

The Formation of Sect Shinto in Modernizing Japan

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This essay analyzes the formation of sect Shinto in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is pointed out that the Shinto sects that constituted sect Shinto were constructed on the basis of preexisting infrastructures, which had developed in response to the profound social changes accompanying the modernization process of the Bakumatsu and Meiji periods. Sect Shinto took shape in a crossfire between the impact of modernization from below, and the vicissitudes of Meiji religious policy from above. The essay further proposes to distinguish between two types of Shinto religious movements: Shinto sects, characterized by a typical “dish-structure,” and Shinto-derived New Religions, displaying a “tree-structure.” Of these two types, groups of the first type were shaped more directly by Meiji religious policy than the latter, which first arose as “founded religions” and adapted to Meiji policy only later, in the course of their institutionalization.

Keywords: Sect Shinto — modernization — Meiji religious policy — Kokugaku — New Religions

Rethinking Sect Shinto

THE TERM “SECT SHINTO” (*kyōha Shintō* 教派神道) dates from the prewar period. To this day it is often used in its prewar sense, with reference to the so-called thirteen Shinto sects (whose modern names are Izumo Ōyashirokyō 出雲大社教, Ontakekyō 御嶽教, Kurozumikyō 黒住教, Konkōkyō 金光教, Jikkōkyō 実行教, Shinshūkyō 神習教, Shintō Taikyō 神道大教, Shintō Shūseiha 神道修成派, Shintō Taiseikyō 神道大成教, Shinrikyō 神理教, Tenrikyō 天理教, Fusōkyō 扶桑教, and Misogikyō 禊教). These thirteen groups were officially recognized as “Shinto sects” by the authorities in the Meiji period, and were

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referred to collectively as “the thirteen Shinto sects” between 1908, when Tenrikyō was established as the last of the thirteen, and 1945, when the prewar Religious Organizations Law (*shūkyō dantai hō* 宗教団体法) was abolished.¹

Sect Shinto was from the start a category of state religious policy, and this characteristic of the term has formed the starting point for most research up to this day.² We should not forget, however, that religious policy was developed in response to a historical reality. The establishment of sect Shinto was an administrative way of dealing with the crystallization of Shinto traditions into organized religious groups, a process that was in turn triggered by the modernization of Japanese society as a whole. It was because this crystallization process had already begun before the Meiji government formulated its religious policy, that sect Shinto was created as a category of this policy.

A major issue in the study of sect Shinto, then, is the relation between Meiji religious policy on the one hand, and modern developments of Shinto on the other. There is no doubt that the formation of Shinto sects after Meiji was given a concrete shape by state policy. At the same time, however, the politicians, bureaucrats, and leading Shintoists who were involved in the formation of this policy reacted to the rapid changes within the Shinto world when they formulated their proposals for the organizational structure of what later was to be called sect Shinto. It is therefore possible to trace in the concrete contents of the Shinto policies of the government the issues that Shinto was facing in the process of modernization. In my view, it is essential to focus on the organic interrelationship between these two historical factors in the emergence of sect Shinto. In this essay, I shall argue that Shinto was forced to adapt to social changes caused by modernization, and that the emergence of organized religious groups was one concrete form in which this adaptation took place. I shall conclude by pointing out that the establishment of an organized sect Shinto was a logical and inevitable outcome of this.

The formation of organized Shinto sects should be studied within the context of developments in Japanese society as a whole. Among the changes that transformed Japanese society in the nineteenth cen-

¹ Jingūkyō 神宮教, too, started as a Shinto sect, but was dissolved in 1899 and reclassified as a secular organization under the name of Jingū Hōsaikai 神宮奉齋会, and is therefore not normally included in the thirteen Shinto sects. Moreover, the number of state-recognized Shinto sects increased slowly between 1876, when the legal framework for recognizing sects was established, until 1908.

² Representative among prewar studies of sect Shinto are TSURUFUJI Ikuta 1939; NAKAYAMA Keiichi 1932; and a series of works on individual sects by Tanaka Yoshitō in the 1930s, collected in TANAKA 1987.

ture, the following three had a direct impact not only on Shinto but on Japanese religion in its entirety:

1. The structure of industry and production
2. Internationalization
3. Changes in the intellectual context

Changes in the restructuring of industry and production led to far-reaching changes in the social foundation of religion. I am here aiming at a wide range of phenomena, from industrialization and urbanization to the improvement of transport. All this transformed the structure of village communities on which traditional Buddhist sects and shrine Shinto depended, and forced them to adapt to radically altered circumstances. Naturally, traditional ways of maintaining faith systems in a highly closed society with little population mobility had to be modified radically to adapt to a society where mobility rapidly increased. In more concrete terms, the faith of parents was no longer handed down automatically to their children, as more and more people moved away from the temples and shrines they had patronized over many generations.

Internationalization became an incentive for religion to set itself new goals, and to raise its efforts in offering religious education to the people to a higher level. With the fall of the bakufu Japan was opened to the world, and foreign (notably Western) culture flooded into the country. Christianity was one element of this sudden influx. The lifting of the ban on Christianity, and the subsequent arrival of Christianity in Japan as an aspect of Western civilization, had a profound impact on the religious world of Japan. From the beginning, Christian missionaries showed great initiative in the field of education. The efforts of Protestant missionaries, mostly from North America, to foster talent at all levels of education caused waves among religious educators in Japan. Traditionally, much attention had been given to the training of religious professionals, such as monks and priest; but now, the issue arose of how to incorporate religious instruction in regular education for the general population.

Among the factors that inspired new developments in religious organization, the changed intellectual context of religion was perhaps the most important. In the Edo period literacy rates had been low, and even primary education was not widespread. In the nineteenth century, however, literacy rates rose rapidly, especially in urban areas, and primary education reached ever growing sectors of the population. After the Restoration, also secondary education became steadily more common even among the lower social strata. This gradually undermined the status of monks and priests as an intellectual or semi-

intellectual class. Simultaneously, common believers ceased to be mere passive receivers of religious information, and became able to participate actively also in spreading such information.³

These changes not only informed changes in the organizational structure and methods of proselytization of established religions, but also opened up the possibility of creating new organizational forms and new ways of proselytizing. This is why after the Restoration, established Buddhist sects went through a period of radical innovation, while the Shinto world faced an even greater wave of change. Also, it explains why new religious groups began to take shape from the Bakumatsu period onwards.

When we consider the emergence of those religious groups now known as sect Shinto from this perspective, we notice a number of blind spots in existing research. First, we need to reconsider whether it is appropriate to limit the term “sect Shinto” to the thirteen Shinto sects, and if not, what kind of categorization would be more helpful. Then, on the basis of such a categorization, we can address the issues of which aspects of Shinto’s modernization led to the formation of sect Shinto, and in what ways sect Shinto can be distinguished from shrine Shinto (*jinja Shintō* 神社神道) and Shinto-derived New Religions (*Shintō kei shinshūkyō* 神道系新宗教).⁴

Among the Shinto religious groups that broke away from shrine Shinto in response to modernization, we can distinguish two types.⁵ In a word, the first type emphasized organizational continuity, while the second gave more weight to doctrinal continuity. Where groups of the first type were connected closely to historical forms of Shinto, and especially of shrine Shinto, groups of the second type were less bound by tradition. Drawing on broader categorizations of religious movements, we may describe the former as reform movements, and the latter as founded religions. Of course, the grade of continuity of particular groups with established religion varies from case to case on a sliding scale; but nevertheless, a rough typological distinction as sketched here can be recognized. At the same time, these two types represent two tendencies or directions in Shinto’s response to modernity: respect for tradition, and the need to adapt.

³ In the postwar period, and especially since the 1980s, this situation became even more extreme with the spread of higher education. This has given rise to a phenomenon that we may call an “intellectual reversal,” where many common believers are more knowledgeable than their priests. On this topic, see INOUE 1999.

⁴ I choose here to retain and redefine the term sect Shinto, rather than do away with it altogether; on my reasons for taking this position, see INOUE 1991.

⁵ A parallel typology can be applied also to new Buddhist movements; on this point, I refer to INOUE 1996.

The Influence of Meiji Religious Policy

How can we describe the emergence of the category of sect Shinto in Meiji religious policy? First of all, we must be aware of the fact that during the period directly following the Restoration, the Meiji government expected Shinto traditions to perform two main functions. First, there was the containment of Christianity. Under growing pressure from Western states to lift the ban on Christianity, the government anticipated a growing influence of the religion in the future. Apprehension about the spread of Christianity inspired measures to educate the populace in order to counteract the threat of Christianization. Secondly, Shinto was expected to lend substance to the Restoration's ideal of unity of rites and government (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致). The Restoration government adopted Shinto as a religious device to create a new hierarchical order within the realm of religion; the aspect of Shinto that suggested it to the government as such a device was the notion of *saisei itchi*.

From this starting point, religious policy went through a series of reforms and adaptations. The religious policies of the shogunate and the Meiji government differed in many aspects, but the changes that had the most profound effect on the development of religion after the Restoration were without doubt (1) the shift of emphasis from Buddhism to Shinto, and (2) the implementation of a uniform religious policy by the state.

The shogunate concentrated its policy efforts on Buddhism because of the *danka* 檀家 system, under which all births and deaths had to be registered at Buddhist temples with legal monopolies to minister to specified households. The Restoration government stood under the influence of a considerable number of nativists (*kokugakusha* 国学者) who had defined its political ideals, and as a result it favored Shinto. In the course of the Edo period a hierarchical order had been imposed on the Buddhist world through the *honmatsu* 本末 system, which identified one head-temple (*honji* 本寺) for each sect, and arranged all other temples under a specified head-temple as sub-temples (*matsuji* 末寺). In the Shinto world, however, and especially in the world of shrines, no *honmatsu*-type hierarchy existed.

Regarding the second point, we find that under the *bakuhan* system, where power was divided between a national bakufu and regional domains, political control over religion had a two-tier structure. The bakufu administered the various religious groupings. With regard to Buddhist sects it implemented the *honmatsu* system, and exerted control by overseeing the head-temples. With regard to shrines, it placed priests under the control of the Shirakawa 白川 and Yoshida 吉田 houses,

and laid restrictions on priests by using these houses as a channel. Finally, the office of the magistrate of shrines and temples (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行) coordinated religious policy as a whole. However, domains, too, had their own religious policies, which differed from one place to another. The Satsuma domain, for example, banned the True Pure Land sect, and the Okayama domain used shrines instead of temples to register the population. Thus there were considerable variations in religious policy between different domains.

After Meiji, however, the principles for the administration of religious organizations were unified by the state. Even though the practical implementation was left to local authorities, the state laid down a uniform legal framework for administering religion. This situation first arose with the institution of the Ministry of Religion (Kyōbushō 教部省) in 1873, and continues to this day, now under the Religious Affairs Division of the Agency of Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō Shūmuka 文化庁宗務課). The unification of religious administration by the state caused the religious system of modern Japan to regroup at a fast pace. However, the system that emerged as a result was in fact rather far removed from the initial plans of the Restoration government. The separation of shrine Shinto and sect Shinto was one such unforeseen outcome, which came about as the result of a long process of trial and error. This in itself shows that the emergence of a system of Shinto sects was the natural result of an historical development, rather than a mere product of administrative reform.

At this point, we may attempt to draw up a preliminary outline of some developments within Meiji religious policy. The Restoration government selected shrine Shinto as the religious system most fit to perform the role of strengthening the modern state. To this end, the government set out to reconstruct shrine Shinto, by putting an end to the state of kami-Buddhist amalgamation (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合) that was common throughout the Edo period. First the government announced the reinstatement of the Kami Council (Jingikan 神祇官), in a proclamation of the Council of State (Dajōkan 太政官) dated the third month of 1868.⁶ Needless to say, this amounted to a return to the institutional framework of Ritsuryō times. The Kami Council took over the powers executed by the Shirakawa and Yoshida houses during the Edo period (such as the power to appoint priests), and assumed responsibility for the administration of all shrines and priests. Then, 1870/1/3 saw the proclamation of that famed “imperial edict on the promulgation of the Great Teachings” (*taikyō senpu no mikotonori*

⁶ The solar calendar was adopted in 1873, so all dates before 1873 are according to the lunar calendar.

大教宣布の詔), which laid the basis for the system of “missionaries” (*senkyōshi* 宣教使) who were to preach a set of state-sanctioned doctrines throughout the country.⁷

Further, the Council of State proclaimed on 1871/5/14 that shrines were not private but public institutions, and the system under which positions at shrines were hereditary within traditional priestly lineages was abolished. This was the start of the running of shrines by the state. Local customs and shrine traditions were scrapped, and exchanged for shrine activities stipulated by the state.

Parallel with these changes, the “separation of *kami* and buddhas” had been announced by the Council of State on 1868/3/28 (*shinbutsu hanzen rei* 神仏判然令). The aim of this announcement was to make clear for each religious institution whether it was a shrine or a temple, and, accordingly, whether its staff were to be defined as Shinto priests or as Buddhist monks. In this way the government aimed to create a Shinto that was clearly distinct from Buddhism.

Through these measures, Shinto was turned into a state-run sect for the propagation of the Great Teachings. However, the Kami Council was demoted to become the Ministry of Kami (Jingishō 神祇省) already in 1871, and subsequently abolished altogether in 1872. The Ministry of Religion (Kyōbushō) was set up in its stead, but this institution, too, was soon abolished, and from 1877 onwards a Bureau for Shrines and Temples (Shajikyoku 社寺局) in the Home Ministry took over its tasks. Although the administrative status of the offices dealing with religion was steadily lowered, there was no change in the basic attitude of the government, which held on to the principle that Shinto should serve as the spiritual foundation of the nation.

At first, the scheme of missionaries inaugurated in 1870 gave concrete form to the government’s policy of popular religious education; but this soon ended in failure. The Shintoists and nativists appointed as missionaries under this scheme were from the start ill-fitted to serve as popular propagandists, and they proved remarkably ineffective. In 1872, a new system of “national evangelists” (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) was introduced, under the aegis of the Ministry of Religion. Following the failure of the missionaries, shrine priests and monks were appointed as national evangelists. This was the start of a joint Shinto-Buddhist campaign (run administratively by the Great Teaching Institute, Daikyōin 大教院) that went straight against the grain of the separation of *kami* and buddhas implemented only four years earlier. This sud-

⁷ The three Great Teachings were (1) respect for the gods, love of country; (2) making clear the principles of Heaven and the Way of Man; (3) reverence for the emperor and obedience to the will of the court. On the Great Promulgation campaign, see HARDACRE 1986.

den change of policy threw the religious world into turmoil. The True Pure Land sect, which from the start had been opposed to the central role of Shinto in religious policy, broke away from the Great Teaching Institute, and thus caused a crisis that led to the final abolishment of the system of national evangelists in 1884.

I have recapitulated these well-known facts because it was in the throes of these rapid reforms that sect Shinto came to be separated from shrine Shinto. After the demise of the system of national evangelists, the government gave up all efforts to involve itself directly in popular religious education. Two years earlier, in 1882, a government notice had separated “shrine officials” (*shinkan* 神官) from national evangelists. This notice stipulated that shrine officials serving at shrines could not hold appointments as national evangelists, and that funerals could only be performed by the latter. From this point onwards, the direct involvement of the state was limited to only shrines, and popular education through religious instruction was left to Buddhist and Shinto sects. In a sense, we could say that the state opened up this field to free competition.

The separation of shrine Shinto and sect Shinto took the form of a division of labor, with shrine Shinto applying itself to ritual, and sect Shinto to religious education. Furthermore, the same year, 1882, saw the founding of two central Shinto institutions: the “Ise Hall of Imperial Studies” (Jingū kōgakkān 神宮皇学館) and the “Institute for the Study of the Imperial Classics” (Kōten kōkyūsho 皇典講究所).⁸ These institutions can be said to represent a further separation between religious education (*kyōka* 教化) on the one hand, and academic study (*gakumon* 学問) on the other. In contrast to the Ise Hall of Imperial Studies, the Institute for the Study of the Imperial Classics was not a public institution, but nevertheless its founding reflected government concerns to the extent that we may anachronistically describe it as a “third sector” facility. At this point, twenty years of Meiji religious policy resulted in a triple partition between ritual, religious education, and academic study, with the state involved directly only in the first of these fields. In a sense, this was a very rational outcome, since ritual was least sensitive to the changing times, and by necessity had to play a central role in establishing the modern emperor system.

The state concentrated its administrative efforts on shrine Shinto, but this did not stop it from imposing considerable restrictions also on sect Shinto, which now had been given the task of educating the populace. Both sect teachings and the architecture of sect buildings

⁸ These institutions survive today in the form of two private universities, both of which educate shrine priests: Kōgakkān Daigaku in Ise and Kokugakuin Daigaku in Tokyo.

were supervised by the government, while the mission policies of all sects were controlled through the sects' administrative leaders (*kanchō* 管長). Of course this applied equally to Buddhist sects, but while these were able to draw on their own established traditions, the new Shinto sects did not have any such traditions, and as a result naturally conformed more closely to the model laid down by the government.

Preparing the Ground for the Formation of Sect Shinto

Even though the administrative category of sect Shinto was created by the Meiji government, the formation of Shinto religious groups⁹ in the nineteenth century was ultimately the inevitable result of social change. In the above, I have argued that, rather than holding on to the old category of the “thirteen Shinto sects,” we should distinguish between two types of religious groups: Shinto-derived New Religions and sect Shinto. Religious groups not included in the thirteen sects, as well as those groups among the thirteen sects that displayed a high level of independence, can then be categorized afresh on the basis of this typology. In what follows I shall use the term “sect Shinto” in this sense.¹⁰

The first to form religious groups were those movements that strongly displayed the characteristics of Shinto-derived New Religions, such as Kurozumikyō, Tenrikyō, Konkōkyō, Misogikyō, and Maruyamakyō 丸山教.¹¹ Slightly later, in the last years of the Edo period and

⁹ The formation of religious groups here refers to the process by which certain belief systems give rise to clear organizational forms. A religious group is here defined as a religious organization that encompasses (1) facilities that are the object of religious beliefs; (2) religious specialists who spread these beliefs, and a system for training such specialists; and (3) believers who support the organization. Such organizations were not completely non-existent in the Edo period; one might argue, for example, that Yoshida Shinto achieved the status of a religious group from the sixteenth century onwards. However, Yoshida Shinto remained a rather small-scale organization, and its efforts to spread its teachings were limited in scope. Characteristic of modern religious groups is the independence that believers' organizations attain from society at large. Following Joachim WACH's typology (1962), we can say that “specifically religious groups” first began to spread widely at this time.

¹⁰ This categorization does not necessarily coincide with the present status of these groups. At present, the following twelve groups are members of the official association of Shinto sects (*Kyōha Shintō rengōkai* 教派神道連合会): Izumo Ōyashirokyō, Ōmoto 大本, Ontakekyō, Kurozumikyō, Konkōkyō, Jikkōkyō, Shinshūkyō, Shintō Shūseiha, Shintō Taikyō, Shinrikyō, Fusōkyō, and Misogikyō. However, this association cannot be regarded as a direct continuation of prewar sect Shinto, as is made clear in article 3 of the association's statutes: “This association is formed by all Shinto sects that are in accordance with the association's aims.”

¹¹ Nyoraikyō 如来教, which arose in the first decades of the nineteenth century, slightly earlier than Kurozumikyō, may also be regarded as an early New Religion. Nyoraikyō was founded by Kino きの (1756–1828), based on Shinto-Buddhist combinatory beliefs around the deity Konpira. See KANDA 1990.

the early days of Meiji, the archetypical Shinto sects of Shinrikyō, Shinshūkyō, Shintō Shūseiha, Izumo Taishakyō,¹² and Shintō Tai-seikyō were founded. Another group of sects based on confraternities (*kō* 講) of mountain cults then began to take shape in the first decades after the Restoration: Jikkōkyō, Fusōkyō, Ontakekyō.

There is no single pattern to the development of early movements of the type of Shinto-derived New Religions. Kurozumikyō, for example, encountered few obstacles in the process of building up an organizational structure, while Misogikyō faced persecution (its leader was arrested and exiled to Miyakejima), and was organized only under great duress. In both cases, however, these movements attracted a considerable following and formed organizations that were clearly different from the shrines and Shinto schools of the Edo period. This was made possible by the emergence of a social infrastructure that rendered new forms of organization feasible; and the same social conditions that informed the formation of Shinto-derived New Religions of this type also laid the foundations for the subsequent organization of the Shinto sects.

As noted above, Shinto-derived New Religions differed from the Shinto sects in the distance they maintained from traditional shrine Shinto, and in their nature as founded religions rather than reform movements. We may specify this distinction by focusing on two points: the presence of a founder, and the nature of the organizational structure.

A founder is a figure who propagates a religion that may be called “new” (relative though this appellation may be). A founder not only establishes a new organization with a new name, but also creates new teachings, new rites, and new activities. According to these criteria, we can clearly describe Tenrikyō’s Nakayama Miki 中山みき as a founder. Also Kurozumi Munetada 黒住宗忠 (Kurozumikyō) and Inoue Masakane 井上正鉄 (Misogikyō) can be said to have created relatively new religions; but at the same time, Kurozumikyō and Misogikyō remained closely linked to shrine Shinto, and thus displayed features that make it possible to label them as Shinto reform movements, that is to say, as Shinto sects.

Shinto-derived New Religions always have a clear founding figure under whose leadership the movement began its activities. In the case of the Shinto sects, however, the persons who function as the sects’ founders have not always played a role in the organization of the sect. In some cases, the founder has not even been at the center of the movement from its inception. This is the result of special circum-

¹² The reading of the name of this sect was changed to Izumo Ōyashirokyō after the war.

stances created by Meiji religious policy, but at the same time, it also shows that Shinto traditions did not necessarily require the presence of a founder to develop into organized religious groups.

Another point of difference is the nature of the organizational structure. In some groups, the headquarters and the various branches of the group all display the same forms of belief and engage in the same types of activities. This is true, for example, of Kurozumikyō, Tenrikyō, and Konkōkyō where all branch churches express the same beliefs, perform the same rites, and engage in the same activities. Other groups, such as Izumo Taishakyō, Ontakekyō, Shinshūkyō, Shintō Taiseikyō, and Fusōkyō display more variation among branches. In some cases, branch churches have a great degree of independence, and the religious group is no more than an umbrella organization. A well-known example of this is the case of Maruyamakyō. From 1882 until 1885, Maruyamakyō was under Fusōkyō, while maintaining its own identity through characteristic activities. After the death of Fusōkyō's first *kanchō* (Shishino Nakaba 宍野半), Maruyamakyō left Fusōkyō and became part of Shintō Honkyoku 神道本局 (later renamed Shintō Taikyō). Examples such as this one show that in some cases, distinct "mini-groups" were subsumed within larger organizations.

Organizationally, Shinto-derived New Religions typically display a "tree-structure," and the Shinto sects a "dish-structure." Groups with a tree-structure spread out from the headquarters at the center by establishing branches and sub-branches in new areas, with all parts of the structure maintaining an organic connection with each other and with the center. In contrast, dish-structure groups present a single organizational framework while including various heterogeneous mini-groups within this overarching structure. Sects of this type may be compared to a dish dressed with different types of food: together, they form a single menu, but they are composed from different kinds of ingredients.

In this sense, there are clear differences in organization between the two types. However, this contrast is prominent only on the level of the organization as a whole. When we focus on the individual local branches, the two types look more similar: both arise when people who share certain beliefs come together, exchange information, and thus construct belief systems that are tightly integrated with daily life. This occurred when the strong community links of Edo-period local society gave way to links of a different kind, in a period when society was rapidly becoming more fluid. The fact that Shinto-derived New Religions began to emerge in the nineteenth century demonstrates that the social conditions allowing popular religious movements to

take shape were already in place in different parts of the country. These New Religions created organizational structures, forms of proselytization, and teachings that were tailored to people's daily needs—albeit often in compromise with established religion. It is worth pointing out that this is a characteristic shared by all the religious groups under consideration, regardless of the type they belong to.

Kurozumikyō succeeded in creating a religious organization relatively easily, thanks to the fact that its founder Kurozumi Munetada (1780–1850) was a shrine priest, and that Shinto was looked upon favorably by the Okayama domain. Munetada experienced a mystical conversion in 1814, and inspired by this event he began preaching in the following year. His disciples spread his teachings beyond Okayama; one of them, Akagi Tadaharu 赤木忠春, preached among courtiers in Kyoto. In this way the group succeeded in recruiting followers from all layers of the population and over a wide area, from northern Kyushu in the west to the Kinki region in the east. Of course the success of this group can only be understood against the background of the social changes that took place during the Bakumatsu period. By the end of this period, Kurozumikyō had become the New Religion with the largest following.

Inoue Masakane (1790–1849), the founder of Misogikyō, enrolled as a student in the Shirakawa house in 1830 and acquired a ritual license (*shinpaishiki kyojō* 神拜式許状) in 1836. After this he started preaching, mostly in and around Edo. Masakane gained an appointment as shrine priest of the Umeda Shinmeigū, which allowed him to preach as a shrine priest. Since Edo was the center of the shogunate Masakane soon caught the attention of the authorities, and doubts were raised as to whether his teachings were in accord with Shinto orthodoxy. In the end Masakane was exiled to Miyakejima in 1843, and died there in 1849. Meanwhile, the Misogikyō movement itself spread widely among the populace, including the *bushi* class, and by the time of the Restoration it had gathered a considerable following both in the Kantō and the Kansai.

Nakayama Miki (1798–1887) of Tenrikyō is said to have experienced a religious conversion in 1838, when the deity Tenri-ō no Mikoto began to speak through her; but she did not start propagating her faith until the 1850s. She grew up in a Pure Land household, but after her possession she became strongly convinced that she was a “temple of God.” However, because she was not a religious specialist but the wife of a village headman, her group was faced with restrictions and persecution as soon as the number of followers began to grow and confraternities began to spread in the 1860s. In 1867 Miki's eldest son, Shūji 秀司, obtained a license from the Yoshida house (against

Miki's wishes) that allowed him to serve as a low-ranking priest, and thus secured the right to preach. After the Restoration, however, this license lost its value with the Yoshida's fall from favor, and once more the group ran into trouble with the authorities.

Konkō Daijin 金光大神 (Akazawa Bunji 赤沢文治, 1814–1883), the founder of Konkōkyō, was also a member of the peasant class, and was therefore not qualified to engage in religious activities. In the 1850s he began preaching about revelations made to him by a deity he called Tenchikane no Kami. Soon, he was faced with obstructive actions from a mountain ascetic (*shugenja*) who claimed that Konkō Daijin violated his longstanding rights in the area. In reaction to this Konkō Daijin gained permission from the Shirakawa house to worship the kami in his house, and to build a shrine there. This happened in 1864, a few years before the Restoration.

Maruyamakyō was based on a Fuji confraternity. This group was formed during the very period when the religious policy of the Restoration government was undergoing one sudden change after another. Its founder, Itō Rokurobei 伊藤六郎兵衛 (1829–1894), was born in Musashi province (in what is today the city of Kawasaki). It was his ambition to revive the Maruyama confraternity to which his family had traditionally belonged. In 1870 he purportedly received a divine revelation, and after this he was revered locally as a “living deity.” However, he was not qualified as a national evangelist, and his actions were severely restricted by the authorities. At this juncture Rokurobei followed the advice of Shishino Nakaba (at the time the head priest of the Sengen shrine), and in 1875 joined Nakaba's Association of Fuji Confraternities (Fuji Issan Kōsha 富士一山講社, which later became established in 1882 as an independent Shinto sect under the name of Fusōkyō). This enabled him to establish the “Maruyama Church of the Association of Fuji Confraternities.”

The example of Maruyamakyō is a good illustration of the influence that the religious policy of the Restoration period exerted on the organization of Shinto-derived New Religions. As soon as the number of followers rose above a certain level and an organization began to take shape, the group ran into trouble with the authorities. This did not stop the group from establishing an organization of its own, but it did force the group to conform itself to sect Shinto.

Organizing Sect Shinto

In contrast to the Shinto-derived New Religions described above, the organization of sect Shinto had from the start the character of an enterprise driven by Meiji religious policy. This is not to say, however,

that the Shinto sects were created from thin air by the state; in all cases, some kind of infrastructure was in place before the state stepped in. Shinto-derived New Religions were shaped by founders who preached new teachings and designed an organization on that basis; in the case of Shinto sects, new teachings and nascent organizational structures that had emerged locally were formed into religious groups under the influence of government policy. What, then, did such preexisting infrastructures consist of? Here, two points spring to mind:

1. Mountain beliefs (notably around Mt Fuji and Mt Ontake) were rooted in local confraternities, which were already beginning to develop into “mini-churches.”
2. Under the influence of the Kokugaku movement, new Shinto teachings were being developed that were less metaphysical and more relevant to the practical concerns of daily life than their Edo-period predecessors.

The first of these two points relates to organization, and the second to teaching. As other factors, which were perhaps somewhat less significant, we may mention the countless confraternities founded all around the country by so-called “pilgrim masters” (*oshi* 御師) based at the Ise and Izumo shrines, and the spread of popular movements such as Tōkyūjutsu 陶宮術 and Shingaku 心学,¹³ which had both established organizational structures that could serve as an example for sect formation.

Among the typical Shinto sects (Shinrikyō, Izumo Taishakyō, Shintō Shūseiha, Shintō Taiseikyō) only Shinrikyō and Shintō Shūseiha were started by founder-like figures. Shinrikyō’s Sano Tsunehiko 佐野経彦 (1838–1906) studied Kokugaku and medicine in his youth, and propagated a Japanese form of “imperial medicine” (*kōkoku idō* 皇国医道) during the Bakumatsu years. There was no organized movement at this stage, but already around the time of the Restoration Tsunehiko published a series of books drawing on his “house tradition.” During 1875 and 1876 he experienced mystical dreams and received divine revelations, and soon afterwards he began to gather a following and to hold lectures. Deeply worried about the encroachment of Christianity, he stressed the need to educate the people in Shinto. Tsune-

¹³ Tōkyūjutsu was a form of Japanese astrology started and spread by Yokoyama Maruzō 横山丸三 in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The practice propagated by the Shingaku movement, begun by Ishida Baigan 石田梅岩 in the eighteenth century, is perhaps better described as a form of spiritual training than religion; however, the network of Shingaku schools and training centers (concentrated in the Kansai region) exerted some influence on the later organization of religious groups.

hiko's ideas, then, were formed already during the Bakumatsu period; but he began to establish an organization only after the Restoration, under the influence of the social circumstances and the religious policies of that time. In 1880 Tsunehiko founded a "Shinri church" in Kokura (Kita-Kyūshū). However, due to the peripheral location of the church and Tsunehiko's own lack of contacts in government circles, his movement was not officially recognized until 1894. Tsunehiko traveled widely, especially in Kyushu, to recruit followers, and in that sense, the organization of his church was initially similar to the "tree-structure" typical of Shinto-derived New Religions. At a later stage, however, when the movement began to expand, various churches with little doctrinal relation to Shinrikyō were absorbed under its wings. As a result, Shinrikyō's following had something of a two-tier structure.

Shintō Shūseiha was started by Nitta Kuniteru 新田邦光 (1829–1902). Kuniteru was born in a *bushi* family in Awa province (modern Tokushima). From an early age, he showed an interest in the notion of Japan as a divine land, and felt a mission to spread Shinto and educate the people. Kuniteru combined a Kokugaku stress on Japan as the land of the kami with a *bushi* training in Confucianism. From ca. 1860 onwards Kuniteru started lecturing to students in Kyoto. Kuniteru's lecture notes from this period later formed the basis for the teachings of the Shintō Shūseiha, so that also in this case, we can say that the basic ideas behind the movement took shape already in the Bakumatsu period.

In the year of the Restoration, 1868, Kuniteru became a Jingikan official and was dispatched to Hida (modern Gifu). Here he ran into political trouble, and this inspired him to leave politics and embark on a religious career. In 1872 he became a national evangelist, and one year later he founded the "Association of Shūsei Confraternities" (Shūsei Kōsha 修成講社). Already in 1876 this organization gained official recognition as an independent sect under the new name of Shintō Shūseiha. Here, Kuniteru's connections from his days as a Bakumatsu activist for the imperial cause must have been of considerable help. As a result of this process of organization, Shintō Shūseiha had two distinct groups of believers: Kuniteru's students from the Bakumatsu period, and the members of the local groups that joined the Shūsei Kōsha after Meiji. In this sense, Shintō Shūseiha's structure was similar to that of Shinrikyō.

Shinshūkyō was founded by Yoshimura Masamochi 芳村正乘 (1839–1915), the son of a medical doctor in Mimasaka domain (in modern Okayama). It is said that he was told as a child by his grandmother that the Yoshimura house descended from the ancient priestly lineage of the Ōnakatomi. This appears to have been an important factor in

Masamochi's later choice of career in shrine administration and sect Shinto. In his youth, Masamochi studied Confucianism, "Imperial studies" (*kōgaku* 皇学), and Chinese studies. He was an imperial activist during the Bakumatsu period, and was forced to flee Kyoto to escape from shogunal forces. The dramatic events of these years left him a religious man with an ardent faith.

Immediately before the Restoration, Masamochi did some teaching at his own school in Mimasaka, and after the Restoration he was invited to join the Jingikan. He worked in shrine administration also under the Kyōbushō, but he was strongly opposed to the joint Shinto-Buddhist campaign run by the Daikyōin, and he left the Kyōbushō at this point. He spent some time at the Ise Shrine Office (Jingū Shichō 神宮司庁) and experimented with various religious practices, leading to mystical experiences. He also engaged in severe mountain practice over a period of three years. In the late 1870s, when it was rapidly becoming clear that the government intended to separate shrine priests from national evangelists (a policy implemented in 1882, as mentioned above), Masamochi gave up his position as shrine priest and decided to create his own organization. This came to fruition with the founding of the Shinshū Confraternity (Shinshū Kō 神習講) in 1880, which achieved independent status as Shinshūkyō in 1882. Many central members of this group were old acquaintances from Masamochi's time at the Jingikan, but overall, the organization is best described as a new umbrella uniting preexisting local confraternities.

Izumo Taishakyō was organized by Senke Takatomi 千家尊福 (1845–1918). As the eldest son of the *Izumo kokusō* Senke Takasumi 尊澄,¹⁴ Takatomi was born to an elevated position within the Shinto world. He became the head priest of the Izumo shrine in 1872 and received the highest national evangelist rank in the same year. When (also in 1872) the organization of national evangelists was split into a western and an eastern branch, Takatomi was appointed as the *kanchō* of the western branch. Finally, in November of this year he became the eightieth *Izumo kokusō*. Thus, Takatomi held the highest positions both at Izumo shrine and in the western branch of national evangelists.

Takatomi took to the task of spreading Shinto teachings with great fervor. To this end, he brought all Izumo confraternities in the country together in 1873 under a single umbrella organization called Izumo Taisha Keishin Kō 出雲大社敬神講. In this way, the networks created by Izumo *oshi* presented Takatomi with the infrastructure that

¹⁴ *Izumo kokusō* (or *Izumo no kuni no miyatsuko*) 出雲国造 is an ancient title from Ritsuryō times, carried by the provincial governors of Izumo. The title continues to be used to this day by the head priests of the Izumo shrine.

made possible the rapid organization of Izumo Taishakyō, which came into being in 1882 (initially under the name of Shintō Taishaha 神道大社派).¹⁵ Takatomi was at the center of the government's Shinto policy, and at the same time controlled the Izumo shrine. He was directly involved in the formulation of religious policy, and was able to act upon his inside knowledge of all developments in this field. Thanks to his unique position in Shinto politics, the process of organizing Izumo Taishakyō went smoothly.

The sect of Shintō Taiseikyō was organized by Hirayama Seisai 平山省齋 (1815–1890). Seisai was the first *kanchō* of Ontakekyō. In the case of Ontakekyō, the position of *kanchō* had little more than nominal importance, but that said, it is noteworthy that Seisai was involved in the organization of two different Shinto sects. Seisai was the son of a *bushi* from what is today Fukushima. He studied Chinese and Kokugaku in Edo, and at the age of 36 he became the adopted son of a bakufu official called Hirayama Gentarō 平山源太郎. From this point onwards he made a career within bakufu ranks, until he got involved in the troubles around the succession of shōgun Iesada, and was temporarily transferred to Kōfu in 1859. He was pardoned in 1862, and given a diplomatic post under the *bugyō* of Hakodate, advancing to the post of *gaikoku bugyō* 外国奉行 (magistrate in charge of foreign affairs) in 1866. After the fall of the shogunate two years later, Seisai was placed under house arrest. In this period he moved to Shizuoka and opened a school of Chinese studies there. Seisai regained his freedom in 1870, and became involved in religious affairs. He became a national evangelist in 1872, attaining the highest rank in 1879. He served as headpriest of Hikawa shrine (the First Shrine of Musashi) from 1873, and as priest at Hie shrine from 1875. Seisai, then, occupied important positions both as a shrine priest at important shrines and as a high-ranking national evangelist. He formed the “Taisei Church” (Taisei Kyōkai 大成教会) in 1879 with the aim of educating the people in Shinto. Again in 1882, this church became independent under the name of Shintō Taiseikyō with Seisai as its first *kanchō*.

What was the underlying infrastructure that Seisai drew on in organizing Shintō Taiseikyō? In this case, the organization was not built up around preexisting confraternities or churches. Instead, this organization incorporated various existing groups. This is reflected in the name of the organization: *taisei* means “to increase, to grow large.” The aim of this organization was to bring together various groups to

¹⁵ Izumo *oshi* first appear in the sources in the sixteenth century and expanded their activities rapidly in the seventeenth century. They were most active in the Tōkai, Kinki, Chūgoku, and Shikoku regions.

further a common aim: spreading Shinto. Among the groups that formed Taiseikyō we find Ontake confraternities, Tōkyūjutsu groups, and Shingaku schools. Also, the notorious Renmonkyō 蓮門教, a group founded by Shimamura Mitsu 島村みつ that was heavily criticized in the media for its healing activities, was among the groups that formed Shintō Taiseikyō in 1882.

Shintō Honkyoku (since 1940 Shintō Taikyō) was founded in 1875 after the failure of the joint Shinto-Buddhist campaign in that year, as a Shinto office (Shintō jimukyoku 神道事務局) for the continuation of the Shinto leg of this campaign. At first, this Shinto office encompassed various Shinto groups, but over time (and especially in 1882) many of these groups established independent organizations. In the end, the Shinto office itself achieved the status of a Shinto sect under the name of Shintō Honkyoku in 1886. At this time Inaba Masakuni 稲葉正邦 (1834–1898) became the sect's first *kanchō*. Masakuni was a *bushi* who had held important bakufu positions;¹⁶ after the Restoration he was appointed as governor (*chiji* 知事) of Yodo domain. It was during this period that Masakuni began to study Hirata Kokugaku, and became active in the Shinto world. He held high positions in the Kyōbushō and the Daikyōin, and served as head priest of Mishima shrine in Shizuoka. As such, Masakuni was a person of consequence within the field of religious policy in the early Meiji period. Due to this background, Masakuni emerged as a central force behind the establishment of the Shinto office, and, subsequently, the founding of Shintō Honkyoku.

Finally, we need to touch briefly on Jingūkyō 神宮教, which is not usually included in the list of thirteen Shinto sects because it was reorganized into a secular foundation (*zaidan hōjin* 財団法人) in 1899. Yet, Jingūkyō emerged through a process similar to Shintō Honkyoku and Izumo Taishakyō and at least initially took form as a Shinto sect. The main force behind the organization of Jingūkyō was the Shintoist Urata Nagatami 浦田長民 (1840–1893). Nagatami held the post of vice head-priest (*shōgūji* 少宮司) of the Ise shrines, and served at the same time as a Kyōbushō official. As soon as the Kyōbushō was established in 1872, Nagatami applied for permission to establish an “Ise Church” (Jingū Kyōkai 神宮教会). A mere month later he founded the first “preaching hall” (*sekkyōsho* 説教所) in Ise. As the number of preaching halls increased, he built a Ise Teaching Institute (Jingū Kyōin 神宮教院) already in the same year, and set up an Association of Confraternities to organize the believers who attended activities at the preaching halls. Local confraternities (which initially carried such names as

¹⁶ Masakuni served as Kyoto Magistrate (*Kyōto shoshidai* 京都所司代) and Elder (*rōjū* 老中).

“Association of Patriots,” Aikoku Kōsha 愛国講社) were in October 1873 brought together under a single organization named the Divine Wind Association (Kamikaze Kōsha 神風講社).¹⁷ In this way, existing Ise confraternities were brought under the umbrella of a new Ise Church.

Urata Nagatami left the Ise Teaching Institute in 1877, and from this year Tanaka Yoritsune 田中頼庸 (1836–1897) started a new wave of proselytizing activities. When the Jingūkyō was formed as an independent sect in 1882, Yoritsune became its first *kanchō*. Yoritsune was of Satsuma *bushi* stock and had occupied central positions within the Shinto world: Jingishō official, head-priest of the Ise shrines, *kyōdōshoku* of the highest rank. Throughout the early years of Meiji, he played an important role in the formulation of religious policy.

Finally, we need to discuss three Shinto sects based on mountain beliefs: Fusōkyō, Jikkōkyō, and Ontakekyō. Fusōkyō and Jikkōkyō were based on Fuji confraternities, and Ontakekyō—as the name suggests—on Ontake confraternities. Fuji confraternities first emerged in the mid-eighteenth century, mostly in and around Edo. Their activities were greatly restricted when they were banned by the shogunate in 1849, but in spite of such adverse circumstances, Fuji beliefs continued to flourish throughout the Bakumatsu period. Ontake confraternities began to spread from the late eighteenth century onwards, and were popular over a wide area in the nineteenth century. These mountain confraternities were at bottom variants of the pilgrimage confraternities that can be traced back to medieval times. However, they were built on a much more well-defined set of beliefs than, for example, the older Ise or Zenkō-ji pilgrimage confraternities, and they incorporated a structured system of practices. In many places, local organizations of confraternities existed already from an early date. However, when these were transformed into Shinto sects, this often happened under the leadership of outsiders.

Fusōkyō was organized by Shishino Nakaba, whom we encountered already in connection with Maruyamakyō. Nakaba, another Satsuma *bushi*, studied Hirata Kokugaku and entered the Kyōbushō in 1872. When he was appointed as the first head-priest of Sengen shrine in Shizuoka, he took up the plan to revive the Fuji confraternities that had been banned some twenty years earlier. One reason for this was that Nakaba felt the need to stem the spread of Christianity through the propagation of Shinto. He immediately set up an Association of Fuji Confraternities (the above-mentioned Fuji Issan Kōsha), with the aim of uniting all followers of Fuji confraternities in this single organization. This association became established as Fusōkyō in 1882.

¹⁷ *Kamikaze* is an ancient poetical epitheton (*makurakotoba*) to Ise.

As noted above, Jikkōkyō was another Fuji group. When Shibata Hanamori 柴田花守 (1809–1890), the tenth leader of the Shugendō school of Fujidō 不二道, took measures to Shintoize Fujidō, this movement split into competing factions. Shibata's faction later developed into the Shinto sect Jikkōkyō. Shibata drew up his own Shinto teachings with the help of Shintoist acquaintances and became the first *kanchō* of Jikkōkyō in 1882.

Ontakekyō was formed when Shimoyama Ōsuke 下山応助 (dates unknown), the leader of an Ontake confraternity, called upon other confraternities to organize a joint Ontake association in the Bakumatsu period. This resulted in the founding of an Ontake church (Ontake Kyōkai 御嶽教会) in 1871. For a short period of time this church joined the Taisei Church, but when Shintō Taiseikyō was established in 1882, Ontakekyō became an independent sect. However, because Ōsuke had suddenly disappeared, Taiseikyō's Hirayama Seisai became the sect's first *kanchō*. In 1885 he was succeeded by Ōtori Sesshō 鴻雪爪 (1814–1904), a Buddhist monk who had become a shrine priest in the midst of religious reform after the Restoration.

Looking back on the transformation of mountain confraternities into Shinto sects, we find that Fusōkyō was organized by a *kokugakusha* without any prior connection to Fuji confraternities; Jikkōkyō was organized by Fujidō members with the help of *kokugakusha*; and Ontakekyō was created on the initiative of Ontake practitioners, but needed the help of outsiders to achieve independent status. In contrast to the Shinto-derived New Religions discussed above, the first *kanchō* of these sects were not so much founders as organizers. Moreover, many confraternities, both linked to mountains such as Fuji and Ontake and to famous shrines, joined Shinto sects while continuing to function as semi-autonomous sub-groups. This phenomenon gave Shinto sects the “dish-structure” noted above; also, it shows that there was something to the Shinto tradition that permitted this loose kind of organizational regrouping.

Concluding Remarks

In the above I have given a brief overview of the formation of sect Shinto. The fact that such various Shinto-derived New Religions and Shinto sects appeared in the course of the nineteenth century bespeaks the emergence of social conditions that made new organizational forms of religion both possible and necessary. However, it was the religious policies of the Restoration government that gave the nascent organizational structures and teachings of this period their particular form.

As such nascent organizational structures, we have encountered local confraternities, religious movements founded under particular circumstances, and other kinds of groups. Shinto-derived New Religions had already developed characteristic teachings and organizational forms before the Restoration, and the religious policies of the Meiji government were not the primary reason for their formation. In the case of sect Shinto, however, the influence of government policy was a decisive factor. Here, small religious groups of a varied nature were absorbed into sects with what I have called a “dish-structure,” through the activities of administrative organizers. The teachings of these sects were influenced by Kokugaku, often via somewhat round-about routes. Kokugaku arose in the mid-Edo period and incorporated elements of both learning and practice; in the nineteenth century, influential *kokugakusha* such as Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) and Ōkuni Takamasa 大國隆正 (1792–1871) initiated an intellectual movement that had an impact on a wide section of society. A central element of this Kokugaku movement was the call to restore ancient Shinto (Fukko Shintō 復古神道), and the number of *kokugakusha* and Shintoists inspired by this movement increased gradually during the Bakumatsu period. The Restoration occurred right at the time when these *kokugakusha* were becoming directly involved in the organization of Shinto groups. Some among them went on to shape the religious policy of the Restoration government, and took the lead in establishing Shinto sects. When faced with the separation of shrine Shinto and sect Shinto—a process that culminated in 1882—a number of these Kokugaku priests chose to dedicate themselves to the latter.

A point that I have not been able to discuss within the confines of this short essay is the impact of the system of national evangelists on sect Shinto. This system forced Shinto to develop a program for popular Shinto education. It imposed a configuration in which preaching followed centrally determined articles of faith, and preachers were officially ranked. The system of national evangelists was short-lived, and was itself a “top-down” organizational structure; but it is an undeniable fact that this system presented an influential model for the organization of Shinto.

The main arguments presented in this essay can be summarized in the following two points:

1. The conditions (infrastructure) for the formation of Shinto religious groups were already in place before the Restoration. This is most clear in the fields of doctrine and organization. In the field of doctrine, Kokugaku and Fukko Shintō had a great impact. In the field of organization, associations

of confraternities and other similar groupings laid the foundation for the development of sects after Meiji.

2. The religious policy of the Meiji government imposed a particular blue-print on the formation process of Shinto religious groups. Through the division of functions that contrasted these groups with shrine Shinto, they were encouraged to adopt a form of propagation that was influenced by the system of national evangelists. This resulted in the formation of umbrella sects that incorporated disparate religious groups.

I close this essay with a few remarks on what we may call the fundamental premises that made the emergence of Shinto sects of this type possible. As an ethnic religion (*minzoku shūkyō* 民族宗教), Shinto was strongly ritualistic in character, deeply entwined with social customs, and weak in the fields of doctrine and proselytization. What allowed Shinto to develop organized religious groups as part of the modernization process was the very fact that Shinto was little differentiated from the organizational structures of society as a whole. In this sense, the particular process of the formation of sect Shinto, shaped though it was by the historical circumstances of the nineteenth century, did not represent a radical departure from the fundamental characteristics of Shinto as a religion.

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