Showcasing Shinto

-The Reinvention of Shinto as an Ecological Religion-

Leif Petter Sandvik

Master's Degree Thesis in History of Religion (60sp)
Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
The Faculty of Humanities
Univerisity of Oslo
Spring 2011

“Green Kamakura” –Drawing by a young member of `Tsuru no ko-kai' (see p. 69)

© Leif Petter Sandvik

Spring 2011

Showcasing Shinto: The Reinvention of Shinto as an Ecological Religion

Leif Petter Sandvik

http://www.duo.uio.no/

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The emperor and the nation have been central to representations of Shinto since the Meiji period, but recently, there has been a widespread tendency among Japanese (and others) to equate Shinto with eco-friendliness. I have investigated the history of this idea in order to understand how this new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion came to be. This thesis is the first investigation of the history of this concept and aims at understanding how this new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion came to be.

These modern ideas reverberate with an older discourse on nature in Japan. Prominent scholars and ideologues who have contributed to the idea that the Japanese religions are nature loving are for example: Watsuji Tetsuro, Okakura Tenshin and Masaharu Anesaki. Other scholars have questioned this view; among them are: Poul Pedersen, Arne Kalland and Julia Thomas. While their perspectives are different, these scholars all underline that there are ideological reasons behind the ecological claim.

In my investigation of environmental activities within Shinto I travelled to Japan, conducted interviews, visited shrines and collected relevant material. My main argument is that this new representation relates to post-modern concerns and identity-seeking. The ideologues are constantly contrasting the problematic present with a better past. They argue that ancient practices of kami-worship attest to Shinto's benign relationship with nature. The new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion, I argue, also involves a fair amount of paradoxes and builds on a reversed-orientalism.

I have applied critical analysis in my investigation and I will demonstrate that the new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion is a social and historical construct.

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped me in the process of completing my Masters Degree thesis. First of all I would like to thank my supervisors Nora Stene Preston and Mark Teeuwen for the constructive criticism and the excellent advice that they have provided. Thank you for sharing your time, experience and knowledge with me.

I would also like to thank my friends and fellow students at the University of Oslo. Special thanks go to Aina Hammer, Henriette Jevnesveen and Knut Aukland for the friendship and interesting conversations.

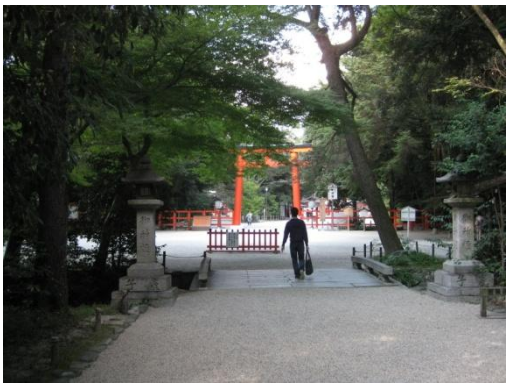
I am in particular indebted to Knut for proofreading my thesis and the helpful remarks.

And last but not least, I would like to thank my family and all the friends who have supported me.

Pictures

1. The Tsurugaoka Hachimangū

2. Shinto priest purifies a car



3. The Shimogamo shrine in Kyoto surrounded by Tadasu no Mori (a sacred forest)

4. Sacred space and a sacred tree

5. A sacred river at the Kamigamo shrine

6. *Sakaki*: Evergreen branch used in rituals

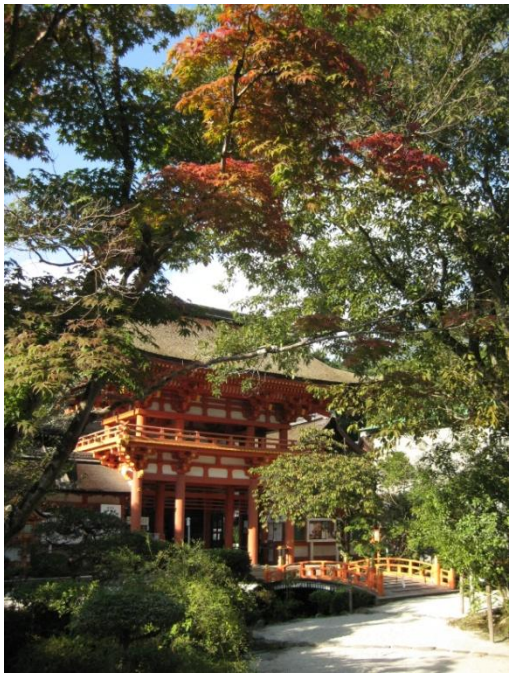
7. *Chōzuya*: “Shinto water ablution”

8. *Torii* gate in front of the Meiji Jingū

9. Showcasing Shinto: foreign tourists participate in *misogi*: “water ablution”

10. The Japanese imperial army depicted on a stone lantern outside the Yasukuni shrine

11. A sacred tree near the Shimogamo shrine



12. The Kamigamo shrine in Kyoto

Historical Map of Shinto

Early Religious Practice in Japan:
-Kami-worship, shamanism and local religious practices centred around agriculture and harvest.

Nara Period 710-794: Buddhist and Chinese influence.
– The Imperial myths *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* are written.

Heian Period 794-1185: The height of Chinese influence. The Fujiwara clan has the real power, serving as regents and intermarrying with the Emperor.
-The Jingi System is established. Shirakawa Shinto.

Kamakura Period (Kamakura Shogunate) 1185-1333: Imperial House lose power.
-The concept of Shinto is established.

Muromachi Period (Ashikaga Shogunate) 1333-1573:
Sengoku Period 1467-1573: Warring states period. Eventually leads to unification of political power under the Tokugawa Shogunate.
-Yoshida Kanetomo's unified One-and-Only Shinto: Yoshida Shinto.

Edo Period (Togugawa Shogunate) 1603-1868: Peace and political stability. Seclusion from the rest of the world.
-Shinto-Confucian syncreticism: Yoshikawa Shinto.
-Kokugaku Theories: Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane.

Meiji Period 1868-1912: The country is re-opened and imperial rule restored. (The Meiji Restoration) The period is represented by Western influence and threat, and the modernization of Japan. Russo-Japanese War 1904-05: Japan defeats Russia upon imperial ambitions in Manchuria and Korea. Japan emerges as a world power.
-Emperor Meiji is restored to power and given divine status.
-The Great Promulgation Campaign: Separation of Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu bunri*).
-Shinto is transformed into an independent religion.
-Shinto is later stripped of its religious elements. Becomes a state ideology: -State Shinto.

Taisho Period 1912-1926: Continued influence of Western culture.

Showa Period 1926-1989: Japanese military aggression in Asia. The Second World War and subsequent Japanese defeat.
- *Jingiin* is established and Shinto eventually becomes the state religion of Japan. This mark the end of religious freedom until the end of the war.
-Shinto Directive and a new constitution: Religion and state are separated by the American led occupation forces after the war.
-Jinja Honchō is established.

Heisei Period 1989-Present
-Yasukuni controversies
-The new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion takes form.

Contents

Abstract V
Acknowledgements VII
Pictures IX
Historical Map of Shinto XIII
Introduction 1
1.The History of Shinto 7
1.1 Nara and Heian Period 7
1.2 Kamakura and Muromachi Period 9
1.3 Tokugawa Period 11
1.4 Meiji Restoration 13
1.5 Shinto and the New Concept of Religion in Japan 14
1.6 After the War: Shinto's Way Forward and Neo-Nationalism 18
Summary 20
2. The Discourse on Nature 23
2.1 The Kokugaku Tradition and the National Ideology of Nature 23
2.2 Watsuji Tetsuro 24
2.3 Okakura Tenshin and Anesaki Masaharu 27
Summary 29
3. The Rediscovery of Shinto 31
3.1 The Discourse about Animism 31
3.2 Yasuda Yoshinori and the Revival of Japan's Animism 32
3.3 Umehara Takeshi and Japan's Ancient Shinto Roots 33
3.4 Shinto and Environmentalism 35
Summary 36
4. On the Methology of Fieldwork 39
4.1 The Qualitative Research Interview 40
4.2 Internet Sources, Media and Text Analysis 42
5. Perspectives of Sonoda Minoru 45
5.1 The Concept of Fūdo 46
5.2 Satoyama: The Japanese Traditional Rural Landscape 48
5.3 Ritual Practice 49
5.4 Shasō Gakkai 50
5.5 Holism 53
5.6 The Bukōzan Mountain and Future Environmental Activities 55
Summary 56

6 Jinja Honchō 59
6.1 Jinja Honchō's Policies 59
6.2 Comparing the English and Japanese Homepage of Jinja Honchō 60
6.3 Jinja Honchō vs. Folk Shinto 64
Summary 64
7. New and Old Elements: Environmental Activities and the Enduring Significance of Imperial Shinto 67
7.1 Interview with Taima Yoichi and the Activities of the Enju no Kai Organization 67
7.2 Meiji Jingū and NPO Hibiki 71
7.3 The Grand Shrine of Ise and the Shikinensengū 72
Summary 74
8. The Nostalgic World of Miyazaki Hayao 77
8.1 *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) 77
8.2 *Princess Mononoke* (1997) 78
8.3 *Spirited Away* (2002) 79
Summary 80
9. Analysis of Modern Representations of Shinto 83
9.1 Critique of Modernity 83
9.2 Tracing the Conception of Shinto as an Ecological Religion and the Japanese Love of Nature 86
9.3 Representations 88
9.4 The Ideology of Environmentalism and the Ideal of the Past 91
9.5 Nihonjinron and National Identity 94
Conclusion 99
Glossary 103
Bibliography 107
Articles in Journals 110
Internet Sources 111
Films 114

Introduction

Shinto is often characterized as the indigenous religion of Japan, which has existed since ancient times. The word 'Shinto' literally means the "Way of the Kami", and it is said that most basic to Shinto is the concept of '*kami*'.[1] Japan is also sometimes spoken of as the land of the eight million kami. The meaning of the term 'kami' is very comprehensive. In English literature it has sometimes been associated with 'gods' or 'deities'. Perhaps the best way to describe it is a sort of life-force or energy manifested within objects, places, and divine spirits or in humans who has shown exceptional powers.[2] Alternatively, it can be defined as objects of worship which have a great influence on human life.[3] Due to the fact that kami are perceived to be inherent in natural objects and in animals, and because Shinto shrines generally are found in natural surroundings, there is a common belief that Shinto is a 'nature-religion'.

Shinto has also in modern times been related to nationalism. Beginning with the Meiji period (1868-1912) and escalating during the Second World War, Shinto became closely attached to Japanese imperialism and colonialism. The Japanese emperor was revered as a living kami; as the father of the nation and the descendant of the sun-goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. The new national identity was built upon this divine heritage, and Japan was glorified as the foremost nation in the world. Shinto's close relationship between emperor and the state remains intact today. Not however, to the same degree as before, because the constitution of Japan has enforced a separation between religion and the state. Yet, many aspects of nationalistic Shinto are being kept alive and there are continuing efforts to revive those aspects that were lost.

My goal has been to investigate modern representations of Shinto. As a consequence of Shinto's alleged close relationship with nature, many people have suggested that people could learn from the ancient wisdoms of Shinto when facing modern environmental problems. H. Byron Earhart, Professor in comparative religion, states that: "A general principle of Shinto is that man basically is one with nature,(…)." He argues that Shinto could have a possible significance for environmental concerns, and that the Japanese, in order to tackle

[1] Kami may also refer to pluralities. I have chosen not to italicize the word'kami' throughout the rest of my
[2] Ian Reader, *Simple Guides: Shinto*, (London: Global Books Ltd., 2007), p.40-41
[3] Jinja Honchō homepage (english): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/shinto/index.html (Last checked: May.05.2001)

their environmental problems, should look to the past and to Shinto for ecological wisdom.[4] High priest of Chichibu shrine, and a front figure in the Shinto world, Sonoda Minoru, argues that: "If there is a universal message from Shinto that can be helpful it must be to preserve and protect the forests, and experience a feeling for the forests."[5] The notion that Shinto is an ecological religion is illustrated by both examples, from an outsiders perspective in Earhart and an insider in Sonoda. This new representation of Shinto as an ecological religion has steadily gained more recognition. Within the Shinto shrine world there are new developments which attempts to reinvent Shinto so that it will correspond to this new representation as an environmentally friendly religion. In this thesis I have tried to understand the origins of these ideas and the belief in Shinto as an ecological religion. My main research question is: How, why and by whom is Shinto being redefined in ecological terms? A study on ecology within Shinto has never been done before.[6] I have investigated the history of this idea and carefully selected the most important ideologues that supported and invented this idea together with their central concepts and terms in Japanese. This means examining Shinto as a discursive formation, rather than an ancient religion of Japan.

A second important aspect is Shinto's connections to nationalism. The collective (ultimately the state) in which the emperor is symbolized as Japan's high-priest, has also been an important aspect of Shinto since the Meiji period. I have tried to identify the status of imperialistic and nationalistic Shinto within the new reinterpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature. Does the increased focus on nature clash with Shinto's association with the emperor, or do they reinforce each other?

The first chapter is an outline of the historical background of Shinto. Shinto has typically been described as the indigenous religion of Japan. I have argued that Shinto is a modern creation, and that it is not the ancient indigenous religion of Japan. It has also been influenced by other foreign religious traditions over the course of time. Kami-worship has a long tradition in Japanese religiosity, but the concept of Shinto as an independent religious tradition is a modern creation. Before the onset of modernity kami-worship played a minor

[4] H. Byron Earhart, "The ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns."*Contemporary Religion in Japan* 11 1/ 2 1970, also see: http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/jjrs/pdf/CRJ-248.pdf (Last checked: November .20. 2010)

[5] My own personal interview with Sonoda Minoru

[6] An investigation on environmental activities within Shinto has not been done before. However reserach has been carried out on 'the ideology of nature' within Shinto in: Julia A. Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*, (2001), and the so called idea of a unique Japanese 'love of nature' and its relationship with Shinto in: Pamela J. Asquith and Arne Kalland (ed.) *Japanese Images of Nature* (1997)

role in local communities, while Buddhism dominated the Japanese religious sphere. Buddhism and Chinese philosophy influenced to a great extent what would eventually become Shinto, the so called traditional religion of Japan. The concept of Shinto is to a high extent an ambiguous term. It incorporates local folk practices, imperial Shinto (*koshitsu Shinto*), conventional shrine practices, and other Shinto inspired religious factions. State Shinto (*kokka Shinto*) refers to the state-centered promotion of national ideology confined to the Second World War and the pre-war years. Shinto lacks many of the elements which are common to other religious traditions such as a well-defined canon, a founder etc. It is therefore difficult to describe and understand it. My argument however is that, Shinto as it is presented today by the Shinto establishment resembles the civil religion created during the Meiji period more than the old local traditions of kami-worship. It is therefore problematic to describe Shinto as the ancient native religious tradition of Japan.

How Shinto eventually has become identified as an ecological religion is what I will demonstrate in the second chapter. I discuss the ideology of nature and how ideas about a Japanese nation gave rise to nationalism and efforts to create a national identity. The *Kokugaku* school (school of national learning) which originated and existed during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) developed ideas about a particular Japanese culture and a unique Japanese consciousness. Their goal was to separate pure Japanese culture from Chinese influences. Kami-worship and the revival of ancient myths written in the *Kojiki* (the old chronicles of Japan) played an important role in the differentiation process of Japanese spirituality with Chinese philosophy, in the form of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Associations with the unique landscape, climate and culture of Japan also led to the idea of a special Japanese 'love of nature'. This was in particular exemplified in traditional Japanese art like poetry, architecture, flower arrangement, and in the tea ceremony. The *kokugaku* scholars had traditionally contrasted Japan with China. The new emerging nationalists contrasted Japanese culture with that of the West, since they now represented the cultural, economic and military power.

In the third chapter I have traced the idea of Shinto as an ecological religion. The idea behind Shinto's ecological potential may have originated in the West, but this image has also been appropriated by Japanese nationalist scholars. I have discussed two prominent scholars affiliated with the 'Nichibunken' institute (International Research Center for Japanese Studies). Yasuda Yoshinori and Umehara Takeshi are two "ideologues" who both argue that

Shinto and Japanese culture, in contrast to the West, possess' harmonious and benevolent attitudes towards nature. They both conclude that ancient Shinto spirituality can help solve the environmental problems of today, caused by the destructive Western dualistic philosophy.

The fourth chapter is an outline of how my field research was conducted. I have not just looked into the subject of conventional fieldwork, but included webpages and movies. Webpages have proved to be particularly interesting since they represented two sides: one English one Japanese.

In the fifth chapter I have presented the perspectives on Shinto as an environmental religion by high priest Sonoda Minoru. I interviewed Mr. Sonoda in Tokyo while I was conducting my investigation of environmental activities within Shinto. Sonoda is one of the leading figures in the shrine world concerning environmental issues. He is involved in an organization called the 'Shasō Gakkai', which focuses on the protection of and the education about sacred forests (*chinju no mori*) in Japan. According to Sonoda, Japanese culture, religion and its harmonious existence with nature, developed because of the natural conditions given to Japan: rice cultivation is basic to Japanese culture, and forests are important for irrigation and the cultivation of rice. Shinto is a religion based on this; it is a religion based on ritual practice for revering nature and giving thanks to nature for its gifts. Sonoda's environmental perspective focuses on the mutual dependence between humans and nature, and that human development is a necessity.

'Jinja Honchō', the National Association of Shinto Shrines, is the center of attention in the sixth chapter. I have examined what this organization says about environmentalism contrary to the emperor and the state. What made this organization an interesting object for my study was that the Japanese version of the Association's homepage is almost solely dedicated to the emperor and the nation. On the other hand, in the English version, Shinto is presented in terms of "sacred nature", and as a nature loving religion. Jinja Honchō does not actually work as the head body of a religious organization; rather it functions as a coordinating structure between all member shrines. It assigns, tasks, gives advice and educates Shinto priests.

Chapter seven is about environmental activities associated with Shinto. While conducting fieldwork in Japan I visited a Shinto shrine in Kamakura, and I interviewed Taima Yoichi, a Shinto priest at Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine about 'Enju no Kai'. This is an

example of a shrine-organised group that aims to engage shrine believers in ecological activities. In this chapter I also discuss a similar Non-Profit Organisation called 'Hibiki'. Additionally, the cyclical rebuilding of the Ise Grand Shrine has also been associated with environmentalism. I discuss whether the main focus of these activities are environmental or not. I also argue that the implementation of ecological activities together with Shinto are based on ideological reasons and that imperial values are still the main focus.

In the chapter eight I draw on the example of Miyazaki Hayao's animated movies, to show that the ideology of nature, environmentalism, and the myth that the Japanese have a particular relationship with nature, are also prevalent in modern popular media. This shows that there is a discourse on nature and environmentalism separate from Shinto, yet which also draws on past traditions and symbols reminiscent of kami-worship.

In the last chapter I analyze these various modern representations of Shinto. I draw upon modernization theories, orientalism and theories on national identity in order to understand; how, why, and by whom Shinto is being presented as an ecological religion And further, how these representations function along with the older imperial and state symbols of Shinto.

Throughout these chapters I have treated Shinto as a religious phenomenon. Many Japanese may argue that Shinto is not a religion; that it simply is a manifestation of socio-cultural practice in Japan. In my own investigation in Japan I met people who verified this opinion. Most Japanese will say that they do not affiliate themselves with, or profess a belief in a religion. However, the majority of the Japanese population does participate in religious activities, both Shinto and Buddhist, because of obligations and socio-cultural belongings.[7] In addition, research shows that even though many do not profess a religious belief, most Japanese claim that spirituality is meaningful to them.[8] They also participate in annual rituals and festivals (*matsuri*). A new car is almost always purified by a Shinto priest, and ancestor worship is a common practice. Japan scholar Mark Teeuwen says that 'Shinto' serves as a common term for various shrines and its practices rather than 'religion' in the traditional Western "Christian" meaning, because it has no doctrine, sacred scriptures and no

[7] Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), p. 13
[8] Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Shūkyō Asobi and Miyazaki Hayao's Anime*, Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Vol. 10, No. 3, February 2007, University of California Press, p. 73-95

commands.[9] There is a general restraint by people in Japan, to identify themselves with religion. The Japanese word generally used to denote 'religion' is *shūkyō*. It literally means the "denomination of a specific sect".[10] The word was acquired when Japan encountered the West and their concept of religion. The word contains associations to commitment and belief, usually not a part of Japanese religiosity. On the other hand, identification with a group and activities related to cultural belonging, are closer to traditional religious behavior in Japan and elsewhere in east-Asia.

A word for religion did not exist in East-Asia before the Europeans and Americans arrived. The closest equivalent was the concept of *dao* in China and *dō in Japan,* which means "the way". (*Dō* is the same as *tō* in *Shin-tō*: 'the way of the kami'.) Basically, the concept of *dō* is similar to the Buddhist word *dharma*. It described how the world was build, and it assigned a set of rules one should live according to.[11] Modern Shinto theologists have often referred to Durkheim's definition and analysis of religion, stating that religion is a product of society and integration, and is characterized by the appearance of the sacred and profane. Durkheim argued that the worship of God actually is the act worshipping the community, and that the most basic rituals are those which celebrate the sacred community.[12] This self-understanding of Shinto has been criticized because of the unreasonable comparison between Durkheim's study of Australian aborigines and modern Japanese society. It remains true, however, that belief is not essential to Shinto but belonging is.[13] The community and rituals which manifests the sacredness of belonging to a community is vital for Japanese religiosity. The philosophy of Confucianism where order and stability are maintained through rituals, serving the whole community, is an important part of Japan's religious life and in Shinto. I define Shinto as a religion because there are high levels of religious practice and religious belonging. There is also a general belief in sacredness. Hence I do not accept the argument that Shinto is not a religion. However, I do accept the point that as a religion, Shinto is not overtly concerned with belief such as found in the Judeo-Christian traditions.

[9] Mark Teeuwen, *Fellesskapsritualer og personlig tro*, inTerje Grønning (ed.), *Vinduer Mot Japan*, (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2005), p. 19-20
[10] Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, p. 13
[11] Mark Teeuwen, *Da religionen kom til Japan*, in: Sigurd Hjelde and Otto Krogseth (ed.), *Religion-et vestlig fenomen? Om bruk av betydning av religionsbegrepet*, (Oslo, Gyldendal, 2007), p.144-45
[12] Teeuwen, *Felleskapsritualer og personlig tro*, p.26
[13] Ibid, 26-27

1.The History of Shinto

There seems to be a common presumption that Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan, and that one can trace its roots to the ancient past. The roots of Shinto, like kami-worship and shrine practice, is definitely rooted in the remote past, but the concept known as Shinto can not. In this chapter I want to describe the transformation of local kami-worship into a national ideology and to an independent religious tradition known as Shinto. I also want to show how this new creed gradually became linked to the imperial house and the state. This is important because what I want to show in this historical sketch is that Shinto is not a timeless concept, on the contrary, it was constructed and reinvented on the basis of various agendas according to different circumstances. Throughout history the concept of Shinto has been redefined over and over, most often for the benefit of influential people or to attend a political agenda. Shinto on a public level is often associated with imperial and national rites, while in the local communities shrine worship is most often centred on rituals and prayers tied to individual health, harvests and prosperity. In what follows I will look into a new interpretation of Shinto as an ecological religion, and its link with nature and environmentalism.

1.1 Nara and Heian Period

Very little is known about ancient religion in Japan except that there were cults dedicated to kami, and that they were probably focused on harvests and natural resources. There is hardly any information at all on the nature of these cults or the nature of the kami. After the Taika Reform of 645-646 A.D., students were sent to China to learn about Chinese politics and culture. This sparked changes and a transformation in Japanese religious life, likely due to the influence of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, but also because the Chinese writing system was introduced and native Japanese literature started to develop.[14] The oldest surviving texts written in Japan that deal with religion are the *Kojiki* ("Record of Ancient Matters", written in 712) and the *Nihongi* ("Chronicles of Japan", 720, also called *Nihon Shoki*). These mythologies tell us about ancient gods and heroes in Japan. According to the "Oxford Dictionary" myths are:

[14] Allan G. Grapard, "Shrines Registered in Ancient Japanese Law; Shinto or Not?" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.* 29/3–4. 2002,p.229

> A traditional story concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, typically involving the supernatural.[15]

The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* myths tell us about the beginning of history, the activities of the kami, and how everything came to be. It has often been argued that the basic characteristic of all myths are pre-scientific explanations of natural phenomena.[16] However, the most significant function of the myths in these two texts was to uphold social structures and institutions. Borislaw Malinowski emphasizes the active social force of myths, and that "*it comes into play when a social or a moral rule demands justification*."[17] These myths which now are associated with Shinto, tell us about the origins of Japan, and the *Kojiki*, more than the *Nihongi*, tell us how the Gods manifested power in the Japanese Emperors. The Emperor is portrayed as heavenly born, as the descendant of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami, the most powerful kami. Emperor Tenmu of the Yamato clan ordered the text written in around 670 to establish his legitimacy to the throne.[18] Before this time, religion in Japan was centred on veneration of local deities, especially clan deities, who were believed to be spirits of ancestors. The most prominent of these deities were those associated with the most powerful clan, the Yamato clan. Rituals performed at the imperial court witness the heavenly decent of the emperors.[19] According to the creation myth in the *Kojiki* the Creation Gods Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to the Japanese islands and to the kami of heaven and kami of earth. The most prominent among all of them, was the heavenly Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. She declares that the island of Japan belongs to her grandson Ninigi, the forefather of the first Japanese emperor Jinmu, who again is the forefather of Emperor Tenmu.[20]

The second oldest book in classical Japanese history, *Nihongi*, differs slightly from the *Kojiki*, especially in that there is a less focus on the heavenly descent of the Yamato emperors, and Amaterasu Ōmikami ; the Sun Goddess, is hardly mentioned at all.[21] *Kojiki* plays a major role in what we now know as Shinto, however, it is a story about the imperial history of Japan rather than a history of the old religions of Japan. Buddhism was introduced to Japan two

---

[15] Oxford Dictionary Online: http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/myth?view=uk (Last checked: Feb.12.2010)
[16] Max Muller's "nature myth"; John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 132
[17] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1926), 36
[18] Mark Teeuwen, *Shinto: Japans Eldste Myter*, (Oslo: Bokklubben, 2005), xiii-xv
[19] John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, 134
[20] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, 28-29
[21] |ibid, 29-30

centuries before the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* was written. It was gradually welcomed, especially by the nobility, who saw it as an aspect of the civilization that had contributed to the advanced culture of China. It had beautiful rituals and sutras, teachings of morality, and not least, it promised concrete direct results, like salvation. The arrival of Buddhism played a vital role in the shaping of kami-worship as an independent religious institution known as 'Shinto'.

Most Japanese scholars talk about "Shinto" only in theological terms, while they use the term "kami-worship" when they discuss shrine rituals and kami.[22] Shinto has often been called the indigenous religion of Japan, which has survived up until today through an unbroken lineage.[23] One might say that this is debatable. According to Mark Teeuwen and Bernhard Scheid, both who are prominent scholars of Japanese religion, the history of "Shinto", as an autonomous Japanese tradition, can be traced back to the fourteenth century.[24] The earliest attempt however, at creating a coherent system of kami cults was the classical *Jingi* system during the Nara (710-784) and Heian period (794-1185), where the central government took control over nearly 3000 shrines in a strategy possible aimed at gaining territorial and social control.[25] These official registers of kami and shrines to which the imperial government made regular offerings, were established by the "Office of Kami of Heaven and Earth" (*Jingikan*). Whether this imperial cultic system or these registers should be named Shinto or not is questionable, especially because of the Buddhist involvement in it, but the reason why Teeuwen and Scheid consider the fourteenth century to be the beginning of Shinto history, is that this was the first time that the tradition identified itself as such.

1.2 Kamakura and Muromachi Period

The word Shinto appears four times in the *Nihongi*, and the occurrence of the term generally infers to its early existence as an autonomous religion. A traditional view has been that Shinto and Buddhism existed as two independent religious traditions and that the word Shinto was created to differentiate between the two after Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the seventh century.[26] Teeuwen however, argues that the word Shinto which first appears in the *Nihongi* is actually synonymous to the Buddhist term; *jindō*, adopted from China. This Buddhist term refers to all the deities that are not Buddhist in origin. Teeuwen also reasons

[22] Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen, "Tracing Shinto in the History of Kami Worship." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. Fall 2002: 199
[23] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 19
[24] Ibid, 199
[25] Allan G. Grapard, "Shrines Registered in Ancient Japanese Law; Shinto or Not?"
[26] Sokyo Ono, *Shinto: The Kami Way*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962), p. 2

that the term was transformed from a "word" into a "concept" during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) and that "this transformation was of great importance to Shinto's subsequent development into the self-defined religion that it is today."[27] He writes:

> The older term jindo was given a new meaning and a new reading in a discourse that drew both on hongaku ideas (original enlightenment) and Yin-Yang cosmology.[28]

The local kami deities were originally regarded as non-Buddhist, and as potentially malevolent deities. This view gradually changed over time as the *honji-suijaku* practice was applied, and this indicates that the kami were being viewed as "*local traces of abstract, distant Buddhas*."[29] Eventually among certain people and local kami-cults, a theology on kami started to develop. Now the kami became regarded as the origin (*hongaku*), given precedence and having its own transcendent quality, that they are no longer just a trace of the abstract Buddhas. [30] By the twelfth century, the name *jindō* was also given a new meaning, redefined along Chinese-Daoist lines and the kami are associated with primeval chaos and yin-yang cosmology. These two basic ideas of what *jindō* are, contributed to the development of the concept of Shinto. After it was conceptualized in the fourteenth century, the name was changed to Shinto instead of *jindō*.[31]

Previously shrine practice was merely restricted to official court rituals and offerings (*jingi* rituals) but gradually it become more popular to visit shrines for personal reasons.[32] During the late medieval and early modern times, popular shrine cults started to emerge, but it was still not the modern Shinto as we know it. One interesting aspect is that the imperial rule was not one of the main topics during this period. The *jingi* system was imperial but the new cults, developed under the name of Shinto was not.[33] On the other hand, the historical and social contexts would demand that Shinto, as it now was known, would reinvent itself again on more than one occasion.

Yoshida Shinto, as it became known, would eventually be the dominant form of institutionalized Shinto until the end of the Tokogawa period. The Yoshida family had had a

---

[27] Mark Teeuwen"From Jindo to Shinto; A Concept Takes Shape." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. Fall 2002: 235-237
[28] Ibid, 233
[29] Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen (ed.) *Buddhas and kami in Japan : Honji suijaku as a combinatory paradigm*, (New York: Routledge, 2003)
[30] Ibid, 241
[31] Ibid, 257
[32] Ibid, 248
[33] Ibid, 258

leading position in court as ritualists in the *Jingikan* since the Heian period. When civil wars at the end of the fifteenth century destroyed the imperial palace and the *Jingikan*, Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511) used this opportunity to seize a leading position within Shinto. He was a relative of the Shirakawa house, which until then had controlled the *Jingikan*.[34] He took control over the imperial kami rituals, while creating his own religious system. With his connection to the court, Shinto, and the many popular shrine cults, were once again brought under imperial control. Hardly anyone contested his succession to religious power, mainly because of a lack of interest. The imperial court had no real political power at the time, having lost its power to regents during the Heian period and later to local warlords. The emperors were merely acting as puppets. The Yoshida family developed a comprehensive religious system known as *Yuiitsu Shinto* (the "One-and -Only Way of the Kami"). Rituals were modelled on esoteric Buddhism; however, Yoshida Shinto claimed that Buddhism was actually derived from the original teachings of the kami, and was therefore considered inferior to Shinto.[35]

1.3 Tokugawa Period

The Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868) entrusted authority of shrines in Japan to the Yoshida family and they consolidated this power by bringing thousands of priests under their control.[36] The popular practice of most early modern Japanese who worshiped kami at shrines, did not however relate this practice to the word "Shinto".[37] Eventually an alternative contender to Yoshida Shinto emerged. Yoshikawa Koretaru (1616-1694) who had close political ties with the Tokugawa Shogunate, sought to reinvent Yoshida Shinto, and even though he did not mean to create a new tradition, his concepts of what Shinto ought to be became known as Yoshikawa Shinto. It was critical of Yoshida Shinto's close affiliation with Buddhism, and it leant more towards Confucian ethic, while propagating a reform and a return back to the true Japanese way. [38] Teeuwen explains:

[34] Maeda, Hiromi. "Court Rank for Village Shrines." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29/3–4. 2002, p.329; The Tokugawa Shogunate officially gave the Yoshida a privilege over the Shirakawa family in kami matters in 1665. p. 330

[35]Bernhard Scheid,"Shinto as a Religion for the Warrior Class; The Case of Yoshikawa Koretaru." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. 2002, p.303-305; Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p.49

[36] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 53-54

[37] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 57

[38] Scheid, "Shinto as a Religion for the Warrior Class", p.305-306, 318, 320

> The kami emerge as something primeval, pure, and pre-Buddhist, and Shinto takes the form of a teaching of attaining purity through a return to this primordial entity—but this time in a Confucian or nativist garb rather than in a Buddhist or Daoist one.[39]

Even though Shrine cults and kami-worship were popular, Buddhism was still the dominant, most powerful form of religiosity. It must be mentioned however, that Buddhism in Japan was strongly influenced by native kami-worship and vice versa. The Tokugawa Shogunate had made affiliation with a Buddhist temple compulsory, to monitor the population and stop the spread of Christianity in Japan. This was known as the *danka* system.[40] Buddhist priests were also considered superior to Shinto priest in many ways. In spite of this, many people sought a religious alternative to Buddhism, and found an interest in Confucianism combined with a strong belief in Kami. Perhaps a hint at what was to come later with the Meiji Restoration (1868).

A school of national revival known as the *Kokugaku* tradition originated during the Tokugawa period. It was heavily influenced by old Japanese literature, notably the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi* myths, and also ancient Japanese poetry. Two of the most prominent figures linked to this tradition were Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843). Norinaga was a skilled philologist whose most important work, the *Kojiki-den* (commentaries on the *Kojiki*), has been credited for revitalizing public knowledge of the *Kojiki* and other ancient literary works. The *Kokugaku* scholars were critical of the sinocentricism of Japanese cultural and social life; hence they focused instead on what was purely Japanese, depicting a golden age before Chinese culture influenced Japan. They argued for example that the Japanese kami and the imperial rites were far superior to Buddhism, and that Amaterasu was the most important kami.[41] In his book *Naobi-no-mitama* (The spirit of the rectifying kami) from 1790 Norinaga writes:

> The great imperial land is the great land wherein resides the great goddess of the sun, the divine ancestress. Japan is superior to all other countries; since all other countries receive her plentiful benevolence……She (Amaterasu) decreed Japan was the land where her descendants would reign forever. Thus, in the beginning, the imperial throne was established here in Japan along with heaven and earth.[42]

[39] Teeuwen, "From Jindo to Shinto", p.258
[40] The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/jjrs/pdf/810.pdf (Last checked April.21.2011)
[41] Breen and Teeuwen , *A New History of Shinto*, p. 61-63, and Mark McNally, "The Sandaiko Debate; The Issue of Orthodoxy in Late Tokugawa Nativism." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3–4. 2002:359-378
[42] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 61

The link between *Kokugaku* and Shinto has often been credited to Hirata Atsutane, who focused on the metaphysical aspects of the ancient myths. He steered the *Kokugaku* scholar tradition away from scientific philology and created a theological Shinto faith, pointing to the soul, the afterlife and worship of ancestors.[43]

Disciples of these two *kokugaku* scholars spread the teachings and writings all over Japan, and this nativist nationalistic material would eventually influence oppositional movements which ended the Tokugawa shogunate.

The Tokugawa shogunate had initiated a 250 year long seclusion policy, banning foreigners from entering Japan and the Japanese from leaving. These policies also included persecution of Christians, as they were seen as a potential threat. Christianity was almost completely eradicated by the end of the Tokugawa period. Seeing that Europe had humbled China, the Japanese leadership closed the country so that it would not endure the same fate. However, as the European and American presence in East-Asia grew, and modern Western ships frequently were spotted outside Japanese harbours, the Japanese realized they could no longer keep its country closed, or they would forever lag behind the stronger and more technologically advanced Western powers.[44]

1.4 Meiji Restoration

In 1854 Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) of the United States Navy anchored in the bay of Edo (name of old Tokyo) with his black warships, and with an implied threat of force if necessary, "requested" that Japan open its ports and that the Shogun sign a trade treaty. The treaties was signed but they were deemed unfair and favouring the Americans, while it at the same time was seen as a sign that the Shogun was weak and losing his control. The dissatisfaction among many *samurai* and local *daimyō* (domainal lords) led to internal unrest and hostility towards the Tokugawa Shogunate. For them the emperor emerged as the only alternative to the discredited shogun. *Kokugaku* notions of loyalty to a divine emperor gave the revolutionary *daimyō* a valid reason to overthrow the shogunate. *Sonnō Jōi* ("Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians") became a political slogan and represented a movement whose goal was to overthrow the Shogunate, reinstall the Emperor to power and confront the Western threat. In a coup on January 3, 1868, the Emperor Meiji declared his restoration to power and that the reign of the Tokugawa Shogun was ended. Conflict broke out between

[43]Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Japan*, p. 63, and McNally, *The Sandaikō Debate*, p. 363
[44] William G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1982)

those who supported the Shogun and those who backed the Emperor, but eventually the followers of the coup triumphed and the Meiji Restoration was initiated.[45] In order to compete with the Western powers, all the borders of Japan were declared open, and a campaign to modernize Japan was launched. As the old feudal system was abolished, social economic and political reforms got under way. Japan sent students abroad to learn everything they could from the West, in an effort close the gap and modernize the country.[46]

The Meiji Restoration had an enormous impact on the concept of Shinto. Most importantly Shinto became known to the general public and it became fused with nationalistic state ideology (*kokutai*). During the Tokugawa period, the term Shinto was not widely used among the common people. Among common people, a concept of religion did not exist at this time, as pre-Meiji Shinto was merely experienced as consisting of kami-cults; observing rites, festivals and pilgrimages. It also had a deep Buddhist influence. During the Meiji Restoration, however, Shinto emerged as a public independent religious tradition, merged with state ideology, to serve a political and nationalistic agenda.[47] The Great Promulgation Campaign represented the state's appropriation of Shinto, its nationalization of rituals, shrines and symbols, for the purpose of serving a nationalist ideology. A new national identity was being constructed.

1.5 Shinto and the New Concept of Religion in Japan

During the modernization process and the European and American dominance of the 1800s, western concepts of religion, science and philosophy where adopted or forced upon many non-western cultures, thus altering many existing traditions. Even though Japan was never colonized, it also experienced dramatic changes due to Western influence. The Shinto establishment sought to modernize and rationalize Shinto. Kami-worship was appropriated and revering Amaterasu Ōmikami became the most central aspect. On the other side, local kami practices of revering nature were discounted because it was considered primitive and outdated by the reformers.

In Japan Buddhism dominated in the middle ages (1000-1600), while Confucianism was the dominant perspective during the Tokugawa period. Confucianism maintained the building structures of the society through public rituals, performed by Buddhist and Shinto

[45] The *Boshin War* was a civil war fought in Japan between 1868 and 1869 by the supporters of the Shogun and those backing the Emperor.
[46] W.G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*
[47] Helen Hardacre, *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 18-19

priests. The principle idea in Confucianism is 'ritual practice'[48], and since Confucian temples were scarce in Japan, Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines provided the sanctuary that it needed in order to expound.[49] 'Ritual practice' in the Confucian sense covered anything from public ceremonies to activities in daily life. Harmony and order were maintained as long as 'ritual practice'; the building structures of the society, was honoured and respected. The worship of ancestors was also a central part of this practice. By showing respect for the elders, the ancestors and the ruler, one kept the society in balance and harmony.

The Tokugawa shogunate also demanded that all the people should be affiliated with and tie a bond to a Buddhist temple. This policy kept Christianity at bay and helped the government control the population.[50] Shinto did not have the same institutional organization like Buddhism in Japan had at that time. The shrines were smaller and were mostly maintained by local farmers and the laity, or otherwise affiliated with a Buddhist temple and managed by Buddhist monks. The Buddhist temples where drawn into the politics of the government and even though Buddhism continued as a system of belief among the people, the metaphysical aspect of Buddhism was removed from temple practice. Because from the Confucian point of view, any practice that was considered mysterious or supernatural, not moral, and not for the benefit of the society, was regarded as superstition and fraud.

As previously mentioned the modernization process in Japan also had a big impact on the local traditions in Japan. Since the beginning of the Tokugawa period Christianity had been banned in Japan. Yet, as trade with foreign countries increased, the Western powers started to express concerns about the Japanese stance on Christianity. In the eyes of the Europeans and the Americans, the Japanese were uncivilized because they denied their people freedom of religion. The Meiji government and nationalist intellectuals in Japan feared however that if Christianity was not held at bay, they would lose control of the population and fall prey to the West, like so many other countries in Asia. Also, the Christian belief contradicted with the Japanese Confucian hierarchical system in that it saw only the Christian God as the supreme authority, not the parents, ancestors, or the Emperor; the sovereign ruler of the nation. The *kokugaku*-scholar and disciple of Hirata Atsutane; Ōkuni Takamasa (1792-1871), was a government advisor and he was convinced that Japan had to develop its own

[48] 'Ritual Practice' is a key element in the modern interpretation of Shinto, according to Minoru Sonoda, see interview in ch. 5.
[49] There was no tradition for having Confucian temples in Japan.
[50] Christianity was prohibited in 1614 because it was seen as a threat to the government.

"way" or religion, if it was to compete with Christianity and the West. He believed that a concept of religion was necessary to be modern and strong, and build nationalistic sentiments, in the same way that Christianity had been a tool for Western advancements. Takamasa proposed a Japanese "Great Way", counter to the West's Christianity. It was to be grounded on Confucian ideals while most importantly, it had to serve a nationalistic agenda. Only Shinto, Japan's own and unique "way of the Gods" could provide this. The new 'religion' was based on the *kokutai* ideology of: patriotism, self-sacrifice and loyalty to the emperor. Ōkuni and his disciple, Fukuba Bisei (1831-1907), were the main architects of the new conceptualization of Shinto as a state religion.

Soon thereafter the old *jingikan* (Department of Divinities) was re-established and a campaign to cleanse all the Shinto-shrines of un-Japanese Buddhist elements commenced (*shinbutsu bunri*). The combinatory gods of Buddhism and Shinto, were replaced with the imperial gods from the ancient mythological texts. The goal of the campaign was to unite the Japanese people in a national cult under the leadership of the Emperor. All Shinto shrines were coordinated and ranked in hierarchy below the Ise Shrine, which is dedicated to the goddess Amaterasu-Ōmikami, the imperial ancestor. In her article on the redefinition of gods in Meiji Japan, Sarah Thal writes:

> Interpretations of the gods change with each succeeding political transformation as ritualists re-define the objects of their worship in order to survive.(…) It is through redefining their gods that people redefine themselves. [51]

While the Shinto bureaucrats and priests experienced a high point in political influence, Buddhism suffered, as temples were damaged and monks were harassed. Eventually the Shinto-mission failed however. There were several reasons for this. Shinto did not have any official doctrine, nor did it have any basic answers to life and death, good and evil. Buddhism had provided the answers to these mysteries, and Buddhism still had a stronger hold than Shinto on everyday religious practices, especially in respect to funerals and religious belief. The sometimes brutal measures in which the Shinto campaign was carried out also alienated many Buddhist followers. In this sense the effort to unite all the people in

[51]Sarah Thal, "Redefining the Gods; Politics and Survival in the Creation of Modern Kami." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3–4. 2002, p. 379

Japan was counterproductive. Pressure from foreign countries to stop the persecution of Christians and grant freedom of religion also increased.[52]

The failure of the campaign led to the dissolution of the *Jingikan* and the government sought a new path in its religious undertaking. From then on Shinto was not to be defined as a religion, but as a set of secular state-rituals. Shinto priests were no longer allowed to spread religious teachings; they had to concentrate on performing rituals in accordance with the affairs of the state and not other-worldly superstition. The Shinto establishment did not oppose this. On the contrary, this gave Shinto a prominent position bound closely to the state. Even though Shinto leaders had to give up religious practices like funerals and preaching, they could now claim that Shinto was something far more than religion. At the same time it united the Japanese people under the leadership of the emperor. The reform of 1882 stripped Shinto of all its "religious" elements. The reason was to separate state and religion (*seikyō bunkatsu*). Religious Shinto-sects were allowed, but the official Shinto was no longer defined as a religion, but as something larger. Shinto would be the "way" which guided the other religions.[53]

The government did not pay much attention to religious affairs anymore. Freedom of religion had been granted in the constitution of 1889, and as long as religious acts did not interfere with the 'patriotic duties' of the nation, they were basically free to carry on their business. Some people have interpreted these 'patriotic duties' as being Shinto state-rituals, but there is nothing which indicates that the government was overly concerned about Shinto anymore, having failed in its previous campaign.[54]

Gradually however, as Japan become more and more involved in its military campaign in South- East Asia, the difference between religious teaching and 'patriotic duties' became diffused. The Government used Shinto shrines to spread nationalistic propaganda, and praised the patriotic citizens who had died for the sake of the nation and the divine Emperor. Soldiers who had died in a Japanese military campaign were apotheosized and commemorated in certain appointed shrines. In 1940 *Jingiin* (Institute of Divinities) was established, which goal was disseminating reverence for the kami.[55] All people in Japan, no

[52] Christian missionaries were allowed to return to Japan when the Tokugawa shogunate fell in 1868.
[53] Mark Teeuwen, *Da religionen kom til Japan*, p.154
[54] Ibid, p. 155
[55] The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1102 (Last checked: Jan. 05.2011)

matter what religion they belonged to, had to revere the Emperor. This appeared to be the end of religious freedom in Japan and resulted in the reconciliation between state and religion. This redefinition of Shinto came to be known as State Shinto (*kokka Shinto*), a nationalistic "quasi-religion" serving the state's policies.[56] Japanese historian Shimazono Susumu describes the formation of State Shinto in this way:

> Shinto might be understood as a somewhat coherent system of practices and religious ideas united in the belief in the kami of the Japanese land. "State Shinto" was formed when those conceptual systems and practices that related to the state, found in part of Shinto, acquired a new coherence.[57]

1.6 After the War: Shinto's Way Forward and Neo-Nationalism

After the Second World War Shinto was classified as a religion by the Allied power's interim government. To prevent militaristic and nationalistic ideological use of Shinto, the Shinto Directive[58], drafted by the American lead occupation forces, granted religious freedom to every citizen and the state was forbidden to patronage any religion.[59] This policy was implemented in the Japanese post-war constitution, almost solely constructed by the Occupation, and is still to a high extent valid today.[60] Nevertheless, over the years groups within the Shinto leadership and conservative right wing politicians have on several occasions tried to modify it.[61]

When Shinto lost political influence and state patronage, it had to be reinvented again. At the same time people where tired of Shinto propaganda, after the disastrous outcome of the war. The Occupation thought that eventually Shinto would fade out, but the Shinto priesthood organized themselves, faced the challenge and one of the results was the formation of the National Association of Shinto Shrines, called Jinja Honchō.[62] The agenda for Jinja Honchō was (and still is) to serve as an overarching construct for Shinto, educate Shinto priests and Shinto followers, and to restore, at least to some extent, the public function that Shinto once had.

---

[56] Mark Teeuwen, *Da Religionen kom til Japan*, p. 152-157

[57] Shimazono Susumu, "State Shinto in the Lives of the People :The Establishment of Emperor Worship, Modern Nationalism, and Shrine Shinto in Late Meiji." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.* 36/1. 2009, .p 99

[58] Shinto Directive: Prohibited state support for Shinto or any other religion. Also, Shinto influence had to be removed from schools. Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*,p.167-170

[59] Hardacre, p. 133-142

[60] Hardacre, p. 138; Articles 20 and 89 in the Japanese constitution.

[61] Teeuwen, "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shinto Policy." *Japan Forum* 8(2). 1996

[62] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 5-6

Shinto's direction forward was debated among its leaders, and three different groups, each with their own front figure, argued about the definition of Shinto and what it was to represent. The group led by Ashizu Uzuhiko (1909-92) "stressed Shinto's role in uniting the Japanese people under the spiritual guidance of the emperor."[63] Yanagita Kunio's (1875-1953) group "stressed the spiritual value of local traditions of worshipping kami", while the fraction fronted by Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953) "argued that if Shinto was to survive, it should be developed from an ethnic religion into a universal one."[64] At first Ashizu's theories on Shinto's representation prevailed. His Shinto sought to unite the Japanese people under a political construct, while Yanagita and Orikuchi, who were both academics sought a nativist role for Shinto. The latter alternatives, even though they initially had to yield to an imperialist ideology, have throughout the years gained ground.[65] For Yanagita, the act of separating shrines from religion was a mistake and a threat to the original roots of Japanese culture. He also feared the discontinuation of local ritual practices and beliefs which had accompanied the Meiji state cult. In his eyes, the local customs and shrine practices were the essence of what constitutes Shinto. He saw Shinto as reflecting the cultural identity of Japan, but at the same time did not oppose the significance of the imperial house. Both Yanagita and Orikuchi's opinion was that Shinto should serve as the native religion of Japan, however, not as a political state ideology.[66]

For Jinja Honchō and other conservative organizations and politicians, maintaining certain ideological aspects of State Shinto is still important. The imperial moral values (*kokutai* ideology) based on patriotism, self-sacrifice and loyalty to the emperor which were created during the Meiji period, are seen as the cornerstone of the Japanese society. And for them, shrines serve the purpose of uniting the populace and educating the people about these values. Since the end of the occupation of Japan, right-wing conservatives have campaigned to re-write the constitution, while nationalizing and reviving state funding for the Ise Grand Shrine and the controversial Yasukuni shrine which enshrines the souls of fallen Japanese soldiers. Proposals to do so have been turned down in the Diet (Japanese Parliament) on several occasions. However, efforts are still ongoing to change the status of Yasukuni, to rewrite the constitution, and to allow the Prime Minister and the Emperor to officially visit the shrine and pay their respects to the war dead.

[63] Ibid, p. 6
[64] Ibid
[65] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 5-7
[66] Ibid, p.15-17

Yasukuni, originally named Tokyo Shōkonsha, was established in 1869. It is the most important shrine among the 'shrines for the protection of the nation' (*gokoku jinja*), previously known as 'spirit-inviting-shrines' (*shōkonsha*).[67] The purpose of the *gokoku jinja* is to conduct rites in the memory of the loyal soldiers who died in warfare and thereby appeasing their spirits. It was first build to commemorate those who died in the battle against the old Tokugawa shogunate and helped restore the Emperor to power. Since then it has apotheosized and enshrined almost 2, 5 million souls who made the ultimate sacrifice in combat for Japan. Most of them died during Japan's military campaign in Asia and the 2nd World War. The kami venerated at Yasukuni, the apotheosized war dead, are also known as *eirei*; 'glorious spirits'. Among these spirits who are venerated at Yasukuni, 14 of them were Class A war criminals who received capital punishment by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal after Japan's surrender. In recent years the controversy surrounding the shrine has increased due to visits by Prime Ministers and the efforst by conservative organizations like the Japan Society of the War Bereaved (*Nihon Izokukai*) and Jinja Honchō to nationalize Yasukuni. Both organizations have close ties to the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), which has dominated Japanese politics in the post-war years. Critics say that the official visits by politicians show that Japan do not take seriously the damage it caused its neighbors during the war, that it demonstrates a denial of responsibility, and they also fear a return to the politics of the militaristic and ultra-nationalistic Japan.[68] On the other hand the supporters and the apologetics see the importance of visits by the Prime Minister and the Emperor because this would reinforce patriotic spirit, and restore a national identity which they believe has been lost. Some conservatives claim that these old traditions were taken away by the Western occupation forces, and that Western culture is continuing to threaten Japanese ways of living.[69]

Summary

In this chapter we have looked at the background history of Shinto/kami-worship from the Nara and Heian period until the onset of the Pacific War. The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi myths* tell us about the history of Japan and kami-worship. Some people have claimed that Shinto is the old indigenous religion of Japan. We have seen that kami-worship has existed for a long

[67]The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=244, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[68] See Tetsuya Takahashi, *Legacies of Empire: The Yasukuni Shrine Controversy*, in John Breen (ed.): *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)
[69] See Hitoshi Nitta, *And Why Shouldn't the Prime Minister Worship at Yasukuni? A Personal View*, in John Breen (ed.): *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*

time, yet the concept of Shinto did not emerge until the 14th century. At this time it was associated with imperial rituals, while Buddhism was the dominant religion. During the Tokugawa period, identity and traditional Japanese culture became the focus of the *kokugaku* scholars. Their goal was to identify that which was purely Japanese and devoid of Chinese influence. Motoori Norinaga re-vitalized the *Kojiki*, and placed great importance on kami-worship and in particular Amaterasu Ōmikami, the divine ancestor of the Japanese emperor.

The weak response by the Tokugawa shogunate to the threat posed by Western powers led to the Meiji Restoration. At the same time *kokugaku* theories became the politics of the new leadership in the process of building a new Japanese nation. During this period Shinto emerged as an independent religious tradition. Old kami-beliefs were reinvented into imperial ideology with Amaterasu at its center. Folk-traditions were ignored by the new leaders and replaced by imperial state rituals along with patriotic moral values. Eventually a new civil religion emerged called State-Shinto (*Kokka-Shinto*). This form of Shinto, represented by Yasukuni today, is strikingly different compared to the image of Shinto as an archaic religion which worships nature. However, this remnant of State Shinto is very much alive and existing today. For Jinja Honchō and other conservatives, it is perhaps seen as the most important role for Shinto.

In the following chapter I will discuss the implications a national ideology of nature may have on the discourse of national identity in Japan. Parallel to the creation of State-Shinto, theories on Japan's close relationship with nature evolved. These theories were based on *Kokugaku* ideas and the uniqueness of Japan. These theories on an intimate relationship between the Japanese people and nature would within the course of time also be linked to Shinto.

2. The Discourse on Nature

The modern representation of Shinto as an environmental religion is based on a discourse of a unique and intimate relationship with nature. What I will show in this chapter is that this stereotype of a particular relationship with nature is not a new representation, but that it dates back to the *kokugaku* tradition, which I briefly discussed in chapter one, about the Tokugawa period. If we study this representation in its historical and social context, we will discover that the concept of nature, in its various forms, over the course of time, has been deployed in Japanese political ideology. And further, that it is a social construct created to establish a unique national identity and to differentiate Japan from other foreign cultures.

2.1 The Kokugaku Tradition and the National Ideology of Nature

The *kokugaku* movement during the Tokugawa period marked the beginning of the development of a Japanese national consciousness, and the notion of a Japanese nation. The objective of the *kokugaku* scholars was to find distinct cultural characteristics of Japan through the study of historical texts. The theories that were developed, represents new Japanese ideas on social, political and cultural identity. Some people have also said that the intellectual origin of these ideas eventually led to Japanese ultra-nationalism and militarism.[70] Students of Hirata Atsutane were for example involved in overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate and in returning the emperor to power. The ancient texts had revealed that through his divine heritage, only the Emperor was authorized to rule Japan.[71]

The most influential among these *kokugaku* scholars was Motoori Norinaga. His goal was to cleanse Japanese culture of Chinese influence, and in the ancient Japanese texts he had allegedly found native ethics and moral principles which demonstrated Japan's uniqeness. Natural spontaneity; Japan's natural Way of the Gods (*kannagara*), in contrast to human purpose or cleverness, characterizes Norinaga's concept of nature.[72] Julia Thomas writes that:

> Norinaga does not separate nature from culture claiming that Japan represents nature as opposed to Chinese culture, but instead enfolds both nature and culture under the aegis of Japan.[73]

[70] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kokugaku-school/ (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[71] Ibid
[72] Julia A. Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*, (Berekeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 43-45
[73] Ibid, p. 45

Through Norinaga's reasoning, nature is fused with the Japanese imperial culture. In his research on the *Kojiki* he discovered the myths about the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami and also the divine heritage of the emperors. As a consequence, he claimed that Japan's natural place was at the center of the world. Japanese culture was far superior to Chinese, and the universe revolved around Japan and the imperial house. Thomas argues that this interpretation of nature had nothing to do with the physical environment, instead it concerned the validation of ideology and political rule in nature.[74] In contrast to the ideas of the European enlightenment which sought to overcome nature, modern political movements in Japan embraced nature.[75]

In their ideological support for the emperor and the new government, Meiji ideologues utilized nationalistic concepts of nature in order to differentiate Japan from the West. Inspired by the *kokugaku* scholars, nature was culturalized and approaches to the landscape, climate and Japanese art evolved. Within this discourse of Japan's unique landscape they discovered a new pride. In his book *Nihon Fukeiron* (Japan's Landscape) Shige Shigetaka (1863-1927) wrote about *kokusui* (national essence) and the *sui generis* nature of Japan. According to Thomas, these concepts about nature and nationalism emerged only after the encounter with western ideas.[76] The immemorial harmony between people and nature, the essence of being Japanese, such national ideologies of nature only emerged after the Russo-Japanese war. Japan's triumph over a 'Western power', followed by the disappointment when they were not recognized by 'the Occident', offended the Japanese. Thereby to separate themselves from the West, and affirming Japanese superiority through the ideology of nature became the response to this humiliation. This ideology of nature was further developed within a philosophical movement known as the ' Kyoto School', which incorporated Western philosophical and religious ideas and reformulated them in the Japanese cultural tradition.[77] Among the scholars of the 'Kyoto School,'Watsuji Tetsuro was one of the most prominent philosopher on the ideology of nature.

2.2 Watsuji Tetsuro

The philosopher and nationalist Watsuji Tetsuro (1889–1960) had a considerable influence on the theory of Japanese particularity and national identity. His contribution to the ideology of

[74] Ibid, p. 184
[75] Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity*
[76]Ibid, p. 172-174
[77] Ibid, p.187 and; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kyoto-school/ (Last checked: April.21.2011)

nature is also very significant to modern interpretations of Japan's unique relationship with nature. His name and the concept of '*fūdo*' (climate, environment and culture) are often cited by scholars when they discuss Japan's claimed special relationship with the natural environment. Part of his philosophical system is an ecological and environmental approach to understanding Japanese culture. One could perhaps say that he created philosophical ideas about nature as national ideology. In his book *Fūdo* (1935) (Translated as *Climate and Culture*, 1961) Watsuji explores the relationship between the environment and culture. This book is also more or less a critique against natural science, because he claims that it cannot explain how climatic conditions have created human culture. He speaks of climate (*fūdo*) as the whole natural environment and also the cultural environment. What we do in everyday life and what we perceive and feel are made in certain environmental conditions. There is a mutual influence between the humans and the environment, and this creates peoples' values and attitudes. The community, and ultimately the state share these experiences. He claims that the climatic conditions can be discerned in every expression of human life, from clothing and architecture to individual behavior. It all reflects the climatic conditions we live in. But humans also, are conditioned by climate, and by working on the landscape, over time transform the climate. His philosophy on human culture is a deterministic and holistic approach, where everything has a cause and effect and where man and nature are inseparable.[78]

Before he explains the unique climate and culture of Japan at the end of the book, he sets out to explain how the cultures of other civilizations came to be and how they differ from Japan's. He praises India's early civilization where the spirit of man was one with nature. The reason for this is that India is a monsoon culture, with a lush environment. However, because of the experience of summer all year long the people of the south have hardly made any cultural progress. This is the reason why they fell prey to the Europeans. Indian philosophy has also degenerated into a desert culture because of the esotericism of Buddhism and symbolism of Hinduism, Watsuji argues.[79] In the desert culture, he goes on to explain, people has to fight nature to survive. In this climate of death there is little sign of life; no rain and no forests. Man therefore searches for the holy in that which is far away or transcendent. The aggressive approach to nature also leads to a hostile temper in the minds of the desert people. The Asian people who possess' plenty of nature and food, are peaceful people, while

[78]Tetsuro Watsuji, *Climate and Culture-A Philosophical Study*, (Tokyo: Yushudo Co Ltd. 1961), p. 7-9
[79]Watsuji, p. 22, 27, 36

the people of the desert culture with a shortage of this are warlike and aggressive. The people of the desert has cultivated a culture of war and conquering. This desert culture which he also calls biblical culture is the basis for aggressive religions like "Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism". In this culture he says, one submits to one deity and wage constant wars against others.[80]

> 'God' was the realization of the oneness of man in his struggle against nature, so there are here no marks of the deification of the forces of nature. Nature must take her place subordinate to god.[81]

The desert culture took hold over Europe and "*the submissive and aggressive pattern of desert life continues to attract modern man today*."[82] However, the gentleness of love in Christianity grew in Europe because of its difference in climate.[83] Based on climate and landscape he also argues that the Europeans are obsessed with logic and rationality, because in Europe the shape of nature is regular and logical. In contrast, nature in Japan is irregular and awe-inspiring, caused by strong winds and heavy rain.[84] He also criticizes China for its resignation to Western powers. Concluding that the Japanese are rich in temperamental diversity compared to the dull Chinese is but one example of his derogative depiction of the Chinese culture.[85]

The latter part of the book is dedicated to the demonstration of the uniqueness of Japan, its climate and culture. Watsuji divides the global environment into monsoon, desert and pastoral zones. Japan is in the monsoon belt, off the coast of the Asian continent. Calling attention to the fact that Japan is also exposed to arctic air from the north he makes sure to distinguish Japan from other monsoon cultures. These physical conditions accounts for a unique climatic situation in Japan, which is reflected in the Japanese culture. He concludes that the special climate in Japan creates a unique temperament in the Japanese mind. Compared to the delicate characteristics of the Japanese, he questions whether or not it is the Europeans who should be called savages.[86] Additionally, Watsuji attributed the "ancient love of nature" to the unique Japanese climate and culture.[87] Subsequently Japan's wet rice cultivation, architecture, social structure, family system, national character, religious beliefs and ethos are all results of the climate. The promotion of collective orientation over

[80] Ibid, p. 40-52, "Mohammedanism": This is Watsuji Testuro's terminology.
[81] Ibid, p. 54
[82] Ibid, p. 52
[83] Ibid, p. 61
[84] Ibid, p. 73-74, 78
[85] Ibid, p.122-132
[86] Ibid, p. 176
[87] Thomas, p.202

individual rights is also a result of this. Watsuji argues that because of the warm Japanese climate the Japanese home is completely open within. It is designed in such a way that it does not separate between individuals, unlike the Western home. Subsequently the Japanese home mirrors the ideal Japanese family; the family-state (*kazoku-kokka*) and the importance of collectivism in Japan.[88]

What integrates these different practices and gives them significance is the state. As a result of this:

> Watsuji's ecological perspective brings in and legitimizes the existence of the state. This position allows Watsuji to incorporate in his ethical theory the Emperor as the pivotal state institution, and create his version of cultural nationalism.[89]

> Watsuji believed that the 'indissoluble unification' of the Japanese state was the work of religious ritual, i.e., the imperial rites conducted at the Grand Shrine of Ise(…)While he apparently did not literally believe in Shinto mythology, Watsuji recognized the essential role of Shinto in the imperial system.[90]

Even though Watsuji's work noticeably has been more influential among post-war intellectuals, it also proved useful for the pre-war nationalists. He made sure to distinguish Japan from other cultures, arguing that the Japanese lived in harmony with nature, while the Occident, with its scientific approach, subjugated nature.[91] However, more important for the Meiji leaders, he legitimized the authority of the emperor and the role of Shinto in the middle of this. An intimate relationship between humans and the national land evolves, and the state then decides what is significant and of value. In an abstract form the Japanese state became the ultimate manifestation of nature. The emperor served as the father of the nation and personal sacrifice was demanded for the sake of the family-nation (*kazoku kokka*).[92]

2.3 Okakura Tenshin and Anesaki Masaharu

Within classical Japanese literature, *kokugaku* scholar Motoori Norinaga had also found distinctive Japanese natural human characteristics, like sensitivity and delicate emotions. This idea was further developed by Meiji ideologues like Okakura Tenshin and Anesaki Masaharu in their works on Japanese culture and identity.

---

[88] Winston Davies, *Religion and national idenity in modern and postmodern Japan*, Paul Heelas (ed.), *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998),p. 174-175
[89] Harumi Befu, *Watsuji Tetsuro's Ecological Approach,* in P.J.Asquith and A. Kalland (ed.) *Japanese Images of Nature* (London: Curzon Press, 2004), p.112
[90] Winston Davies, *Religion and national identity in modern and postmodern Japan*, p. 175
[91] Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity*, p.202
[92] Harumi Befu, *Watsuji Tetsuro's Ecological Approach*

Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913), also known as Okukura Tenshin, wrote an influential book called *The Book of Tea*.[93]This book was originally written in English and was meant for the Western audience. He attempts to describe Japanese culture to the foreigner through the concept of 'teaism'. '*Chadō*'("The Way of the Tea") as tea-ceremony is called in Japanese, came from China but was developed and supposedly "perfected" in Japan. Okakura says that 'teaism', the philosophy or way of living exemplified through the Japanese tea ceremony, has fostered a particular simplistic and aesthetic form of art and culture in Japan. The whole Japanese personality has been influenced by this. He says:

> The Philosophy of Tea is not mere aestheticism in the ordinary acceptance of the term, for it expresses conjointly with ethics and religion our whole point of view about man and nature... The long isolation of Japan from the rest of the world, so conducive to introspection, has been highly favorable to the development of Teaism.[94]

The geographic isolation of Japan has, it is argued, created this unique culture in Japan based on a philosophy of 'teaism'. Okakura also draws upon the East-West dichotomy, saying that, in the end, Western people cannot really comprehend this Japanese perspective on life.

Anesaki Masaharu (1873-1949) was also a prominent intellectual and scholar during the Meiji era. Some people credit him as being the father of religious studies in Japan.[95] Among his most famous works on religion are "*History of Japanese Religion"* (1930) and "*Religious Life of the Japanese People*"(1938), but he also wrote extensively on several other topics like literature and art. He was a guest lecturer at Harvard University and the book "*Art, Life and Nature in Japan"* (1933) is based on these lectures. The image of Japanese art and life described by him in this book follows the general trend of other nationalist intellectuals at that time. It is an attempt at distinguishing Japanese culture from other societies. He is critical towards other nations and elevates Japanese art. Perhaps more importantly, he links art to the idea of a unique Japanese 'love of nature'.

> In many countries nature is thought of as necessarily wild and bold, in contrast to human refinement. According to that conception, life consists in the combat against nature, or in the conquest of it. But the Japanese lives too close to nature for him to antagonize her, the benignant mother of mankind. Just as art has permeated every corner of life in Japan, so Japanese art always derives its model and inspiration from nature.[96]

---

[93]Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea*; http://www.gutenberg.org/files/769/769-h/769-h.htm, (*Chadō* literally means "The Way of the Tea". Okakura Tenshin calls it "teaism'.
[94] Ibid
[95] Naomi Hylkema-Vos, "Kato Genchi: A Neglected Pioneer in Comparative Religion." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 17/4. 1990: p. 376
[96] Masaharu Anesaki, *Art, Life and Nature in Japan*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1933), p.6

Anesaki argues that the art imported to Japan over the centuries was "never accepted without being more or less modified and tempered by the native spirit of Japan."[97]According to him, Japanese culture is harmonious and more refined than other cultures. It's gentler, softer, more delicate, and beautiful. In this book he also touches upon religion, and he asserts that religion in Japan has contributed to the intimate connection between the Japanese and nature. Because he says, both Buddhism and Shinto, teach that men are no different than the objects of nature, therefore the Japanese must also respect nature.[98] He concludes that the modernization and adoption of "vulgar arts of the West" nearly destroyed Japan's national heritage. However, according to Anesaki the Western threat can be diminished:

> But they are not without counteracting forces, which are seen in the tenacity of family life and religious tradition, in the surging renewal of national self-consciousness, and in the ever-lasting inspiration of the beauty of nature.[99]

Watsuji, Okakura and Anesaki's work continued to inspire nationalist writers after the end of the Second World War. They have in particular been an inspiration for the vast amount of *Nihonjinron* literature published in the post-war years. *Nihonjinron* theories are texts which focus on Japanese national and cultural identity. It follows in the footsteps of the *kokugaku* theories differentiating Japan with 'others', but with a modern interpretation of Japanese culture and identity. I will discuss *nihonjinron* theories later in chapter nine.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented how the concept of nature was applied in the Japanese ideological search for national identity. During the Meiji period many people felt a loss of identity in face of the rapid modernization, Western threat, and the numerous changes arising in Japan. Among various competing theories on a national identity the idea of a unique culture based on nature materialized. While the *kokugaku* scholars worked with an abstract concept of nature, the Meiji ideologues identified nature with the physical landscape, climate and Japanese art. The idea that the Japanese have a unique and harmonious relationship with nature stems from these attempts to contrast Japan with either China or the West. The most influential scholar among these Meiji ideologues was Watsuji Tetsuro, who developed the concept of *fūdo*. Watsuji Tetsuro equated the unique culture of Japan with its climatic and geographical conditions. His concept of *fūdo*, asserts that there is an intimate relationship

[97] Ibid, p.25-26
[98] Ibid, p. 9-10
[99] Ibid, p.176

between human cultures and the climatic and environmental factors. He argued that because Japan is an island nation, has a monsoon climate, and additionally has to endure cold arctic air coming from the north, it possess' a distinct culture compared to other nations. As a result of its landscape and climatic conditions the Japanese people do not seek to overcome nature, rather they strive to live in harmony with it. The Japanese love for nature stems from the natural conditions which the people have to deal with in everyday life. Likewise, Okakura Tenshin and Anesaki Masaharu idealize Japanese art and culture, giving the reader the impression that the Japanese are imbued with exceptional aesthetic appreciation for nature. Because Shinto often is described as primitive nature-worship, the ideology of a unique Japanese feeling for nature has also led to the belief that Shinto reproduces this archaic relationship between the Japanese and nature.[100]

In the following chapter I will discuss the relationship between Shinto and the ideology of nature. It is this link, I argue, that over the course of time led to the re-presentation of Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion.

[100] Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity*, p. 188

3. The Rediscovery of Shinto

Animism gradually became a popular phrase in the Japanese discourse on cultural uniqueness. Many well-known scholars in Japan have interpreted Shinto in animistic terms, because of its close relationship with nature. In contrast to a rational world, reality is perceived as filled with spiritual beings. In a general sense the theories on Shinto and animism stress the uniqueness of the ancient Japanese culture, which has survived the modernization process. Consequently the interest in Shinto as an animistic religion can also be understood as a critique of modernity and the West.

3.1 The Discourse about Animism

Animism was termed by Sir Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) in his ground-breaking book *Primitive Culture* (1871), in which he developed a theory on the origin of religions. According to Tylor religion is the "belief in spiritual beings."[101]In a rational effort to understand and explain reality, the primitive people deducted that; because people are animated with souls, nature should also be animated with a soul. Animism is therefore the belief in a reality distinct from the body. He describes the growth and development of animism as the spirits in nature acquire an identity and character. From ancestor worship, totemism, polytheism to the highest stage monotheism. The last stage of animism is the belief in one supreme divinity. Not all cultures evolve at the same pace, but this is not due to difference in mental capacity.[102]In addition to describing the evolutionary origin of religion, Tylors definition of animism offers a characterization of something opposite to materialism:

> The deep lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy.[103]

Katō Genchi (1873-1965) was one of the earliest Japanese scholars of religion specializing in Shinto studies. He was perhaps the first scholar who drew a parallel between Shinto and animism. His intention however, was not to distinguish Shinto from other religions, on the contrary, Katō wanted to prove that the Western conception of Shinto as a lower primitive religion was wrong. He developed an outline of how Shinto has evolved from being a primitive animistic religion, to a higher religion that worships Amaterasu Ōmikami as

[101] Edward B.Tylor, *Primitive Culture*: 1.(Cambridge; England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.424
[102] Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion: Second Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23-29
[103] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (1871), Quoted in John Clammer, *Japan and its Others*, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), p. 219

the supreme God.[104]He follows the Dutch scholar C.P. Tiele's model of classification of religions and attempts to incorporate Shinto in this system.[105]Tiele had dismissed Shinto because it had no history, but Katō believed that Shinto ranked equally among the other higher religions. He did not belong to the nationalists or *nihinjinron* theorists who sought to promote Shinto as a primitive tradition. He tried to find similarities between Shinto and other monotheistic religions in order to equate Japanese religion with the idealistic and modern religions in the West. On the other hand, moving on to a present day intellectual, Professor Yasuda Yoshinori has highlighted Shinto as primitive animism in order to differentiate Shinto and Japanese culture with that of the West.

3.2 Yasuda Yoshinori and the Revival of Japan's Animism

Professor Yasuda Yoshinori, senior fellow at *Nichibunken* (The International Research Center for Japanese Studies), wrote an article in a *Nichibunken* newsletter in 1990 called "Animism Renaissance". In this article he called for a revival of primitive animism and termination of forest destruction around the world. According to him, the European expansion in Africa and Asia during the 15th century brought with it an ideology where man exploits nature.

Yasuda argues that the Christian philosophy which he calls the "civilization of deforestation" has thus endangered the world's ecosystem. Those civilizations which existed before the European advancement were primitive native animistic systems where man lived in harmony with nature. This animism and "spiritual richness" was destroyed when Christianity expanded, argues Yasuda. However, because Japan was isolated for so long during the Tokugawa period, and because of its geographical isolation, the Japanese people have been able to retain a "forest civilization" and managed to escape the invasion of the "civilization of deforestation."

> Owing to this isolation, the Japanese people were able to maintain their primitive civilization which is based on a harmony between man and nature.[106]

Not unlike his predecessor Watsuji Tetsuro, Yasuda ascribes the origin of the "forest civilization" to the landscape and the warm and wet climate in Japan. He gives credit to Shinto for preserving the native animism, because Shinto shrines often harboured the sacred trees in which the gods dwelt. Due to industrialization and modernization, many Japanese

[104] Naomi Hylkema-Vos, "Katō Genchi: -A Neglected Pioneer in Comparative Religion." p.384-386 and 389
[105]The Britannica Encyclopedia: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/497215/classification-of-religions/38037/Additional-Reading, (Last checked: July 22. .2010)
[106] Yasuda Yoshinori, "Animism Renaissance." *Nichibunken Newsletter*. No.5, 1990

people have deserted the old ways and abandoned the harmony between man and nature, he argues. And therefore, throughout the world animism disappeared at the same time as the destruction of nature began. In the countries that were colonized, the native animistic system was almost completely eradicated and they were deemed primitive and heretical by the Christian invaders. It is clear however that in Yasuda's opinion, because of Shinto, many Japanese have retained a unique love for nature which most other people have lost or forgotten. Due to the geographical isolation of Japan, and the seclusion during the Tokugawa period when Christianity was forbidden and Christians were persecuted, Shinto was able to survive. At the end of the article Yasuda calls for a revival of native animism in order to tackle our environmental problems.[107]

In Western academic circles the term 'animism' has practically "gone out of date". Tyler's theories on animism are hardly relevant in the modern study of religion, except perhaps when one studies the historical development of religious studies. Postmodern movements like 'New Age' and 'deep ecology' however have shown an increasing interest in animistic ideas. John Clammer says that animism in Japan has a political significance as a counter-discourse to conventional science. Hence he also claims that it is still a legitimate field of study, as a discourse on religion where the focus is on nature and social praxis rather than belief and theology. Clammer argues that 'basic' Shinto can be understood as a sophisticated example of animistic religion.[108]

3.3 Umehara Takeshi and Japan's Ancient Shinto Roots

Umehara Takeshi was the director general for the *Nichibunken* Newsletter and he is considered to be perhaps one of the most famous philosophers in present day Japan. He is especially noted for his works on Japanese culture and his controversial ideas on Japanese "uniqueness." Harumi Befu has suggested that the modern theories on Japanese particularism (*nihonjinron*) have discovered new symbols of national identity, which has replaced the old 'tainted' symbols from the times of Japanese militaristic aggression in Asia.[109] Umehara attests to this when he says that he used to have "bitter memories of a chauvinistic State

[107] Ibid
[108] John Clammer, *Japan and its Others*, p. 228 and 238
[109] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinro*n, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), p.100; this topic is discussed more thoroughly in ch. 9.5.

Shinto" but that he has now rediscovered the value of Japan's ancient Shinto roots.[110]In the early years after the war he remembers that he was disillusioned, and while he strove to find answers in Western philosophy he could only find emptiness there. In an interview with the "New Perspectives Quarterly"[111]he says:

> Then I began to study Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan. It was at this time that I came to believe there was something in the Shinto religious orientation of Japan, rooted in its ancient cultural origins, that could offer a philosophy of existence that fundamentally differed from the inevitable dead end of European thought.[112]

Many Japanese people have steered clear of Shinto because of the unpleasant memories from the war days, but Umehara says that there is nothing to be ashamed of because the ideological expression of State Shinto was influenced by Western thinking. In his opinion one will find true Shinto if one looks back before European ideas contaminated it.

He claims that modernism is at an end and that in Shinto he has found values which can contribute to the whole of mankind in a postmodern age. These values are defined as Shinto's forest civilization and the wisdom of the ancient ways when people lived in harmony with nature. Because modern philosophy is based on a Cartesian dualism which sees man as the master of nature, exploitation of nature threatens to bring death to all nonhuman life and in the end to mankind as well.

> Since modernism as a world view is exhausted, and now even constitutes a danger to mankind, the new principles of the coming postmodern era will need to be drawn primarily from the experiences of non-Western cultures, especially Japanese civilization.[113]

He argues that Japan is better suited than other non-western cultures to guide the world in these postmodern times because Japan modernized without ever losing its soul. The primitive societies in for example the forests of South America are content with their ways. Japan on the other hand, is a modern nation with a unique cultural heritage, and can therefore emerge as an example to other modern nations.

A common factor among new religions that are critical of modernity is that the ancient past is seen as a period of great wisdom and truth which has been lost in the rationalization process, and a newfound embrace of holism, ecology and a belief in the re-enchantment of

---

[110] Takeshi Umehara, "Ancient Postmodernism."*New Perspectives Quarterly*. Volume 26, Issue 4. (2009), internet article: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2009.01111.x/abstract (Last checked: April.30.2011)
[111] Ibid
[112] Ibid, p. 41
[113] Ibid, p. 48

nature.[114]John Clammer states that many of these modern movements in the West share the same ideas as those that are prevalent in Japanese cultural discourses.[115]The revival of occultism in the West was a critical reaction to the Cartesian-Christian dualism, where man overcomes nature, and the transcendent God is separated from man. The growing secularization of the world, where everything is explained in rational scientific terms, has left a spiritual void in many people. The revival of old native religions, the return to traditional beliefs and a critical perspective on Western culture are just a few examples of the post-modern reactions to modernity. In her essay on "Modern Perceptions of the Kami" Mori Mizue shows that Western writers critical of modernity, also have expressed interest in Shinto as a primitive religion, because it can offer a contrasting view in the modern world. Japanese intellectuals inspired by Western writers have also contributed to the new discourse on Shinto as a primitive animistic religion, professing an intimate relationship with nature.[116]

3.4 Shinto and Environmentalism

One of the first Western scholars to promote the idea about Shinto's ecological potential was professor in Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University, Byron Earhart.[117]He says that the Japanese religious tradition which emphasized oneness with nature is a model for tackling the environmental problems of the modern world. Earhart believed that humans are cultural beings and therefore needs cultural or spiritual inspiration in life. Consequently to tackle environmental problems, religions or other cultural traditions could prove to be helpful. People in the West who are critical of the Judeo-Christian relationship with nature have often been intrigued by eastern traditions with a more benign relationship with nature. Zen Buddhism has for a longer period of time been the favored philosophy, however, now they are also discovering the spirituality of Shinto. The sacred value Shinto accords to nature are rooted in rice agriculture, but even though most Japanese are not involved in agriculture nowadays and live in a modern urban environment, the notion of nature has survived and is still part of the Japanese consciousness, claims Earhart. Furthermore, Japan has also had problems with pollution, perhaps more than many Western nations, but if Shinto were to revitalize itself it could become relevant to the present

[114] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 77-93; 322-325
[115] Clammer, p. 217
[116]Itō Satoshi, Matsuo Kōichi and Mori Mizue, *Nihonshi shōhyakka: Shinto*, (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2002.), p.18-23. This is based on Mark Teeuwen's book review in the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, 29/3-4

[117] H. Byron Earhart, "The ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns."

environmental concern. If the ideals of Japanese religious tradition were reenacted it could help the environmental cause and inspire people in the rest of the world who is seeking a more meaningful relationship with nature. [118]

There are also several Japanese developments in the twenty-first century that links Shinto with the environment, and which to a certain degree are supported by Jinja Honchō. The Shrine Forest Society (Shasō Gakkai) is one of those movements:

> The Shasō Gakkai represents a serious attempt to give substance to the idea which, until recently, was fantasy more than it was ever fact: that Shinto is a religion of nature, and that Japan's nature is somehow, of itself, Shinto. [119]

Shasō Gakkai and other movements which focus on Shinto, nature and ecology will be discussed more thoroughly in following chapters.

Summary

Previously I have described how an ideology of nature developed in order to establish a unique Japanese national identity. In this chapter we have seen how the discourse on a Japanese particular love for nature eventually became linked to Shinto. Worship of nature, a feature often acquainted with Shinto, seems to correlate with animism considering that animism imbues nature with spirits.

Associating Shinto with animism also has a political significance because it serves to differentiate Shinto from Christianity and the West. Considering that animism is in general thought to be an ancient form of religiosity, it places the foundation of Shinto in the past and reinforces the description of Shinto as the indigenous religion of Japan. I have previously demonstrated that Shinto is a modern construct based upon a combination of old kami-worship and modern nationalism. Animism gives Shinto the quality of being 'primitive' in a positive sense, because modernity is seen as antagonistic in the eyes of the Western cultural critic. In addition to this, animism also bestows Shinto with the characteristic of being benevolent towards nature, considering the fact that animism is also thought to encompass the belief in spirits in nature. This idea has given credibility to the description of Shinto as an ecological religion

[118] Ibid, p. 1-26,
[119] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto,* p. 210

Both Yasuda Yoshinori and Umehara Takeshi use this description of Shinto as a primitive nature-religion to contrast Japan with the West. They both claim that the ancient form of religiosity in Japan can help solve the environmental problems of the world, caused by Western modernity and philosophy. Recently several new environmental activities associated with Shinto have also emerged, like for example the 'Shasō Gakkai'. My goal has been to investigate the reinterpretation of Shinto as an ecological religion. What has been the driving force behind this reinterpretation? To what degree can it be linked with political ideology? And to what extent does environmentalism play an important role within Shinto compared to the imperial moral values? I will return to these questions when I analyze my investigation of environmental activities within Shinto in chapter seven and in my in-debth analysis in chapter nine.

In the following chapter I will discuss my fieldwork in Japan and how it was conducted. In my investigation the goal has been to examine modern representations of Shinto. I have attempted to find answers to these questions: How, why and by whom is Shinto being redefined in ecological terms? While conducting my fieldwork I also paid attention to the imperialistic and nationalistic aspect of Shinto and how this correlates with the new presentation of Shinto as an ecological religion.

4. On the Methology of Fieldwork

My field study was conducted in the fall of 2010, with most of the time spent in the Tokyo area. I did not focus my study on one small community, having too little time to do so; rather I concentrated on identifying Shinto practice in a more general sense. A significant part of my investigation was carried out in Kamakura; an old political center and the seat of the *shōgun* during the Kamakura period. I also travelled to Kyoto, the old imperial capital of Japan and to Kobe. During the field research I visited numerous Shinto shrines, talked to various people, lay and priest, in Japanese and applied participant observation.

When I was younger and went to high school in Japan, I had visited Tokyo on several occasions and also Kamakura once on a school fieldtrip in 1995 while studying Japanese history and religion. Furthermore, I had previously for a longer period of time lived in both Kyoto and Kobe (approximately 17 years), and I knew these cities and their most important shrines.

In my investigation I've been relying on my personal experience. My story is an outsiders account, but I have also tried to relate an emic narrative from interviews with clergy and conversations with lay people.[120]Before travelling to Japan I had studied Shinto and especially the nature discourse within Shinto and Japanese culture. Most of the works were critical analyses and before doing my fieldwork I reminded myself of my subjective experiences and cultural baggage. This does not mean that I believe I could achieve an absolute objective mindset, being completely impartial to the truth or falsity of the accounts of the Shinto adherents. Even though I had lived in Japan for almost 17 years, and I believe that I know Japanese culture quite well, being an outsider, with a Christian cultural background, grown up with missionary parents, I had to be reflexively aware of the context were I came from.[121]Gavin Flood writes about the need for a 'dialogical reflexivity'; while being sensitive to difference it is also a critical investigation, recognizing the historical and social context of one self and the study at hand. The researcher is an observer entering in a critical dialogue with the observed. Flood recommends a strategy applying critical research

[120] Kim Knott, *Insider/Outsider Perspectives*, in John R. Hinnels (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, (New York, Routledge, 2005)
[121] Ibid, p. 244-245

methods in social sciences and humanities when one studies religion, a recommendation I have tried to follow in my fieldwork.[122]

During my fieldwork I collected data from various sources based on the material which was available and what I considered would be most suitable for the following analysis. I have collected data from personal interviews with Shinto priests, I observed Shinto rituals, talked with shrine visitors and I discussed Shinto with people I met outside of the religious terrain. The Shinto clergy may have an opinion on this matter which perhaps differs from the assumptions of the lay people. I was, therefore, interested in finding out the various, and perhaps, contradicting ideas of what Shinto is in modern Japan. I have also acquired DVD's produced by the International Shinto Research Institute, two documentaries on the Yasukuni shrine, and written material in the form of official Shrine pamphlets, magazines and an official guidebook to the Yūshūkan military museum. Additionally, internet sources have proven to be very valuable in my investigation, owing to the fact that almost every Shrine in Japan of a considerable size has its own homepage. There are also numerous organizations in Japan, related to the topic of Shinto and/or environmentalism, which have their own internet webpage. I have not restrained myself to the use of only one method; instead I sought to make use of multiple resources in my investigation of the modern representations of Shinto.

Due to the fact that I spent almost all of my childhood in Japan and went to an international high school in Kobe, I am fluent in both Japanese and English. Therefore I was able to speak in Japanese with Shinto priests and adherents. At the same time my informants could articulate themselves in their native language and thereby avoiding any communicative misunderstandings. The importance of knowing Japanese have been seminal in the study. Because I grew up in Japan I do not only have a good knowledge of Japanese culture and how to behave towards informants, I also have a good command of Japanese. The understanding of central concepts and terms in relation to Shinto and its claimed relation to nature lies at the core of the following investigation.

4.1 The Qualitative Research Interview

My informants were carefully chosen because of their affiliation with a Shinto environmentalist movement and their importance within their respective movements. Sonoda Minoru is Professor emeritus at the Kyoto University, he is the chief priest at Chichibu-Jinja

[122] Gavin Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology; Rethinking the Study of Religion*, (New York: Continuum, 1999), p.144, 148-149, 234-236

shrine, president of the International Shinto Research Association and one of the founders and a member of Shasō Gakkai: the Association for the Study of Sacred Forests. I travelled to Japan in the autumn of 2010 for my fieldwork. The reason why I chose to do my research at precisely this moment was so that I could attend a Shinto symposium organized by the International Shinto Research Association. It had been arranged so that I could meet and interview the president of the organization, Mr. Sonoda Minoru, perhaps the most important figure within the shrine world when it comes to the reinterpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature. I particularly wanted to ask him about Shasō Gakkai and its activities. My second informant was Taima Yoichi, priest and director of the Human Resource Department at the well renowned Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine in Kamakura.[123]At the Tsurugaokoa Hachimangū Shrine they have an association called Enju no Kai, which amongst other things have courses on ecology that are arranged by Shinto priests. I wished to learn more about this association from Mr. Taima, and I wanted to ask him about his perspective on Shinto's connection with nature.

Before conducting the interview I had to ask myself these questions: Was I prepared? Did I have enough background knowledge of the topic to express what I was interested in, and would my respondents understand what I was interested in learning? Where my respondents prepared for what kind of questions I would ask, so that they could defend their opinion? Being reflexive is also important when conducting a qualitative research interview. The interviewer has to keep an open mind to the fact that there are many ways one can bias the result. For example, will my personal assumptions jeopardize the outcome of the interview? Will I be able to be objective, keeping an open mind while and at the same time maintain a critical distance? It might sound contradictive but it is important to have a critical perspective without necessarily being judgemental. And what kind of answers are they going to give me? Will the answers I am receiving be colored by the fact that I am a foreigner? Would a Japanese person get a different answer?[124]

Interviewing Mr. Sonoda I was a little worried that I was pushing his time after a whole day of conference. Therefore I did not ask him all the questions I had prepared but concentrated on the ones that I thought was most important. But the interview went

[123]The Homepage of Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine: http://www.hachimangu.or.jp/
[124] Trude A. Fonneland, *Kvalitative Metodar: Intervju og observasjon*, p. 226-228 and 231-235, and Bjørn Ola Tafjord, *Refleksjonar kring refleksivitet*, p. 244-246, in *Metode i religionsvitenskap* by Siv Ellen Kraft and Richard J, Natvig (ed.), (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2006)

smoothly, perhaps because he felt at ease since Professor of Japanese studies; Mark Teeuwen (University of Oslo) was present and also took part in the conversation. Beforehand I had read an interview with Sonoda Minoru done by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and I had also read his chapter on 'Shinto and the environment' in John Breen and Mark Teeuwen's book *Shinto in History*.[125]With Mr. Taima I had a scheduled appointment and the setting was more formal than the interview with Mr. Sonoda. Before my interview I had corresponded by e-mail with lower ranked *miko* (female Shrine servants), and I had studied the homepage of Tsurugaoka Hachimangū and the internet webpage of Enju no Kai. As I had corresponded with people at Tsurugaoka Hachimangū beforehand and prepared them for what kind of questions I was going to ask, this allowed Mr. Taima to gather magazines and brochures with relevant information produced by the Shrine, and hand them over to me. The interview with Mr. Taima was shorter than my interview with Mr. Sonoda, but I learned a great deal about the environmenetal activities conducted at the shrine. For both interviews I had prepared a gift (*omiyage*) which is a general formal custom in Japan when one asks for a favour.

4.2 Internet Sources, Media and Text Analysis

What has proven especially useful for me in the research is the abundance of Shinto shrines which are represented on the internet. I believe that all of the prominent shrines in Japan and most of the shrines with an employed clergy have an internet homepage. Some shrines have an internet page in both English and Japanese, others in Japanese only. In those cases were a shrine was represented in both English and Japanese I was able to learn if there were different messages according to the separate languages. Seeing that shrines are represented on the internet, I was able to study and compare history and practices of individual shrines. The Association of Shinto Shrines, Jinja Honchō, appoints priests and sets the agenda for many practices in all of its member shrines. Notably these are the festivals associated with important annual events, weddings and coming of age ceremonies, and the performance of certain rituals and prayers. However, each individual shrine does for the most part operate independently, for instance revering a local guardian kami and performing and celebrating their own rituals and festivals. Ian Reader, a prominent scholar on religions in Japan, says that the foundation history of a shrine (*engi*) is often based on stories about powerful individuals (emperor or a famous warrior) or a miraculous happening. The shrines also have an interest in maintaining and promoting such lore because it draws interest from the

[125] John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*, (New York: Routledge, 2000)

people.[126]For example many shrines, among them Tsurugaoka Hachimangū in Kamakura which I visited, is associated with a kami called 'Hachiman'. He is often regarded as the guardian kami of the warriors while at the same time he is also being identified with the former emperor Ōjin.[127]Other shrines draw people because they are associated with *ryōen* (making good marriages) or *enmusubi* (linking two people). Keta Taisha experienced a surge of interest when the head priest of the shrine proclaimed that the guardian kami of the shrine had the ability to help girls find lovers and husbands.[128]What I am trying to show here is that each individual shrine basically establishes their own "religious" program, and that studying the various homepages of shrines might give us an idea of the diverse practices and representations in modern Shinto. These internet pages may or may not give us any new information of what traditional Shinto is, but it can give us a picture of modern movements, and the identity these movements are seeking in a modern world.

I have for example also looked at webpages of different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which are connected to environmentalism and Shinto. Typical of these NGO's is the message of peace and harmony which they believe Japanese culture can share with the rest of the world.[129]Investigating the difference and similarities between a written official text on Jinja Honcho's homepage and what these NGOs say about Shinto has also proven to be useful.

What is presented on the internet webpage, especially if it is written in English is evidently meant for the foreign or international readers and thereby formulated accordingly. I believe that studying the difference between the internet pages in English and Japanese will show us that contrasting messages are being told. The messages for the Japanese audience are often more direct and include activities for the follower; etiquette and how to worship, information about local shrines, and the imperial myths. Jinja Honcho is for example more concerned about emperor and nation when it is not addressing a foreign audience. The message conveyed to the foreigners represent to a higher degree what they want the 'Other' to believe Shinto is. I will come back to this when I investigate the difference between the English and Japanese homepage of Jinja Honcho in chapter six.

---

[126] Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, p.141
[127] Ibid, p. 142, and The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1083 (last checked 11.09. 2010)
[128] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p.207
[129] Clammer, p. 71, 72, 76

In addition to interviews, internet and text I have analyzed three films written, produced and directed by Miyazaki Hayao. The reason why I have chosen precisely these movies is because they are extremely popular in Japan and they have also been very succesful abroad. More importantly however is the narrative and the message of these films. They all illustrate Japanese spirituality and convey a message of environmentalism. Miyazaki seems to reaffirm a longing for the ancient wisdoms of Japan, while he is criticizing modernity. Many people have also interpreted his films as a proclamation of Japanese religiosity.[130]

I present Sonoda's interview and his perspectives on Shinto and nature in the next chapter. The interview with Taima is presented in the chapter about Environmental Activites Associated with Shinto in chapter seven. In recounting these interviews I am a participating interviewing subject. This has been done in order to make the narrative more dynamic and also give the reader a closer contextual relation with the informant.

[130] See for example: Jolyon Baraka Thomas, "Shūkyō Asobi and Miyazaki Hayao's Anime."

5. Perspectives of Sonoda Minoru

Sonoda Minoru is within the Shinto world one of the foremost representatives of the new interpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature. This is the reason why I have put a great deal of emphasis on an interview with him. I met him at a symposium organized by the International Shinto Research Association on September 19th, 2010, in Tokyo. This is an organization which promotes exchange between people who study Shinto and Japanese religion in general. The symposium was a presentation of special research topics related to Shinto.

After the symposium I sat down and talked with him for about an hour. I wanted to find out more about the relationship between Shinto and nature, about Shasō Gakkai of which he is a prominent member, and about environmental activities in his own community. In this chapter I have also implemented data from an article Sonoda has written and a separate interview with him done by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

I started off by asking him whether he thought that the representation of Shinto as a cult of nature is an attempt to distinguish Shinto and Japanese culture from the Christianity and Western culture. Sonoda first accounted for the difference between Shinto and the world religions. Then he argued how Shinto came to be and why this has resulted in a close relationship with nature. "Christianity and the world religions, they function as a religious order and they have 'faith', 'confessions' or a 'dogma'" he said. "Therefore, one can say that world religions have a universal doctrine and one believes or does not believe in it, it is all about faith put in a system. Shinto however, is a 'culture religion,' and it emerged from the ancient agricultural civilisation of Japan." In a separate interview with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) Sonoda illustrated the archaic aspect of Shinto in this way: "Basic to Shinto is the idea of growing crops and receiving their life. Receiving life and giving thanks to life represent Shinto's fundamental view of life."[131]He explained to me that Shinto does not seek a universal presence and that the motive is not to proselytize; to pursue other people so that they will be initiated into the faith. Even though the same word 'religion' has been used, the nature or character of Shinto is different from that of the world religions. "Cognitively one could say that it (religion) is a Western discourse, where the duality of things has been a

[131] Interview with Sonoda Minoru. "Transmitting a made-in-Japan philosophy of peace to the world: A message of symbiosis from Shinto shrine groves." *SPF Voices; Newsletter of Sasakawa Peace Foundation*. No. 50, Vol. 2. 2006: www.spf.org/e/pdf/publication/newsletter/2006_2.pdf (Last checked Jan.10.2011)

historical reality" he went on saying. "And in light of this Christianity, Islam and the Judaism established a faith and then a group or a church. Shinto is not an organization like that, even if we use the same word 'religion.' Our common sense says that religion must have a 'faith', but we do not make an issue about faith. Only as 'ritual practice' is it understood as a religion. This is what 'culture religion' is. In this sense it is somewhat different from advanced religion." He made it clear that Shinto is a system made up of 'mythology' and 'ritual practice', and hence, not necessarily a religion in the Western sense of the term. In the previously mentioned interview with the SPF he said that:

> Shinto is primal because it's a basic religion that human beings generated when they first developed society. In that sense, I think, it can be seen as the basis of religion that honors the preciousness of life. After civilization developed, the idea of a genius like Jesus or Muhammad teaching a particular doctrine led to the emergence of institutional religions. These religions, stripped of the view of life of indigenous religions, were urbanized and took on a universal character. And an extremely deductive way of thinking took hold. Institutional religions regulate behavior on the basis of doctrines and principles. Human beings act in accordance with the divine will or a divinely ordained mission. This leads to the idea of wiping out others for that reason. But because Shinto is imbued with a mindset rooted in the earth, the idea of killing opponents in obedience to a divine decree doesn't arise.[132]

5.1 The Concept of Fūdo

Continuing with my own discussions with Sonoda Minoru he said that Shinto originated in the ancient Japanese society when "life in Japan was based on the *fūdo* of the land: the particular culture of a society (and its geographical landscape)." The concept of *fūdo* was first introduced by Watsuji Tetsuro, whom I presented earlier in chapter 2. In an article called *Shinto and the Natural Environment*[133]Sonoda discussed Watsuji and the concept of *fūdo* more thoroughly. He said that *fūdo* according to Watsuji is not only the external, natural climatic and geographical features of a region, it is also the culture that the people who live there have brought with them. The people of that particular society: "(…) develop a shared appreciation of the natural landscape and build a symbolical world inspired by that landscape (…). Thus by cultivating nature and transforming it into a lived-in *fūdo*, societies at the same time construe a religious cosmos in which they can feel spiritually at ease."[134]Sonoda told me that Shinto, a product of Japan's *fūdo*, has created a unique harmony between people and nature, and not a culture where humans subjugate nature.

---

[132] Ibid
[133] Sonoda Minoru, *Shinto and the Natural Environment*, in Breen and Teeuwen (ed.), *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*
[134] Ibid, p. 33

I also asked Sonoda Minoru whether he believes that the interpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature was influenced by environmental movements in the West. In response to this he said that he believes the *fūdo*-culture in Japan is different from the Western ideas of ecology, because humans hardly have a place in the Western environmental movement. "An 'ecology' where people must not 'touch' or interfere with nature, or a reality where humans are not included, this I believe, is not very Japanese, and is also not part of Shinto" Sonoda explained.

> In an agricultural civilization, the natural environment ceases to be purely 'natural.'[135]

"On the other hand a world where nature and people are living together interdependently, supporting each other, this kind of *fūdo* is what Shinto actually is" Sonoda told me. In short, Sonoda seemed to say that the Western environmental movement is focusing on the natural environment only, while they are forgetting or ignoring the needs of the people. He said that the Japanese way, or Shinto's ecological message is that humans also must be allowed to prosper while one at the same time takes measures to protect and preserve the natural environment.

Sonoda also refers to Shinto as a 'socio-ecological religion.' He explained this to me in the interview, and in the article previously mentioned where he also describes the term in detail. By 'socio-ecological religion' he means that Shinto originated as people got together, cultivated the land and changed the natural conditions according to their needs.[136]Shinto is a religion where man and nature both have an important role, mutually depending on each other. Sonoda points out that Shinto has many ancient myths explaining the natural environment and how to improve crops. For example there are myths of a sacrifice of a kami (mother deity) for the sake of producing crops. This symbolises the transformation of the natural environment into *fūdo*.[137]

In these early times people did not have the means to control nature, so they were restricted by the given natural conditions. The natural ecology of the region becomes cultured nature, which is what Watsuji called *fūdo*. Sonoda told me that this way of living, where nature is altered, but not controlled, where people and nature are living in a harmonious symbiotic relationship is what people in Japan may call a typical *satoyama* way of living.

---

[135] Ibid, p.33
[136] Sonoda Minoru, *Shinto and the Natural Environment*, p. 33
[137] Ibid, p.34

5.2 Satoyama: The Japanese Traditional Rural Landscape

Before the onset of modernity Japan had numerous small village communities which Sonoda calls 'hometown cults (*kakyō saishi*), where they shared a common 'sacred world.' The village kami, *ujigami*, resided in the village shrine. This was originally a sacred grove (*yashiro*) at the rear of the village.[138]The old Japanese village communities together with the cropland and the surrounding forests are typically referred to as *satoyama*.

> The satoyama ideal, born out of an intimate and even reverential connection with nature, entails living with the land and on it, without arrogating it exclusively to human use-living in a sustained way over many generations.[139]

Living in for example Tokyo where the concrete buildings, electrical wires and city noises appear to be endless, the idyllic rural way of life that is *satoyama* may seem alluring. In Japan there seems to be a nostalgic feeling towards this rural village life, yet life in these village communities seems to become more and more difficult as young people move in to the cities and only a few are left to carry on the tradition.

Satoyama is usually situated at the base of a mountain, surrounded by forests, grasslands and rice paddies. *Satoyama*-culture is about sustaining human life at the same time as one allows other life forms to prosper. Rice paddies for example, in addition to producing rice for humans, have created a habitat for various species, like bugs, fish, and frogs. Many species would not have been able to exist were it not because of human cultivation of the land. It is said that *satoyama* culture maintains biodiversity while it creates productivity.[140]If one looks at the history of Japan, uninhabited land has been relatively scarce. Because of this the saying goes that the Japanese have learned how to live in a way which benefits humans and non-humans. However, according to Brian Williams; the modernization process of the Meiji era marked the beginning of a gradual decrease in *satoyama* ecosystems in Japan.[141]

In the Western environmental movement there has lately been an enormous focus on preserving wild and uninhabited nature like coral reefs and rainforests. At the same time the industrialized countries are trying to maximize the 'outcome' (gain, dividend) from cultivated areas with modern machinery and chemicals. The environmental movements are focusing on a nature separated from human development, because human development is viewed as being

[138] Breen and Teeuwen, Shinto in History, p. 43-44
[139] Brian Williams,"Satoyama: The Ideal and the Real, *Kyoto Journal." Biodiversity: Japan's Satoyama and Our Shared Future*.Issue nr. 75, 2010: p. 24
[140] Ibid, p. 26
[141] Ibid, p. 29.

destructive to nature. They want to protect the environment on nature's own terms. The *satoyama* ideal is a landscape developed by humans. Harmonic intervention in nature over hundreds of years have created a specific culture. This is what Watsuji Tetsuro and Sonoda Minoru calls *fūdo*; mankind's history and culture illustrated within the natural environment. When Sonoda is talking about nature he is talking about the culture of the community (culture, cultivation; agri-culture), the *fūdo* embodied within landscape. It is not unspoiled wilderness. And the priorities become different when nature is viewed in such a different contrasting way. Human development is not necessarily seen as contradictive to the protection of nature. The adherents of *satoyama* say that people need to readjust their modern practice. Their message is that sustainable living is possible and that"exploiting nature for human sustenance is not wrong if it allows other life to coexist."[142]They call this the wisdom of the past.

It is interesting to notice that Japan's Government have also called for a global 'Satoyama Initiative.'[143]The Ministry of Environment in Japan together with the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) has jointly started to promote socio-ecological production landscapes. The goal is to create societies which exist in harmony with nature. The project homepage states that they want to integrate traditional ecological knowledge with modern science. The existence of so called 'traditional ecological knowledge' is however questionable. Poul Pedersen states that ecology is a modern global phenomenon and that it cannot be identified in the local traditional time and space.[144]It has also been a common trend in Japan to think of itself as more different than other countries, being unique and somehow 'chosen' to help the rest of the world.[145]I will argue that this showcasing of *satoyama* as a model for preservation of nature follow in the same lines as the representation of Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion.

5.3 Ritual Practice

Returning to my interview with Sonoda Minoru, he told me that the mutual sympathy between humans and nature has been severely damaged in our present time, yet psychologically this mindset is still present within the Japanese spirit. He described a

[142] Ibid
[143] Ibid: *Kyoto Journal* online: http://www.kyotojournal.org/biodiversity/BD_online/knight/KJknight.pdf and http://satoyama-initiative.org/en/, (Last checked: Jan. 12. 2010)
[144] Poul Pedersen, *Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity: The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm*, in Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland (ed.) *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, (London: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 268-269
[145] Clammer, *Japan and its Others*, p. 6, 30

tradition in Japan where one holds a memorial service for the harmful insects one has killed. For example in Japan people can buy a termite pillar (memorial tower) and conduct a memorial service for the termites which have been exterminated.

> If you don't exterminate the termites, your house will be destroyed. For this purpose there is a cleric who will conduct a memorial service and erect a pillar for the termites which we habitually kill. This happens like it is taken for granted. And the fishermen, when they conduct a service for the spirits of the fish, they have something called 'fish-scale memorial pillar'. Once every year they will most certainly go to a temple and ask for a memorial service, or they will approach a kami and conduct a ritual worship (matsuri). One can do both. In this way one can give thanks to the living beings in our surroundings, and this is still happening today. There are many examples.

Sonoda also described the rebuilding of the Grand Shrine in Ise[146]and that Shinto priests conduct a memorial service for the soul of the trees that are being used to construct the Shrine. He said:

> This kind of memorial service has a Buddhist-like background, but this is because of the Japanese animistic heritage. The service conceptualizes that 'if something is living, then it has a soul'. Our goal is to restore this Japanese heritage that life is not only for human beings, but also includes trees, grass and insects. This ritual practice is based on the fact that we are living because they gave up their lives. It is a primitive practice that still exists today.

Locating current Shinto practices in the past is a recurring theme in the reinvention of Shinto as an ecological religion. The past is regarded as an ideal time when people lived in harmony with nature. Modernity is said to have threatened these ancient practices and those who portray Shinto as an environmental religion argue that they are revitalizing old traditions.

5.4 Shasō Gakkai

> The Shasō Gakkai represents a serious attempt to give substance to the idea which, until recently, was fantasy more than it was ever fact: that Shinto is a religion of nature, and that Japan's nature is somehow, of itself, Shinto.[147]

The 'Shasō Gakkai' was established in 2002, and it was the first environmental society established by Shinto priests. The meaning of *Gakkai* is "society" and *Shasō* is "shrine grove" ('*Chinju no mori*').[148] The purpose of the society is to raise awareness of and to protect sacred shrines- and temple forests in Japan. On Shasō Gakkai's webpage we can see that it holds regular conferences, conducts workshops, has its own training program for "*Shasō* instructors" and it publishes its own annual bulletin called "*Shasōgaku kenkyū.*"[149]

[146] The inner shrine at the Grand Shrine of Ise is dedicated to the Goddess Amaterasu and is ritually rebuilt every 20 years, illustrating the death and renewal of all things.
[147] John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 210
[148] Christal Whelan, "Seeing the Forest and the Trees." *Kyoto Journal*, p. 68
[149] The Homepage of Shasō Gakkai: www.shasou.org (Last checked Jan. 16. 2011)

Shasō instructors are given the responsibility to look after and preserve the sacred forests in Japan. The Shasō Gakkai is run by a board of trustees which includes experts on environmental science and Shinto priests, including Sonoda Minoru.[150]

I asked Sonoda what Shasō Gakkai is. Is it a new representation of Shinto? And if it is, is it a move away from the focus on state and the emperor? He told me:

> What we in Shasō Gakkai do is of course related to *chinju no mori*. It is essentially close to Shinto, but in fact Shasō Gakkai is also concerned about the forest in Buddhist temples and old forests around ancient tombs. So protecting forests connected with those kinds of Japanese culture is important. Many of our members are not Shinto priests. There are natural scientists, ecologists and specialists on forestry, and they represent more than half of our members. So basically the purpose of Shasō Gakkai is to protect the Japanese culture, and we believe that we should grow Japanese forests and stop deforestation. We are basically just doing forestry. We are supporting a culture where raising forests is the primary goal, restoring this traditional culture and to actually make it into an environmental case. Especially where there is a crisis or reduction in the shrine forests, Buddhist temple forests or other similar forests important for the *fūdo*. From now on we want to cultivate these places. To the Japanese audience concerned about nature, we want to communicate that the forest are the foremost examples, and we want to inspire them. It is this kind of work we do in Shasō Gakkai.

He went on saying:

> For example it is often said that, in Japan we have rice agriculture, rice paddies and therefore water is extremely important. To build a rice paddy in the lower reaches of the river one has to take care of the forests in the higher reaches of the river, otherwise we will not get a steady flow of water; an irrigation system. Therefore the former way of developing farmed land, was to take care of the forests of the higher reaches of the river, and from this came the idea of awe or respect for nature, or that there are kami residing in nature. I believe it is connected in this sense. The old way of developing was not by destruction, but through taking care of nature. It is in this direction we want to move. I believe that it is our responsibility to achieve this. This is also what Shasō Gakkai believes.
>
> If there is a universal message from Shinto that can be helpful it must be what I just talked about; to preserve and protect the forests, and experience a feeling for the forests. It is frequently said that these are the essential characteristics of Shinto. If Shinto has an international message it must be about forests, and not about the Emperor, because that is 'particularism'and is solely Japanese culture.

Once again Sonoda is saying that protecting sacred forests is an ancient tradition in Japan and in Shinto, and that this could serve as an example for modern environmental movements. In the article *Shinto and the Environment* Sonoda tells us about a myth concerning the storm-kami Susanowoo who creates trees from his bodily hair. Taking this unique myth into account Sonoda concludes that the early Japanese must have had an interest in the preservation and cultivation of forests.[151]

---

[150] Ibid
[151] Breen and Teeuwen, *Shinto in History*, p. 41

Both the International Shinto Foundation[152]and the Shasō Gakkai participated in the World Exposition in 2005, which was held in Aiichi Prefecture, Japan. The theme of the exposition was "Nature's Wisdom". On the exposition's homepage we can read about Japan's experience with development while preserving the natural environment:

> Our ancestors aimed to benefit from nature without harming it, and they developed ways of maintaining a mutually dependent and beneficial relationship with nature. In the course of this process, it was essential to acquire deep insight and knowledge of nature's characteristics, and to invent modalities for utilizing nature's bounty in a sustainable manner, while making a positive contribution to nature itself. This kind of exercise has long been a part of the Japanese culture and way of life.[153]

The message from Expo 2005 is that Japan has a unique cultural tradition which can serve as an aid to the current environmental problems. They want to show the world how to develop new technologies while living in harmony with nature. The theme of Shasō Gakkai's exhibit at Expo 2005 was "Japanese culture to live in the forest". A DVD film entitled "Japan, Land of Forests," developed by the International Shinto Foundation, was also released at the exhibition.[154]This film has often since been used to promote Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion. A version with English subtitles also exists for the foreign audience.

The purpose of the Shasō Gakkai is as I said to maintain and preserve the sacred forests of Japan, *chinju no mori*. Normally the sacred forests are the woods surrounding a Shinto Shrine. The symbol of Shasō Gakkai shows three circles surrounding the shrine building.[155]The first circle symbolises the shrine precincts with sacred trees. The next circle embodies the virgin or climax forests- forbidden wood. Within the last circle we find mountain forest: second-growth or mixed forest. This made me wonder about Sonoda's information concerning the Chūden incident in Kaminoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture and the Shidai Shō Hachiman Shrine.

The Central Japan Energy Agency (CJEA) needed additional land to construct a new nuclear power plant in Kaminoseki. To build this facility the CJEA needed 100 000 m^2 of shrine property covered by forests, and they offered a vast amount of money as compensation. The local shrine priest, supported by environmental groups like Greenpeace in Japan opposed

[152] The Homepage of the International Shinto Foundation: http://www.shinto.org/eng/ (Last checked: May.09.2011)
[153] The Homepage of World Expo in Aichi 2005: http://www.expo2005.or.jp/en/whatexpo/message_01.html (Last checked: May.09.2011)
[154] The Homepage of the International Shinto Foundation : http://www.shinto.org/eng/dvdinfo.htm (Last checked: May.09.2011)
[155] The Homepage of Shasō Gakkai: http://www.shasou.org/logo.htm (Last checked: May.09.2011)

to this idea because it would result in the destruction of sacred land and forests. However, the Jinja Honchō responded by dismissing the priest and replacing him with another priest who duly signed the papers which gave the CJEA the rights to proceed with their plans. Some local citizens are now calling the Shrine *Chūden Jinja* or the "Shrine that venerates the Central Japan Energy Agency".[156]

I asked Sonoda about his opinion on this incident, and what he thought about situations where there seems to be a conflict between human development and environmental protection. He told me that the Kaminoseki issue was a big problem for them (the Shinto establishment). He said: "If you look at it categorically, the forests we are talking about (in Kaminoseki) were actually not *chinju no mori*. They were still forests owned by the shrine, but symbolically it was not a forest which the shrine needs to preserve." What he is saying here is that the shrines are more concerned about certain types of forests compared to others. The sacred forests are those in the closest proximity to the shrine; considered to be the original forests of Japan. I believe this shows that it is not equally important if other forests are being cut down. The most important issue seems to be that shrines and the immediate surrounding vegetation are being preserved.

Sonoda described a similar problem within his own shrine precinct. For more than 50 years the sacred mountain Bukōzan has been damaged by the Chichibu Cement Company. For many people who live in this area this cement company is their livelihood. Therefore sometimes environmental degradation is unavoidable he explained. Idealistically the shrine leaders are insisting on protecting the environment, but the wellbeing of the community is also just as important. "Unfortunately in these times we have to admit that there is a gap between modern day needs of the community and our (Shinto) wishes" he said.

5.5 Holism

In a preceding symposium held by the same International Shinto Research Association, the topic was "What Can Shinto do for the World Environment?" I watched the DVD copy from this convention and in Sonoda Minoru's presentation he mentioned the deep ecology

[156] John Breen, *Shinto and the Environment*, (Manuscript for forthcoming encyclopedia), and Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 207-208

movement. The deep ecology movement has a strong holistic view on the world.[157]I therefore assumed that holism is also a factor in this new interpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature.

Sonoda told me that in contrast to Christianity, Judaism and Islam who sense an existence outside time and space, Shinto is basically only concerned about a 'singular' worldview. The perspective of reality in Shinto is that kami, people and nature, all live in the same ecological system. He called this *ametsuchi*, which literally means heaven and earth. [158] The understanding of this is that the realm of heaven is not in a different dimension from the realm of earth. Sonoda believes that the idea of *ametsuchi* is clearly not the same as the monotheistic religious perspective on the world. "This distant, general concept of transcendence is not something which we have. In light of this, I believe that holism could be a correct characterization of Shinto", he said.

On the other hand, protecting and preserving only those forests that are designated as sacred space; *chinju no mori*, does not resonate with the Western academic understanding of what holism is. Holism in Western New Age thinking is strongly anti-dualistic and anti-reductionist, and it is assumed that everything is interconnected and that 'God' or the 'One Source' is manifested in everything.[159]The basic idea of the Deep Ecology movement is also that everything in our world is related and has an equal value.[160]Shinto however, is about revering certain particular elements of nature, not necessarily the whole natural environment. Motoori Norinaga formulated a concept of what is sacred in 'Shinto' in this way: "Whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence and virtue, and inspired a feeling of awe was called Kami".[161]Only unique phenomena and things which have a particular influence on human life are considered to be sacred and kami. And in the case of human beings, only those people who have made a great contribution to the state and the community, or who showed exceptional powers, will be enshrined after their death according to Jinja Honchō.[162]A holistic worldview often indicates a benign attitude towards nature, and is often linked with ecology. It is not clear that Shinto, as it is here recreated, can be called

[157] [157] Roger S Gottlieb, *Spirtual Deep Ecology and World Religions: A Shared Fate, a Hared Task*, in David L. Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.), *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, (New York: New York Press, 2001), p.18-20
[158] The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1177 ,(Last ckecked (May.09.2011)
[159] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 119-121, 152
[160] Roger S Gottlieb, *Spirtual Deep Ecology and World Religions*
[161] Motoori Norinaga quoted in the homepage of Jinja Honchō (English): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/shinto/index.html
[162] ibid

holistic. Associations with holism does however serve the purpose of differentiating Shinto from Christianity which has often been portrayed as dualistic and anthropocentric.[163]

5.6 The Bukōzan Mountain and Future Environmental Activities

Sonoda told me that he has initiated a campaign called the'Bukōzan Revival Forum', to take back the mountain and establish it as a symbol of the community in his own prefecture. To back this up they will also stage an eco-museum. Part of this will be a re-forestation project together with plans of a water irrigation system. Sonoda said that he has talked with the workers and the director of the cement company and the way he understands it, they also feel that it is a shame what has happened to the mountain. Asked if the workers can build a memorial pillar for the mountain and the forest, and then perhaps feel that their guilt has been lessened and continue digging into the mountain, Sonoda replied that this is not the way it is supposed to be. "Erecting a memorial pillar, saying I am sorry as an excuse for digging, this is not how we want to do it. Every year I conduct a festival (*matsuri*) directed towards Bukōzan to sort of pacify the gods," he said. Sonoda is especially concerned about the facade of the mountain. Before the mountain was destroyed they used to welcome the kami of the mountain to the village, pray and show their gratefulness. However, since the outer appearance of Bukōzan has been one of destruction he has concentrated on appeasing the kami. It is generally believed that kami can also be angry and malevolent if they are not appeased. Therefore one has to conduct rites and make offerings to maintain harmony with the kami residing in nature. However, Sonoda seemed to be optimistic about the future: "In the long run, we hope that there is potential in people and what we do. Many people in Saitama feel that Bukōzan is the symbol of their hometown (*furusato*).[164]Therefore we will all have to become one single voice and work with the company and find a solution to the problem together. " He said that the company has expressed a willingness to work together and that he himself is no longer expressing his objection to the mining industry. It also works in their favor that it has become more and more popular in Japan for businesses and companies to appeal to ecology and to be portrayed as environmentally friendly.

The environmental activities of Shinto which Sonoda is describing are significantly different from the 'no-touch' approach of the Western ecological movement. Anthropologist Arne Kalland argues that in differentiating Japan with the West, we have ignored that the

[163] Lynn White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, Science 1967, 155: 1204-1207, see also: http://www.uvm.edu/~gflomenh/ENV-NGO-PA395/articles/Lynn-White.pdf
[164] *Furusato* is the family hometown or home-village.

Japanese have tried to conquer nature just as much as the Westerners have done.[165]The common Shinto belief is that everything in nature has a soul or a spirit does not mean that one cannot exploit nature. One is dependent on each other in nature therefore a human may for example kill a whale, but he has to perform a memorial rite for the whale afterwards. A human can communicate with a *kami* who resides in a certain place through rituals of purification and offerings, and ask the *kami* to move from their abode so that the location may be used for human development.[166]By bestowing the natural world with spirits, like one does in Shinto, one can come to terms with nature. The malevolent spirits are often thought to reside in the wild nature and through purification; nature is brought inside where the humans can appreciate it. The wild nature outside human society is reduced into something refined and pure.

So Sonoda's environmental philosophy, I would say, is more concerned with maintaining and protecting traditional values, than protecting nature. What he seemed most concerned about when I interviewed him regarding the Bukōzan Mountain, was that the outer appearance and the damage done to the mountain did not look good. It was not so important if the cement company was there as long as the appearance of the mountain was not one of destruction. The Japanese sensibility to aesthetic appreciation of nature, stressed by many scholars, does not inevitably result in a motivation to protect the environment from human exploitation. In addition to this, the promotion of *satoyama* as an ideal way of living represents a problem, because the rapid growth of industry has led to urbanization and also a steady decline of typical *satoyama* landscapes in Japan. It is precisely this, protecting Japanese traditions and values in the threat of modernity which explains much of the promotion of Shinto as an environmental, and more so; a unique indigenous religion. Still, Sonoda Minoru believes that nature and environmental philosophy will play a much greater role in the future interpretations of Shinto and in this prediction he may very well be correct.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented Sonoda Minoru's perspective on what Shinto is. He says that the concept of religion is different in Japan compared to the West. Shinto is not a proselytizing world religion that places importance on faith. It is a 'socio-ecological religion' which developed within Japan's traditional culture. He calls it a 'culture religion', and that it

[165] Kalland, *Culture in Japanese Nature*, in *Asian Perceptions of Nature*, 245
[166] Ibid, 247-248

is based on agriculture and giving thanks to nature for its produce. The unique culture of Japan developed because of its given climatic and geographical conditions. This is what Watsuji Tetsuro and also Sonoda call *fūdo*. Japan's *fūdo* has created a special harmonious relationship with nature, and Shinto is a product of this. This intimate relationship with nature is exemplified within the traditional rural landscape of Japan, called *satoyama*. It is about preserving nature, but a symbiotic co-existence between humans and nature. *Satoyama*, the traditional rural landscape of Japan, illustrates a harmonic human intervention in nature. The word *satoyama* has strong nostalgic sentiments in Japan, and Sonoda says that he wants to restore and protect the old traditional Japanese culture. I will argue that this focus on Shinto is about revitalizing and preserving Japanese cultural traditions more than it is about protecting nature. I will also contend that the presentation of 'green' Shinto is an aspiration to exhibit Shinto in an attractive and favorable aspect.

I will now present Jinja Honchō; the National Association of Shinto Shrines in Japan. It is necessary to look at this organization, because the rest of my material will reflect the position Jinja Honchō has to Shinto and the environment. Although Shinto does not have an official authority, Jinja Honchō serves as the co-ordinating body of 80,000 Shinto shrines in Japan and could be regarded as the main body within the shrine world. I have examined the webpage of this organization, in both English and Japanese, in order to find out what they say about Shinto's relationship with nature and ecology and the older discourse on emperor and state.

6 Jinja Honchō

The National Association of Shinto Shrines (NAS), i.e., Jinja Honchō, was founded in 1945 as a response to the Shinto Directive, which ordered the separation between state and religion. After the defeat in the Second WW and with the loss of financial state support, many feared that Shinto would cease to exist. So in order to preserve the Japanese religious tradition, Shinto leaders chose to construct Jinja Honchō as an umbrella organization which would represent the Shinto shrines. Jinja Honchō works as a coordinating structure for all member shrines and it encourages them to follow 'the spiritual leadership of the Ise shrine'.[167]By Jinja Honchō the Grand Shrine of Ise is ranked highest among all the shrines in Japan. According to the English version of Jinja Honchō's homepage, the main purpose of the organization is to give public information on the services of Shrine Shinto, to perform rituals, educate the followers, revere the Grand Shrine of Ise, and to educate and train Shinto priests.[168]

6.1 Jinja Honchō's Policies

The Constitution written by SCAP[169]and the Shinto Directive[170]of 1945 made the separation between state and religion official and effectively cut state support of Shinto. Following this, Jinja Honchō has on several occasions proposed to re-write the constitution. Shinto leaders believe that the occupation forces misunderstood the difference between militaristic-nationalistic propaganda and old Japanese traditions.[171]Jinja Honchō is a divided organization, but conservatives within the organization and right-wing politicians have a general negative point of view on the Shinto Directive and especially the law which separates state and religion, Jinja Honchō has therefore chosen to retain many elements from the state cult of the Meiji period. The most important agenda for the conservatives within the organization seems to be the leading role of the Ise shrine, the administration of imperial state rituals, and the public role of Shinto.[172]In other words; re-uniting the Japanese people and restoring the so called traditional imperial values of patriotism, self-sacrifice, and loyalty towards the emperor (the *kokutai* ideology). On the English homepage we can for example read that:

---

[167] Teeuwen, "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shinto Policy. *Japan Forum* 8(2). 1996, p. 179, I briefly discussed the Grand Shrine of Ise at the end of chapter one.
[168] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō (English): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/about/, (Last checked: May.05.2011)
[169] Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers led by General McArthur during the occupation of Japan following the Second WW.
[170] Teeuwen, "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shinto Policy, p. *178*
[171] Ibid, 181-182
[172] Teeuwen and Breen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 13

> (…), it is the utmost importance for every individual Japanese that one should endeavor oneself to help and assist the emperor, the ascendant of Amaterasu Ohmikami(…)[173]
>
> To bind oneself with others in harmonious acknowledgment of the will of the emperor(…)[174]

The conservatives are likely to argue that imperial rituals are age-old traditions, stemming from the Nara and Heian period, yet the emperor's role was remarkably more subtle at that time.[175]However, the emperor's role within Shinto increased greatly during the Meiji period, as he became the symbol of the nation and the unique divine ancestry of all Japanese. For Jinja Honchō the leadership of the emperor and the public role of Shinto rituals are still very important. The *Shinto Seiji Renmei* (Shinto Political League), also called *Shinseiren,* is a political body tied with Jinja Honchō. This group lobbies among- and applies pressure on Japanese politicians. The current president of *Shinseiren* is former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro of the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), who was forced to retire when he questioned the constitution while defending the imperial institution.[176]Since the end of the occupation Jinja Honchō has on several occasions, through the *Shinseiren*, proposed to revise the constitution. Instead of having shrines catering solely to the private beliefs of individuals, the foremost objective of Jinja Honchō has been to give the shrines a public role. When a proposition to do so was turned down by the Diet in 1956, the focus was turned on the Ise Grand shrine and making this institution a public property. As we have already seen, the Ise Shrine has very close ties to the imperial house, and symbolizes in many ways the public role Shinto played during the pre-war years. Eventually failing to materialize this as well, Jinja Honchō, right wing-politicians and conservative groups have turned their focus to the Yasukuni shrine, which I discussed at the end of chapter one. The Ise Grand shrine is still considered the foremost shrine in Japan, but Yasukuni is the symbol for the conservatives who want to see Shinto return to the political influence it had as a state ideology.[177]

6.2 Comparing the English and Japanese Homepage of Jinja Honchō

In their book *A New History of Shinto,* John Breen and Mark Teeuwen conclude that:

---

[173] ibid
[174] Jinja Honcho Homepage (English): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/shinto/index.html (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[175] Mark Teeuwen, "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shinto Policy", p. 183
[176] Breen and Teeuwen, *New History of Shinto*, p. 201
[177] See John Breen (ed.): *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past.* The effort to renationalize Yasukuni means that it must be separated from the religious status of Shinto, therefore Yasukuni has been removed from Jinja Honchō's membership.

> At the start of the twenty-first century, NAS's consuming passions remain emperor and imperial institution, the Ise Shrines, revising the Constitution, the Yasukuni Shrine, and ethical education.[178]

My own investigation of the web pages of Jinja Honchō and its weekly newspaper *jinja shinpō* confirms this. I studied these web pages in 2010, but more thoroughly in the first three months of 2011. The internet homepage of Jinja Honchō has an English version and a Japanese version, and it is interesting to notice the difference in how Shinto is presented respectively. In contrast to the webpage in English were Shinto is presented as an ecological religion which can help solve environmental problems in the world; the Japanese webpage did not mention this connection with nature at all, until just recently. I will return to this later but first I want to "draw a picture" of the message given to the readers on the English website.

Nature and spirituality dominates the English language webpage of Jinja Honchō. Shinto is defined as a 'Religion of the Forest'. The presentation of Shinto in English by Jinja Honchō is that of an indigenous religion survived from ancient times, which worships spirituality in nature.[179]The webpage also highlights the difference between Christianity and Shinto, and the Western 'destructive civilization' compared to the Japanese 'forest civilization'. In many ways it is very similar to what Sonoda Minoru said about Shinto in chapter four concerning the unique climate and geography that has created a certain unique mentality in the Japanese people, resulting in a harmonious symbiosis between man and nature.[180]The message from Shinto to the readers and to the rest of the world is that we are facing grave consequences if we do not change our ways and that Shinto, which sees nature as divine, can help humanity overcome these problems.

> So, Shinto suggests to shift a point of view and to look at our environment with the spirit of 'reverence and gratitude', that is, with the spirit of parental care for children or with the spirit of brotherhood. And if we could extend this spirit to our neighbors, to our society members, to our country members, to people of the world, and to nature, too, beyond the difference of thoughts, ethics, religions, then this spirit will be the base to foster criteria and morals indispensable for keeping our human life healthy.[181]

It suggests that we look at the 'Japanese spirituality' handed down from the ancient past, and learn to better take care of the environment and each other.

---

[178] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 200
[179] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/civilization/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[180] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/nature/index.html and http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/civilization/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[181]The Homepage of Jinja Honchō: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/nature/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

On the Japanese language webpage, the public role of Shinto and the distinguished position of the emperor stand out. It has an overview of the creation mythologies from the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, along with the divine heritage of the Japanese emperors.[182] Additionally there is a presentation of the unique role of the Ise Grand Shrine in the Shinto tradition and the worship of Amaterasu and the Imperial House.[183]There are also presentations of the most important kami, along with various rituals and shrine practices.[184]The national holiday and birthday of the present emperor is also mentioned together with a tribute to the imperial house which I have translated from Japanese as follows:

> Various incidents have occurred over the last 20 years, yet both majesties; the emperor and the empress, have together with the people constantly prayed for the peace of the nation, happiness of the people , and for good relations with foreign countries.
>
> Our country's imperial house has a legendary origin. Since the foundation of our nation the imperial line has been succeeded by an unbroken line. There are no other examples of this in history among other royal families.
>
> While thinking about the tradition of the glorious imperial house, let us celebrate the emperor's honorable 20 years since his enthronement.[185]

Furthermore Jinja Honchō has an educational website for kids which I have translated a part of. This is the explanation of the National Foundation Day on February 11th:

> On the National Foundation Day we celebrate the enthronement of the first emperor of Japan. Let us make sure that we cherish the love for our country.[186]

Along with this, to get an understanding of the various topics discussed within the Shinto world, I looked at articles on the webpage of Jinja Honchō's weekly newspaper: *Jinja Shinpō*.[187]There are many articles with imperial and political themes, but I could not find any about nature or ecology. Nor did the Japanese homepage of Jinja Honchō mention environmental issues and Shinto's intimate relationship with nature until 2011. The new webpage presents an article called 'Shinto's invitation'. The theme here is about nature,

---

[182]The Homepage of Jinja Honchō (Japanese): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/izanai/shinwa.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
The Homepage of Jinja Honchō (Japanese): [183] http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/izanai/ise.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[184] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō (Japanese): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/izanai/jinja.html and http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/iroha/index.html , (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[185] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō (Japanese): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/column/000027.html and http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/column/000026.html , (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[186] Jinja Honchō homepage for kids: http://www.omiyakids.com/study/holiday/kenkoku.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[187]The Homepage of Jinja Shinpō: http://www.jinja.co.jp/, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

agriculture and how Shinto developed within the old Japanese way of living. I have translated the latter part of this article which I found to be most important in the present context:

> Within the concept of Shinto lives the Japanese wisdom or values which has been cultivated since ancient times. That is to protect nature, represented by the sacred forests (*chinju no mori*). That humans and nature live together in harmony, preserve public areas through *matsuri, and* enhance our sense of identity. We wish to influence our descendants, from the smallest household to wider areas. And last but not least, to pray without limits for the growth of our country Japan and the imperial household which has been given to us.[188]

Shinto's harmonious relationship with nature is mentioned, yet the article also makes sure to mention the importance of revering the emperor and enhancing a national spirit.

We can see that even though Jinja Honchō has begun to emphasize Shinto's close relationship with the environment, ultimately the most important agenda is to advocate the imperial house, national sentiment and moral values. John Breen calls this an" ideological reduction of environmental themes".[189]He also says:

> The suggestion is perhaps that, when not appealing to a Western audience, NAS's real concerns are not nature-oriented after all.[190]

The proposition of Shinto as an ecological religion is particularly evident in many English language publications written by Japanese as well as foreigners.[191]It is quite clear to me that there are two different competing discourses on Shinto. The reason for this is complex. Gradually Shinto has become more focused on nature and environmentalism. This may very well become the most important topic within Shinto in forthcoming years, but the old values stemming from the Meiji period are still more prominent, at least within Jinja Honchō. I will argue that the reason why the focus on nature and environmentalist issues is more evident in English language publications is because the imperial values do not appeal to a foreign audience. They bring about a sense of nationalism, which reminds us of State-Shinto and Japanese aggression during the Second World War. Associating Shinto with environmentalism and nature obliterates those images of nationalism. The emperor and state are still very important to the Shinto Establishment, and this is clearly evident from what we

---

[188]Jinja Honchō homepage (Japanese): http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/izanai/index.html (Last checked:May.09.2011)
[189] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 209
[190] Ibid, p. 208
[191] For example: Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home*, (Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press, 2004), Motohisa Yamakage, *The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006), and Daniel M.P. Shaw, *The Way Forward? Shinto and a Twenty-First Century Japanese Ecological Attitude*, in Bergmann, Scott, Samuelsson and Bedford-Strohm (ed.), *Nature, Space and the Sacred: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009)

have seen, but we are also witnessing a gradual re-interpretation of Shinto in Japanese as well. The discourse about ecology and Shinto originated in the West, but this idea has been appropriated by Japanese intellectuals as well as Shinto leaders, because it serves the purpose of creating a unique identity, and differentiating Japanese culture with that of the West.

6.3 Jinja Honchō vs. Folk Shinto

Even though conservatives within Jinja Honchō seems to think that patriotic love for Japan and the emperor are the most important aspects of Shinto, the general public in Japan may not feel the same. Jinja Honchō is generally most concerned with the political center of Japan. It does not offer financial aid to its member shrines, nor hardly any other support. On the contrary, it demands that all member shrines buy Ise amulets and sell them to lay people. Many priests have complained about the financial problems this creates for the local shrines, and some shrines have even left the organization, like the Meiji Jingū.[192]Since Jinja Honchō only functions as a coordinating body, it does not own the shrines, nor does it have much to say on the practices of its member shrines either. Each shrine is basically free to place importance on other aspects rather than the public role of Shinto created by the Shinto leadership during the Meiji period. Many local shrines focus on traditional practices and beliefs. Shrine practices most often revolve around fortune-telling, weddings, purifications; especially cars together with annual ceremonies and festivals. There are a vast amount of practices related to kami-worship which are completely unrelated with the Shinto invented in the pre-war years. The Shinto establishment maintains that Shinto is the old traditional- or indigenous religion of Japan, but the strong focus on the emperor and imperial ethics is definitely a creation of the Meiji State.

Jinja Honchō are also embracing the focus on 'green' Shinto, even if the real focus still is on the *kokutai*-type ideology of moral education and unification of the Japanese people. When they want to appeal to a broad audience and the younger generation, they are more likely to be interested in environmentalism rather than the emperor.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed Jinja Honchō, -the religious administrating organization of 80 000 Shinto shrines throughout Japan. I have showed that the main agenda of Jinja Honchō is based on the imperial institution and pre-war Meiji state-rituals. The objective is to give

[192] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p.204-205

Shinto a public function, and bind all the Japanese people to the emperor. We have also seen that the discourse on nature within Shinto has gained popularity, especially in English language publications. Additionally this is slowly becoming a feature within the conservative circles of Jinja Honchō as well. Although Jinja Honchō now mentions Shinto's intimate relationship with nature, this seems to be overshadowed by imperial ideology. I will argue that in the end the organization is more concerned about the collective (ultimately the state) being more important than the individual, in which the collective is symbolized by the emperor as Japan's high-priest. We saw that during the Meiji period the focus on nature was reduced by the Shinto leadership, and it is this alternate form of Shinto that is still permeating the policies of Jinja Honchō today. On the other hand, even though the Shinto establishment is focusing on emperor and the state, the general population does not necessarily place importance on this. Statistics show that more than a hundred million Japanese are Shinto "adherents"; however, very few Japanese people will recognize Shinto as their religious identity.[193] And most people go to shrines on annual events, to pray for health and prosperity or simply as tourists, with no imperialistic or nationalistic ideologies in mind.

[193] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 1

7. New and Old Elements: Environmental Activities and the Enduring Significance of Imperial Shinto

My investigation of environmental activities within the Shinto world led me to the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū (shrine) in Kamakura city in Kanagawa prefecture. This well renowned shrine was established by Yoriyoshi Minamoto (988-1075) in 1063 and his descendant Yoritomo Minamoto (1147-1199) founded the Kamakura Shogunate and moved the shrine to its present site. The shrine venerates the Hachiman deity, regarded as an imperial ancestral kami and the guardian kami of the old warrior class. The Hachiman cult has also historically had strong Buddhist-Shinto syncretic qualities.[194]

I wanted to find out more about Shinto's relationship with nature and if there is a contradiction between this and the Shinto establishments strong interest in imperial Shinto's moral values. I discovered that even though Shinto is currently being promoted as an ecological religion, remnants of the imperial cult created during the Meiji period are still evident, and the most important task for shrines are the public function they serve in uniting the people and educating them on traditional Japanese moral values.

7.1 Interview with Taima Yoichi and the Activities of the Enju no Kai Organization

My primary interest in this particular shrine was based on the activities conducted by the 'Enju no Kai'(Locust Society). This is an organization affiliated with the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine which focuses on traditional Japanese culture and environmental activities. Mr. Taima Yoichi is a Shinto priest and director of the Human Resource Department at the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū. In the interview I inquired about Enju no Kai and Shinto's close relationship with nature. First he told me about the concept of *fūdo*, which I will not dwell on too much in this chapter since it has been discussed thoroughly before. However, he basically described that the harmonious relationship between man and nature developed out of the climatic and geographical conditions of Japan, and that Shinto was a product of this. Later on in the interview, on the topic about Shinto and its strong ties to the Japanese Imperial House, he told me that he could not sense a contradiction between this while also being concerned about nature. He said:

[194] The Encyclopedia of Shinto: http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1083 (Last checked Jan. 21. 2011)

> The Japanese imperial house, if I could describe it in simple terms, is about respect and reverence, but it does not have political power. It is better described as religious reverence. From a long link of chains the Japanese Imperial House obtained a religious like reverence. And these Japanese religious-like values is in truth about the values in a symbiosis between people and nature. Within this, a livelihood of gentle agriculture has been carried on, and is now part of the Japanese life. If this is Shinto, then the most revered within this Shinto is the Imperial House. I don't believe that there is a contradiction between honoring the Imperial House, and the Shinto way of thinking which is to work towards a symbiosis with nature.

My interpretation of this statement is that the reverence for the imperial house is an old tradition just like reverence for nature is. The *fūdo* of Japan; the natural climate, geography and culture created a natural harmony with the environment. Within this culture, reverence for the most influential clan which eventually became the Imperial House, also arised. But more than that, he seems to say that respect for emperor nurtures values that also lead to eco-friendly behavior.

Taima told me that up until now shrine activities had basically focused on the nearby area around the shrine, but in relation to the environmental problems we are facing today Enju no Kai was mobilizing and trying to reach an understanding with a wider area, not just within the shrine's own domain. He listed the five relatively abstract goals of Enju no Kai which are: "1. To protect Japanese culture and build healthy feelings for the nation. 2. To contribute to a brilliant society, by striving towards a healthy and sound guidance of the youth who will carry the burdens of our future. 3. To preserve local nature and contribute to global environmental protection. 4. To promote activities for international exchange, and contribute to a realization of world peace. 5. To deepen the knowledge among our members, and improve our qualities so that we can become good Japanese citizens."[195]The order in which the goals of Enju no Kai is listed could be random, however, it is interesting to notice that the first objective is to protect Japanese culture and the nation. The second goal, which encourages the youth to learn how to become good citizens of the Japanese society is also reminiscent of the so-called' imperial moral values' which are so important for Jinja Honchō. Even though environmentalism is listed as one of the five main objectives, I will argue that it is of lesser importance compared to unifying the Japanese people and instilling good traditional moral values. I will demonstrate my point further.

While discussing nature and the hope for the global environment, Taima said that the activities the shrine and 'Enju no Kai' are conducting were limited to the local area like

[195] The five goals are also listed on Tsurugaoka Hachimangu's and enju no kai's webpage: http://news.hachimangu.or.jp/dispdtinfo.asp?M_ID=148&C_ID=3 (Last checked Jan. 21. 2011)

Kamakura and Kanagawa prefecture. Yet, at the same time they wanted to exchange ideas with people from overseas, and share with them what they (the Japanese) have inherited from their ancestors; how Japanese culture and Japanese spirituality can contribute to environmental improvement. We have seen that Yasuda Yoshinori, Umehara Takeshi, Sonoda Minoru, and also 'Jinja Honchō' on its English website, have said that Shinto ideas could benefit international environmental conservation. The 'Shinto' cosmology however, is very much centred on Japan. For example only important Japanese historical persons are apotheosized, and the most important kami are the Japanese imperial ancestors. Sacred values are accorded to and limited to the Japanese geographical context. If we pay attention to this, it is difficult to see how Shinto values could have a global appeal.

In addition to this, during my interview with Sonoda about to the Chūden incident, he said that the forest that was sold to the Nuclear Agency was not a sacred forest (*chinju no mori*) and therefore it did not necessarily have to be protected. My interpretation of this is that the whole natural environment is not sacred in Shinto, only particular (Japanese) elements within it. It is therefore hard to see what kind of benefit Shinto would have for the global ecology, especially from a foreign point of view.

The internet webpage for Enju no Kai shows a variety of activities.[196]For example ecological workshops, forest management and environmental activities conducted by school children. Educating the children are one of the main activities of Enju no Kai. `Tsuru no ko-kai', is a section of the organization dedicated to children. On the organizations webpage it says:

> We believe that from now on, through the continuing activity of maintaining the forests within our shrine compound and shrine precinct, and together with appropriate dignity, we whish to make the next generation who in time will carry our burdens, aware of the necessity of environmental protection.[197]

In addition to this, Kamakura train station had an art exhibition with drawings made by children depicting Kamakura and the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū, together with the words "green Kamakura", "save the earth", "save the environment", etc. Taima said that if they don't make an appeal or conduct activities, people on the outside will forget the old traditions. Therefore he believed that it is the shrine's duty to involve and remind the Japanese people once again of these values.

[196] Ibid
[197] Ibid, This is my own translation from Japanese to English

> We wish to get a better opinion on this (the old traditions) and restore this. The people who work on this are of course adults, but it is the children who are the ones who will inherit the earth, and who will have to bring this (message) with them to the next generation. Therefore we feel that we have to raise them properly (in this way)

Many of the new environmental activities conducted at shrines can be interpreted as genuine. During the interview Taima also gave me a pamphlet illustrating the 'ritual of firefly release' (*hotaru hojosai*). According to Winifred Bird, the firefly has recently become a "symbol of Japan's bygone rural landscape."[198]Pollution and bright lights from cities are believed to have caused a decline in their numbers. Fireflies have a relatively short life span and in Japanese literature they have often represented the impermanence of things, just like the *sakura* (cherry tree) blossoms. The ritual at Tsurugaoka Hachimangū is: "held to recognize the preciousness of life and seasons' passing, and to thank our deities for giving our life and daily bread." It is also an attempt to improve the living conditions for the fireflies so that they will prosper within the shrine precinct.

The society has various admirable environmental activities, but in the end the traditional moral values and the education of proper Japanese conduct appears to be most important.

My two visits to Kamakura, a couple of days each time, allowed me to see for myself what sort of activities and practices are conducted at a Shinto shrine in Japan. This does not mean however that Tsurugaoka Hachimangū is representative for all Shinto shrines in Japan. Briefly moving back to my interview with Sonoda Minoru, he said that Shinto basically was built on 'ritual practice'. Mark Teeuwen then mentioned the fact that Shinto does not have a firmly set doctrine, therefore each shrine are free to convey their own message. And if they do not have a message they might be left ignored. Responding to this Sonoda explained that *Jinja Honcho* has tried to set up principles for how to live in a correct manner and how to revere the kami, but Shinto is different from other firmly set religious organizations. Based on this each Shrine may have different messages, but *Jinja Honcho* is paying attention to what these messages are, says Sonoda. The new paradigm of Shinto as an ecological religion has given many shrines a chance to reinvent themselves. Ecology and protection of nature induce a sense of admiration and consideration. The global popularity of environmental concerns today also makes these issues very relevant. My own investigation of different shrines however, has shown that the environmentalist aspect of Shinto often is subordinate to other

[198] Winifred Bird, "Fireflies." *Kyoto Journal*, issue 75, p. 33

motives. This raises the issue about the representation of Shinto is an ecological religion. I will show two additional examples which highlight this point in question.

7.2 Meiji Jingū and NPO Hibiki

In Tokyo I paid a visit to the Meiji shrine (Meiji Jingū)[199]which is dedicated to the divine souls of the late Emperor Meiji (1852-1912) and Empress Shōken (1850-1914). The shrine is located in the centre of Tokyo and is surrounded by a vast amount of trees donated from all over Japan and the world. I had a short conversation with a priest and asked him who or to what the adherents were directing their prayers. The reason why I asked this is because whenever I asked about prayer in Shinto, people would simply tell me that Shinto is different from Christianity because they do not pray to one God. The priest at Meiji Jingū told me that the adherents were directing their prayers towards the divine souls of Emperor Meiji and his wife; Empress Shōken. He also told me that kami have abilities or powers which far exceeds humans and that when one prays to the kami they will share their power with the worshipper. Later I asked a visitor if it was true; that he prayed to the soul of the late emperor Meiji. He was almost horrified, and told me that only politicians and Shrine priests would say something like that. However, the shrine does of course have strong imperial connotations precisely because it is dedicated to the late emperor and empress. On the other hand, there is an organization affiliated with the shrine which amongst other things, also focuses on ecology. This is interesting because Meiji Jingū, with its link to the imperial house, is precisely the sort of shrine which one might think would promulgate national sentiments and collectivism rather than ecological awareness. On a closer look however, this presumption proves to be not too farfetched. The agenda of the organization are in many ways very similar to the goals of Enju no Kai at the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine in Kamakura.

The non-profit organization called NPO Hibiki is a youth-club which organises activities at the Meiji shrine. Some of the programs which the NPO Hibiki offer are related to: 'greenery', international cultural exchange', 'rice farming', and 'promotion and cultivation'. The message from NPO Hibiki is that; 'Japan is a country with a long traditional history, and its culture, customs, and lifestyle are the basis of the Japanese identity. Therefore, they believe, it is important to value this in order to create a sense of pride in Japan's history and culture.' NPO Hibiki's greenery program promotes ecological and spiritual training through the practice of planting acorns in the man-made forest surrounding

[199] Homepage of Meiji Jingū: http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/english/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

the Meiji Shrine. The program also states that: "We believe that this program helps to pass down our traditional Japanese value for nature from generation to generation."[200]

Like the Enju no Kai, NPO Hibiki emphasizes exchange of ideas with people from overseas and the education of children. I will argue that the reason behind this is to promote the unique Japanese culture to foreigners, and that it is an example of showcasing Japanese culture and traditions. Educating the children is also about transferring these ideas to the next generation while at the same time inducing pride in Japan and its culture. This is somewhat reminiscent of the history textbook controversy in the 80's and 90's. The dispute related to the presentation and interpretation of Japanese history in school textbooks. A conservative group believed that the Japanese school textbooks were too critical of Japanese militarism during the Second World War and that it depicted Japan in a negative light. They argued that this would harm the pride of their own country, and had therefore written and compiled a new history textbook which denied Japan's history of aggression.[201]The Enju no Kai and NPO Hibiki seem to advocate many of the same values which featured State Shinto and at the same time they want to induce positive feelings for Japan. The method of presentating Shinto as an environmental religion is a part of this, because ecology is identified with something positive, instead of the negative associations to militarism and ultra-nationalism.

7.3 The Grand Shrine of Ise and the Shikinensengū

The Grand Shrine of Ise (Ise Jingū) has historically had strong connections with Amaterasu Ōmikami, the emperor and State Shinto, but lately it has also began to focus on nature. During the Meiji period the Grand Shrine of Ise was allocated as the foremost shrine within Shinto. In many ways it became the symbol of emperor worship and state patronage. Likewise, and as previously mentioned, the Ise Grand shrine holds a very prominent position within *Jinja Honchō* today as the aim of the organization is to preserve and maintain the principles of Shinto 'guided by the spiritual leadership of the Ise shrine'.[202]In August 2008 an environmental conference was held by shrine priests in northeastern Japan. One of the participants suggested that *Jinja Honchō* should seize the opportunity offered to them by the

[200] Homepage of NPO Hibiki (english brochure): http://www.npohibiki.com/pdf/HIBIKI_Brochure_Eng.pdf, see also homepage of NPO Hibiki in Japanese: http://www.npohibiki.com/, (Last checked:May.09.2011)
[201] Arpita Mathur, *Japan's Contemporary Nationalism: Trend and Politico-Securtity Drivers*, Strategic Analysis, 31: 1, Routledge, 2007, p.122-123, see: http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a780592033~db=all~order=page, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[202] Teeuwen, "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shintō policy." p.184

forthcoming rebuilding of the Ise shrine (*shikinensengū*), to promote environmental issues.[203] Subsequently in preparation for the rebuilding in 2013, a campaign promotion video was released by *Jinja Honchō*.[204]This video shows a picturesque Japanese landscape. Giving the viewer strong associations with nature. The narrator says:

> One life is connected to all other lives. We have wind, water, and light which nourishes our life. All life depends on other lives for its existence. Let us offer a sincere appreciation for the vital things which we take for granted.

At the end of the video the female actress places a protective talisman or amulet (*ofuda*) from the Ise shrine within a household shrine (*kamidana)* and prays. What makes this interesting is that *Jinja Honchō* launched a very different campaign in 1987 to get Ise amulets (*jingu taima*) into 10 million Japanese homes. Theses amulets are regarded as sacred objects in which Amaterasu Ōmikami resides. The objective was to bind the people to Ise, Amaterasu Ōmikami and the imperial house. By 2008, approximately 9 million amulets had been sold.[205]The new campaign promotion video shows an entirely different strategy compared to the campaign in 1987, particularily promoting nature. However, what we see is that that even though the focus seem to be on ecology, the amulets still carry the symbol of the emperor, and in the end therefore, this link between shinto and the emperor is most emphasized.

In my interview with Taima at the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine, the topic on the rebuilding of the Ise shrine also surfaced. I asked him if there is a conflict between human development and the protection of sacred forests. His answer was:

> I believe that remanufacturing/reclaiming is possible from destruction. You have probably heard about the cyclical rebuilding of the Ise Shrine. For this purpose we use an enormous amount of lumber. While we cut the timber we also sow new seeds so that in two hundred or maybe three hundred years a new forest will be fully grown. So the natural environment is reclaimed, even if there is a specific destruction. This is about surpassing the destruction when one is cutting down trees, surpassing destruction when one is expanding the farmland. Deep down it means to recycle what is gone. So in practice the image of nature in Shinto is not that nature is untouchable. For people to live and survive in nature, one has to receive the 'power' that nature possesses. And this blessing from nature we have to consume. But evidently there are limits to this consumption; this is because we have to work towards a re-growth and recycling. An exploitation which exceeds this is extremely dangerous. The reason why environmental questions have become a global issue is because people have exceeded the limits of nature in its consumption.

While new forests are being grown in order to replace what was cut down, one starts to wonder whether this practice is sustainable in the long run. 14,000 cypress trees are being

[203] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 209
[204] Jinja Honchō promotion video of Shikinensengū: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrFFkOAlHWY (Last checked 03.05.2011)
[205] Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, p. 203-204

used and the cost exceeds 550 billion yen. One shrine priest voiced his concern when he said that the ritual practice of rebuilding the Ise shrine would not survive into the next century.[206] It is also clear from this example that nature is not privileged over human practice. Like both Sonoda and Taima said, protecting nature for its own sake is not what Shinto is about. It is about sustainable development, and active human cultivation of nature. Obviously it is somewhat different from many environmentalist movements which we are used to in the West, which often have a 'no-touch' approach to nature. I am not however, trying to say that the Western environmentalism project is better or more genuine. As I have already shown, there are many laudable environmental activities conducted by Shinto shrines. I do however question the real motive behind these practices. In many cases the real concern seems to be the conservation of traditional values, particularly those State Shinto moral values. Many scholars and environmentalists have also elevated Shinto's attitude towards nature and praised its ecological potential.[207]For example Daniel M. P. Shaw writes that: 'We can appreciate Shinto as a unique convergence of the abstract concepts of nature, space and the sacred, but also as an inspiration for concrete action within those spheres."[208]However, if my investigation shows that Shinto places more significance on other aspects than environmentalism, why is it elevated as an ideal example for the preservation of nature? Is it wishful thinking? Or perhaps the people who see Shinto as an ecological religion have a personal motive on their own? I will return to these questions in my in-depth analysis in chapter nine.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the Enju no Kai and activities at the Tsurugaoka Hachimangū shrine in Kamakura. This society focuses on environmental activities while at the same time it is concerned with restoring old Japanese traditions. Even if ecology and nature is gradually becoming more relevant concepts within Shinto, I will claim that traditional values and national pride are still very important, perhaps more so than environmentalism itself. Even though shrines are basically free to chose its own agenda, and re-invent themselves and focus on ecology, the old imperial values of State Shinto seems to remain vital. We have also seen examples of this at the Meiji Jingū and the Ise Grand shrine. Even though NPO Hibiki, which is associated with the Meiji shrine, also has an environmental focus, the shrine is first and

[206] Breen, *Shinto and the Environment*
[207] For example Byron Earhart and Daniel M.P. Shaw.
[208] Daniel M. P. Shaw, *Shinto and a Twenty-First Century Japanese Ecological Attitude*, p. 327

foremost a symbol of the Meiji era and the Meiji emperor. In addition to this, the agenda of the non-profit organization seems to be the promotion of Japanese culture, rather than the promotion of ecology. The same applies for the Ise shrine. The focus on nature tends to be subservient, because the shrine is primarily a symbol of imperial divinity and the emperors' descent from the sun-goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. The shrine also functions as a national Shinto symbol, because the stated goal of Jinja Honchō is to bring the Japanese people together under the leadership of the shrine.

In the next chapter I want to discuss the discourse on nature through the example of the celebrated movies made by Hayao Miyazaki. I believe it is important to acknowledge that a 'love of nature' is also promoted as a unique Japanese characteristic in modern popular media. Many people have also associated Miyazaki's films with traditional Japanese culture and Shinto.

8. The Nostalgic World of Miyazaki Hayao

While discussing the modern trend which relates Shinto with nature and traditional Japanese culture, I believe it is significant to introduce the famous animated movies made by Miyazaki Hayao and the Studio Ghibli production company. Director Miyazaki has won several awards and most notably an Oscar in 2002 for the movie *Spirited Away*, which is the most popular movie in Japan to this date. The movies *My Neighbour Totoro* and *Spirited Away* made Miyazaki Hayao an internationally renowned film maker, and both films were given rave reviews. *Princess Mononoke* was also a top box office hit in Japan and very popular among Miyazaki fans overseas.

Many people see a link between Miyazaki's films and Shinto.[209]The films I am about to present are infused with environmental themes and references to traditional Japanese culture. Miyazaki seems to express distress over the modern world while simultaneously idealizing the past as a time when certain values were treasured. The message given to the viewer implies that we need to alter our behaviors, and look to the past for wisdom.

8.1 *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988)

Totoro is a forest god, and he is one of the best known film figures in Japan. The setting in this film is situated in a typical *satoyama* landscape during the 1950's; a laid back rural Japanese village with deep forests, farms and rice paddies. The plot of the movie is about a family who moves to their home village (*furusato*) outside of Tokyo. The mother of the family is hospitalized and she needs a healthier environment to live in when she recovers. The two young girls, Satsuki and Mei, soon discover that the house and the neighboring forest are inhabited by magical creatures. The entire film is permeated with Shinto symbology and spirituality. A general concept within Shinto is that the sacred cannot be seen. In *My Neighbour Totoro* the adults are not able to see the spirits, only Satsuki and Mei (approximately ten and four years old, respectively) can. By chance Mei stumbles upon Totoro living in a big camphor tree, but he is nowhere to be seen when she brings along her father and older sister. The father remarks that she (Mei) must have met the Guardian of the Forest and together they thank him for looking after Mei. The camphor tree has a *shimenawa*

[209] Helen McCarthy, *Master of Japanese Animation*, (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1999); Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000); http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/boydShinto.htm and Yahoo Shinto discussion group: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/shintoML/ (Last checked.May.10.2011)

rope tied around it symbolizing that it is a sacred tree with a kami dwelling inside it. Also in front of the path which leads in to the forest stands a *torii* gate, which in Shinto marks the entrance to a shrine, or the transition from the profane to the sacred. Later in the movie Satsuki comes across an *inari* shrine, dedicated to the kami of rice and agriculture. Right after this Totoro appears and he gives Satsuki a package containing acorns. The girls plant the seeds and that night they watch as Totoro appears dancing around the garden patch, and the next morning acorn tree sprouts have appeared. The film is a nostalgic story about an adventure into a "lost" enchanted world. The film has also lent inspiration to environmental activities like the protection of Sayama Hills and its surrounding areas.[210] *My Neighbour Totoro* has served as a powerful tool for the new focus on Japans traditional cultural heritage, like *satoyama* and sacred nature. Together with references to, what seems like Shinto symbology, Miyazaki's films contain environmentalist and naturalist themes with a strong message of what was lost in the modernization process of Japan. This is particularly evident in the film *Princess Mononoke*.

8.2 *Princess Mononoke* (1997)

> "In ancient times a land laid covered in forests, where for ages long past lived the spirits of the gods. Back then, man and beasts lived in harmony, but as times went by most of the great forests were destroyed. Those that remain were guarded by gigantic beasts who owed their legions to the great forests spirit. For those were the days of gods and the demons."[211]

These are the words of the narrator at the very beginning of the film Princess Mononoke. The setting of the film is in the Muromachi Period (1333-1568); the feudal times when the land of Japan was divided between competing warlords. The plot is about a young warrior named Ashitaka who is struck by a curse as he tries to protect his village from a demon-god. The village shaman pursues Ashitaka to leave the village and find the source of this curse. His journey brings him to " Iron-town" where Lady Eboshi and her warriors are engaged in a full scale war against the forest gods and a brave young girl called San (Princess Mononoke), who was raised by a wolf-god. Ashitaka also learns that the demon-god who struck him used to be an animal-god which Lady Eboshi had shot with a firearm and driven to madness. Lady Eboshi and her men are fighting the gods to get hold of the valuable iron-ore beneath the mountain. They burn down the forest while they set up a plan to kill the Forest Spirit (*shishi-*

[210] Totoro and environmentalism related homepages: www.totoro.or.jp/, www.totoroforestproject.org, http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/644.pdf, and World Expo Aichi 2005: http://www.expo2005.or.jp/en/venue/experience05.html (Last checked: 03.05.2011)

[211] *Princess Mononoke*, (1997) Studio Gibli

gami). In their effort protect the forest, the gods who reside there (*mononoke*) have launched a counter-attack on the humans, and this is also the reason why Ashitaka's village was attacked by the demon-god. Ashitaka sees the good in both parties and tries to stop the bloodshed. It is an epic battle between humankind and nature, which ends in a reconciliation and a restored harmony. The message of the film seems to be that modernization has caused people to forget the places that once were divine and sacred, and that this threatens the harmony which has existed between humans and nature. Miyazaki says that in ancient Japan, some forests were forbidden places for humans to enter and it was generally believed that cutting down trees would bring about a curse. This old belief has been lost in modern Japan and he believes that the awe the Japanese held for nature has gradually diminished.[212]

8.3 *Spirited Away* (2002)

Spirited Away does not to the same degree have a clear message on modernity and the environment like *Princess Mononoke*, yet it contains perhaps more references to traditional folk beliefs than any other movies made by Miyazaki. A young girl called Chihiro is the main character in this movie. On their way to the family's new home her father takes a wrong turn and they end up on a narrow road covered by trees. First they pass a *torii* gate, and then the road leads them to an old abandoned theme park. While Chihiro wanders alone around the park she meets a boy named Haku. He tells her that she must leave as soon as possible, but it is too late as her parents by a magic spell have been turned into pigs. She eventually discovers that she is trapped in a world of spirits, and Haku must help her find a job at a bathhouse run by the sorceress Yubaba. This is not just any kind of bathhouse, because this particular one serves all the numerous spirits in the world. A rural "Shinto" solstice ritual where one calls forth the kami and invites them to bathe in their baths is supposed to be the inspiration behind this.[213]The first guest Chihiro has to cater to is a polluted river kami. Thankful for Chihiro's job, the (now cleansed) river kami gives her a magical object. When Haku (transformed into a dragon) is attacked and hurt by enemies of Yubaba, Chihiro feeds him the magical object and he survives. At the climax of the film Chihiro remembers that she once lost a shoe in a river, and she realizes that this river must have been Haku. The name of the river; *Kohaku*, is Haku's real name and when she tells Haku this, Yubaba's control over

[212] Miyazaki interview: http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/interviews/m_on_mh.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[213] James W. Boyd and Tetsuya Nishimura, "Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki's Anime Film "Spirited Away"", in the Journal of Religion and Film: http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/boydShinto.htm (Last checked: May.10.2011)

him vanishes. He could not remember his own name because the river had been destroyed by industrialization and covered with buildings.[214]This is a reference to the destruction of nature at the expense of development. At the end of the movie Chihiro pass a test put on her by Yubaba. This saves her parents from the spell and they can leave the world of spirits together.

Even though many people see a connection between Shinto and Miyazaki's movies, the director himself says that religion never has been the basis for his films. He does however say that ancient spirituality has been important for him. The ancient belief that kami exists everywhere in nature, is something that manifests itself in the movies, he says. He is also concerned about the contemporary generation having lost these ancient values.[215]

I would argue that the environmental themes and the 'Shinto' symbology in Miyazaki's films stem from, not Shinto itself, but the nature discourse, originating with Motoori Norinaga, and sustained by Watsuji Tetsuro along with other traditionalist. It follows in the line of the *nihonjinron* theories and it is about national identity and the agenda to restore and preserve old Japanese traditions and values. In this process those who create these representations contrast Japanese traditions with modernity and Western culture. Miyazaki criticizes the modern world and the loss of ancient Japanese principles which has led to the loss of a Japanese identity. He creates and idealizes his own interpretations of the ancient Japanese culture and indirectly suggests that the viewers should restore these. We can see the same thing is happening in contemporary Shinto. There is a focus on the past and a unique Japanese intimate relationship with nature, in order to create and rebuild a Japanese identity. This however, actually originated with the *kokugaku* theories and is now maintained by these modern *nihonjinron* theories and can be seen in Miyazaki's films.

Summary

I have presented three different films by Miyazaki Hayao, each one with enormous success in Japan and abroad. His films are teeming with references to kami-worship, spirituality, nature and a critique of modernity. He creates a myth of a romanticized ancient Japan living in harmony with nature, and builds upon the existing Nihonjinron theories; that the Japanese and

[214] Ibid
[215] Boyd and
Nishimura, "Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki's Anime Film "Spirited Away."and Elisabeth Vintacelli, "Bittersweet Symphonies," *The Village Voice*
(27 October–2 November 1999): http://www.villagevoice.com/film/9943,vincentelli,9453,20.html, p. 3 (Last checked:May.10.2011)

their culture are unique. His films have achieved global success and have added to the image of a special Japanese attitude towards nature. Miyazaki draws inspiration from rural folk tales and Motoori Norinaga, the *kokugaku* scholar who developed the idea that Shinto is nature. He reinvents pre-modern spiritualism for the post-modern world, and his movies induce a sense of nostalgia of the glorious, yet simple, rural past. I have discussed Miyazaki's films to illustrate that the nature discourse also exists in popular media in Japan, and that this goes along the lines of 'green' Shinto, in nostalgia for the past and in creating a Japanese national identity fit for the postmodern world.

9. Analysis of Modern Representations of Shinto

In my investigation of the modern representations of Shinto I have attempted to uncover the process' behind the new presentation of Shinto as an ecological religion, the people behind this, and the reason they have for doing so. I have compared this new representation with the older discourse in Shinto based on the emperor and the Japanese state which came to the fore during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Kami-worship and the emperor did not play a significant part in Japanese politics until the Meiji Restoration, when Shinto was established as a state ideology in the process of building a nation. State-Shinto as it became known, involved emperor worship, state-rituals, patriotic duties and moral education. We have seen that the Shinto establishment, represented by Jinja Honchō, seems to be more concerned about Meiji moral values rather than environmentalism itself.

I have explained how the ideology of nature in Japanese politics eventually led to a definition of Shinto as an ecological religion. This has also been validated by the idea of Shinto's alleged primitive form of 'nature-worship'. In addition to this, I will maintain that environmentalism has presented Shinto with an opportunity to make itself meaningful in a postmodern world where modernity, technology, industrialization, are facing growing criticism. Ecology and a return to ancient wisdoms are a common reaction against the environmental problems associated with modernity. Hence one could say that Shinto is reinventing itself to adapt to the needs of the postmodern world.

9.1 Critique of Modernity

Another feature of post modernity is the 'unsecualrization'of the world, or to put in other words; the re-enchantment of the world. Modernity was thought by many to lead to a gradual decline in religious belief and practice. In his book *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter L. Berger argues that in pre-modern societies the world was filled with sacred mystery and power. With the onset of modernity however secularization becomes inevitable. He says that differentiation, pluralization and globalization have led to a fundamental change in how people experience religion.[216]Other sociologists and scholars of religious studies have argued against the secularization thesis. Even though statistics show that people in Europe have steadily become more secular, people in other parts of the world are becoming more

[216] Inger Furuseth and Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion, Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), p. 59

'religious.' Research also shows that people are turning to more alternative movements at the expense of the established religious traditions.[217]In the introduction I discussed the concept of 'religion', and how its meaning or definition was different in East-Asia, compared to the West. In Europe for example, especially since the enlightenment and the protestant reformation, religion has been associated with commitment and belief. In East-Asia religiosity has basically circled around rituals and performance. There has also been a tendency to pick and choose whatever form of "religion" suited you best. In Japan there is no sense of contradiction between being Buddhist, while participating in Shinto rituals and at the same time receiving Taoist-influenced fortune telling. The disintegration of the certainties of modernity has also had a substantial impact on postmodern religiosity. Critique of modernity and the recent popularity of new religious movements in the West has perhaps demonstrated that the East-Asian 'way', and ancient form of religiosity reminiscent to paganism in Norse religion or in ancient Greece and Rome, are returning. In the West there has been a steady growth of various new religious movements (NRM). The NRMs represent an alternative to the established world religions. Paganism is experiencing resurgence and the time before the onset of modernity is remembered as an ideal time. One interesting aspect of neo-paganism in the West is the romantic view of non-Western societies were they are still living in an "enchanted" world. The focus on ecological problems and the emphasis on the recovery of old wisdoms is also a visible feature of post-modernity and NRMs.[218]Spirituality and nature-worship which was portrayed as primitive and un-modern are experiencing a resurgence. Shinto, often portrayed as nature worship in foreign publications and by Japanese ideologues, has therefore become very relevant in a postmodern, re-enchanted world.

Many of the so-called countercultural activists of the anti-modernity movements and scholars with a romantic view of the 'Other' began looking towards the East for spirituality and wisdom. The people representing these movements which emerged during the 50's and 60's not only criticized capitalism, materialism, industrialism, science and technology. They also blamed Christianity and the West for being anthropocentric, and based on a dualism of man and nature. The American historian Lynn White published an article in 1967 called 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.' In this article White argues that the origins of the

[217] Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007), and Davie, *Europe-The Exceptional Case*, (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2002), and James A. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
[218] Hanegraaff, p. 77 and 81

current environmental crisis can be found within the most basic ideas of Christianity. He writes for example that:

> "Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions, not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends."[219]

In contrast to Christianity, the Native-American and Eastern religions were thought to be founded upon a harmonious existence with nature. In Japan, Zen Buddhism has for a long time been the center of attention for foreigners seeking Eastern spirituality. The works of Suzuki Daisetz has for example been instrumental in bringing Zen philosophy to the West.[220]There are however tendencies I would say, which indicates that Shinto is replacing Zen's popularity, because it is portrayed as the authentic Japanese indigenous religion and because of its animistic perceptions.[221]

It is my contention that these outside perspectives on Shinto also have triggered changes within the Shinto establishment. The foreign presentation of Shinto as a nature-religion and the consequent link with environmentalism has not been discounted by those who represent Shinto in Japan. This positive image of Shinto has given the ideologues and leaders within the shrine world a chance to re-represent Shinto as an ecological religion, and revitalize it in a problematic modern world, where people, especially the younger generations, are forgetting or ignoring the old cultural traditions of Japan.

The modern world symbolizes in many ways also the loss of traditions and values; the differentiation and fragmentation of a society's norms. Societies are becoming more and more complex, and globalization is threatening local traditions. Fragmentation of societies signifies the disintegration of a common culture, common religion and a common national identity. Zygmunt Bauman uses the term 'liquid modernity' to characterize our time.[222]It symbolizes the increased feeling of uncertainty where nothing is certain or absolute anymore. In these times identity, both personal and national, are fluid and constantly changing. I will argue that identity is an important issue in the definition of Shinto as an ecological religion, and this has also been a recurring theme in my analysis.

---

[219] Lynn White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*,
[220] Daisetz Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1938)
[221] Personal discussions with Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Oslo: Aike P. Rots, see also Byron Earhart, "The ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns."
[222] Zygmunt Bauman, *Flytende Modernitet*, (Oslo: Vidarforlaget A/S, 2001)

9.2 Tracing the Conception of Shinto as an Ecological Religion and the Japanese Love of Nature

The presentation of Shinto as an ecological religion might very well be a postmodern movement, but even so, environmentalism presented in Shinto is very similar to the politics of differentiation practiced by the *kokugaku* scholars and the Meiji nationalists. I have demonstrated how both Sonoda Minoru and Taima Yoichi adopted the concept of *fūdo* when they explained the connection between Shinto and nature. This concept was developed by Watsuji Tetsuro to affirm the uniqueness of Japanese culture, in contrast to others. Jinja Honchō does also highlight this on its English website, referring to Japan's climate and geographical conditions as an expedient for the Japanese gentle attitude towards nature.[223]I have also demonstrated that Shinto does not worship the whole natural environment, only particular elements within it. Nationalist *kokugaku* scholar Motoori Norinaga has been credited for creating the idea about the alleged 'Japanese love of nature'. He emphasized that kami are heavenly deities, souls of dead persons, living humans, or animals, plants mountains, rivers etc., and perhaps above all those things in nature which induce a sense of awe.[224]The English homepage of Jinja Honchō describes objects of worship as those things "which are closely associated and have great influences on human life."[225]Considering the idea about *chinju no mori* in Shinto ecology, Sonoda Minoru and the Shasō Gakkai are dedicated to the protection of the sacred primary forests of Japan, but not all forests. In many ways this is the opposite of holism, at least the Western concept of what holism is.

The understanding of what environmentalism is might also differ between cultures. In the West many environmental activists work to preserve wild and untouched nature. They see human activity as damaging to wildlife. In the new and re-invented Shinto, which I have described, it is cultivated nature that is highlighted as the ideal form of ecology. The concept of *fūdo* basically refers to the given climatic and geographical conditions, and the effect it has on people and their culture. The focus lies on the reciprocal influence that nature and culture have on each other. *Fūdo* is based on the the idea that man and nature are inseparable, and that man is dependent on nature and vice versa. The basic idea is that sustainable living is only possible through the cultivation of nature. It is not my intention to decide whether or not Shinto truly is an environmentally friendly religion, yet the point I am trying to make is that

[223] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/nature/index.html
[224] Clammer, p. 226
[225] The Homepage of Jinja Honchō: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/shinto/index.html

the environmentalist perspective of Sonoda Minoru and other ecological movements within the shrine world, are different from that of the typical "no-touch" policy of Western environmentalism. I have also demonstrated that in many cases environmentalism comes second to the ideas of Shinto as a civil religion. These ideas are often based on nationalistic symbols, conducting state rituals, and uniting the Japanese people under the leadership of the emperor. This was particularly evident in the Japanese webpage of Jinja Honchō. In chapter seven I discussed various environmental movements associated with Shinto, like the Enju no Kai and NPO Hibiki. I argued that my investigation shows that the real motives behind the presentation of Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion are ideological, representing parts of the re-construction of a national identity. This leads me to the conclusion that even though Shinto is being re-interpreted as a religion of nature, this reinterpretation always happens within the larger framework of another discourse that focuses on the community and, ultimately, the state.

The idea about Shinto as an ecological religion finds its basis in the conception that the Japanese are particularly concerned about nature. Arne Kalland argues that the idea of the 'nature-loving Japanese', to a high degree is a misconception. Kalland claims that the Japanese so called "love of nature" does not imply a benevolent attitude towards the environment, on the contrary, it is a love of refined nature while the wild nature is abhorred. This is exemplified in the dichotomy of purity versus impurity in Shinto. There is a strong focus on keeping disorder and what is considered impure at bay, and instead the Japanese try to control nature in the process of taming it through rituals and thereby moderating it.[226]The borders to the sacred world are marked by religious objects such as a *torii* gate or a *shimenawa* rope and Kami and wild nature are approached and reduced through rituals. Only after rituals are performed can the adherents have a working relationship with the spirits.[227] This form of "taming" nature is also exemplified in arts like the *ikebana* (flower arrangement), *bonsai* tree, and in miniature garden. Kalland concludes:

> "The true and ideal nature thus only becomes apparent when all offensive elements are removed" [228]

[226] Arne Kalland, *Culture in Japanese Nature* in O. Bruun & A. Kalland (ed.), *Asian Perceptions of Nature. A Critical Approach*
[227] Ibid, 247-249
[228] Arne Kalland, *Holism and Sustainability: Lessons from Japan*, in the Journal: *Worldviews: Global Religions, culture, and Ecology*, Vol. 6. 2002, 145-158

When nature supposedly is divine and harmony with nature is seen as an immanent character of Japanese culture, this leads to the term "love of nature". It does not however mean that the Japanese show a particular concern for the environment as a whole, because it is always possible for the Japanese to remove spirits through rituals if they wish to utilize a certain area.[229]Take for example Sonoda's account of how a memorial ritual is conducted for animals that are killed. Japan has on several occasions been criticized by environmental activists for the overfishing of blue-fin tuna and the killing of whales for scientific purposes. Even though nature is considered divine, and infused with spirits, it does not guarantee against environmental deterioration. We also saw examples of this in the Bukōzan mountain and the Chūden nuclear factory.[230]

The representation of a 'Japanese love of nature' is a widely-held notion, particularly in Japan, but also elsewhere. In contrast to this stands the opinion that the Westerners are trying to conquer nature. I will now focus on the people behind these representations. Who are they and what could be their purposes for creating these images.

9.3 Representations

'Orientalism' became a widespread term within academic circles after it was described by Edward Said in his influential book of the same name.[231]Said's theory was that Western perceptions of the 'Other' were prejudiced and shaped by attitudes of colonialism. Orientalism created images and stereotypes of the 'Other'. In order to define oneself in a positive light the other was often portrayed negatively. On the other hand, in some cases people have created a favorable image of the 'Other' in order to criticize their own culture. One of the first scholars to associate Shinto with environmentalism was Professor Byron Earhart, in his article: "The Ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns."[232]Since then many other scholars, both foreign and Japanese have drawn attention to Shinto's possible practicality in solving modern environmental problems.[233]This image of Shinto created by the West has been used in a new presentation ('re-presentation') of Shinto by those who were being described. This form of reversed-

[229] Arne Kalland, *Culture in Japanese Nature*, p.249
[230] See chapter 5 and the interview with Sonoda Minoru
[231] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979)
[232] H. Byron Earhart, "The ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns."
[233] See Daniel M.P. Shaw, *The Way Forward? Shinto and a Twenty-First Century Japanese Ecological Attitude*, Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home*, and Motohisa Yamakage, *The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart*

orientalism has also been called the ”pizza-effect”. This term was first coined by scholar Agehananda Bharati, do demonstrate how cultural exports change form and are reintroduced to their culture of origin.[234]The national ideology of nature, first created by nationalists, then re-represented as possible environmentalism by foreign writers with a romantic view of the Shinto, has given credibility to the idea that Shinto is an ecological religion.

In the social constructionist approach representations are seen as the very formation of things such as knowledge and social phenomena. Representations link meaning and language to culture.[235]One can therefore say that representations are central in the production culture. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes culture as:

> A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.[236]

Cultural representations are not something of itself; it is something which a group creates in their interaction with each other, and something which gives them a meaning. Gavin Flood says that religious values are temporal, relative to their context, and that they do not embody a timeless essence.[237]In contrast to this stands essentialism; the idea that something is immanent, without historical cause or effect. The people, who describe Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion, are for example consistently drawing on the past. They argue that Shinto has survived relatively un-changed since its origin in primeval times. Both Yasuda Yoshinori and Umehara Takeshi, present Shinto as the ancient native religion of Japan. They say that basic to Shinto is the idea of existing in harmony with nature and that this is an ‘essential’ character of Japanese culture. To the contrary, Shinto is like any other cultural representations dependent on historical particularities. Through the study of the narratives about Shinto we have discovered that it is also a cultural creation, relative to its context and that it does not embody a timeless essence such as ‘harmony with nature’. This focus on the past as an exalted time and place is also criticized by Russel T. Mc Cutcheon. He calls this the “politics of nostalgia”. Studies about the characteristics of an earlier period

[234] Agehananda Bharati, *Indian Expatriates in North America and Neo-Hindu Movements*, Vinayshil Gautam and J. S. Yadava (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*, (New Delhi:Naurang Rai Concept Publishing Company, 1980), p. 245-255
[235] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (London, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), p. 5-7, 15
[236] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p.89
[237] Flood, 113-114

often deal with what they used to be rather than what they represent today. [238]The representation of *satoyama* as an exemplary way of living does not resonate with modern Japan because rural life is steadily diminishing. More and more *satoyama* landscapes are vanishing and being replaced by industrial development, housing or golf courses.[239]The romantic presentation of an idealistic past is also demonstrated by Miyazaki in his animated films. The setting is for the most part set in old rural Japan, far away from the modern urbanized Japan of today. While his movies are considered entertainment they also carry a message; inspiring people to change their behavior and to look to the past for higher wisdom. There will always be many ideals, but this does not necessarily result in actual practice.

It is my contention that the scholars and environmentalists who represent Shinto as an ecological religion have an incentive to do so. In creating these stereotypes the foreign activist are romanticizing the East in order to criticize their own culture. The best way to criticize is to portray something else as better. Ideologues like Yasuda and Umehara and want to make Japanese culture more attractive. Compared to the imperial symbols and nationalism, the image of Shinto as a 'green religion' is much more attractive, to foreigners as well as the younger generations of Japan. Drawing on invented ideals of the past, the ideologues reconstruct Shinto as an ecological religion. We have also previously seen that the East-Western dichotomy is widespread among the Japanese conservatives. Constructing differences and contrasting Japanese culture with the 'Other' is a recurring theme when establishing representations.

In the process of constructing culture, representations are central. We can also add that culture is central in the production of national identity. This is one of my main arguments, that the representation of Shinto as an ecological religion also is related to the construction of a new Japanese national identity. The Japanese government has initiated a global *satoyama* initiative, promoting the environmental culture of Japan to the rest of the world. Nature and environmentalism was the focus of the World Exposition held in Aichi prefecture in 2005. In popular movies like those made by Miyazaki Hayao, we are also witnessing the recurrent theme of a Japanese intimate relationship with nature. I will argue that environmentalism is a new symbol of Japanese national identity. Nationalist scholar

[238] Russel T. McCutcheon, *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 142
[239] National Geographic on *Satoyama*: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/12/081209-totoro-japan-forest.html, (Last checked:May.10.2011)

Umehara Takeshi also spoke of Shinto being an example for the rest of the world in how to preserve nature. Likewise, Sonoda Minoru said that if Shinto had a global message, it would have to be about the protection of forests. The ideology of nature, first created by *kokugaku* scholars, then developed by Meiji nationalists, has now been reinvented into an environmental ideology that helps giving shape to a national identity in a post-Second World War Japan.

9.4 The Ideology of Environmentalism and the Ideal of the Past

Many western academics, as I have mentioned before, have commented on Shinto's spirituality and ecological potential. There seems to be an essentialist understanding that Shinto is based on a reverence of nature and a harmonious existence with the natural environment. There is for example a shrine in the United States called the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. The shrine teaches that Shinto is "the practice of the philosophy of proceeding in harmony with and gratitude to Divine Nature", and that "Shinto emerged and developed spontaneously as an expression of the deep intuitive connection with Divine Nature enjoyed by human beings in ancient Japan."[240]The concern about the environment and the appeal to traditional religious ideas and values, especially those of indigenous origin, is what Poul Pedersen calls 'the religious environmentalist paradigm.'[241]The idea that ancient ideas and values also have an ecological wisdom relevant for contemporary environmental problems is simplistic and untenable, he argues. First of all, norms and values do not necessarily lead to actual practice. He says:

> We must reject the idea that behavior can be predicted from values, and that values can be deducted from behavior. [242]

There are countless examples throughout the history of Japan, of human behavior which does not resonate with a benign attitude towards nature. [243]And likewise, even if Japan is known for its appreciation of nature, either in Shinto practice or in the form of aesthetics like poems, miniature gardens, *bonsai* and *ikebana*, this does not necessarily imply specific environmental values. Pedersen also makes a point that ecological awareness did not characterize ancient cultures and that this is just re-representation of modern ideas and concerns, placed in a traditional context. He says:

---

[240] Quoted from John Breens article: *Shinto and the Environment*, see also: http://www.tsubakishrine.org/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)
[241] Poul Pedersen, *Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity*; *The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm*, In O. Bruun & A. Kalland (red.), *Asian Perceptions of Nature. A Critical Approach*,, 258-273
[242] Ibid, p. 265
[243] Pamela J. Asquith and Arne Kalland, "*Japanese Perceptions of Nature: Ideals and Illusions*", p. 6

> Ecological representations of nature belong to a conceptual framework of globality and are therefore fundamentally different from traditional representations of nature with their predominant localized focus.[244]

Pedersen argues that ideologies "transform pre-existing beliefs, ideas, and practices by objectifying them and by changing their contexts."[245]The concept of nature has repeatedly been used to differentiate Japan with other nations. In her book "*Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*" (2001), Julia A. Thomas discussed how the concept of nature had been used and transformed in Japanese political discourse from the Tokugawa period through the 1930's. She says that: "a nationalistic concept of nature was developed, in the discourse of Japanese culture."[246]References to the unique landscape of Japan, the unique consciousness of the Japanese people, the distinct race and culture of Japan, are but some examples of the literature and nationalistic propaganda adopted in the quest for a superior Japanese national identity. She concludes that Japan's "immemorial harmony with nature" is a twentieth century product. We have seen how this ideology of nature eventually has become connected to identity again, but this time within the concept of ecology and in Shinto. Again I will refer to Pedersen, when he says that:

> Religion is exposed to and accommodated within the global ideology of nature, because the articulation of religious identity has transcended its traditional local setting and must confront global issues.[247]

From what we have seen in earlier chapters we can deduce that the global interest on environmental issues have also affected Shinto. Many people have attempted to make Shinto values and beliefs relevant to the contemporary environmental problems, and this has at the same time resulted in a re-interpretation of Shinto. The reason why Shinto is being reinterpreted in this way is because of concerns of identity in the postmodern world. Once again I will return to the issues about imperialism and State Shinto. In our modern globalized world these representations of nationalism give negative associations to Japanese aggression and militarism. Affiliation with nature and ecology on the other hand, produce positive representations. This is the reason, I will argue, why uncritical English publications on Shinto focus on nature. It also gives the shrines an opportunity to promote themselves in a new guise to the younger generations who are more interested in the environment than imperial state symbols.

---

[244] Pedersen, p. 269
[245] Ibid
[246] Thomas, *Reconfiguaring Modernity*, p.159
[247] Ibid, p. 271

The new environmental identity, linked with old indigenous traditions and religious values, has also one could perhaps say, given Japan a better chance to compare itself to the West. In the critique of modernity and in environmentalism, people have discovered a new way of differentiating Japanese religion and culture from that of the West. It is now the West that is criticized, while Japanese culture is portrayed as the ideal way of living. I will, however, also point to the important factor of modernity and a nostalgic longing for the past. I will argue that the ideologues who present Shinto as an ecological religion are equally concerned with contrasting the problematic modern world of today with a better past, and, possibly, a better future.

The idea that the modernization project has failed has led to the conclusion that the present time is full of problems. Amongst other things modernity is blamed for environmental degredation. It is also a general belief that modernity in many cases has led to an indifference to traditional cultures and morals, and that this is especially evident in the younger generations. In the previous chapters I have demonstrated that the ideologues, Yasuda Yoshinori and Umehara Takeshi, constantly drew on the past to validate the relevance of Shinto and Japanese culture in the post-modern world. The past as an ideal time and place was also a recurring theme in Miyazaki's films. Anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen argues that in the ideologizing of the past, the past is portrayed as the truth and used mythically to justify a specific interpretation of the present.[248]I have demonstrated that the interpretation of Shinto as an ecological religion is legitimized by referring to ancient Japanese practices. Sonoda Minoru spoke about the importance of protecting trees in old agricultural practices like wet-rice cultivation. He additionally talked about the exemplary way of living in traditional *satoyama* landscapes. Sonoda argued that these ancient practices in Japan justified the representation of Shinto as an ecological religion. However, I have also demonstrated that the idea about a Japanese love of nature is based on an ideology of national identity. Hence, I conclude that the ideas about ancient Japanese practices which show benevolence to nature are social constructs.

My argument is that the idea that "Shinto loves nature" is based on ideological reasons, and I have attempted to demonstrate that this is a social and a historical construct and that it cannot be rooted in the past. This does not mean however that the ideologues are denied to use history to add persuasiveness to utopian ideas. Ideologies do not necessarily

[248] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Kampen om fortiden: et essay om myter, identitet og politikk*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), p.16-17

have to be historically correct. Nevertheless, my intention has been to describe how this representation of Shinto as an environmental religion came to be. At the same time I have tried to show that it is not a representation which is archaic and constant. In the future Shinto may very well be defined as an environmental religion, and I have already demonstrated that Shinto is becoming more concerned about nature than it used to be.[249]However, only when we realize that this is not a new concept, but rather one that has evolved over time, can we appreciate its expression today. We must also understand in what sort of environment this idea has come about, and what sort of agenda it supports. As scholars of religion, we are not to decide what Shinto may or may not be. Religions and cultures are constantly being reinvented in order to adapt to the present needs and demands. I do, however, believe that we who study this field have to use critical analysis in order understand that cultures and religions are shaped by social, historical, political, economic and biological factors.

We have witnessed how Japan's national and cultural identity since the Meiji restoration has been rooted in Shinto, in various ways. First with the emperor as the foremost symbol, and now with the renewed focus on nature. National symbols of identity will also be the focus in the next chapter about *nihonjinron*; the discourse on Japanese uniqueness.

9.5 Nihonjinron and National Identity

The image of'green'Shinto coincides with the ideology of nature, because in both instances Japanese culture is situated as unique compared to other cultures. It is a form of reversed-orientalism where ancient eastern harmony, spirituality and green philosophy are contrasted with Western modernity, dualism, materialism and rationalism. Larry Lohman uses the term 'Green Orientalism' to describe how other cultures are being elevated and marked as a prime example for environmentalism. The Western environmentalist critical of modernity is on a constant search to find what the West is not. On his quest he creates representations of other non-Western cultures as an example to follow. Lohman says:

> "The only way subordinate groups can build alliances with such Orientalists is to act out the parts of 'environmentalists', 'traditional peoples' or 'development enthusiasts' to which they have been assigned, then twisting and subverting these roles to their own advantage."[250]

Western orientalistic, yet 'romantic', descriptions of the Shinto as primitive nature-worship, has been embraced by the people creating nationalistic ideologies for Japan. Theories on

[249] See chapter 6 about Jinja Honchō.
[250] Larry Lohman, "Green Orientalism." in *The Ecologists.* Vol 23 No 6 November/December 1993: p. 203

orientalism and difference are very much alive in Japan today. In Japan these theories are known as *Nihonjinron*; the discourse on Japanese identity, particularity and homogeneity.

> "The whole genre can be regarded as one dealing with Japan's identity, attempting to establish Japan's uniqueness and to differentiate Japan from other cultures."[251]

Befu Harumi argues that discussions about uniqueness are widespread in Japan and that the vast amount of literature on the subject shows that this is a predominant discourse within the Japanese consciousness.[252]

Historically *nihinjinron* can be traced back to the *kokugaku* theories about national identity, by contrasting Japan with China. Since then the West has generally been the constant significant 'Other' which intellectuals and ideologues have compared and distinguished Japan against. When the Tokugawa rule ended in 1868 and Japan opened its ports, the Japanese people were forced to recognize the military and technological gap between themselves and the West. The situation also demanded that Japan develop a definition of itself compared to the West. Many Westerners looked upon Japan as a backward country and this representation manifested itself into the Japanese consciousness. Befu calls this denigration of oneself; 'auto-orientalism'.[253]Gradually however, the Japanese gained a more positive identity of themselves vis-á-vis the West. Their military strength grew while at the same time imperial nationalism evolved. The divine heritage of the emperor and the symbol of him as the father of the Japanese 'family' placed Japan in a unique position in the world. The nationalization of Shinto also played a big part in this process. Befu says:

> A religion that is unique to a given ethnic group can help define the identity of the group in a way a religion such as Christianity or Islam would have difficulty doing.[254]
>
> All Japanese have to do is to point to Shintoism as an attribute of Japan's uniqueness, because Shintoism is a unique, indigenous religion. By elevating it from folk belief to the state religion and placing the emperor as its centerpiece, the Japanese state created a unique religious basis for its nationalism.[255]

Before the modernization period the emperor had occupied a relatively small place in Japanese culture and politics. During the pre-war period however, the emperor had been elevated to become one of the foremost symbols of modern Japan. Befu argues that every

---

[251] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinro*n, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), p.2
[252] Ibid, p. 66-67
[253] Ibid, p. 127
[254] Ibid, p. 84
[255] Ibid, p. 84

modern nation-state has symbols which instil national sentiments and a sense of belonging, and that they are created by the state to represent the state.[256]In pre-war Japan the primary state symbols were the emperor, the Imperial Rescript on Education, state rituals and the national anthem.[257]However, after the defeat of the war, because of the associations with Japanese aggression and militarism, these symbols for integrating the nation and defining national identity had become 'tainted'. Befu has proposed a theory called the' symbolic vacuum' hypothesis.[258]He argues that the popularity of *nihonjinron* literature in post war years may be attributed to the demise of national symbols after the Second World War. Within this symbolic vacuum other means to define national identity have emerged. So instead of these tainted symbols, *nihonjinron* literature has focused on other unique aspects of Japanese culture. It is my contention that the ideology of nature, previously developed by the *kokugaku* scholars, has once again, in the form of environmentalism, become relevant in defining Japan's national identity.[259]Befu says that *nihonjinron* as a discourse is convenient because the content of *nihonjinron* can be altered according to the needs of the age.[260]The current global popularity of environmental issues has certainly also appealed to the *nihonjinron* discourse. Within the traditional ideology of nature *nihonjinron* has found that 'essence 'which separates Japan from the rest of the world. Befu says that: "Both wartime Nihinjinron and postwar neo-Nihonjinron rely heavily on Japan's primordial sentiments in the presumed 'ethnic essence' of the Japanese."[261]The 'love of nature' was articulated as the essential characteristic of the Japanese, yet during the war nature was de-emphasized, but it has now been rediscovered. As a consequence the global concern about the environment has, in the eyes of the *nihonjinron* proponents, placed Japan in a unique position in the world. As a result of Japan's alleged age-old close relationship with nature, they can declare that Japan have a unique ability to save the world environment.

---

[256] Ibid, p. 87
[257] Imperial Rescript on Education: Government policy on ethics and moral ity. Those who did not revere it where stigmatized as unpatriotic and traitorous. See Hardacre, *Shinto and the State 1868-1988*, p, 121-123
[258] Ibid, p. 100
[259] I would like to add that the concept of nature has also been utilized in the creation of a national identity elsewhere. Norwegian scholar Gudleiv Bø argues that nature has also played an important role in the building of a national identity in Norway. The first two decades after the partial independence of 1814, Norway was in particular contrasted against Denmark. The main argument was that; compared to Denmark which is mainly flat, Norway has beautiful mountains and fjords. Many Norwegian romantic nationalists like: Henrik Wergeland, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Adolph Tidemand, and Edward Grieg, emphasized the aesthetics of Norwegian nature in literature, paintings and in music. See: Gudleiv Bø, *Natur og nasjonalitet: Naturomgivelser og "folkekarakter" i norsk nasjonsbygging*, I. Lærkesen, H. Bache-Wiig and A. G. Lombnæs, (ed.), *Naturhistorier. Naturoppfatning, menneskesyn og poetikk i skandinavisk litteratur*, (Oslo: Landslaget for norskundervisning, 1999), p. 39-63
[260] Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 101
[261] Ibid, p. 102

On the other hand, there are conservatives who still value the 'tainted' symbols of the Meiji period, and who believe that they are vital for the protection Japanese culture and in uniting the nation. We have previously seen examples of the fact that although Shinto has been presented as an ecological religion, the old *kokutai*-type imperial symbols, state rituals and moral values are regarded by many as indispensable. The return to a public function for Shinto is still a very important matter for Jinja Honchō. Postmodern movements include both critique of modernity, and conservative actions trying to hold on to old traditions. Either way, whether they are based on the emperor, nature or reinvented as environmentalism, the ideologies continue to evolve and influence Japanese culture and self-understanding.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated how Shinto became defined as an ecological religion. I have explained how an ideology of nature developed within the school of national learning (*kokugaku*) during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). These scholars, headed by Norinaga Motoori, sought to discover unique aspects of Japanese culture in ancient texts. The objective was to create a distinction between China and Japan. Within these ancient texts Norinaga claimed to have discovered Japan's natural position in the center of the world. His adoption of the concept of nature was spatial, and did not have anything to do with the physical environment. However later, inspired by *kokugaku* theories on Japanese uniqueness, Watsuji Tetsuro created a link between the given landscape and climate of a nation and its unique culture. Based on the concept of *fūdo*, he concluded that the Japanese mindset and their culture were particularly unique, compared to other nations. By the means of associating climate and geography with Japanese culture, Watsuji had created an undeniable link between the Japanese consciousness and physical nature. Nationalist Meiji scholars like Okakura Tenshin and Anesaki Masaharu wrote about the sensitivity of the Japanese consciousness in relation to art and nature. According to them, the Japanese compared to other people, were much more delicate and refined in their art and in their aesthetic appreciation of nature. These efforts to differentiate Japan with other nations, resulted in the belief that the Japanese are, and have always been, living in harmony with nature.

In foreign language publications Shinto has often been characterized as nature-worship; therefore it has also been associated with the myth about the 'Japanese love of nature'. The characterization of Shinto as the indigenous faith of the Japanese people, has given credibility to the discourse about particularity. Some scholars like for example Yasuda Yoshinori have pointed to the animistic features of Shinto. Umehara Takeshi has accentuated the ancient wisdom that Shinto embodies. Both ideologues draw extensively on the past, creating an image of a problematic modern world where Shinto philosophy, in contrast to Western rationality and science, can help solve the environmental problems we are facing today. In their ideological presentation of the past, tradition and identity are produced. Anthony D. Smith argues that:

> It is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know 'who we are' in the contemporary world.[262]

During my fieldwork in Japan I interviewed high priest Sonoda Minoru, who is at the forefront within the shrine world in the reinterpretation of Shinto as an environmentally friendly religion. We discussed the concept of *fūdo*, ritual practices, and the environmental organization 'Shasō Gakkai'. Protecting and preserving the sacred forests of Japan; *chinju no mori*, is the most important agenda for this organization. Sacred Shinto shrine groves are basic to ancient Japanese culture said Sonoda , and the purpose of Shasō Gakkai is to do research on this and to educate other people, including foreigners, about the environmental aspects of *chinju no mori* (sacred shrine groves). According to Sonoda , rice cultivation is fundamental to Shinto, and the protection of forests and the irrigation systems are essential for the preservation of the traditional Japanese way of living. Nostalgia for ancient Japanese traditions and a critique of modernity and the West are predominant issues in the reinterpretation of Shinto as an ecological religion. Also, behind this representation lies another motive, namely to create a positive and proud identity in a postmodern world. Globalization is threatening local traditions, but at the same time environmentalism has become a global phenomenon. Shinto, in its new 'green' disguise is attempting to create a new postmodern identity, and validating this in the past.

I have compared this new identity of Shinto with the imperial nationalistic Shinto which we know from the Meiji period. I have demonstrated that state policies are still very much alive in Shinto today, especially within Jinja Honchō. Many conservatives within this organization would like to see Shinto become influential in state politics like it was during the postwar period, serving as an overarching civil religion in the Japanese society. As a consequence they are focusing on state rituals and the emperor as a symbolic father for the Japanese nation. Initially this aspect of Shinto seems far removed from ecological Shinto. However, my investigation has shown that these two representations seem to work together. The environmental activities associated with Shinto which I have presented, express environmental concerns while at the same time placing importance on traditional Japanese moral values and identity. My analysis has shown that there are ideological reasons behind both interpretations of Shinto.

[262] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991), p.17

When people are being told that Shinto is a 'nature-religion', this sounds plausible because they also learn that in Shinto they worship rivers, trees and mountains. From an environmental perspective this sounds virtuous. As we have seen, people critical of the West and modernity have given Shinto an ecological characteristic. It is easy to deduce that reverence of nature must also entail a protective and benevolent attitude towards the environment. I would say that the concept of 'Shinto' is more than just reverence of nature. Shinto is an overarching term for various practices like imperial Shinto, folk Shinto, shrine Shinto and to some extent other Shinto inspired religious factions. Imperial Shinto (*koshitsu Shinto*) for example, is very different from the idealistic image of Shinto as an environmental religion. It is in many ways still associated with nationalism, and it brings forth memories of militarism and fascism from the Second World War. Reverence of nature is only one aspect of a wide variety of practices belonging to the overarching term 'Shinto'. In addition to this, worship of nature in Shinto does not imply a reverence for the environment as a whole. As I have previously mentioned, only particular 'Japanese' elements within the environment are objects of worship. Ecology is the study of the whole environment. The idea behind the deep ecology movement is that everything in nature is of equal value, and the theory about holism express' that God is innate in every object of nature.[263]In Shinto, worship is limited to those aspects of nature which have a great influence on human life. The sacred shrine groves, *chinju no mori*, have been advertised as an example of Shinto's ecological potential. Yet, these forests constitute only a minor segment of all the forests in Japan. The example of *satoyama* (the traditional rural landscape of Japan), which the Japanese government has exemplified as an ideal model of Japanese rural life, is also problematic because *satoyama* and traditional rural life in Japan are diminishing. Whether this could be seen as a model for the world is therefore rather questionable. In addition to this, Shinto has been present on several forums on religion and ecology, where the topic of matter is what religions can offer to help the environment. Shinto seems to take the environmental project seriously, conducting various activities as I have demonstrated. My argument however, is that environmentalism in Shinto still to a high degree is based on a specific ideology of identity; of presenting the ideal Japanese values and differentiating these with the 'Other'.[264]Through participation in these forums, Shinto has won admirable recognition. As a result of this Shinto has also been able to disassociate itself with symbols of militarism and nationalism.

[263] See ch. 5 on Holism
[264] Religion and ecology forums on internet: http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=127 and http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/shinto/index.html (Last checked 27.04.2010)

The platform of ecology has therefore given Shinto a chance to reinvent itself and become more appealing.

I believe that nature is rapidly emerging as the main theme within Shinto. Whether this is a conscious decision or strategy is open to question, but there has never been any official meetings or decisions in Jinja Honchō on this change. It is however, my contention that associations with nature and ecology has given Shinto a chance to reinvent itself and generate positive representations compared with nationalistic imperial symbols. The focus on nature is a result of changing atmosphere and public opinion in Japan. The world is becoming more and more globalized, and even though *kokutai*-type rhetoric still is a main topic within central Jinja Honchō, it will lose its meaning in an increasing globalized Japan.

The representation of Shinto as an ecological religion is a product of the specific historical and social contexts of our time. Cultures and religions are forced to reinvent themselves in accordance to the needs of any given place and time. This re-representation of Shinto has drawn inspiration from the ideologies of nature, and has been adopted in order to create a positive image of Shinto befitting the postmodern globalized world. An investigation of environmental activities within Shinto has never been conducted before. I believe however, that the ongoing change and reinterpretation of Shinto as a cult of nature also will be topic of interest for other future investigations.

Glossary

Japanese	English
Amaterasu-Ōmikami	Sun-goddess, ancestor to the emperor, and ranked foremost among the kami of the earth.
Ametsuchi	Heaven and earth
Anesaki Masaharu (1873-1949)	Meiji Ideologue. Wrote the book "*Art, Life and Nature*"
Ashizu Uzuhiko (1909-92)	Stressed Shinto's role in uniting the Japanese people under the spiritual guidance of the emperor.
Chadō	Tea ceremony; "Way of the Tea"
Chinju no mori	Sacred shrine groves, sacred forest
Daimyō	Domainal lords existing during the feudal times in Japan
Danka-system	Compulsory affiliation with Buddhist temple during the Tokugawa shogunate
Enju no Kai	An association based on cultural and environmental activities. Organized by priests at Tsurugaoka Hachimangū
Fūdo	Climate, landscape and culture
Fukuba Bisei (1831-1907)	One of the main architects of the new conceptualization of Shinto as a state religion
Furusato	Family hometown
Gokoku jinja	Shrines for the protection of the nation
Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843)	Kokugaku scholar; disciple of Motoori Norinaga
Hongaku	Being original, original kami; not of Buddhist origin.
Honji Suijaku	Kami as local traces of abstract Buddhas
Jindō	Early Chinese term which refers to all the deities that are not Buddhist in origin

Jingi-system	Coherent system of kami cults during the Nara and Heian periods
Jingi-rituals	Imperial court rituals, Heian and Nara period
Jingiin	Institute of Divinities, established in 1940
Jingikan	Office of Kami of Heaven and Earth, Heian and Nara period
Jinja Honchō	National Association of Shinto Shrines
Kakyō saishi	Hometown cults
Kami	Kami may refer to a specific kami or to pluralities. Any manifestation of nature may be a kami. It can also be anything which has a particular influence on human life
Kamidana	Household shrine
Kannagara	Way of the gods, dignity
Katō Genchi (1873-1965)	Scholar of religion specializing in Shinto studies.
Kazoku kokka	Family nation
Kojiki	"Record of Ancient Matters", chronicle, collection of Japanese myths
Kojiki-den	Commentaries on the Kojiki by Motoori Norinaga
Kokka Shinto	State Shinto (existed from Meiji period to end of WWII)
Kokusui	National essence
Kokugaku	National school of learning. Originated and existed during the Tokugawa period
Kokutai	State ideology during Meiji era, national identity, national essence
Koshitsu Shinto	Imperial Shinto
Matsuri	Festival, waiting for the kami
Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801)	The "founder" of the Kokugaku school.
Nichibunken	International Research Center for Japanese

	Studies
Nihongi (Nihon Shōki)	"The Chronicles of Japan", myths, classical Japanese history
Nihonjinron	Literature based on Japanese identity and uniqueness
Nihon Izokukai	Japan Society of the War Bereaved
NPO Hibiki	Non Profit Organization tied to the Meiji Jingū
Ofuda	Talisman, amulet
Okakura "Tenshin" Kakuzo (1862-1913)	Meiji ideologue. Wrote the "*Book of Tea*"
Ōkuni Takamasa (1792-1871)	One of the main architects behind the reinvention of Shinto as state religion
Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953)	Argued that if Shinto was to survive, it should be developed from an ethnic religion into a universal one
Samurai	Military nobility. Warriors
Satoyama	The Japanese traditional rural landscape
Seikyō bunkatsu	Separation of state and religion
Shasō Gakkai	Environmental organization for the preservation and protection of sacred forests in Japan
Shimenawa	Rope marking a sacred place, or an object
Shinbutsu bunri	Separation of Shinto from Buddhism after fall of Tokugawa shogunate
Shinto seiji renmei or shinseiren	Shinto political league, tied to Jinja Honchō
Shōgun	Military leader, generalisimo
Shōkonsha	Spirit-inviting-shrines (for example Yasukuni)
Sonnō Jōi	"Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians" Political slogan to overthrow the Shogun and reinstall the Emperor to power (barbarians actually refers to 'foreigners').

Taima	Amulet
Torii	Shinto gate marking the border between the sacred and the profane
Ujigami	Village kami
Yashiro	Sacred grove near village
Yanagita Kunio (1875-1953)	Stressed the spiritual value of local traditions of worshipping kami
Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511)	Took control over imperial kami rituals. Founder of Yoshida Shinto.
Yoshikawa Koretaru (1616-1694)	Contender to Yoshida Shinto. Shinto-Confucian syncreticism.
Yuiitsu Shinto	One-and -Only Way of the Kami
Watsuji Tetsuro (1889–1960)	Philosopher on the ideology of nature. Developed the concept of *fūdo*.

Bibliography

Anesaki Masaharu, *Art, Life and Nature in Japan*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1933.

Asquith. Pamela, J. and Kalland Arne. (ed.) *Japanese Images of Nature*. London: Curzon Press, 2004.

Barnhill, David L. and Gottlieb, Roger S. (ed.), *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*. New York: New York Press, 2001.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Flytende Modernitet*. Oslo: Vidarforlaget A/S, 2001.

Beasley, William G. *The Modern History of Japan*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1982.

Beckford, James A. *Social Theory and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Befu, Harumi. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinro*n. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001.

Bergmann, Sigurd. Scott, P.M. Samuelsson, Maria Jansdotter. and Bedford-Strohm, Heinrich. (ed.), *Nature, Space and the Sacred: Transdisciplinary Perspectives*. Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009.

Breen, John, *Shinto and the Environment*, (in a forthcoming encyclopedia)

Breen, John. *Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan's Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Breen, John. and Teeuwen, Mark. *A New History of Shinto*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Breen, John. and Teeuwen, Mark. *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Bruun, Ole.and Kalland, Arne. (ed.), *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*. London: Curzon Press, 1995.

Clammer, John. *Japan and its Others*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001.

Davie, Grace. *Europe-The Exceptional Case*. London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2002.

Davie, Grace. *The Sociology of Religion*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. *Kampen om fortiden: et essay om myter, identitet og politikk*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996.

Flood, Gavin. *Beyond Phenomenology; Rethinking the Study of Religion*. New York: Continuum, 1999.

Furuseth, Inger. and Repstad, Pål. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion, Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006.

Gautam, Vinayshil. and Yadava, J. S. (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*. New Delhi:Naurang Rai Concept Publishing Company, 1980.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Hall, Stuart *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997.

Hardacre, Helen. *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Heelas. Paul. (ed.), *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998.

Hinnels John R. (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. New York, Routledge, 2005.

Hjelde, Sigurd. and Krogseth, Otto. (ed.), *Religion-et vestlig fenomen? Om bruk av betydning av religionsbegrepet*. Oslo, Gyldendal, 2007.

Itō, Satoshi. Matsuo, Kōichi. and Mori, Mizue. *Nihonshi shōhyakka: Shinto*. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2002.

Kasulis, Thomas P. *Shinto: The Way Home*. Honolulu:University of Hawaii Press, 2004.

Kraft, Siv Ellen and Natvig, Richard J. (ed.), *Metode i religionsvitenskap*. Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2006.

Lærkesen, Ivar. Bache-Wiig, Harald. and Lombnæs, Andreas G. (ed.), *Naturhistorier. Naturoppfatning, menneskesyn og poetikk i skandinavisk litteratur*, (Oslo: Landslaget for norskundervisning, 1999)

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Myth in Primitive Psychology*. London: Kegan Paul, 1926.

McCarthy, Helen. *Master of Japanese Animation*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1999.

McCutcheon, Russel T. *Critics not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Napier, Susan J. *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

Ono, Sokyo. *Shinto: The Kami Way*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962.

Pals, Daniel L. *Eight Theories of Religion: Second Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Rambelli, Fabio. and Teeuwen, Mark. (ed.), *Buddhas and kami in Japan : Honji suijaku as a combinatory paradigm*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Reader, Ian. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.

Reader, Ian. *Simple Guides: Shinto*. London: Global Books Ltd., 2007.

Rodríguez, Jeanette and Fortier, Ted. *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith and Identity*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1991.

Suzuki, Daisetz . *Zen and Japanese Culture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1938.

Thomas, Julia A. *Reconfiguaring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology*. Berekeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Teeuwen, Mark. *Fellesskapsritualer og personlig tro*, inTerje Grønning (ed.), *Vinduer Mot Japan*. Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2005.

Teeuwen, Mark. *Shinto: Japans Eldste Myter*. Oslo: Bokklubben, 2005.

Tylor. Edward, B., *Primitive Culture*: V. 1. Cambridge; England: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Yamakage, Motohisa. *The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006.

Watsuji, Tetsuro. *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*. Tokyo: Yushudo Co Ltd. 1961.

Articles in Journals

Earhart, H. Byron. "The ideal of Nature in Japanese Religion and its Possible Significance for Environmental Concerns." *Contemporary Religion in Japan* 11 1/ 2. 1970:1-26

Fumio, Tamamura. "The Development of the Temple-Parishoner System." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 36/1. 2009: 11‑26

Grapard, Allan G. "Shrines Registered in Ancient Japanese Law; Shinto or Not?" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.* 29/3–4. 2002: 209-232

Hylkema-Vos, Naomi. "Kato Genchi: A Neglected Pioneer in Comparative Religion." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 17/4. 1990: 375-395

Kalland, Arne. "Holism and Sustainability: Lessons from Japan". *Worldviews: Global Religions, culture, and Ecology*. Vol. 6. 2002: 145-158.

Lohman, Larry. "Green Orientalism." *The Ecologists* Vol 23 No 6 November/December 1993: 202-204

Maeda, Hiromi. "Court Rank for Village Shrines." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29/3–4. 2002: 325-358

Mathur, Arpita. "Japan's Contemporary Nationalism: Trend and Politico-Securtity Drivers" *Strategic Analysis*. 31: 1. Routledge. 2007: 111-137

McNally, Mark. "The Sandaiko Debate; The Issue of Orthodoxy in Late Tokugawa Nativism." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3–4. 2002: 359-378

Scheid, Bernhard. "Shinto as a Religion for the Warrior Class; The Case of Yoshikawa Koretaru." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. 2002: 299-324

Scheid, Bernhard and Teeuwen, Mark. "Tracing Shinto in the History of Kami Worship." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. Fall 2002: 195-207

Shimazono, Susumu. "State Shinto in the Lives of the People :The Establishment of Emperor Worship, Modern Nationalism, and Shrine Shinto in Late Meiji." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.* 36/1. 2009: 93-124

Thal, Sarah. "Redefining the Gods; Politics and Survival in the Creation of Modern Kami." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3–4. 2002: 379-404

Teeuwen, Mark. "From Jindo to Shinto; A Concept Takes Shape." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 29/3-4. Fall 2002: 233-263

Teeuwen, Mark. "Jinja Honchō and Shrine Shinto Policy." *Japan Forum* 8(2) 1996:177-188

Thomas, Jolyon Baraka. "Shūkyō Asobi and Miyazaki Hayao's Anime." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 10, No. 3. February 2007: 73-95

Umehara, Takeshi. Ancient Postmodernism. *New Perspectives Quarterly*. Volume 26, Issue 4. 2009: 40-54

White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science*, 155. 1967: 1204-1207

Williams, Brian, "Satoyama: The Ideal and the Real." *Kyoto Journal*. "Biodiversity: Japan's Satoyama and Our Shared Future." Issue nr. 75. 2010: 24-29

Yasuda, Yoshinori. "Animism Renaissance." *Nichibunken Newsletter*. No.5, 1990:2-4

Internet Sources

Alliance of Religions and Conservation: http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=127, (Last checked: April.27.2010)

Britannica Online Encylopedia: http://www.britannica.com/, (Last checked: July 22. .2010)

Boyd, James W. and Nishimura, Tetsuya. *Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki's Anime Film "Spirited Away"*, in the Journal of Religion and Film: http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol8No2/boydShinto.htm (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Buruma, Ian. "A New Japanese Nationalism." April 12, 1987. http://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/12/magazine/a-new-japanese-nationalism.html (Last checked: Jan. 07. 2011)

Enju no Kai homepage: http://news.hachimangu.or.jp/dispdtinfo.asp?M_ID=148&C_ID=3 (Last checked: Jan. 21. 2011)

Forum on Religion and Ecology: http://fore.research.yale.edu/religion/shinto/index.htm,l (Last checked: April.27.2010)

Global Satoyama initiative homepage: http://satoyama-initiative.org/en/, (Last checked: Jan. 12. 2010)

International Shinto Association homepage: http://www.shinto.org/eng/, (Last checked: May.09.2011)

Japanese Journal of Religious Studies:

http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/jjrs/jjrsMain.htm, (Last checked. May.11.2011)

Jinja Honchō homepage in English: http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/publications/shinto/index.html, (Last checked: May.05.2001)

Jinja Honchō homepage in Japanese:

http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/, (Last checked: May.09.2011)

Jinja Honchō homepage for kids:

http://www.omiyakids.com/index.html, (Last checked: May.09.2011)

Jinja Honchō promotion video of Shikinensengū: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrFFkOAlHWY (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Knight, Catherine. “Japan’s ’Satoyama Initiative’: Model for Sustainability?” *Kyoto Journal* 75 Online. 2010. http://www.kyotojournal.org/biodiversity/BD_online/knight/KJknight.pdf, (last checkeed: May.10.2011)

Meiji Jingū homepage: http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/english/index.html (Last checked: May.10.2011)

National Geographic on satoyama: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/12/081209-totoro-japan-forest.html (Last checked: May.10.2011)

NPO Hibiki homepage (english brochure): http://www.npohibiki.com/pdf/HIBIKI_Brochure_Eng.pdf, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

NPO Hibiki homepage in Japanese: http://www.npohibiki.com/, (Last checked: May.09.2011)

Okakura Tenshin, *The Book of Tea*; http://www.gutenberg.org/files/769/769-h/769-h.htm (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Oxford Dictionary Online: http://oxforddictionaries.com, (Last checked: Feb.12.2010)

Shasō Gakkai homepage: www.shasou.org (Last checked: Jan.16. 2011)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy http://plato.stanford.edu/, (Last checked May.09.2011)

Tabuchi, Setsuya. Interview with Sonoda Minoru. “Transmitting a made-in-Japan philosophy of peace to the world: A message of symbiosis from Shinto shrine groves.” *SPF Voices; Newsletter of Sasakawa Peace Foundation*. No. 50, Vol. 2. 2006. www.spf.org/e/pdf/publication/newsletter/2006_2.pdf (Last checked: Jan. 10. 2011)

The Encyclopedia of Shinto:

http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/ (Last checked: May.10.2011)

The Hayao Miyazaki Web: http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/interviews/m_on_mh.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

The Homepage of Jinja Shinpō: http://www.jinja.co.jp/, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Totoro and environmentalism related homepages: www.totoro.or.jp/, www.totoroforestproject.org, http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/644.pdf, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America homepage: http://www.tsubakishrine.org/index.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Tsurugaoka Hachimangū homepage: http://www.hachimangu.or.jp/, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Vintacelli, Elisabeth. "Bittersweet Symphonies," *The Village Voice* (27 October–2 November 1999): http://www.villagevoice.com/film/9943,vincentelli,9453,20.html, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

World Expo in Aichi 2005 homepage: http://www.expo2005.or.jp/en/whatexpo/message_01.html (Last checked: May.09.2011)

Yahoo Shinto discussion group: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/shintoML/, (Last checked: May.10.2011)

Films

Studio: Studio Gibli

Director: Miyazaki Hayao

My Neighbour Totoro (1988)

Princess Mononoke (1997)

Spirited Away (2002)