook example of emergence and the truth of Foucault's claim that "the successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them."

Let us now examine in a bit more detail exactly what sort of re-interpretation the Meiji oligarchs presented to the Japanese public in order to reflect on the influence it was to have on the popular understanding of Shinto in Japanese history. Describing the new religious landscape and sense of national identity that the Meiji rulers aimed to create, Breen and Teeuwen paint Meiji society in the following way:

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[85] Thal, Sarah. Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2005. Print. p. 6

> In effect, the new Meiji cult of shrines functioned as a form of Confucian-inspired ancestor worship. By honoring the ancestors of the nation, a community was created that celebrated a shared [if constructed/fictional] past. To this end, shrines were redefined as places that commemorated heroes of the state. The centerpiece of the new shrine system was Ise, the shrine of the imperial ancestor and sun-goddess Amaterasu… In 1871 all other shrines were arranged on a hierarchical scale, from imperial and national shrines at the top to prefectural shrines, district shrines, and finally non-ranked shrines at the bottom. At the same time, hereditary lineages of priests were abolished and a state-sanctioned system of appointed priests was put in its place. In this way shrines were appropriated by the state and designated as sites for the performance of state rituals (*kokka-no-sōshi*). From this time onwards, state-appointed priests were to perform an increasingly standardized set of state rituals as local representatives of the emperor. Their performance of these rituals aimed to unite the people with their emperor in a shared act of ancestor worship, in the manner of a family that gathers in front of the family altar to create and renew a sense of shared purpose and solidarity[86].

As we discussed briefly early on in this paper, the concept of the "nation-state" and the corresponding notion of "national identity" were still nascent at this point in Japanese history, and the Meiji elite thus felt—perhaps rightly so—that it was necessary to inculcate this new idea at the local level. The job of these newly independent shrines, then, was essentially to educate the Japanese public about their new places as a citizens of the Japanese nation, and to clearly explain what was expected from them as members of this new community (i.e. how to be an obedient citizen). Being completely cut off from their previous sources of both money and prestige, these shrines likely had little choice but to play along with the Meiji government's orders, but this is not at all to say that they were coerced into cooperation. Sarah Thal describes the concrete effects of the Meiji Restoration on one of these newly independent shrines located on the island of Shikoku, which immediately following Meiji Restoration was re-dedicated to the "nativist kami" Kotohira Ōkami. Thal describes the events of this period in the following way:

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[86] Breen and Teeuwen (2010): 12

> Following the previous pattern, in which his predecessors redefined the god in the early seventeenth century to ensure both personal and institutional survival, the tonsured priest of Konpira Daigongen quickly renounced his Buddhist ties and renamed the god Kotohira Ōkami ("Great Kami Kotohira"). In doing so, he avowed exclusive dedication to the Way of the Gods (*shintō*), as defined by the nativists in power. However, the priest of the new Kotohira Shrine sought not only survival under this new regime, but a continuation of the great wealth and prominent status that Konpira Daigongen had enjoyed before 1868. His pursuit of such privileges by cultivating ties to the fledgling imperial state not only brought Kotohira into a new, centralized hierarchy of shrines, but by 1873 committed him and the other priests of Kotohira to the dissemination of nativist teachings designed to combat the influence of Christianity and support the state. At Kotohira Shrine…the priests combined this educational agenda of the state with their own efforts to increase donations to the shrine, promoting Kotohira in particular, and by implication [this newly created notion of] Shinto in general, as a model of civilized,

> educated behavior appropriate to the new, imperial subjects and familiar to the most generous worshippers of the god.[87]

In her truly admirable genealogical examination of the history of this popular Japanese pilgrimage site, Thal demonstrates the undeniable correlation between shifts in intellectual discourse/political power and re-interpretations of the spiritual power believed to be present at this site. The priests of this shrine of Konpira demonstrated great ingenuity in acting to preserve their—and the shrine's—own continued existence and privileged status, constantly re-interpreting the deity enshrined there in order to best guarantee their own survival. Much as was the case with the introduction of the term *shūkyō* into Japan, we are thus well-advised not to view this new understanding of Shinto as being *forced upon* individual shrines, as they were undeniably implicated in the process of its dissemination by virtue of their active appropriation of the new interpretation to safeguard their own positions.

Now that we have a general understanding of the change in discourse around Shinto in this period, let us examine those uses of it and related terms that came directly from the Meiji elite themselves. One of the first explicit explanations of the new Meiji regime in their own terms comes in the form of a question posed by the emperor to his advisors known as the "Imperial Inquiry on the Prospering of the Imperial Way" (*Kōdō kōryū chokumon* 皇道興隆勅問), Meiji 2/5/21 (30 June 1869). In this document, the emperor declares:

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[87] Thal (2005): 7

> Since the heavenly deities and the heavenly ancestors have erected the axis and opened the fundaments of our imperial nation, the line of emperors inherited this and exercised the heavenly office in accordance with the changes of nature. With ritual and government being one, those above and those below of one heart, government and teaching (*jikyō*) clear to those above and customs and manners of those below beautiful, the imperial way has excelled with clarity among all the nations. Yet since the Middle Ages, the hearts of men have grown shallow, foreign teachings (*gekyō* 外教) took advantage of this, and the decline of the imperial way finally reached the extremity of recent times. The cycle of Heavenly fortune has today reached the time of the Restoration. However, rules and regulations have not yet spread, and government and teaching (*jikyō*) are not yet universal. We are deeply worried that this might be because the imperial way is not clear. [Therefore] we now seek a revival of the unity of ritual and government and of the imperial way particular to our country since the heavenly ancestors, and we want to take the course of elevating among the millions of common people the principle of repaying one's ancestors, lest they be led astray by foreign seductions, and have government and teaching (*jikyō*) be spread throughout [the realm]. I invite all of you to proffer your opinions in this matter without hesitation[88].

This term *jikyō* should be understood in the context of the aims of the Meiji Restoration, specifically in connection with the way that the nativists strived to recreate the—of course fictional—lost "age of antiquity [and]…divine era of natural harmony and innocence" in Japan. This strain of thought—undeniably influenced by

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[88] Krämer 97

Norinaga's claims of an ancient and harmonious native Japanese tradition which was later tainted by foreign (i.e. Chinese) elements—is the foundation upon which the Meiji Restoration was built. The term *jikyō* 治教 here should be understood to represent the means of governance that is alleged to have facilitated the harmony of this ancient Japanese society, and which the Meiji rulers claim to be "restoring" in the present day.

Another clear example of an early use of the nativist understanding of kami/Shinto can be seen in the 1870 Imperial Edict on Spreading the Great Teaching (*Senpu daikyō mikotonori* 宣布大教詔). Here the Meiji elite make the following proclamation to the masses:

> We solemnly announce: The Heavenly Deities and the Great Ancestress [Amaterasu Ōmikami] established the throne and made the succession secure. The line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession thereof and handed it on. Religious ceremonies and government were one and the same (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致) and the innumerable subjects were united. Governing and teaching (*jikyō*) were clear to those above, while below them the manners and customs of the people were beautiful. Beginning with the Middle Ages, however, there were sometimes seasons of decay alternating with seasons of progress. Sometimes the Way was plain, sometimes darkened. Now in the cycle of fate all things have become new. Governing and teaching (*jikyō*) must be made clear to the nation and the Great Way of obedience to the gods must be promulgated. Therefore we

> newly appoint propagandists (*senkyōshi* 宣教師) to proclaim this to the nation. Do you our subjects keep this commandment in mind. [89]

Just as Norinaga had claimed that the imperial line existed in an unbroken continuity, the Meiji elite also claim that "the line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession [of the throne] and handed it on". There is also present in this declaration a very similar picture of the common people knowing their places and a stress on this trait of not questioning the social hierarchy as one of the key pillars to a harmonious society. Further evidence of Norinaga's influence is visible in the way in which the imperial system is justified through connection with the "heavenly ancestors" and in the intense disdain is shown for all "foreign teachings". In this way, an interpretation that in the time of Norinaga was just emerging onto the historical scene has already in the span of only a few decades come to be appropriated by a new movement and is being disseminated throughout all of Japan.

Kuroda too notes the singular importance of Norinaga in setting the conceptual stage for Shinto's eventual emergence as an independent religion, arguing that:

> The notion of Shinto as Japan's indigenous religion finally emerged complete both in name and in fact with the rise of modern nationalism, which evolved from the National Learning [*kokugaku*] school of Motoori Norinaga and the Restoration Shinto movement of the Edo period down to the establishment of State Shinto in the Meiji period. The Meiji separation of Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*) and its concomitant suppression of Buddhism

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[89] Krämer p. 96

> (*haibutsu kishaku*) were coercive and destructive "correctives" pressed forward by the hand of government. With them Shinto achieved for the first time the status of an independent religion, distorted though it was. During this period the "historical consciousness" of an indigenous religion called Shinto, existing in Japan since ancient times, clearly took shape for the first time. This has remained the basis for defining the word Shinto down to the present. Scholars have yielded to this use of the word, and the population at large has been educated in this vein[90].

This intentional re-casting of the kami and Shinto toward the political end of crafting a narrative of nation and community in Japan, then, is our third major point of emergence in our genealogy of Shinto. In opposition to the term's use prior to this point in history—in which it served to denote any non-Buddhist deities, kami in the plural, the kami realm etc.—*shintō* has now finally emerged through the radical reforms of the Meiji era as an independent entity in its own right, serving the explicit goal of legitimizing the new imperial regime's nativist narrative of Japanese history and of acting as its official mouthpiece.

The natural and final step in this process of re-interpretation was, of course, to intentionally erase the point of historical emergence so as to lend it the legitimacy that comes from appearing to be ancient. Evidence of this phenomenon can be seen in such declarations as the Imperial Rescript on Education (教育ニ関スル勅語) of 1890:

> Know ye, Our subjects: Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue;

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[90] Kuroda (1981): 19

> Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects…guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may thus attain to the same virtue. [91]

In this version of history, the "Empire" does not begin the late 1860s, but is instead "coeval with heaven and earth". Similarly, it is not such famed individuals as Takamori and Takayoshi who played the key role in bringing about this government, but instead the "Imperial Ancestors" who set up the imperial throne to be "infallible for all ages". As a perhaps unintended side-effect of placing the origins of the imperial line in pre-historic times and of then attempting to legitimize this claim through association of the throne with the recently-emerged nativist interpretation of the kami, the Meiji elite also re-cast Shinto as an ancient, indigenous Japanese religion, and this view has persisted largely unchanged until the present day. While the creation of modern Shinto was not an end in and of itself, but rather a means to the ulterior end of legitimizing the newly ascendant Meiji elite's right to govern, it is clearly a consciously constructed product of this era of Japanese history, and not the ancient tradition it is popularly portrayed to be.

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[91] "The Imperial Rescript on Education." Meiji Jingu. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

Final Thoughts:

While there would certainly be much value in a continued genealogical investigation into the development of the concept of Shinto from the end of the Meiji period onwards, the author wishes to argue here that this major emergence and its corresponding interpretation have persisted largely untouched until the present day. This most recent re-interpretation of Shinto as the indigenous religious tradition of the Japanese people has been shown to be a carefully constructed narrative with a clear political aim, and it should accordingly be viewed in its proper place as the most recent emergence in a long historical genealogy. This genealogy has, generally speaking, three main emergence points where the term Shinto was re-appropriated and its popular understanding underwent a complete transformation. The first of these is seen in such early Japanese texts as the *Nihon shoki* and represents a continuation of the Chinese understanding of the term *shendao* in Japan. In this period of its history, Shinto was most often utilized as a general term for non-Buddhist deities, and it had the strongly negative connotation of being an impediment to Buddhism. In its second major emergence, Shinto/kami came to signify the manifestation of a buddha in the world for the sake of guiding humanity toward enlightenment, and in this period the term came to be nearly-synonymous with the persons of the buddhas themselves. This understanding of the term lasted until very recent history, when in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration the newly ascendant elite appropriated this term and bent it toward their political goal of crafting a mythology of the Japanese people centered around the person of emperor. The persuasiveness of this new interpretation of Shinto can be seen in the traditional narratives that are still so popular today and in the scholarship of the 20th century which served to reinforce this depiction as an historically accurate account, but the pushback against this understanding of Shinto has already gained much speed in the roughly 35 years since Kuroda's first, seminal contribution to this deconstruction effort.

While there is still much more work to be done in constructing a complete and fully-detailed genealogy of Shinto, this paper has attempted to demonstrate through an abbreviated deconstruction/genealogy the benefit that the respective scholarly approaches of Derrida and Foucault can offer to modern Shinto studies. The author is well aware that he has skipped over a number of relevant points of emergence/transformation in Shinto's history, but for the sake of presenting the general trend of its development over history this could not be avoided. The ultimate goal of this brief investigation, however, was not to present an infallible understanding of Shinto down to the most-minute detail, but rather to introduce a discontinuity into the way in which we understand this highly problematic historical phenomenon. Indeed, rather than to answer the question "What is Shinto?", the goal of this paper might be better described as having simply been an attempt to ask whether or not we are posing the right questions at all in our scholarship. More than half a century's worth of 20th century Shinto scholars failed to adequately question the popular narratives of its historical development, and as a result, this scholarship only served to further our ignorance of Shinto's true historical forms. The lesson we are to take from the mistakes of this previous generation of scholars seems to be simple—before attempting to make any sort of definitive statements about a subject of study, we should first be sure to identify and remove any inaccuracies/additions that may be present in our current understanding. When one considers, then, the sheer number of individuals in academia who still understand Shinto primarily through its traditional narratives, it seems obvious to the author that our first step toward a new understanding must be taken *first and foremost* through a systematic and unrelenting deconstruction of these misleading interpretations.

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