

JAPAN

ANTONI, KLAUS. *Shintô und die Konzeption des japanischen Nationalwesens* (kokutai). *Der religiöse Traditionalismus in Neuzeit und Moderne Japans*. Handbuch der Orientalistik 5. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998. xii + 426 pages. Bibliography, index. Cloth Nlg. 198.00/US\$116.50; ISBN 90-04-10316-3; ISSN 0921-5239. (In German)

This important study investigates the subject *kokutai* (national polity, body, substance, or essence; *Nationalwesen*), which Western scholarship up to now has rather neglected. While attention normally is given to the political misuse of Shinto from the Meiji period to the time of World War II, the author demonstrates that *kokutai* was a significant ideological construct that formed an underlying continuum even during major historical breaks such as the Meiji Restoration and the end of the second world war. *Kokutai* served as a tool not only to define the national identity over against increasing foreign influence in modern Japan, but also to legitimize Japan's military intrusions into other countries in the region.

After an introductory chapter clarifying terminology used later, in Chapter 2, "The Relationship between Shinto and the Government in the Edo Period," the author treats Yoshida Shinto, Confucian Shinto (Hayashi Razan), Yoshikawa Shinto, Suika Shinto

(Yamazaki Anzai), and Watarai (Ise) Shinto as movements that distanced themselves more and more from Buddhism and moved closer to the Confucianism of the time. In this way, Antoni demonstrates the dynamic, multifaceted character of Shinto in this period, and argues that this Shinto-Confucian syncretism offers an example of a “religio-ideological traditionalism”: an artificially created tradition that served to legitimize the contemporary power system. In addition to these movements, he also describes the broader religious life of ordinary people as observed in the Ise pilgrimages and the belief in the *shichifukujin* (seven gods of good fortune). Next, Antoni examines the Kokugaku school of Kamo Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane, an antisinification movement that in its treatment of Japan’s ancient past, sought to promote the idea of Japan as *shinkoku* (divine nation) by claiming that the genealogy of the Tennō household reaches back to mythological times unbroken, thereby asserting the divinity of the emperor and his eternal rule. Japan’s claim for superiority was now religiously founded. Thus, paradoxically, even though the Kokugaku began with Confucian presuppositions, it ended up becoming anti-Confucian. Finally, on the basis of a Shinto-Confucian syncretism, at the end of the Edo period the Mitogaku aimed at establishing an idealized archaic government with the divine emperor at its pinnacle and placing the term *kokutai* in the center of discourse. The ideas of this school later became the basis for the conflict between the Shogunate and the Court that resulted in the Meiji Restoration. In 1825, Aizawa Seishisai of the Mitogaku introduced the term *kokutai* into Japanese political theory and defined it as the unchanging, essential character of Japan that distinguishes it from other countries and justifies its claim of superiority. Thus *kokutai* represents an amalgamation of Shinto, the belief in a deified ruler as the basis of the nation, and Confucianism, with its moral norms such as loyalty and filial piety of the people toward the emperor.

In Chapter 3, “The Meiji Restoration and the Meiji Period,” the author argues that were it not for the Tennō loyalists of Kokugaku and Mitogaku during the Tokugawa period, the transformation of Japan into a modern national state would not have been possible. Their ideas were implemented in practical politics, and Shinto eventually developed into a “suprareligious’ state cult.” The idea of the Tennō’s unique and incomparable position now became an officially accepted concept. After the Meiji government was established in 1868, decrees were issued to forcefully separate Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*), which put an end to a 1000-year history of amalgamation between the two (*shinbutsu shūgō*). Using the slogan *saisei ichi* (unity of cult and government), the government sought a religious legitimization, which it bolstered by establishing the Jingikan as supreme government office, declaring Shinto shrines as imperial, placing all shrines into a hierarchical pyramid with Ise at the top, replacing Buddhist festivals with a Shinto calendar of festivals, standardizing Shinto ritual, transferring the registration of the citizens from Buddhist temples to shrines, and declaring Shinto priests to be civil servants. Buddhism was oppressed and its sanctuaries were destroyed (*haibutsu kishaku*) between 1868 and 1873 because it was considered to be a foreign religion.

The Meiji Constitution (1889) declared, “The Empire of Great Japan is ruled for eternity by its Tennō,” and treated him as sacred. According to Itō Hirobumi, one of the authors of this constitution, the emperor was chosen as a fundament for the state in order to create a uniting spiritual vision for the nation, as Christianity had done in Europe. Hence, this spiritual fundament was created artificially in order to establish a well-functioning modern state. The *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*Kyōiku chokugo*, 1890), which calls for citizens to practice filial piety toward the emperor and one’s parents, became the official foundation for *kokutai* thought, referred to by Maruyama Masao as “nonreligious religion.” Inoue Tetsujirō, who had written a commentary on the *Rescript* and who had also studied in Germany, used the term “patriotism” (*kyōdō aikoku*), thus establishing a link between Japanese *kokutai* ideology and the nationalism of imperial Germany. He also called Shinto *kokkateki shūkyō* (national

religion), and later used the term *kokutai* Shinto. Japan's expansionist politics from the 1890s onward also were rooted in Shinto nationalism and its assertions of Japanese superiority. In the beginning of the twentieth century, however, state-supported Shinto was declared "non-religious" in order to formally maintain the separation of state and religion, because of the fear of foreign criticism to the effect that Japan possessed a state religion. In the conclusion of this chapter, the author interprets these developments in the Meiji period in terms of "nativism," "invented tradition" (after Hobsbawm), and (artificially made) "traditionalism" (after Rothermund), in order to demonstrate the ideological function of these politico-religious constructs.

In Chapter 4 the author treats the development of "ultranationalism" during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. As a result of a 1929 court decision, *kokutai* was defined as a form of state in which the emperor of an uninterrupted lineage supervises the executive power of the state. At this point, *kokutai* became a generally binding ideology asserting the absolute unity, unique superiority, and quasi-religious sanctity of the Japanese nation, as can be seen in the *Kokutai no hongī* (official commentary on the 1890 *Imperial Rescript on Education*) of 1937. Further, beginning in 1941, schoolbooks taught the idea of *hakko ichiu* (the whole world under one roof), which applied the hierarchical family concept of Tennōism to the whole world, thus signifying a universalization of the *kokutai* concept. It is in this context that Inoue Tetsujirō's support of the alliance between Japan and Germany "in order to create together a new moral world" must be seen. During this period there were a number of German admirers of the Japanese *kokutai* who, for example, called the Japanese people *Germanen im Quadrat* (Germanic to the nth degree). The author points out the mutual ideological influence between Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. As in Germany, the dissemination of the ideology started in Japan with the schoolbooks of elementary schools that taught tales, legends, and myths in order to emphasize the bravery of the country's heroes. Antoni, however, also directs attention to foreign critics such as Basil Chamberlain, who in his article "The Invention of a New Religion" (1912/1927), clearly pointed out the fabrication of contemporary Shinto, and Emil Schiller, who already in 1931 had used the term "Staatshinto" in a critical way.

In Chapter 5, "The Late Shōwa and Heisei Periods," the author asks whether the military defeat in 1945 really meant a collapse of the whole religious and ideological building of Japanese *kokutai*, as is commonly thought. The Occupation forces' Directive for the Disestablishment of State Shinto aimed at freedom of religion and the separation of religion and state. However, as Antoni impressively demonstrates, elements of Shinto *kokutai* thought survived. In the Japanese original of his edict on the end of war (*Shūsen no shōsho*) the emperor declared: "I am confident that the *kokutai* can be maintained." Even though he conceded to military defeat, the *kokutai* survived. Thus, as before and during the war, the "State Shinto" concept also became a basis for postwar Japan. The emperor's proclamation that he was merely human (*ningen no sengen*, 1946) emphasizes again the inviolable connection between emperor and the Japanese people that forms the nucleus of the *kokutai* idea. The *kokutai* concept was preserved, even at the cost of the emperor's divinity. As such, it also became the foundation of postwar Japan, even though the term is not officially mentioned anymore. Although the new constitution (1947) attributed sovereignty to the Japanese people, they cannot exist without the emperor because he represents their unity symbolically. Furthermore, the *kokutai* concept also survived in the Shinto rituals labeled "private" at the funeral (*taisō no rei*) of Shōwa Tennō (Hirohito) in 1989 and the enthronement (*daijōsai*) of Akihito in 1990, which were performed in essentially the same way as previous ceremonies. In the *daijōsai*, the newly enthroned Tennō assumes a sacred existence, thus providing the continuous divine legitimation of his office. Antoni also notes that the ongoing public discussion about the status of the Yasukuni Shrine and attempts to regain state sponsorship for it, as well as the Jinja Honchō's success in promoting the reintroduction of the *kenkokū kinen no hi* (the National Foundation

Day) and the *nengō* system (counting years according to the era of an emperor) are significant indications of the direction Japan is moving. In the conclusion, the author holds that the postwar state essentially was highly successful in preserving the two pillars of *kokutai*: the inviolable unity of emperor and people; and the religious legitimation of the emperor system through ritual as formulated by Mitogaku and Kokugaku in the Tokugawa period. Moreover, the *kokutai* concept may also be observed outside the realm of the state as, for example, in the *nihonjin-ron* (discourse on [the uniqueness of] the Japanese people), and in the popular discussion about Japan's unique national or cultural identity that has occurred since the 1970s.

In the final chapter, "Shinto and the International Debate on Culture," the author lays out his overall conclusions. Taking as example Samuel Huntington's labeling of Japan as the "lone country," the author strongly warns against generalizations and stereotypes because he sees present-day Japan again being in danger of isolation. He fears that the idea of a "lonely Japan" may become a "self-fulfilling prophecy," since images create reality. "Autostereotypes" and "heterostereotypes" condition each other. Further, while scholars such as Chamberlain and Kuroda Toshio have criticized the popular notion of Shinto as Japan's "national religion," the widespread ahistorical view of "Shinto" as a distinct entity continues to persist up to the present and still powerfully forms those perceptions of Japan resulting from uncritical acceptance of the *Geschichtsredaktion* of the Meiji period. Thus, Antoni's work demonstrates the relevance of historical studies for the very present by taking Japan out of its (artificially created) isolation and uniqueness and placing it into the context of nation-building and nationalism of Western countries, especially Germany. Last, but not least, the author draws attention to the much-neglected ethical aspects of academia, especially the social responsibility scholars also bear for the work they do and its results.

This study leaves open a problem that needs future research, namely the meaning and usage of the term "State Shinto." As in previous publications on the topic (Holtom's *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism* [1943], Lokowandt's *Die rechtliche Entwicklung des Staats-Shinto in der ersten Hälfte der Meiji-Zeit (1868–1890)* [1978], and Hardacre's *Shinto and the State 1868–1988* [1989]), the present study applies the term "State Shinto" to the situation of the Meiji period (212) without discussing the formation of the term and the question of whether it is appropriate for that time. While this term was first coined and used by foreigners in a critical sense (see Lokowandt p. 205 and Antoni p. 315), and probably made popular by Holtom's book, it became a Japanese term (*kokka Shinto*) only through translation after World War II, whereas the term *kokutai* was coined by representatives of the religio-political system itself. By focusing his study on *kokutai*, the author chose for his research a much more adequate approach to the problem of "State and Shinto" in modern Japan than is generally done, because he places a Japanese term derived from primary sources at the center of his work. This enables him to clarify the issue at stake in a way that cannot be done with the term "State Shinto." Antoni's study certainly must be counted among those German Japanological publications that should be translated into English in order to make it available to a wider readership.

As for the presentation of the book, it is regrettable that this volume (and others in the Handbook of Oriental Studies series) does not contain a list of characters for the Japanese words used in the text. Finally, the numerous cases of empty spaces within paragraphs (xi, 3, 5, 15, 77f, 97, 138, 209, 423) and the many typographical errors suggest a level of editorial sloppiness one would not expect from a publisher whose book prices are as high as Brill's.

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