
The Thought of Shinto
and Unification Thought

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A. The Name of Shinto

The oldest recorded use of the word Shinto is in the Book of Changes, a Chinese classic. It is written there that "the holy man provides education with Shinto, and the world obeys." Shinto here means excellent way, or the way of the Gods.

In early Japanese records we find statements such as: "the emperor receives the Buddhist law and reveres the way of the gods (of the 31st Emperor, Yomei, before enthronement)," or "he reveres the Buddhist law and makes little of the way of the gods (of the 36th Emperor, Kotoku)." Here the Chinese word Shinto seems to be used to describe the practice of faith peculiar to Japan, and is used in contrast to Buddhist law. These examples are from the Nihonshoki, a history of Japan written in the early 8th century.

They suggest the Japanese people awakening to a national faith. It is believed that at the time of the compilation of the Kojiki and Nihonshoki, and even before Confucianism and Buddhism were introduced to Japan, that the indigenous Japanese faith was already generally called Shinto.

B. Characteristics of Shinto and Myths

Shinto has a characteristic of not causing Japanese to

consider it a religion. It can be called a pre-religious religion.

Shinto has never existed apart from the Japanese climate and national culture. Shrine Shinto in particular is understood among Shintoists to be free from doctrinal restrictions. Shinto's growth as a religion has not been based on theological processes, so it is regarded as non-religion.

Shinto, although it is ceremonial rather than scriptural, should also be regarded as a religion. Shinto can be regarded as a practice centered on religion. Shinto does not have a founder from the culture of the people, but is a religion which has continued to live centering on myths and the tradition of rituals. Thus it naturally lacks a doctrinal aspect.

The expression "Without a way is the way of Shinto" (by Norinaga Motoori) is interesting. It is a national religion that the bearers of Shinto, the Japanese people, have continued to formulate throughout their history.

Let's examine the Kojiki and Nihonshoki, especially the Kojiki, in order to search for the origins of this people.

Mythology is comprised of stories concerning sacred things such as ceremonies, faith, social institutions, etc, and especially concerning events at the beginning of time: how the cosmos (order) has come about from chaos (disorder), how man came to live on an uninhabited world, how animals came to exist, the emergence of good and evil... Such ontological matters, which precede all things and events and provide the ground of their existence, are dealt with in myths.

The description of creative activities by transhuman beings is focused upon. There is an idea that mythology is not part of the historical reality, but I cannot agree with it wholeheartedly. Mythology is true to the degree that it is believed, and in that respect we should consider that it forms a part of history.

In societies where mythology is believed, it has a deep connection with different aspects of reality, and in a sense supports the reality itself.

It is accepted by the people as a sacred story. It is their history, that is, it is considered to describe

events which actually took place in the remote origins of time. To deny their mythology means to deny their present. The present order has been brought about as a result of events expressed in the mythology, and to deny it means to deny the most primordial basis for the order of the present universe.

Japanese mythology, as expressed in the Kojiki and Nihonshoki, can be regarded as reflecting at least the thoughts of the times: the politics, institutions, economy, etc. of 6th century Japanese culture prior to their compilation and publication.

It may also be regarded as having a political nature, because of a certain artificiality for the sake of arranging and integrating the lineage of the gods centering on the Imperial Household. Even so, that fact itself is not a decisive hindrance to know what the Japanese people have believed about what kind of gods.

Now I'd like to explain the age of the gods, which Japanese have believed in and handed down and is recorded in classic Japanese mythology.

C. History of Gods

1. Table of Gods

		1. <u>Amenominakanushino-kami</u> sin-	
		2. <u>Takamimusubino-kami</u> gle	
		3. <u>Kamimusubino-kami</u> god	
		4. <u>Umashiashikabihikojino-kami</u>	
		5. <u>Amenotokotachino-kami</u>	
Older age of gods	two gods		
Seven generations of the age of gods		1. <u>Kuninotokotachino-kami</u> single 2. <u>Toyokumino-kami</u> god 3. <u>Ujinino-kami</u> and <u>Suijinino-kami</u> 4. <u>Tsunuguino-kami</u> and <u>Ikuguino-kami</u> 5. <u>Otonojino-kami</u> and <u>Otonobeno-kami</u> 6. <u>Omodaruno-kami</u> and <u>Ayakashikono-kami</u> 7. <u>Izanagino-kami</u> and <u>Izanamino-kami</u> (husband and wife)	
the age of gods		1. <u>Amaterasu-omikami</u> 2. <u>Ameno-osihomimino-mikoto</u> 3. <u>Amatsuhidaka Hikohononigi</u> 4. <u>Amatsukidaka-hiko</u> 5. <u>Amatsuhidaka-hikonogisatake-ugayfukiaezuno- mikoto</u>	
age of men		<u>Uamuyamatoiwarehikono-mikoto</u> Emperor <u>Jinmu</u> to the present emperor	

2. The History of the Gods (Kojiki I)

The gods who were born in Takamagahara in the beginning of heaven and earth are first:

1. Amenominakanushino-kami (god who stays in the middle of heaven and reigns over all things),
2. Takamimusubino-kami (god who made efforts in bringing all things into being),
3. Kamimusubino-kami (god who made efforts in bringing all things into being),

Next are the gods who were born by forces going up to heaven, just as the reeds put forth their buds, when the land was not yet solid, like a floating oil, and fluid like a jellyfish:

4. Umashiashikabihikojino-kami (god who was born through something which is like a bud of a reed),
5. Amenotokotachino-kami (god who was born where something went up like the buds of reeds to the highest point).

These five gods are single gods born in heaven, and Kotoamatsu-kamis. Therefore they are to be distinguished from gods who were born in other lands. And they hid themselves. Next come:

1. Kunitokotachino-kami (god who was born through what is left at the bottom after the ones which have gone up have been burnt up; among those who were floating like a drop of oil in the water),
2. Toyokumono-kami (god who was born in a state where something confined in what was drifting like a floating drop of oil, was going to grow).

These two gods hid themselves as single gods. Then in order come:

3. Ujinino-kami (god who was born when the lake and earth were mixed together and not yet separated) and his sister, Suijinino-kami (god who was born when the lake and earth were gradually separated),

4. Isunuguino-kami (god who has started to show his floating became a little hardened turning into something like land),

6. Omodaruno-kami and his sister Oyakashikoneno-kami (gods who were born in the state where

everything had become prepared and provided, and which one is to fear),

7. Izanagino-kami and his sister Izanamino-kami (gods given the name, since they invited each other in order to bear the land). They are a couple.

These seven generations are called the seven generations of the age of gods, or the older age of gods.

Then the five heavenly gods, including Amenominakanushino-kami, gave the two gods Izanagi and Izanami a pike, and entrusted them with the task of solidifying the land, which was not hard yet. So they solidified the land while standing on Amenoukihashi.

First they bore Onogarashima Island (island formed by being naturally hardened), then bore Hiruko, put it in a boat of reeds and cast it off; then bore Awashima, which was not counted as their child.

Next they bore two islands; Awajinokonosawakeno-shima and Iyo (with one body and four faces), then the Okinomitsugono-shima islands, then Isukushino-shima (with one body and four faces), Ikunoshima Is., Tsushima Is., Sadogashima Is., and Oyamato-toyoakitsu-shima (the above eight islands are called Oyashimano-kuni).

Then they bore Kibino-koshima Is., Oshima Is., Himejima Is., Chikano-shima Is. and Futagono-shima Island. They refreshed themselves after bearing different lands and then proceeded to bear different gods. They bore Okotooshiono-kami, Iwatsuchibikono-kami, Otohiwakono-kami, Amenofukiono-kami, and lastly Hinokami. Then Izanamino-kami died. Later Izanagino-mikoto took with Izanamino-mikoto.

"My most beloved wife, the land which I made with you has not been completed. Please come back to the physical world."

The female god said in reply:

"To my regret, since you did not come soon, I ate food cooked in the kitchen of the land of the dead. Let me first speak about it with the god of this land of the dead. In the meantime you must not see me..."

The myth of Izanagi's visit to the land of the dead, suddenly begins to speak of both personified gods (such as Yomotsukami, Yomotsushikome, and others who belong to the land of the dead) and non-personified gods

(Okamuzumino-mikoto, a peach, and Chikaeshino-okami, a Chibikiwa rock). They fulfill their divine status by the fact that they are natural things. They all belong to the land of the dead.

Non-personified gods are not deifications of natural things. The living things of nature, as Japanese understand them traditionally, are categorically different from nature without life, which is dominated by natural law. Nature, as Japanese conceive of it, consists of living beings' potential to become gods.

When the force contained in those beings is perceived as a function, then as gods they enter into a special relationship with man. Thus people's understanding of Shinto varies according to their way of understanding, of which we should be well aware.

C. Misogi (bathing) of Izanagino-mikoto and Birth of Gods.

"I have seen abominable, dirty things. I have been to a dirty land! I will purify myself with water in order to get rid of this dirt." He went to a marsh, where he washed away the dirt on his body. When he threw away what he was wearing, 12 different gods were born from his stick, belt, underwear, coat, hakama, crown, accessory to his left hand, and accessory to his right hand.

Then, when he dove into the water to purify himself another god was born. And when he purified himself on the surface of the water another god, Watatsuminokami was born. The child of Watatsumino-kami is Utsushihikanasakuno-mikoto, and among his descendants are the Azuminomurajis, who worshiped Watatsumino-kami as their ancestral god.

When Izanagino-mikoto washed his left eye Amaterasu-omikami was born, and when he washed his right eye Tsukuyomino-mikoto was born. When he washed his nose Tatehaya-susanoono-mikoto was born. When he washed himself, 14 gods were born.

Izanaginomikoto rejoiced in his last three children, and gave the jewelry from around his neck to Amaterasu-omikami, and said to her, "Reign over Takamagahara." He entrusted the world of the ocean to Susanoono-mikoto.

Amaterasu-omikami is worshiped as the ancestral god

of the present Imperial Household. In its lineage the age of gods ends with

- i) Amaterasu-omikami,
- ii) Amenoshikomimino-mikoto,
- iii) Amatsuhidaka-hikohono-ninigino-mikoto,
- iv) Amatsuhidaka-hikohodemino-mikoto, and
- v) Amatsuhidaka-hikonagisatake-ugayafukiaezuno-mikoto.

Then the age of men began as Kamuyamalo-iwarehikono-mikoto appeared as the Emperor Jimmu.

Mythology can be read through naturally from the age of gods to the age of men as an unbroken stream of history. Gods in the age of gods are described in a human way, and people in the age of men are described as appearing much like the gods. As we go further, we move into the history of the age of men. That is to say, man and gods are described as beings close to each other that can be fused with each other.

This is because ancient people could afford to conceive of both the divine gods' acts and human acts in a fused way. This can be understood from the fact of the ancient unity of religion and politics, as well as from the act of god-man fusion that is Shinto ritual.

Among the mythological gods of Japan mentioned above, there are two types, self-appearing gods and gods who were born. Let us examine this next.

D. Patterns of the Appearance of Gods

(1) Self-appearing Gods

The self-appearing gods are the five Kotoamatsukamis related with the formation of heaven, gods in the period of the age of gods, gods originating from Izanamino-okami, gods appearing in the relation with Izanagino-omikami and Susanono-mikoto. They are extremely important for understanding the concept of god in Shinto.

These gods, which played an important role and occupied a central position in traditional Japanese faith, belong to the self-appearing gods. These Shinto gods are gods who self-appeared from given materials. Takamagahara itself is a material, and therefore they are gods who appeared as the power (life force) inherent

in that world self-developed and self-generated.

Shinto has never conceived of the creator of things in a logical and principled way as a truly transcendent God. It is never the absolute God who precedes all beings and creates beings. It is finite and relative, and naturally polytheistic.

The major characteristic feature of Shinto is that myriads of deities have been believed in. This is the Shinto way of thinking, on which something homogeneous in the core of Japanese culture is based. There exists no absolute idea. Shinto manifests this conspicuously decisive difference from religions that worship only one God.

Japan was already under the influence of Confucianism from the Chinese Continent in the era when the Japanese classics were written. Thus it cannot be said that Japanese people were not familiar with absoluteness or the concept of the absolute.

Nevertheless, many Japanese people appear to have lived through a relative world, different from absolutization, through the subsequent course of history. They believed in many gods and did not have one absolute idea. What characteristic features did Shinto expose in this form of life and thinking? In principle it thinks not in universal terms, but in terms of individualities.

In its sociological aspects, the traditions of the family and family mottos are given much weight, and one is asked to do as the Romans do. Shinto therefore necessarily does not take a monistic, but a pluralistic position. In any dispute, one party always has only the relative truth. Thus Shinto does not develop the concept that if one is correct the other person is absolutely mistaken, and that therefore, the fault is to be completely ascribed to the other. Shinto has the ideal that in reality, harmony through compromise and growth based on harmony is possible.

2. Gods That Were Born

The way in which gods appeared other than through self-development was by being born.

The islands born by the gods Izanagi and Izanami during the bearing of lands, are considered to be gods

also. The bearing of lands is not the same as the bearing of islands. The concept of an island is not nature as spoken of in Western concepts, but is grasped as one total organism.

Gods from the mythology of Izumo origin appear as children gods and their lineage is not put in order.

The god who is born signifies the parent-child relationship of bearing and being born. This concept introduces the consciousness of the position of man as a child of a god.

The Izumo-kunitsukuri-mikoto family has inherited Amenohohino-mikoto as its ancestral god, along with many others: Nakatomino-muraji, Amenokoyameno-mikoto, Imbenoobits, Futotamono-mikoto, Sarumenokimi, Amenougameno-mikoto, Hayato-onano-kimi, and Hoderino-mikoto. It should be noted that these myths are intended to show that these clans have gods appearing in the official mythology as their ancestral gods.

Man is a child born by a god, namely a child with a blood relationship to a god. To explain this point, each tribe has inherited myths that speak of the gods who appear in them as their ancestral gods. Man is called seijinso (literally translated as young-man-plant), and thereby conceived to be in oneness with the land. It may be inferred from this that man was originally understood to be a god's child, born from that god.

Man is allowed to live by receiving a part of the spirit of a god. Thus man and god are essentially in the same position. The deity has to be recognized in man. Naturally, man can be worshipped as a god. One does not show one's hesitation about that faith. It is because one believes that man and god can become homogeneous or united.

Here arises the mutual reliance between god and man. This is a very old, basic idea in the history of religious thought. The ultimate union of god and man is that man respects god, always keeps his body and mind pure, tries to be thoroughly honest, seeks to come nearer to the state of god, enhances god's authority, unites with god and inherits god's virtue. Thereby one will have better fortune.

This represents the principle of cooperation and co-prosperity between a god and a man, and the archetype is

Shinto, in which god and man are in the same position. This is the give and take action between a god (deity) and a man. This is a principled way of thinking about the recognition of the existence of the universe.

E. Shrine Shinto

Shinto cannot be dismissed in a simplistic analysis, because it is a national religion that, as a communal ritual, was influenced by interaction on many levels with the state, the countryside, people's occupations, family, sexual differences, ages, and so on, and with foreign religious cultures; it has trod a complex course of development.

Even those shrines that were not put under the direct control of the state have persevered through the support of Japanese traditional culture and of a community bound together by a common life and, on the level of social customs, through feasts, regular annual events, the rites of passage in one's life, etc. A definition of Shinto that includes its development in the form of the organization of private religious associations is not easy. But there is the fact that at its core is the shrine or temple.

Thus the temple (shrine) is the central basis for Shinto, and the classical form of Shinto is handed down through the rites of the deities of heaven and earth that are performed there.

The scene for the services of the gods of the heavens and of the earth is the shrine. The shrine refers to the holy place and its entire precincts, including the building called a holy house where the god abides.

A god's shrine consists of a holy place where the god is received at the feast time, and the god's forest, a grove of trees that rises onto a little hill. It is in the forest itself that the god abides, and is the place where ceremonies for the god are held.

The shrine is the place where people receive and give a warm greeting to the god through ceremony, and have communion with that god. When people preserve their solidarity by holding a ceremony before their common god for the sake of their communal life, a god appears.

A village community, consisting of both a clan group

of blood relationship and a tribal group bound together by a shared territorial bond, comes together centered on the gods of the region; thereby various shrines have been established and handed down.

Between the god and the local inhabitants, a god-man relationship peculiar to Shinto was established, with the blood bond between the tutelary deity and the worshipers being emphasized. Respect for the gods of heaven and earth through ritualistic customs is the tradition of Japan, and has been continued as an unwritten practice.

Thus it has been the starting point of Shinto from ancient times to make the hills and rivers the garden of a deity. This is not nature simply as a dynamic objectification but nature which has touched people's lives as gods, and a nature in which people have felt the spiritual world of the deities by building a Torii gate at the foot of a mountain, on the seashore, or in the village. Therefore, the people established himorogi and iwahura to hold ceremonies by receiving and worshipping gods.

The shrine was also the place that could bring them new spiritual vitality through the seasonal festivals and the consciousness of belonging, in which the god, man and nature are united.

The religious sense of Japanese people from ancient times, contemplating the spiritual power of gods in the forces of nature, is the way of a people who have felt the reality that man is kept alive through the ecology of nature. The establishment of Shinto is aimed at preserving Shinto rituals as they were in ancient times, because it is a national religion originally based upon an awareness of one's primordality.

Those who criticize Shinto saying that it is primitive nature worship, below the level of religion, do so because they lack an understanding of the sense of nature possessed by the ancient Japanese that is recorded in the myths of the Kojiki and Nihonshoki, and cannot recognize the fact that man is kept alive by the ecology of nature, which has been fully verified by science in the contemporary period.

The Japanese view of life recognizes no essential distinction between the mystery of man's life and the life force which controls the growth and development of

nature. One must understand that through this the gods of nature are religiously acknowledged from the very beginning. This conception has been the fundamental religious spirit of Shinto.

F. Occupations and Gods

Among the common people in the countryside a popular Shinto folk religion was practiced that was believed to bring good fortune to one's daily life through the shrine festival of the tutelary deity of the village or neighborhood, or through a pilgrimage to the Grand Shrines of Ise.

In particular, the heart that prayed that the occupation in which people were engaged in might bring them affluence, also wished that various gods would become involved in their type of occupation or business. Thus, myriads of deities became the objects of that kind of faith, depending on the divine authority, spiritual power and attributes worshiped.

1. Gods Concerned with Agriculture

a) Ukeno-mitamano-mikoto (Fushimi-inare-taisha Shrine in Kyoto)

This is designated as the god of the spirit of foods. Inari pertains to rice, the principal food of the Japanese, even within the word itself (which includes a Chinese character meaning rice).

b) Toyougehimeno-kami (Toyouge-Daijingu Shrine in Ise, the Outer Shrine)

This god is given the greatest weight among the agricultural gods and only appears in the Kojiki. A child of Izanagi and Izanami, and a child of Wakusuhino-kami, an agricultural god.

c) Other agricultural gods:

i) Uganokami and ii) Oomono-imino-kami are also worshiped.

d) Gods of the five cereals:

i) Kamimusubino-kami, ii) Oogetsumimeno-kami,
iii) Amaterasu-omikami, iv) Ukemochino-kami
v) Wakumusubinokami are worshiped.

e) When one cultivates a rice field, Otononushino-kami and Haniyamahimeno-kami are worshiped.

f) Inviting the spirits of the Gods to come.

At the time of rice planting, calamity, damage due to birds or insects, or when praying for rain, one would pray for the coming of the spirits of the gods, and hold a festival so that crops might be produced successfully. At harvest time they again worshiped those gods to whom they asked for protection, Musubino-kami or others, by making offerings to them.

2. Gods of Sericulture

The Kojiki and Nihonshoki explain that silkworms were born from the gods Ogetsuhimenokami, Ukemochinokami and Wakumusubinokami, and it is said that Amaterasu-omikami (the Sun Goddess) started the industry of sericulture. These gods are worshiped as gods of sericulture.

3. Gods of Fishing

- a) Yaekotoshironushino-kami (Miko Shrine, Shimane Prefecture) This god is a child of Okuninushinokami, and is worshiped as the god of fishery.
- b) Hoderinomikoto
This god is worshipped using the affectionate name Umisachihiko. A well-known story says that two brother gods separated, one going to the ocean and one to the mountain, and each presided over products from the sea and land.
- c) Others: i) Owatatsuminokami (god of the sea) and ii) Ukenochinokami (god of food) are also worshiped as gods of fishing.

4. Gods of Hunting

- a) Oyomatsuminokami (god of the mountain)
- b) Hoderino-mikoto (Brother of Yamasachihikonomikoto)
- c) Ukemochinokami and others are worshiped.

5. Gods of Commerce

- a) Ukenomitamanomikoto (affectionately called Oinari-san).
- b) Okuninushinokami (Daikoku-san)
- c) (Ebisu-san)

- d) Hirukookami and Oichihimenokami (god of the market)

Ukenomitamanomikoto was originally the god of agriculture, but his authority was expanded and he became a god of commerce also. In the case of Okuninushinokami, the god of the Izumo Shrine, he is syncretized with the god of wealth (Mahakala), because of the Chinese reading of the name as Daikoku.

6. Gods of Industry

- a) Amanomahitotsunokami (Tado Shrine, Mie Prefecture)
The god of smithery and forges; therefore he is often worshiped as the god of metal refining.
- b) Kanayamahikonokami and Kanayamahimenokami are gods of mines, and are often worshiped together with the god of the mountain, or alone in all kinds of industry concerned with mining, ranging from gold, silver and copper mines to coal mines.
- c) Other industries worship: Homusubinokami when there is need of fire; Mizuhanomenokami as the god of water when water is necessary; Haniyasuhiko and Himenokami, and Ozuetsuminokami, because earth is essential for pottery.

7. Other Occupations

There are innumerable occupations such as salt, sugar, soy sauce, tofu, meat, cake, tea, wine, cloth, architecture, construction, transportation, entertainment, scholarship, etc. A review like this demonstrates that Shinto is a folk religion of myriads of deities reflecting a variety of occupations and lifestyles.

G. Some comments concerning Amaterasu-omikami

It is a very important transmitted racial rite and tradition of Japanese culture that Amaterasu-omikami occupies the seat of the main stream of Shrine Shinto as the central deity of the Eight Hundred Myriad Deities (Yaoyorozunokamigami).

Even though Shrine Shinto is by nature a transmission of beliefs that requires no philosophy or doctrine, this lack of doctrine may be a problem in terms of

international relations, which are becoming much deeper. It is the urgent business of world trends that try to create new culture to clarify what is the rationality behind the Japanese mentality of belief.

Is Amaterasu-omikami the goddess of the sun? If so, why did Japanese offer prayers to her? Why did they make a heavenly body, a fixed star lying in the center of the solar system a goddess? We have historically believed in her, but is that belief worthy to be continued today and handed down to the future? We may have such questions.

The ancient people (Jodai-jin) of our country had no concepts of matter as we use them today. Things were recognized by their function. The sun was not matter as we understand today, but was taken to serve the function of light. The reason why the ancient people stood in awe of the greatness of the sun was essentially that they felt the substance of divine spirit in the light of the sun, in the shining function of the thing. This attitude will surely live eternally as the human stance toward basic life.

Modern people may say that this is nature worship, and that they acknowledged natural gods as dieties, but this world in which we live was, we believe, created by many gods who were born in the Seven Divine Ages (Kamiyo). Our country and mountains and rivers, which we call nature, were born as the flesh and blood of gods, and live with the gods.

At this stage in the classical myths, natural gods were already identified with ancestral gods. Thus the combination of natural gods and personal gods in the religious dimension was realized. This was the basic religious attitude of Japanese people.

The history of belief in which nature is from the outset composed of gods, and where men are the sons of gods, supports the above-mentioned combination. Thus Amaterasu-omikami has been believed in as an ancestral goddess of the Tenno, the emperor of Japan. And not only are her rites the tradition of the Koshitsu (the Imperial Household), but she is also believed in by the general populace.

This fact has not changed even today. Therefore we have little or no doubt that the Imperial Household succeeds to the rite of Amaterasu-omikami as our

ancestral god.

H. Sin Consciousness in Shinto

Shinto regards all disasters and dirtiness, in addition to criminal acts, as sin (tsumi). Public welfare and the maintenance of order are regarded as more important than private and physical sin. Shinto distinguishes heavenly sin from national sin, and believes that all sins can be cancelled by harai (purification through litany).

If sin was believed to be something like original sin, that is some inherent or essential nature, the concept of harai, which identifies sins as dirtiness or disasters that can be cancelled, would never come about. The concept of original sin anticipates the existence of some transcendental, absolute being as a premise, and necessarily demands conditions of belief, such as confession, accepting admonition, redemption, forgiveness or salvation, in one's religious commitment to the Absolute. These concepts are incompatible with Shinto's understanding of existence. In Shinto, human sin and dirtiness has been believed to be purified and cancelled by man's restraint and diligence, and by god's force.

Misogi (purification through bathing) and harai (litany) are procedures for purification, and it is thought to be a human responsibility to participate in the gods' creative work after being purified from all disasters and receiving the blessing of the gods.

In this and other cases, man feels that beings with some magical powers exist that can powerfully absorb his sins and dirtiness and seal them up. The Japanese called those forces gods. They expected gods to absorb their sins and dirtiness, and established certain times and places to send for the gods. This is the beginning of Shinto ritual.

At first, in the ceremony of harai they perform Shinto rituals, reciting a Shinto ritual prayer, harai, norito and kigan. Through the rituals, they entrust gods with the disposal of all sorts of tsumi (sins, disasters, dirtiness,) which men did, do, or will make.

Then Seoritsu-hime, a goddess sitting on rapids named Hayakawa, will bring the tsumi to the large ocean and

sit on the middle of the tide with it. Next, Haya-akitsu-hime a goddess will drink the tsumi-kegare down. Then, Ibukido-nushi (god) will blow it away to the Country of Ne (root) and Soko (bottom). Finally, Haya-sasura-hime (goddess) sitting on the country of Ne and Soko will take it, and wandering over the wilderness, finally making it vanish.

Thus our ancestors felt the effect of gods in the purification of the sea and believed that their tsumi-kegare (sins and dirtiness) could not be purified until they reached the country of Ne and, Soko at the end of the ocean.

The tsumi-kegare was so formidable to our ancestors that it was believed that it could not be purified without the power of gods. The magical powers of harai are powers of the gods that have great effect on human beings.

The gods of Shinto showed the discretion to take another look at man's sins and disasters from an original conception with the desire to accept them as they are, as children of gods. Thus Shintoists believe that man can attain the state of ultimate goodness by misogi and harai.

I. Secularism of Shinto

1. Secularism

The telling of the Shinto myths begins in the age of chaos. Afterwards the myths tell such stories as follows: gods whose roles are to bear nations, to mend, divide and develop the chaos, and to pass on the job to men who had been born from the gods.

The last part of the myths is that Amaterasu-omikami (goddess of the Sun) expected the creative works of her descendants to endure forever with Heaven and Earth (Tenjo-mukyu).

The oracle said "Forever with Heaven and Earth" (Tenjo-mukyu), which was given by Amaterasu-omikami when she sent her grandchild Ninigino-mikoto to the Japanese nation, and told us these circumstances. The oracle said that "this Reed-plain-1500-autumns-fair-rice-ear land is the region that my descendants shall rule. Do thou, my Imperial Grandson, proceed thither and govern it. Go! And may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and may

it, like Heaven and Earth, endure forever."

This is a declaration of the unchanging and eternal nature of the throne. It was an expression of political principle in the 8th century, that the Japanese people grasped as a belief based on their history and tradition from former times. It celebrates this world as something which can be generated and developed forever. It might be said that Japanese, from the beginning of history, have been secularists and optimists.

This national character seems not to have changed even now. Japanese seek their happiness and profit in this world and continue to pray, from the past till now, to gods for the safety of their families and prosperity in business. Naturally farmers, but also merchants, businessmen, and office workers living in the city, participate in annual festival and folk events with the desire of escaping disaster and gaining happiness, without paying almost any attention to the deep relationship between these events and religion.

They continued to believe from generation to generation that to work hard for one's daily life is in itself the purpose of life in this world, and means the realization of the meaning of their existence.

Shinto makes a distinction between hare (public) and ke (daily), but does not consider the difference between holy and secular. The time of the god-festival is in principle the time of hare. The time of birth as the gift of life, the coming-of-age ceremony and marriage are not daily events, so these event also belong to hare. Compared with them the general affairs of daily life are ke. Japanese regulated their life by means of the harmonious rhythm between the two.

2. The world after death

Regarding the next world, we find in the Kojiki and Nihonshoki some folklore about Izanagino-mikoto's visit to Yominokuni (the world after death). The next world is called Takamagahara, Hinowakamiya, Tokoyo, Watatsumi, Nenokuni, Hahanokuni, etc. in these books, but we cannot find any anywhere in them a description that is essentially different from that of the world of Nakatsukuni (this world). Transmissions of belief concerning the next world can thus be thought to lie in the same line as thoughts about this world.

Even the place where one will surely go after death is not decided. This means that the next world is essentially not so important. The next world is not believed to be a place where one can go and never return, but a place that one can come back from whenever they like, to join in the festivals (matsuri) of this world. As a service after someone's death, Japanese go every year to meet the dead person's spirit or their ancestors' spirits and hold a ceremony, a small festival so to speak, for intensive communication (maturu) on the anniversary of the person's death, Ohigan (the equino visit) and especially the Bon festival (the Buddhist festival of the dead).

Shinto has never attempted any detailed description about the nation of the dead, but this does not mean that it believes in extinction between this world and the next world. The two have been thought of as worlds of almost the same dimension.

The next world in Shinto is not a complete Utopia, but is adversely stuck to this world, oriented, centered on this world.

J. A Final Comment

So far I have mentioned little about the relationship between Shinto and Unification Thought. Therefore I would now like to state my opinions about several points.

The religious practices of ancient people (kodai-jin) were embedded in their social life and customs. Thus they developed a religious self-consciousness as Shintoists only after they came into contact with religions from abroad.

It was the Shinto shrine that was most important to the religious activities of Shinto. It is only at the Shinto shrine that new spiritual vitality can be poured out through festivals and rituals, which are religious practices where gods, men and nature become one body. Thus Shinto has no doctrine or scripture, and is compared with scriptural religions as a practice-type and ritual-centered religion.

At this point, Shinto seems unable to transcend the dimension of being a racial religion unless it adopts some theologically unified theory (makes some

scripture).

The Kojiki, Nihonshoki and other myths tell that all living things including man and the earth are born by gods. We know from them naturally that ancient people had some self-awareness that they were the children of gods. Unification Thought maintains that God created men in His own image. Shinto says that gods bore men. What is the difference between these two thoughts about the appearance of men in the world?

The concepts of bear and born in Shinto reflect the recognition that God and men have the same relationship as between parents and children. Dr. Sang Hun Lee wrote "God, who is both father and mother of mankind ..." in the Summary of Unification Thought (Textbook for V.O.C. Academic Seminar 1986.8.17-23, p.25). This expression means that God is the parent of mankind. The Japanese race, along with Shinto, is part of the total constitution of mankind. If we compare the two concepts by magnifying them both to cover mankind in general, we can find that both views are identical.

The two are different, however, in that God in Unification Thought is one God, while Shinto believes in Eight Hundred Myriads of Deities (Yaoyorozuno-kamigami).

The next important problem is belief in Amaterasu-omikami in Shinto.

I think that if we think through the ideas of Shinto in terms of the theory of the "individual truth body" in Unification Thought, Shinto will achieve a deeper theological epistemology. I await your kind suggestions.

References

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