FROM BELIEF TO RELIGION:
UNDERSTANDING THE GION FESTIVAL
AS A POLITICO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Oğuzhan Kaya, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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Date 18.07.2018

ABSTRACT

From Belief to Religion:

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This thesis is an attempt to conceptualize the development of belief in the history of Japan. It does so through two ways, the first of which is a theological discussion of how systems of belief and later religion was formed and organized throughout key moments in the history of Japan. The second way is the investigation of the historical application of those theological developments in the Gion cultic site and its primary ritual, the Gion Festival. The Gion Festival is taken to be a representative ritual event which has historically been subject to political machinations from power groups. It has, at the same time, been one of the most popular ritual events in Japan throughout history, and is thus a representation of popular belief. The investigation of the Gion cultic complex and the Gion Festival is done by contextual analysis and interpretation, as well as ethnographic research completed in Kyoto, in the summer of 2017. The aim of the thesis is to engage in a discussion concerning how the theoretical formation of belief in Japan has historically been riddled with political implications, and ultimately understand conceptualizing systems of belief as politico-cultural phenomena, in the sense that they can only be fully understood in their relation to their political contexts. In understanding the historical impact of intellectual development and political thought on belief, I hope to recontextualize especially the modern experience of religion in Japan.

ÖZET

İnançtan Dine:

Gion Festivali'ni Siyasi-Kültürel bir Olgu olarak Kavramak

Bu tez Japon tarihinde inancın geçirdiği değişimleri kavramsallaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu hedef iki farklı şekilde izlenmektedir: İlk olarak inanç sistemlerinin ve daha sonra dinlerin Japon tarihinin kilit noktalarında ne şekilde oluşageldiği ve değiştiği teolojik bir çerçevede tartışılmış, ikinci olarak ise bu teolojik değişimlerin Gion kült mekanı ve o mekanın en önemli ritüeli olan Gion Festivali özelinde hangi tarihi uygulamaları meydana getirdiği incelenmiştir. Gion Festivali bu bağlamda tarihi bir süreç içerisinde siyasi hesaplara maruz kalmış ritüel eylemlerin bir örneği olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu niteliğinin yanında Gion Festivali, Japon tarihi boyunca düzenlenegelmiş en yaygın katılımlı ritüel olaylardan birisi olarak popüler inancın da bir yansıması olarak düşünülmektedir. Gion kült mekanı ve Gion festivali, bağlamsal bir metin analizinin yanı sıra 2017 yazında Kyoto'da gerçekleştirilen bir etnografik çalışmanın ışığında incelenmiştir. Bu tezin amacı, Japonya'da inancın teorik inşasının siyasi etkilerinin tartışılması ve sonuç olarak inanç sistemlerinin siyasi-kültürel olgular olarak kavramsallaştırılmasıdır. Umut ediyorum ki düşüncedeki dönüşümlerin ve inanç üzerinde yürütülen siyasi fikirlerin tarihi etkisini kavrayarak, Japon dini deneyiminin çağdaş etkilerini de yeniden yorumlamak mümkün olacaktır.

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My mother, sister and best friend, who helped me get back on my feet when the going got tough, cannot be thanked enough. They deserve all the credit I can give them.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Juliet, whose qualities as a cat far surpass my own as a grad student.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DNBZ	Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho. 161 vols. Tokyo: Meicho Fukyiikai, 1979.
GR	Gunsho ruijū. Hanawa Hokiichi ed. Tokyo: Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai.
JST	Jingū sanpaiki taisei. In Daijingū sōsho. Jingū Shichō, ed. Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1976.
KDZ	Kōbō Daishi zenshū. 8 vols. Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, ed. Kyoto: Dohosha, 1965-68.
KSS	Kaitei shiseki shūran. 33 volumes. Kondō Heijō, ed. Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1983-84.
NKBT	Nihon koten bungaku taikei.100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957-68.
NST	Nihon shiso taikei. 67 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970-82.
SZKT	Shintei zoho kokushi taikei. Kurosaka Katsumi, Kokushi Taikei Henshūkai ed. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1941-51.
T	Taisho shinshū daizōkyō. 100 vols. Takakusu Junjirō et al. eds. Tokyo: Taisho Issaikyō Kankōkai and Daizō Shuppan, 1924-1932.
WST	Watarai shintō taisei. In Daijingū sōsho. Jingū Shichō, ed. Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1976.
ZGR	Zoku Gunsho ruijū. 30 vols. HANAWA Hokiichi, ed. Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1972.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis is to conceptualize and problematize the development of religion in Japan from a historical point-of-view. More specifically, this thesis is the historical analysis of a single but representative tradition of belief, which is the Gion cultic complex and its long lasting ritual, the Gion Festival. Through this study I aim to understand how to deal with the politico-cultural baggage that so heavily affects the modern experience of religion in Japan. I use the word politico-cultural instead of more well-established words such as politico-religious, or sociopolitical firstly because I tried to avoid using the word religion where possible, and secondly because using the word politico-cultural better reflects the political nature of some developments I cover in this thesis that are at first glance purely cultural products. What appear to be purely religious ideas unrelated to politics often hide within themselves political positions that are crucial in understanding both the idea itself and the surrounding context within which the idea is created. Arguing for a stance where political and cultural developments should not be separated is relevant precisely because the presence of political ideas within circles of belief have been uniquely prevalent in Japan throughout history. This stance will hopefully help my effort to see the continuities and ruptures between historical belief and its modern forms in a more nuanced way.

The conceptualization of modern and historical belief is generally dealt with differently among Japanese and Western scholars who mainly use the English language to produce their research. In my observations, a great number of English

speaking researchers form their studies around monographs. Theological and theoretical discussion often comes as part of a research involving a specific site or religious tradition that is projected towards a general understanding of belief in Japan. On the other hand, Japanese scholars lean toward cleanly separating theological discussion with grounded research. Often, you will find historical research grounded in a specific historical time and space that doesn't go into too much detail concerning theological or contextual arguments that surround that unit of analysis. Theoretical research often goes the opposite direction and not enough detail can be found regarding specific historical cases. In formulating my own research, I have tried to find a middle ground between these two approaches, which also affected how I organized my chapters. I tried to first create a theological backbone to which historical and ethnographic research could be based on, and then go into that research with the theoretical and conceptual framework always in the background. I have found that organizing my research this way helps it acquire a double meaning of sorts: First, it is a gateway to understanding the phenomena of belief and religion in historical and contemporary senses. Secondly, it became a detailed historical account of the Gion cultic complex. Because this second part revolves around the same questions that I asked myself when formulating belief in general, my Gion research answers those questions from a more concentrated and microhistorical point of view.

In the writing of this thesis, I have used primary and secondary sources as well as ethnographic research, which came as a result of an eight month research period in Kyoto, Japan. The primary sources that I utilized mostly involve some Yasaka Shrine documents as well as compilations of Buddhist texts belonging to

different traditions, all of which are available to the public. I have also utilized some classical and early-modern[1] literature as well as some texts penned by historical figures. Some of these were already translated to English by other scholars, and I have used and cited these translations where applicable.

My secondary sources mostly reflect modern currents of scholarly writing both in Western and Japanese contexts. While Western and Japanese scholarship seem at first glance to be distinct traditions, one can find that Western scholarship tends to follow the footsteps of the advancements of Japanese research regarding the history of religions in Japan. A reconstructive discourse concerning the historical development of religion started with Kuroda Toshio in the 1970s and 1980s in Japan. I drew heavily from Kuroda in my research, and even a large portion of the Western scholars I reference in my thesis try to build on top of his ideas. In theological discussions, I utilized the works of scholars who have written in this reconstructive style (such as Rambelli, Sakamoto, Teeuwen), and earlier scholars whose ideas formed the base of today's research (Tsuda, Fukunaga et al.). There are an enormous pile of works surrounding the discussion of the history of Buddhism and Shinto, and in most cases, these works tend to follow coherent political ideas. Thus, it is easier to define oneself within a certain tradition or current of writing. For the purposes of this thesis, I have found that the correct way to build my research was in support of the reconstructive discourse, and have used the works of scholars who have written in the more traditional approach to religious scholarship such as Hori, Yanagita and Kitagawa to provide those alternative accounts which I aimed to deconstruct.

[1]I use the word "early-modern" interchangeably with the Edo or Tokugawa Period in Japan (1603-1868) instead of referring to that period as Feudal Japan.

The common conception around the notion of religion is that it simply is a universal aspect pertaining to all human societies. It is easy to understand that this conceptualization has been the norm for most disciplines for many years by taking a look at the works of sociologists such as Weber and Durkheim, or anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss and Murdock. These scholars have based a large portion of their corpus on the idea that religion is universal. Their notion of religion has left a legacy that requires us to view it from a point-of-view of western enlightenment grounded in Mediterranean monotheism. There has been, however, a recent surge in scholarship that supports the argument that religion as we know it today did not exist in a large number of societies before the spread of Western thought around the world. In the case of Japan, this point is argued convincingly by scholars such as Helen Hardacre and Jason A. Josephson.

Throughout this thesis, I will purposefully avoid using the word "religion" and will opt for "belief," or "belief system" when discussing pre-modern conceptualizations of what we today refer to as religion. This is because I argue that "religion" did not exist in pre-modern Japan, to the extent that neither the word "Shinto," one of the two main pillars of modern Japanese religion, nor "religion," as a general concept, had found themselves a place in popular discourse, even among Shinto priests, before the Meiji revolution in 1868.[2] The Japanese word for religion, *shūkyō* 宗教, is a modern one that covers a wide expanse of meanings which previously was not covered under the definitions of other words such as "*buppō*" (the teachings of buddha) or "*shinkō*" (belief). Religion, in turn, as a term created in an effort to answer the onslaught of Western thought, does not cover all the meanings that are indicated by the earlier words whose meanings intersect with it. Indeed, even

[2]Hardacre, "The Shintō priesthood in early Meiji Japan," 295.

the word, *shūkyō* is made up of the meshing of the character *shū,* which means "sect" with *kyō*, which means "teaching." What is therefore implicit in this term is adherence to a particular set of doctrinal teachings with the exclusion of others. This makes it a very ambivalent word that at the same time is used as a direct translation of the word religion, especially in legal and constitutional contexts, whereas many practices that could be viewed as religious from the Western point-of-view are not deemed to be "religious" activities by the Japanese people.

The *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) posits that "the foundation of all religion is that there is a God who has dealings with his creatures and who requires them to worship him."[3] Although the definition of religion has been more flexible as of late, we can safely argue that this conceptualization of religion did hold sway to a considerable extent from approximately the seventeenth century to the twentieth. This is a strictly monotheistic understanding of religion which projects Christian belief to different contexts and defines religion fundamentally as the worship of God in different cultural forms. So the act of identifying anything as a religion in different contexts becomes an effort on the part of European and American thought to recognize the place of God in a given society. The definition of religion today has been extended in an attempt to ditch its previous theocentric postulations. The more contemporaneous conceptualizations identify religion as any set(s) of beliefs that define the relationship between what is human and what is sacred. This definition is equally shaky, because what we historically consider to be religions today often do not operate on a binary relationship between sacred and mundane. It is also significant that this view builds on top of the misconceptions of the two hundred year tradition of defining a eurocentric religion, and inevitably operates on the very ideas

[3]Translated by Fell, *On the concept of religion*, 20.

it has supposedly rejected. In other words, the more contemporaneous definition of religion is forced to define a group of "religions" which it has inherited from the older eurocentric notion.

Turning back to Japan, we can see that early encounters with the concept religion in Japan was always problematic. Josephson points out one early moment where the Japanese encountered the word religion. It was when American warships appeared off the coast of Japan in 1852 and forcefully handed two letters written in the English language meant for the eyes of the Japanese emperor. The appearance of the American warships is a famous moment in Japanese history after which the isolationist policy of Japan[4] quickly deteriorated, and Japan had to agree to open up its ports to Western powers. This encounter is known as the Perry Expedition, a quasi-military and diplomatic expedition by the American fleet involving two separate visits to Japan in 1852 and 1854, the aims of which were to establish diplomatic relations and negotiate trade agreements with Japan, using gunboat diplomacy where necessary.[5] In the letters delivered by the Americans, the term "religion" appeared twice. Americans wanted to ensure the Japanese that the United States had no intention to violate the prohibition of Christianity in Japan, and they utilized the word "religion" to relay their message.[6] The Japanese, however knowledgeable they were in translating English, had no idea what this word meant at the time.[7]

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[4]The isolation policy of Japan (referred to as *sakoku* in Japanese) that lasted from the 1630s to 1854 refers to a foreign policy wherein foreign contact and trade mostly with Western countries were severely limited and foreigners were barred from entering the country except from designated areas.
[5]Gunboat diplomacy, known also as "Big Stick ideology" in American historiography, refers to a strategy employed by imperialist powers from the eighteenth century onward that involves the display of naval power and the threat of destruction that lies in that display to force the hand of foreign countries to comply with the demands of the superior power.
[6]Christianity was strictly banned across Japan since the year 1614, by the Tokugawa shogunate. Emperor Ogimachi had also banned Christianity twice, first in 1565and then in 1568 to limited effect.
[7]Josephson, *The invention of religion in Japan*, 71-74.

Interestingly enough, the problem of identifying religion in Japan was not only a problem for the Japanese. Westerners entering the country in the nineteenth century also had trouble with conceptualizing what religion was in Japan and what was not. A compendium of Japan dated back to 1852 and used by members of the Perry expedition includes a portion which states that religion in Japan consists of Buddhism[8] and as many as thirty-four other religions.[9] In fact, many of the Western writers who wrote about Japan before 1853 attest to different arguments regarding religion. For instance, while Vasilĭ Golovnin (1776-1831) argued that the prevailing religion in Japan is a branch of Hinduism, Germain Meylan (1785-1831) observed that the Japanese people named all religions as Buddhism. It is interesting to note that these two also argued that Shinto was Japan's native religion and their own brand of monotheism. Meylan apparently went so far as to argue that Shinto was essentially the worship of a supreme deity who was not depicted directly but was "implicit in mirrors that reflected God's all-seeing eye."[10]

The second half of the nineteenth century for Japan was a period wherein they were forced to open up their country to the Westerners. This opening up did not only involve an economical relationship but also one where new ideas came to freely flow into Japan; ideas that had to be dealt with and translated accordingly. Josephson argues that the identification of religion in Japan had to do more with international power struggles than with ideas of Enlightenment. It was the result of translators and diplomats bargaining for the production of a terminology that they alone wanted to

[8]Buddhism is a dharmic system of belief that originated in Ancient India around 5th century BC. It is based on a variety of traditions and practices attributed to the teachings of the Buddha. All Buddhist traditions aim to overcome the cycle of death and rebirth, but they do so in different ways. The branch of Buddhism that arrived in Japan during 2nd century BC is referred to as Mahayana Buddhism.
[9]Macfarlane, *Japan*, 203.
[10]Josephson, 13.

define.[11] In the end, religion came to refer to Christianity for the most part, and specifically the freedom to be granted to those who adhered to Christianity, in the international discussion that the shogunate engaged with Western countries. As new struggles of power emerged domestically around the concept of religion, religion would diffuse into society as a more encompassing concept that included Buddhism as a subject to which religious freedom could be granted. In 1884, Inoue Kowashi, an influential figure in the Meiji Government stated that religion was "perhaps the greatest and foremost problem in the way of political policy."[12] This identification probably owed to the great change religion would bring upon modes of governance, policy making, and the necessity that it brought in having to define the imperial system vis-a-vis religion. What we will cover is how the Meiji government that toppled the shogunate after a bout of internal struggle and international pressure in the 1860s, came to use or fumble the newly introduced concept of religion in creating a form Shinto that would function as state ideology which went above and beyond what was identified as religion in Japan. As I have briefly noted above, that word Shinto 神道 ("Way of the Gods"), today, refers to one of the two major religions of Japan, the other being Buddhism. In common parlance, it is used to indicate the traditional, ancient and historical religion of Japan as well as the practice of that religion in modern times. I will start with clarifying how this is an erroneous conceptualization.

The English Wikipedia, as of 11 March 2018 describes Shinto as "the traditional religion of Japan that focuses on ritual practices to be carried out diligently in order to establish a connection between present-day Japan and its

[11]Ibid, p. 73.
[12]Inoue, "Kyōdōshoku haishi ikenan," 389.

ancient past."[13] It continues with the statement that "Shinto practices were first recorded and codified in the written historical records of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* in the 8th century." The Japanese Wikipedia shares this understanding and argues that Shinto is a religion that has its origins in ancient Japanese belief, and that it was gradually formed with folk belief at its foundation.[14] Echoing these two definitions, Inoue in his Shinto: A Short History, published as late as 2003 and also cited by Wikipedia, states that "In modern scholarship, the term is often used with reference to kami[15] worship and related theologies, rituals and practices. In these contexts, 'Shinto' takes on the meaning of 'Japan's traditional religion', as opposed to foreign religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and so forth."[16] These conceptualization perfectly present what most people who are familiar with the word Shinto think of when they encounter it.

It is widely understood today that "Shinto" kami and Buddhist deities were separated during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) as the new government tried desperately to modernize and rationalize their country. Shinto was elevated to a status of national religion that was supposed to govern all other religions. It was used as a tool of a strict imperial apparatus that deified the emperor and legitimized the expansionist policies of the state of Japan. Shinto was later discredited and cast down from its high ground by the United States of America after the end of World War II. The United States took measures such as prohibiting the education of Shinto to elementary school students, stripped the emperor from his divine status, secularized

[13]Retrieved from http://www.wiki-zero.com/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvU2hpbnRv in 11 March 2018. The definition is cited from John Nelson, *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine,* 1996, 7–8.
[14]Retrieved from http://www.wiki-zero.com/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9qYS53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvJUU3JUE1JTlFJUU5JTgxJTkz in 11 March 2018.
[15]The term "kami" refers to local deities and covers a wide expanse of different divinities.
[16]Inoue, *Shinto*, 1.

the government apparatus and cut state funding for Shinto Organizations, thus confining Shinto to a space designated for all the other religions and sects being practiced in Japan. Before US intervention in Japanese religious institutions, the office of emperor enjoyed an almost undisputed claim to divinity, which served also as part of the ideological apparatus through which Japan legitimized its aggressive imperial policies especially from the early twentieth century until the end of WWII. I will go through the historical background of state control over religion as well as the tradition of identifying the emperor as a divine being in later chapters, in order for us to realize that the modern conceptualization of religion did not happen in a vacuum.

Today in 2018, Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan are clearly distinguishable from one another: Its priests wear different garbs, and the deities enshrined within their buildings are clearly separated as either kami or buddha. It is often assumed that even before the separation of kami and buddhas in the Meiji Period, Shinto existed as indigenous Japanese religiosity, not bound by formal doctrine it operated through native kami and diverse forms of folk belief. At the same time, it resembled organized religion in that it had shrines and specific rituals, and also formed the basis of Japanese ancestor worship. In other words, whatever historical experiences of belief that cannot be explained clearly by the modern conceptualization of Buddhism, and those that are thought to be native to the soil of Japan are aggregated today under the rubric of Shinto. The problem with this is that, firstly, those experiences of belief that are thought to be continuing in an unbroken chain were not so homogeneous that they can be categorized under a single ambiguous title that supposedly provides the ideological basis of all these different systems of belief. These systems, throughout history, were always interlocked with

each other and contained defining elements of continental belief systems within them, so much so, that it is impossible to conceptualize them correctly without Buddhism, Taoism and other traditions which have their roots on mainland Asia. Secondly, even if such a homogeneous categorization was possible, the word Shinto is ill-suited to actually deliver on the claim that it can serve as their ideological basis naturally, as the Shinto tradition itself was developed under the confines of a Buddhist rubric. Metaphorically speaking, if we consider our unit of analysis as a word that we must read, we can argue that it is not only written backwards, but also upside down. It is doubly misleading to buy into the idea of Shinto as it is nonchalantly identified today. One of my main purposes in this thesis is, therefore, the identification of Shinto in its historical context, an analysis as to why it has become what it is today and how it effects contemporary religious experience.

The central problematique that I will deal with in this thesis is how the Gion cultic center and the Gion Festival can reveal us how belief in Japan has developed and how it is being experienced today. This was, in a way, a very fundamental concern especially because of how modern religion in Japan is defined by the relationship between Shinto and Buddhism. That relationship creates a very sensitive and political bubble around religion, as both adherents and scholars struggle to find comfortable stances to define it. This is obviously due mainly to the developments in Japan's late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which saw the championing of nationalism, imperialism and Shinto.

Kuroda Toshio (1926-93), whose work I drew heavily upon in the writing of this thesis, provides two patterns of thought with regards to how Shinto is conceptualized today. The first view that I have already underlined is by far the most

common, which argues that "despite the dissemination of Buddhism and Confucianism, the religion called Shinto has existed without interruption throughout Japanese history."[17] The second, and perhaps the more dangerous one on account that it is harder to see through, is the notion that aside from whether or not it existed under the name Shinto, there have been Shinto-like beliefs that were present throughout history. This view is particularly troublesome in that it is centered around the same hypotheses made in the first argument, but provides a more sophisticated framework that obfuscates its basic assumptions. Kuroda traces this view back to *kokugaku* scholars, most effectively to Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), although it is also particularly prevalent in the works of the famous folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962).

Kuroda's own treatment of Shinto is a deconstruction of the way in which the history of Shinto has been treated in the ways mentioned above. According to him, shintō[18] existed throughout history only as a word and not as the phenomena it has been argued to refer to. Shinto, as a topic of research, is based on creating a sort of floating signifier that links together unrelated phenomena. The existence of the contemporary practices surrounding various shrines and kami throughout history that Shinto is thought to be governing is unrelated to the fact that Shinto was never a collective term that could be used to refer to the totality of such practices. Historically, "shintō" was not used to refer to the reality behind the word but only to the word itself. In the same sense, the meaning of the word was never determined by

[17]Kuroda, "Shinto in the history of Japanese religion," 1.
[18]From this point on, I will use the word "shintō" when referring to the use of the word in its historical context and when I think that it does not refer to its modern form. Conversely, I have opted to use the word "Shinto" when I refer to the Shinto religion as it is understood today.

the praxis of contemporary belief systems, but rather by reflection on the word shintō itself.[19]

My central object of analysis in this investigation will be the famous Gion Festival in Kyoto, Japan. The Gion Festival is one of the so-called three great festivals of Japan and the grand event of the Yasaka Shrine's annual ritual cycle. The Yasaka Shrine is the name acquired by the Gion Shrine after the 1868 Shintoization process that came with the Meiji Restoration, after which the Gion Festival was supposed to become a Shinto affair. Since the festival had been an incredibly syncretic ritual event since its very inception, involved the participation of the people to a great extent, and had become so big of an event that the shape and form of the Yasaka Shrine was only effective to a certain degree on the way in which it was conducted. I will start with a geographical analysis of the shrine and the larger landscape on which this thesis is grounded, before moving onto the actual investigation.

The city of Kyoto is located in the central part of the island of Honshu in Japan. It has served as the imperial capital of Japan for more than a thousand years since 794 before the title of capital was taken over by Tokyo in 1868. Kyoto lies in a valley located in the eastern part of the mountainous region called the Tamba Highlands. The valley that today is occupied almost fully by the city proper is known as the Yamashiro basin, and it is surrounded by mountains on three sides: Higashiyama 東山 ("eastern mountain") in the east, Nishiyama 西山 ("western mountain") in the west, and Kitayama 北山 ("northern mountain") in the north. The mountains play a big role in the day to day life of the city, as some streets and houses in the peripheries are literally at an arm's length away from them. Significantly, the

[19]Teeuwen, "From jindō to shinto."

alignment of one's physical direction does not work the same way in Japan as it does in most Western and Mediterranean societies. This is to say that the generally accepted way of attaining a sense of direction in Japan is based on the four cardinal directions instead of one's own positional senses, like the left, right, front and back. This is observable in the assignment of names for immovable objects such as gates and places. The aforementioned mountains, for instance, are specifically named after what direction they are on with regards to the city. It is impossible to lose one's sense of direction in the open spaces of Kyoto, for one look towards the horizon can relate to the individual which direction is south where there is no mountain range to be found.[20]

The city is mostly organized around two rivers: Katsuragawa to the west and Kamogawa to the east. Both rivers cut the city mostly from north to south, and join with other smaller rivers on the way to the Osaka bay to the south. The flooding especially of the Kamogawa during the rainy season in summer was a historical source of woe for the people of Kyoto, although with the modern drainage system, a majority of the flooding is restricted to the lower levels of the pathways at the side of the rivers.

The physical organization of Kyoto was fashioned during the eighth century after the Tang capital Chang'an, when Emperor Kanmu (737-806) relocated the capital from Nara, in the shape of a scaled down replica. This means that the city was rectangular in form, and was divided to square shaped wards that were approximately equal in size.[21] The portion of the city that lies south of the Suzaku Gate of the imperial palace is divided into two symmetrical parts called *ukyō* ("Right Capital")

[20]The four cardinal directions were of theological significance for Taoist beliefs and Taoist inspired practices such as feng shui.
[21]Ebrey & Walthall, *East Asia*, 103.

and *sakyō* (“Left Capital”). Interestingly, the left-right partition is not made by centering the city on a map based on the four cardinal directions but from the point-of-view of the emperor. Because the emperor sits on his throne at the north, he looks down upon the city from the north, and thus the left portion of the city is actually the eastern part, and the Right Capital lies at the West (Figure 1).

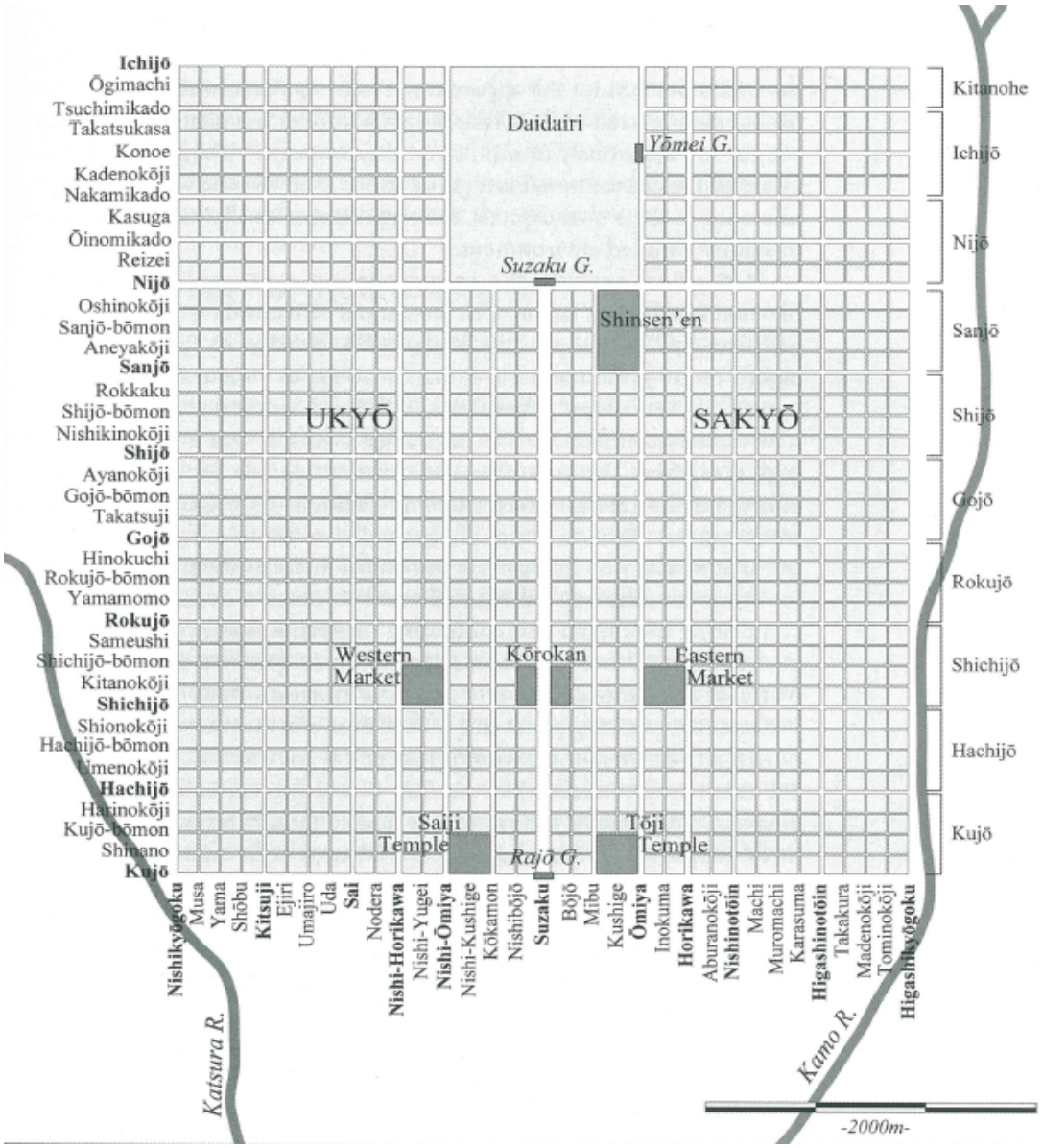

Figure 1. The city plan of Heian-kyō.[22]

[22]Taken from Stavros, *Kyoto*, 9.

Although Kyoto is now considerably larger than it was in the Heian Period (794-1185), it largely maintains its rectangular grid structure, especially at the center of the city. An eastern section of the city (northeastern *sakyō*) today is called the Higashiyama ward, which lies between the Kamogawa and the eastern mountain range. The ward borders the Sanjō 三条 street to the north and the Jūjō 十条 street to the south. Within the eastern end of the ward lies the Yasaka Shrine, which is located just below the mountain that forms the natural eastern border of the city. This is significant in that while the western part of the ward is covered mostly with residential buildings, the eastern side is covered by forests and slopes that sharply rise towards the mountain. Because the Yasaka Shrine lies just on the edge of the natural border to the east, it is no surprise that it was historically considered to be outside the official boundaries of Kyoto (Figure 2).[23]

Having set our backdrop in which we will be grounded for most of the remainder of this thesis, let us go through the topics and issues we will be dealing in each chapter. The central issue of chapter two will be to investigate and analyze the role of Shinto in the history of Japanese religions. More specifically, I will write about how Shinto developed in an overwhelmingly Buddhist framework, and how it was used for a significant period of time to refer to concepts within that framework, rather than to something external to it. I will investigate the history of Shinto as part of an overwhelmingly Buddhist structure, rather than as a syncretic system in the traditional sense wherein Shinto is readily accepted as an essential aspect of Japanese society. My aim in this chapter will be to historically set up Japanese religiosity so that we can later place the Gion cultic complex within that system, and in doing so

[23]I am not providing any references here as this point is further explained in chapter 3 and 4 with the relevant sources.

realize the political burden carried by religious sites both in pre-modern and modern Japan. Understanding the theology behind the historical process of Japan's religious development is very significant, as without a theological discussion, grasping how Shinto developed and came to separate itself from Buddhism can not be possible.

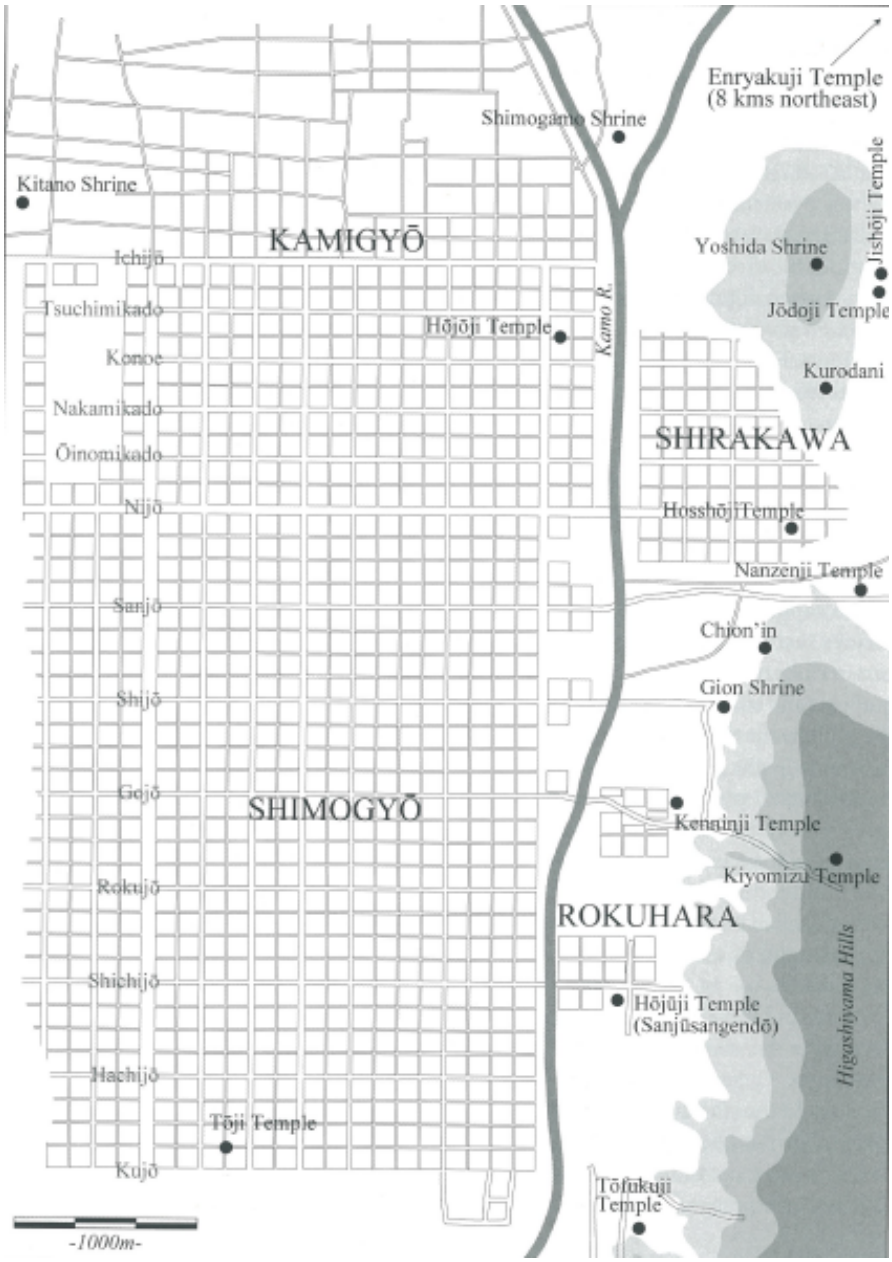

Figure 2. Map of temples in Eastern Kyoto.[24]

[24]Stavros, *Kyoto*, 64.

The first chapter is concentrated heavily on the identification and conceptualization of Shinto, and although it mostly involves historiographical and theoretical discussion, I have also tried to demonstrate practical and early applications of Buddhist and Shinto concepts is specific historical contexts. This is significant in that the whole thesis is based on conceptualizing shinto as something inseparable from continental traditions of belief. Because historical and modern religiosity has treated Shinto in in completely different ways, understanding the historical presence of shinto is a crucial matter. Identifying Shinto this way is an argument in and of itself because of how politically inclined the development of religion has been in Japan, and arguing for a tradition of Shinto inseparable from Buddhism instead of a syncretic tradition that contain different pure components within itself changes the meaning behind anything said after making that statement.

If I may frame the second chapter as presenting a theological and historiographical lens through which we can understand how belief in Japan can be understood, contextualized and analyzed, then the third chapter will aim to do something similar in a much smaller scale. Our aim in chapter 3 will be to further narrow down our unit of analysis and carry over what we have discussed up until then to the central object of this thesis, which is the Gion cultic complex. I believe that this will be best achieved by looking at the systems of belief from which Gion emerged. Only through understanding the context and environment of belief from which Gion originated can we understand the long standing politico-cultural significance of the cultic site. While discussing Gion's place within an exo-esoteric Buddhist-kami network, we will go through events and concepts which are crucial for us to understand the existence of Gion today; from its emergence and

development within a religious framework dominated by Buddhism, to how it served as a sort of battleground through which political and cultural ideas were expressed. I aim to demonstrate in this chapter how belief was historically politicized in Japan and how cultural phenomena were inseparable from ideas pertaining to power through a longue-duree historical account of the Gion festival. The section having to do with the early-modern shape of the festival ties it to chapter four both chronologically and thematically, as the sociopolitical history and organization behind the festival becomes apparent. It demonstrates the festival as a phenomenon affected by intellectual currents and class politics.

In the fourth and last chapter, I will go through the developments considering the religious landscape of Japan mostly from the late-Tokugawa period (mid-eighteenth century) onward. We will see that the dynamic between the theological and political aspects of belief coming to a climax, to the point that it will be impossible to say anything about religion without touching upon the political realities of these tumultuous times. This discussion will serve as the foundations upon which I will analyze the modern Gion cultic complex and its crowning ritual event: The Gion Festival. The Gion Festival will be thought of as a coin with two sides. The first side will be its doctrinal organization, which has to do with the portion of it that is controlled by the Yasaka Shrine and the various official rituals that are conducted throughout the duration of the festival. The second side will be the public nature and face of the festival. As the largest ritual event in Japan, the festival occupies a significant weight in the public psyche, as both an enormous local event for the participants, organizers and Kyotoites, and a touristic event for outsiders. This chapter will culminate in a discussion of mentalities, with a particular focus on how

the contemporary Gion Festival is still very much affected by the historical developments regarding belief systems in Japan, most effective of which were those that came with modernization and imperialism. I will heavily make use of my ethnographic research, and will try to demonstrate the festival as a result of modern sociopolitical negotiations and struggles within the city of Kyoto. My fieldwork in Japan has taken the shape of me observing the rituals surrounding the Gion Festival organized by the Yasaka Shrine as well as observing the efforts of the townsfolk preparing their own participation in the festival. This chapter is meant as a sort of chronological and thematic climax to the first three chapters where I will have established in the second chapter a theoretical framework that covers the historical development of belief in general, as well as a detailed historical account of the Gion cult and its festival where this framework was put to use in a grounded historical analysis. Chapter four will be the point at which these two narratives will converge into a whole through which I will try to understand the modern experience of Gion. In the end, I hope to have found a satisfactory answer to the question of how the nation-state was historically constructed in relation to religion and how this affects the experience of religion in Japan today.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THEOLOGY BEHIND BUDDHISM AND SHINTO

2.1 The early usage of the word Shinto

As I have stated in the introduction, Shinto is used most commonly to refer to Japan's indigenous religion. It is held as a common view that this meaning behind the word was present from early on, and the ancient text *Nihon shoki* is often put forward as early evidence of such a usage. The reason for this is quite straightforward, as the word shintō is thought to have first appeared in the *Nihon shoki*. The word itself can be encountered a total of three times in the text.[25] These are:

1) "Emperor [Yōmei] believed in *buppō* (the teachings of buddha)[26] and respected *shintō."*

2) "Emperor Kōtoku believed in *buppō* but disdained *shintō.* He cut down the trees at Ikukunitama Shrine."

3) In the most tricky entry, Emperor Kōtoku issues an edict that leaves the land in the hands of his descendants, stating that "my children will rule it, as a kami would (*kamunagara*)." The meaning of *kamunagara* 惟神 is explained in an entry that states: *Kamunagara* means "to follow shintō" or "to carry shintō in oneself.'

Now, the most common and traditional explanation with regards to shintō appearing in the *Nihon shoki* is that these passages from the ancient text presents Shinto as Japan's indigenous religion standing apart from Buddhism. A remarkably

[25]Aston, *Nihongi*, vol. 2, 106, 195, 226.
[26]仏法 can also be read as *hotoke no minori*, similar to how *shintō* can be read as *kami no michi.*

representative example of this interpretation can be found in Kitagawa where he states that the Japanese people were compelled to create a signifier for their hitherto unsystematized religious tradition under the sudden impact of continental traditions such as Buddhism and Confucianism.[27] Thus, they borrowed the Chinese characters 神 and 道 to create a new representative term.[28] Because of such a poor and agenda-oriented contextualization of the word shintō, the common view backed up by many scholars traces an unbroken and autonomous Shinto tradition back in history to ancient times, often in an attempt to find meaning in a unified and native system of belief.

Kuroda points out that the word shintō is used in a variety of ways in the *Nihon shoki*, first as "the authority, power, or deeds of a kami, the status of kami, being a kami, or the kami itself". Secondly, it could refer to the action of the kami; and thirdly, to popular kami belief in general. Lastly, it could refer to Taoism.[29] Kuroda draws the first three interpretations from Tsuda Sōkichi who understands the words as "Japan's indigenous belief," which is not so different than referring to them as Shinto. There is little nuance in this reading and it is quite similar in its operation to blocking the problematization of the word shintō. The last interpretation is borrowed from Fukunaga Mitsuji who argues that shintō was synonymous with Taoism in China during this period.[30] Fukunaga's study is in line with the diffusion and influence of Taoism for about 700 years until the *Nihon shoki* was compiled. The

[27]Confucianism is a school of thought dating back to the ancient Chinese philosopher Kongzi 孔子 (551-479 BC). The tradition emphasizes the social role of the family with a particular focus on male seniority within a harmonious social framework. Confucian thought puts great significance on the sacrality of ordinary human activity, and is known to forego otherworldly spiritual manifestations of the sacred.
[28]Kitagawa, *On understanding Japanese religion*, 51-52.
[29]For a detailed explanation of how Shinto is used in the *Nihon shoki*, see Kuroda, "Shinto in the history of Japanese religion."
[30]Fukunaga, "Tennō to shikyū to shinjin."

influence of Taoism showed itself within a variety of groups from common communities to belief systems closely tied to imperial authority. The terminology used in the imperial cult of Japan reflects this strong Taoist flavor. These include, but are not limited to the veneration of swords and mirrors,[31] the concept of *hijiri* which refer to reclusive saints similar to Taoist immortals, and the word *tennō*.[32]

An investigation of the Ise Shrine, the ancestral shrine of the imperial family of Japan, can be helpful to bring into light just how strong the influence of Taoism was on the imperial cult. The Ise Shrine is often pointed out as evidence on the existence of Shinto as an indigenous and separate religion than continental religious tradition. Often put forward is the argument that Ise has been dedicated to Shinto since long ago and that any sort of Buddhism was forbidden on the shrine grounds. Later in this chapter, I will try to debunk this idea, showing how the rituals conducted there drew from and resembled continental religion, and how it was not possible to imagine Ise without Taoism and, in fact, Buddhism.

The entry of Taoism into Japan is a debated topic, but it is generally thought to have influentially crossed over from China and Korea during the Nara (710-794) and Heian (794-1185) periods. The presence of Taoist influence in Japan has never been a question of if, but of how. To briefly explain, there was a significant and deliberate importation of Chinese thought into Japan during the Nara and Heian Periods. What scholars have been debating on concerning Taoist presence in Japan is how exactly Taoism showed itself and the extent to which it was incorporated. A big part of the problem here is the proper identification of what exactly is Taoism and what is not. Taoism is a very multifaceted tradition that includes philosophical ideas,

[31]The sacred sword and mirror have been a cornerstone of the imperial cult of Japan for centuries.
[32]*Tennō* literally means "heavenly prince", but more importantly, it is how one referred to the Japanese emperor.

cultic belief, myths, cosmology, divination, medicine and magic all in one eclectic belief system. To complicate things further, many of these aspects are shared with Chinese cultural practices, and it is at times a very difficult proposition to draw the line between where cultural practice ends and Taoism starts. In the case of Japan, this makes it very hard to categorize between Taoist practices that diffused from China, and the wholesale importation of Chinese thought and cultural heritage. Taoist traditions that are considered today to be religious doctrine and practice are also heavily influenced by Buddhism. As Livia Kohn points out, the influence of Taoism in Japan is first, a question of definition and then a question of degree, both of which are very difficult to determine.[33]

The Ise Shrine is the ancestral shrine of the imperial family of Japan, who trace their origins back to Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, according to the imperial cult. The shrine is located in the Mie Prefecture in South-East Japan. It was and still is the shrine that honors the deities who are the ancestors of the imperial house of Japan and, as far as the imperial cult is concerned, the country itself. It is widely believed that the shrine was exclusively patronized by the imperial family from the time of Emperor Temmu (673-89 AD). The formal organization of the Ise Shrine, however, likely happened during the ninth century reforms.

The Ise Shrine is surrounded by a myriad of smaller shrines dedicated to different deities, most of which are *tochigami* 土地神, local deities tied to the land. The two primary shrines however are dedicated to the supreme deities of the land of Japan: Amaterasu and Toyouke. The smaller shrines are often considered to be branches of the two primary ones. The two most important shrines of Ise are called the Inner and Outer Shrines, or *Naikū* 内宮 and *Gekū* 外宮, both of which are Taoist

[33]Kohn, "Taoism in Japan," 391.

terms meaning “inner palace” and “detached palace” respectively.[34]

While the Inner Shrine houses the ancestral deity of the imperial family Amaterasu, Toyouke is enshrined in the Outer Shrine. The composition of Ise, according to Yoshino Hiroko, is heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy and especially Taoism. In her theory, she states that the Inner and Outer Shrines were built in such a way to imitate Polaris (*tai yi*) and the Big Dipper constellation. She further states that Polaris especially played a very significant role in the festivals conducted at the Ise Shrine, so much so that the time of the Kammiso-no-matsuri[35] and Kannamesai[36] are based on the position of the Big Dipper in the sky. The cults of Polaris and the Big Dipper are once again concepts associated with Taoism. The probability of Taoism having a profound impact on Japan’s systems of belief is not small, as discussed by Kuroda Toshio’s statements in the following passage:

> Early Japanese perhaps regarded their ceremonies and beliefs as Taoist, even though they may have differed from those in China. Hence, it is possible to view these teachings, rituals, and even the concepts of imperial authority and of nation as remnants of an attempt to establish a Taoist tradition in Japan. If that is so, Japan's ancient popular beliefs were not so much an indigenous religion but merely a local brand of Taoism, and the word Shinto simply meant Taoism. The accepted theory today is that a systematic form of Taoism did not enter Japan in ancient times, but it is not unreasonable to think that over a long period of time Taoism gradually pervaded Japan's religious milieu until medieval times when Buddhism dominated it completely.[37]

Having said all of this, a significant portion of the argument is borrowed from Fukunaga, whose position on the influence of Taoism on Japanese systems of belief has been studied by Livia Kohn. Kohn characterizes Fukunaga’s views as “iconoclastic.” She uses the word to differentiate between the traditional approaches

[34]Kuroda, “Shinto in the history of Japanese religion,” 6.
[35]神衣祭, the festival in which clothing is offered to the ancestral deity
[36]神嘗祭, the festival in which food is offered to the ancestral deity
[37]Kuroda, “Shinto in the history of Japanese religion,” 6-7.

to studying Taoism in Japan which "never question the sources or critically evaluate the exact role Taoist elements played in early Japan," and the iconoclastic approach which does the opposite and sees the key elements of modern Japanese identity, like the Tennō system, as shaped by Taoism.[38] For Kohn, these are essentially political stances on state ideology representing two extremes, which are closely tied to debates concerning Shinto. Kohn argues further that the best scholarship is done in the third approach, which she dubs "neutral." The most significant point that she makes for our purposes is the statement that the iconoclastic approach, represented most strongly by Fukunaga, comes explicitly from a background of State Shinto criticism, and the evidence of direct Taoist religious influence on Japan still leaves a lot to be desired. Personally, while I agree with her criticism that both traditions have come to conclusions too quickly with regards to Taoism's effect on Japan, I do find Kohn's stance of consciously dodging state ideology equally, if not more, problematic than the "iconoclastic" approach. Holding a stance towards a sociopolitical phenomenon, unless it sharply dictates where you land irrelevant of the data provided to you, does not correlate with bad research. Furthermore, looking for Taoism only in a historical landscape where the state does not affect religious experience is incredibly naive, and cannot hope to grasp the full extent of the role of Taoism in Japan. All in all, this is still a hotly debated issue, and a definitive conclusion as to the extent of Taoism's direct influence on Shinto cannot yet be made. I believe it is highly probable that the direct influence of Taoism has been overemphasized by Fukunaga's school of thought, and a lot more research and evidence is ultimately necessary to start agreeing with Fukunaga's arguments.

[38]Kohn, "Taoism in Japan," 395.

Besides putting such a huge emphasis on Taoism, there is another explanation pertaining to the meaning of the word shintō in the earliest texts. The term appears in the *Nihon shoki* three times, only one time in the *Shoku Nihongi*, and does not appear at all in other early texts such as the *Kojiki* or the *Manyōshū*. Mark Teeuwen argues, in what I perceive as the most persuasive argument surrounding the word, that this is because shintō was probably Buddhist jargon. "Shintō" only appears in the parts of the texts that have to do with the establishment of Buddhism in Japan. For instance, the two times that the term appears in the *Nihon Shoki* are in passages regarding Emperor Kōtoku. A quick dive into ancient history reminds us that it was during the time of Emperor Kōtoku when the Soga clan, the first patrons of Buddhism, was overthrown. In the first year of Taika (645), Kōtoku issued the edict that ensured the protection of Buddhism by the court and laid the foundations of Buddhist ideas and institutions under the *ritsuryō* system.[39] Teeuwen's argument is backed up by the usage of the term shintō by many early Japanese Buddhist texts, specifically from the eighth century onward.

A very relevant example of the usage of shintō in such a context can be found in the biography of "the great master" of Tendai Buddhism in Japan, Saichō (767-822). It is written in this text that Saichō climbed Mount Kaharu and "saved the shintō" who lived there. It is further written that this shows us that the power of his benevolence reached even beyond his four obligations as a monk.[40] "The four obligations" (*shion* 四恩) of a monk refer to obligations, in no particular order, towards sentient beings, the three treasures of Buddhism, one's parents, and the king.

[39]The ritsuryō system was a system of law based on Chinese law and Confucianism that started to be applied with the Taika Reforms in 645. Ritsuryō involved both criminal and administrative law, and was heavily influenced by the political and administrative system seen in Tang China.
[40]ZGR 8, *ge*, 471.

Saichō's benevolence had extended his obligations because it even reached the kami who are not included in the list.[41] Interestingly, Yoshida Kazuhiko points out that the term here is used to refer not to kami in an abstract sense, but kami as a being that obstructs Buddhism. Further, this usage closely resembles the use of the words *shendao* in Chinese Buddhist texts. In those examples, which are biographies of Chinese monks from the texts *Gaosengzhuan* and *Xu gaosengzhuan*, *shendao* refers to local deities who obstruct Buddhism and are later assimilated into it by monks. This theory is also significant in the sense that it directly challenges the idea that domesticating local deities into Buddhism is a unique characteristic of Japanese Buddhism. Teeuwen goes as far as to persuasively argue that the first reading of the word 神道 was not *shintō* but *jindō*, as the first furigana[42] of the term found in *Konjaku monogatarishū* (a twelfth century text) is written this way, and it finds its meaning once again from its opposition to Buddhism. There are, however, a number of examples in historical texts that use the word 神道 *shintō*/*jindō* in a variety of ways.[43]

2.2 The medieval conceptualization of kami belief and the influence of Buddhism

Before understanding the creation of Shinto as a full-blown overarching concept that governs the operation of shrines in the modern world, we have to supplement the previous discussion regarding the origin of the term with a study of its practical application in history. I believe that the investigation of medieval kami belief is best suited for this endeavor, as the influence of Buddhism in Japanese belief systems and

[41]The meaning of Shinto as it is used in the passage is often thought to simply mean "kami."
[42]Syllabic characters utilized in Japanese to indicate a word's pronunciation.
[43]Detailed discussion about the reading of the word 神道 can be found in Teeuwen, "From jindō to shinto."

the place of kami therein is very evident in this period. The period also marks the beginnings of Shinto as a concept and is necessary to discuss in order to understand modern Shinto, and the invention of religion in Japan.

It is generally agreed upon that Buddhism and kami belief gradually blended into one another between the eighth and eleventh centuries in a process that is often referred to as *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 (syncretism of kami and buddhas). We should note, however, that the translation is misleading in that *shinbutsu shūgō* does not refer to a syncretic blending of two abstract concepts called Shinto and Buddhism but to a complex cultic system which included and incorporated non-Buddhist elements into a mostly Buddhist framework. This is in contrast to the conceptualization of medieval Japanese belief as a two-headed system, one involving shrines practicing shintō and the other Buddhist temples, both doing their own thing with some mixing in the spheres where they intersect. We should rather think of it as an institutionally and doctrinally mixed system wherein no pure components exist.[44] We should also keep in mind that this formation was a historical development and new forms of belief as well as doctrinal explanations dovetailed its creation.

Some new teachings in the late ancient and medieval periods saw kami as benevolent deities protecting Buddhism or as subjects, much like humans, who sought enlightenment and an escape from samsara. The two most popular forms of doctrines were *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (essence and trace) and *hongaku* 本覚 (original enlightenment). *Honji suijaku* refers to the doctrine which argues that Buddhist deities appear as kami in order to save all sentient beings in Japan. The kami are the traces, or manifestations of buddhas who are the true forms and

[44]This conceptualization of medieval belief in Japan is following in the footsteps of many recent works of scholars such as Kuroda, Rambelli, Grapard etc.

essences of various kami. *Hongaku* thought, on the other hand indicated the presence of an innate buddhahood within all sentient beings and argued that kami were the pure spirits of the buddhas. Some *hongaku* practitioners, especially in the Edo Period, even saw inanimate objects as in a state of enlightenment. In all of these teachings and doctrines, the position of the kami was subordinate to the buddhas within a greater Buddhist framework. These doctrines are linked with the concept of "avatar," which is an incarnation of an immortal or supreme being in our world. The word "avatar" is derived from the Sanskrit word *avatāra*, which means "descent." Suitably, the word denotes a descent of a buddha into the mortal realms for specific purposes, such as saving and enlightening people or vanquishing evil. Theologically, the concept was mostly associated with the Hindu deity Vishnu, but was also extended to other Hindu deities such as Shiva or Ganesha. In the case of Japan, the concept was mostly applied in the doctrines of *honji suijaku* and *hongaku,* which found different meanings and practices for the word shintō in the medieval period.

A passage from an eleventh century text explaining the relationship between Buddhism and "*shintō*" is also one of the earliest texts in which the *honji suijaku* doctrine is clearly described:

> In truth, the moon of the presence of original enlightenment illuminates the Lotus Seat in the state of Buddhahood; but the sun, who dims its brightness and mingles with the dust, descends to the assembled shrines in the form of *shintō.*[45]

The author of this text was Ōe no Masafusa whose writings include the first instances of the assignment of *honji* (buddha essence) to a number of shrines including the Gion cultic complex.

[45]Iwashimizu fudan nenbutsu engi, in *Honchō bunshū* 53, Enkyō 2 (1070), SZKT 30, 221. Translation from Teeuwen, "From jindō to shinto."

In the *Nakatomi no harae kunge*, a twelfth century text that is aimed to decipher the esoteric Buddhist meaning behind the purification rituals of the Nakatomi clan (the progenitors of the Fujiwara clan)[46], there are numerous passages that use the *honji suijaku* doctrine along with the word "shintō" which helps us tremendously to determine how the term was used during medieval times. A passage on Shingon Buddhism in the *Nakatomi no harae kunge* describes the relationship between kami and buddhas like this:

> The buddha adopts a state in which kami and buddha are not two different things but are one and the same. The Buddha constantly bestows his trace on shintō.[47]

Another passage translated from the same text by Teeuwen and Van der Veere is the following:

> Although within and without [the Buddhist teachings] the words are different, [kami and buddhas] are identical as means of salvation. Kami are the spirits of the various buddhas; the buddhas constitute the essence of the various kami. Therefore it is written in a sutra: "The buddhas dwell in non-duality, and they always manifest their traces in the *jindō*."[48]

In both instances, the word "shintō" is used in reference to the state of being kami. One thing to note, however, is that the word not only refers to the form of the kami but also to the way in which they serve as traces of the buddhas. In other words, kami are presented in these passages as ways through which people interact with the buddhas.

A significant aspect of the approximately four hundred year long period between 700-1100 AD., when the amalgamation of kami and buddhas gradually

[46]The Fujiwara clan was a powerful clan of nobles in the ancient times, and were the de facto leaders of the Japanese state almost throughout the Heian Period (794-1185). I will delve into more detail about them in the next chapter.
[47]KDZ, vol. 5, 160.
[48]Teeuwen & Van der Veere, *Nakatomi no harae kunge*, 21. The word *jindō* here is written with the same kanji as *shintō.* Teeuwen and Van der Veele are purposefully opting for this reading which I have avoided for convenience's sake.

increased in prevalence, was the isolation of kami from buddhas in specific contexts. The process of association between kami and buddhas was not a complete assimilation of one concept into the other but a complex integration of belief systems. Some systems chose to separate the two concepts of divine entities, and in many cases, kami and buddhas continued their existence as deities distinguished from one another. Some examples of the conscious separation of kami and buddhas include the ban of Buddhist rites at provincial and court offices throughout the duration of the imperial enthronement ceremony, the *daijōe*, in the year 871.[49] Satō argues that the notion of Buddhism being made taboo on days of kami rituals became a well established norm during the late Heian Period.[50] This process of separating kami and buddhas is often referred to as *shinbutsu kakuri* 神仏隔離 (the isolation of kami and buddhas). The first chronological example of the practice of *shinbutsu kakuri* is thought to have been seen in the Ise Shrine. The shrine's *Gishikichō,* dated 804, urges that taboo words be used to refer to the Buddhist concepts of buddha, sutra, monk etc., and in 816 the Ōnakatomi head priest of the shrine seems to have been punished for conducting Buddhist and kami rites in parallel to one another.[51]

Something we should notice in between these examples is that all instances of conscious separation of kami and buddhas involve the political elite. Indeed, all early examples relating to this phenomenon include a group of contemporary elites trying to establish a form of control over expressions of belief. The isolation at Ise is a direct result of an attempt of imperial legitimization, Satō's study is largely based around the detailed study of the diaries of Heian aristocrats, while the ban of Buddhist rituals during the *daijōe* ceremony is directly related to the imperial cult

[49]Bock, *Engi-shiki*, 117.
[50]Satō, "Daijōsai ni okeru shinbutsu kakuri."
[51]Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and kami in Japan*, 22.

trying to monopolize ritual space for a qualitatively significant period of time. The kami rituals which were affected directly by the isolation of kami and buddhas were imperial rituals, and the reason behind their change was the desire "to bolster the principle of hereditary imperial and aristocratic rule, based on mythical and ritual kami precedent, and to protect it from being weakened by the interference of Buddhist ideas."[52] Contrary to common belief, however, the isolation of kami and buddhas, even the most agenda-oriented doctrines, did not indicate an antagonistic relationship where kami belief absolutely rejected Buddhism. I will explore this argument some more in the next section of the chapter where I will be discussing Ise. Before that, however, I need to explain *hongaku* thought, as it is a crucial aspect of how a large portion of religious thought was conceptualized during and after the late Heian Period.

The appearance of the *hongaku* concept came a bit later than *honji suijaku*; its first conceptualization can be found in *Mitsunokashiwa denki* 三角柏伝記.[53] This text subverts the *honji suijaku* doctrine, in that it denotes kami as an abstract fundamental being producing life, as opposed to being a local deity. It identifies three categories of kami. The first is the kami of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚). This category is used in the *Mitsunokashiwa denki* to solely denote the chief kami of Ise, Amaterasu, who is referred to as the primordial kami of original enlightenment and original beginning. Belonging to the second category are the kami of no enlightenment (*fukaku* 不覚). These kami have lost their "mind-kami" even though they are able to see the Three Treasures and hear the Sanskrit sounds of the buddhas.

[52]Ibid 23.
[53]The *Mitsunokashiwa denki* is a text that is dated back to the year 1170. It was compiled at an estate belonging to the Ise Shrine that was tasked with supplying the shrine with timber for ritual use. The word *mitsunokashiwa* refers to a sacred oak tree.

They dwell in the four evil realms [of hell, starved ghosts, beasts, and *ashura*] for eternity. The last category includes the kami of acquired enlightenment (*shikaku* 始覚). These kami, such as Hachimangū and Hirota, are awakened from their delusional slumber to the teachings of the buddhas and have thus returned to original enlightenment. They are nonetheless distinct from the kami in the first category as they were only able reach enlightenment after a number of rebirths, whereas the kami of the first category are fundamentally enlightened. The three categories are also clearly described in the *Nakatomi no harae kunge.*

These ideas did not come up from an empty space, but are based around the notions of enlightenment found in past Mahayana texts. However, the application of the notion of original enlightenment to kami was a new development. The *hongaku* doctrine is clearly based around the association of Amaterasu with Dainichi, who is considered to be the primordial buddha in Mahayana Buddhism, and the conscious effort of elevating the Ise Shrine above others. Although the earliest texts refer only to Amaterasu as the kami of original enlightenment, the categorization it presented became a recurrent way of identifying kami in many schools of thought such as Watarai and Ise Shinto.[54] The theological implications of this school of thought turned out to be enormous as the categorization of kami based on original enlightenment not only opened the floodgates to the identification of other kami as ones of original enlightenment, mostly through the association of various kami with Amaterasu, but also to the idea that kami were primordial beings (Sannō of Mount Hiei is a prominent example). The abstract conceptualization of Amaterasu as pure Dharma Body centered on a geographical location that represented a holy site of cosmic significance provided the figure of kami with a supreme transcendental

[54]See Tamura, *Hongaku shisō ron*.

quality of its own. Although this quality was based strongly in a theological framework of Buddhism, it would give way to schools of thought such as Yoshida Shinto that identified kami as beings superior to buddhas.

In the next section, I will delve deeper into the conceptualization and organization of Ise as a site of original enlightenment and how it's significance as a shintō site was based on a framework that did not cleanly reject Buddhism but was based and dependent on it for long period of time.

2.3 *Kenmitsu taisei*, *hongaku shisō*, and the emergence of *shinkoku*

Kuroda Toshio defined the dominant Buddhist cultic system of medieval Japan as *kenmitsu* 顕密, or "exo-esoteric" Buddhism.[55] With this term, Kuroda did not refer to a single Buddhist school of thought but to the complex institutional structure of late classical and medieval Japanese cultic formation. The exo-esoteric Buddhist network referred to eight schools functioning as state-sanctioned Buddhism. All of the eight schools, except Shingon which was exclusively esoteric, maintained exoteric teachings along with esoteric components. They, together, combined various exoteric and esoteric themes and functioned not as incompatible schools of thought but as the combination of mainstream teachings in Japanese Buddhism.

What was particularly important about his arguments was that Kuroda underscored the importance of Kamakura New Buddhism, such as the Zen and Nichiren schools, and argued that the dominant religious entities during the period were the older schools, namely Tendai, Shingon, Hossō and so on. These dominant schools were where the shintō doctrines of the period formed in and were heavily

[55]An exoteric doctrine refers to doctrinal ideas that are aimed to be disseminated to the general public, where as esotericism refers to doctrinal ideas being divulged only to an initiated few.

influenced by the Buddhists teaching of *hongaku shisō* (original enlightenment). They were a part of Buddhism rather than being something distinct and they arose as reactionary phenomena with opposition to the *kenmon taisei* 権門体制 ("the system of ruling elites").

According to Kuroda, exo-esoteric Buddhism functioned under the *kenmon taisei.* The term is used to refer to the medieval system governing the status quo of Japan. *Kenmon* was a word used in the Heian Period to refer to families and groups who held privileged and powerful positions within society (*ken* 権 meaning "power" and *mon* 門 meaning "gate"). While traditional scholarship preferred to argue that the power struggle in medieval Japan was marked by the triumvirate struggle between the imperial household/nobles in Kyoto, the religious centers of power, and the newly empowered warrior class, Kuroda's theory sophisticated this conception. According to him, these three power groups formed a system wherein the ruling authority was made up of competing yet complementary centers of power.[56] The *kenmon taisei* / *kenmitsu* Buddhism view broke from earlier scholarship in that it challenged the position of shintō as an unbroken tradition of non-Buddhist, native kami worship that hailed from the earliest years of Japan. This framework will form our basis, our context in discussing the Ise Shrine and its ties to *hongaku* thought and the *shinkoku* 神国 ("land of the kami") concept.

Shinkoku was a significant aspect of medieval shintō[57] doctrines that carried over to later times and events. Although grounded in medieval times, the concept survived and evolved into state ideology later. Some obvious usage of it as a consciously used tool of legitimization and coercion are the suppression of the *Ikk*ō

[56]Kuroda, *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō*.
[57]I am using the word "shinto" here as it was used in the proper context, not as its present conceptualization.

Ikki movement[58] and Christianity during the early modern period, as well as Japan's imperial wars and reforms in the Meiji Period. *Shinkoku* is often expressed as the embodiment of the national consciousness of Japan, being related specifically to events such as the Mongol invasions (1274 and 1281) and the Kenmu Restoration (1333-6). This is owed mostly to the work of Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293-1354), adviser to Emperor Go-Daigo (1288-1339) during the Kenmu Restoration and the author of *Jinnō Shōtōki* (1339-1343), which is the text that laid out the groundwork for a discussion of the religious meaning of imperial rule on *shinkoku* terms. Chikafusa emphasized the unbroken line of Japanese emperors as a source of legitimization and placed extreme importance on kami as beings that ensured the protection of imperial rule as well as the land of Japan. Although he did not hold a clerical position at the time of writing the *Jinnō Shōtōki,* he would later be initiated into the ways of Shingon Buddhism.

These instances of the usage of *shinkoku* help in the creation of an out-of-context and supra-historical analysis of the *shinkoku* and *shintō* concepts. According to Kuroda, *shinkoku* was an essential part of exo-esoteric Buddhist thought in the sense that it was a Buddhist construct reacting to a system of government rule composed of multiple centers of influence, which is precisely why Chikafusa's usage of the concept during the Kenmu Restoration is considered to be its most representative form.[59] The medieval interpretation of the word *shinkoku* is of particular significance since it is at this time that the word reached its maturity as an intellectual argument. The reason why it is prone to be represented as a supra-historical idea is because it has existed since the *Nihon shoki,* and this fact creates

[58]The *ikkō ikki* movement was a social rebellion against *daimyō* rule in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It entailed significant Buddhist characteristics, drawing mostly from the *jōdo shinshū* sect.
[59]Kuroda, *Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai*.

somewhat of an excuse to not approach the concept as problematically as one should. The term, at its core, refers to the vague idea that Japan is the land of the kami. It is thus possible to use it in representation of a number of different positions, from simple beliefs to the sacrality of different shrines, to as far as specific brands of political thought concerning the sacred nature of imperial rule.[60]

Viewing *shinkoku* as a concept independent from historical context is closely related to the approach of interpreting shintō as an indigenous idea which has been in existence since the dawn of time, separate from Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. This is, at the same time, the ideology that formed the backbone of Meiji State Shinto, which I will delve into later, and created within the Japanese academia a kind of nativism best exemplified by folklore studies (*minzokugaku*). Not only *shinkoku* but the framework of nationalism and nativism that it has integrated into can still be observed as a considerable influence on a significant portion of Japan's contemporary culture.

Analyses of the *shinkoku* concept have historically taken place in the kind of crude framework that I have presented above, and they have mostly led to the idea that *shinkoku* has its root in the indigenous kami cults which formed the basis of popular religious experience.[61] As simple as this approach may seem, it is beyond doubt a very dangerous one. Since the notion is based on the assumption that Shinto is a belief that was originally different than or separate from Buddhism, the *shinbutsu bunri*[62] state of things introduced with the top-down nationalism of the Meiji state is the way things ought to be naturally. Following this line of thought, one

[60]Kuroda, "The discourse on the 'Land of the Kami' (shinkoku) in medieval Japan."
[61]Kuroda, *Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai*, 235.
[62]*Shinbutsu bunri* refers to the effort and success of the Meiji government to forcefully separate "Shinto" institutions from Buddhist ones, thus fundamentally changing the conceptualization of belief in Japan from then on.

has to conclude that the only way to grasp the historical reality behind shintō is to study the historical change that shintō as an autonomous concept has gone through.

A popular belief about Shinto is that it has gradually freed itself from Buddhist intellectual thought, precisely because it was indigenous to Japan. What supports this argument and provides it with the vigor that it needs to stand on its own is the historical argument that various Shinto doctrines raise the idea of the superiority of kami over buddhas. To understand if the *shinkoku* discourse really comes from ideas of ethnic self-awareness or native beliefs, we have to look at the development of the concept of shintō.

"Shinto" developed as a concept within schools of thought that used the term in their self-definition. What comes to mind when we think of early schools that follow this pattern are Ryōbu, Sannō, and Ise Shinto. Ryōbu Shinto was a popular doctrine of the medieval period that continued until modern times (before 1164 to 1868) and was grounded in Shingon esoteric teachings. Sannō Shinto (started probably in 1233) was similarly grounded in the Tendai Buddhist tradition at Mt. Hiei. It is obviously more proper than not to consider Ryōbu and Sannō Shinto as part of the Buddhist schools they are grounded in, which is to say that the idea that they rejected Buddhism does not make any sense. Ise Shinto, however, is quite different in that it is commonly argued to have rejected Buddhism. It is majorly because of the Ise Shrine that Shinto doctrines are believed to carry tendencies to cleanly break away from Buddhist doctrines, and stress the superior nature of *kami.*

Ise Shinto and the esoteric Buddhist teaching of *hongaku* (original enlightenment) thought are related at an essential level, which is evident in the way in which canonical texts of the Ise Shrine emphasize purity. *Nakatomi no Harae*

Kunge, for instance describes the kami of Ise as *hongakushin,* the deity of original enlightenment.[63] *Kōbō daishi zenshū* is full of texts such as the *Nakatomi no Harae Kunge* and *Ryōgu gyōmon jinshaku* that present the Great Shrine of Ise as the embodiment of purity and original enlightenment.[64] Ise Shinto was a consequence of the development during the medieval period of intellectual schools that centered on *hongaku* thought. It is not as much an opportunistic borrowing from such intellectual traditions as Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism as it is a dependency on them. The most persuasive evidence of this is how Ise Shinto was understood in terms of *hongaku* thought in the period it emerged. The very interpretation of Ise thought was done within the discourse of original enlightenment as evident in the works of Watarai Tsuneyoshi (1263-1339), who was a very influential scholar in the development of Ise Shinto during the Kamakura Period. Tsuneyoshi developed the doctrine of the kami of original enlightenment in his *Daijingū Ryōgū no Onkoto* (1335). The trend seems to have continued into the Muromachi Period, as indicated by transcriptions of oral instructions to texts.[65] Ise Shinto took the form it did precisely because interest in *hongaku* thought was rising considerably, and because of the trend of multilateral borrowing of ideas between different intellectual traditions which included, but were not limited to, Confucianism and Taoism.

It is important to note that these intellectual traditions such as yin-yang and the five agents theory[66] had been interacting with each other since ancient times, as

[63]KDZ 5,179.
[64]KDZ 5,146.
[65]WST, 469.
[66]The five agents theory, *gogyō* in Japanese and *wuxing* in Chinese, is the shortened form of 五種流行之氣. It is an ancient form of conceptual scheme that many Chinese intellectual traditions draw from. The theory is used to describe the forms of all phenomena, but is centered around how those forms interact and relate to each other. The concepts of yin and yang are utilized related to the five agents theory to describe how seemingly oppositional forces are actually dualities that are complementary and interdependent to one another. This basic idea is used in many branches of Chinese philosophy as a fundamental principle.

both Kuroda and Yoshino point out, and it is very difficult to ascertain the extent of borrowing between them. What is clearly evident is that there was a certain mutual experience that resulted in the analogies and shared discourse that we observe here. An example of this can be found in the *Watarai shintō taisei*, which is a compilation of medieval Ise Shinto texts, where it is written that "divine mind is the basis of heaven and earth, the body is a transformation of the five agents (*gogyō*)."[67] Divine mind, in this case, refers to the body of the kami which serves as the basis of the universe.

A significant question, perhaps the most important one, that we have not yet answered is how can we explain the fact that Buddhism was taboo at the grounds of the Ise Shrine if Ise Shinto was indeed an offshoot of the Buddhist concept of original enlightenment. The most representative historical expression of this taboo, that is to say, the reason and the evidence behind why people have thought of the Buddhism ban in Ise the way they did, is the expression of “hiding the breath" (*iki wo kakusu*) of Buddhism.[68] Clear examples of this expression are present in *Watarai Shintō Seiki*, such as the anecdote from an oracle in the *Yamatohime no Mikoto Seiki*:

> Hide the breath (息) of Buddhism and bow twice to the deities”[69]

And I quote this following expression from the oracle of Yamatohime no Mikoto in the *Gochinza Denki*, which was compiled before 1285:

> Therefore, the jinin defend the origin of cosmic chaos; they hide the breath (気) of Buddhism and exalt the deities.[70]

The expression, “to hide one's breath” can be interpreted as “holding/stopping one’s breath” or “do not dare to breathe” as in fear or in an attempt

[67]WST, 78.
[68]Kuroda, *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* & *Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai*.
[69]WST, 78.
[70]WST, 18.

to keep something away. According to Kuroda Toshio, “hiding one’s breath” is not a rejection of Buddhism but refers to the substance of life in esoteric Buddhism. Historical examples of the concept include the contemporaneous Shingon chants of *nenbutsu* and the doctrines regarding Amida Buddha’s breath of life.[71] Hiding of the breath was meant as an attitude of while remaining conscious of one’s stature as a Buddhist, one concealed that part of himself in the presence of the *kami*. In other words, the very usage of the word “breath” finds meaning in its conceptualization as a Buddhist term.

There are, in fact, historical documents surrounding the Ise Shrine that refer to the Buddhism ban not as something internally at conflict, but a complementary practice. For instance, Kuroda provides an anecdote from the Watarai clan in the form of Tsūkai's *Daijingū sankeiki* (1342) which argues that "in her divine will, [the kami of Ise] does not truly hate Buddhism... Her attitude of seeking shelter in Buddhism internally and externally banning it at the same time are not contradictory."[72] Although this particular document is not part of the canonical Ise corpus, it nevertheless reflects a way in which people have dealt with the connection of Ise Shinto and Buddhism. The *Hōki Honki* describes this relationship in the following way:

> Shinto yields to Buddhism; therefore the wisdom of Buddhas and kami is exactly the same; furthermore, the ways of vulgar truth and ultimate truth are not different; the Tathāgata (*Nyorai*) takes the shape of various deities and appears in this world; the deities yield to the Tathāgata and content themselves with delivering oracles; the inner experience [enlightenment, *naishō*] of buddhas and kami is identical; only its external manifestation and rituals are different.[73]

[71]Kushida, *Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*, 201.
[72]JST, 53.
[73]ZGR 1, 115-16. Translated by Rambelli.

This is in line with the view of Watarai Tsuneyoshi who argues that the Inner Shrine of Ise is the soul of Dainichi Nyorai. Buddhism flows out of Dainichi and thus, the dharma or buddha is useless in Ise. In other words, Ise, unlike other kami who can only achieve enlightenment after awakening to Buddhism, is not in need of expedient means to reach enlightenment. Ise is the source of Heaven and Earth, and has manifested original enlightenment since its very inception. Because the kami of Ise is the very essence of Dainichi Nyorai, she does not have an "original state" (*honji* as in the *honji suijaku* theory). Thus, "hiding the breath of Buddhism" refers to this special state of the Ise kami not having an original state. To quote Kuroda,

> What is involved here is not a relationship between kami in general and buddhas in general, nor a reversal of the usual *honji suijaku* relation to form a kind of anti-honji suijaku doctrine. Rather, the notion of "hiding the breath" highlights the fact that within the world of kami and buddhas, as understood in honji suijaku theory, only the Ise kami (and the shrine) have a completely different and distinctive status...

He further argues that:

> It was for this precise reason that Ise Shinto was able to become "Shinto" during the medieval era. Ise Shinto contributed nothing new to religious thought other than its explanation of the singular origin of the two Ise shrines; otherwise it limited itself to performing its special rituals. This, however, is really all that "Shinto" was. Its original feature was fear of a vaguely defined "defilement"; its ceremony of purification (*harai*) was readily absorbed into the logic of purity typical of hongaku thought, as shown by the *Nakatomi no harae kunge*'s ingenious identification of *hara*i with the magic rituals of esoteric Buddhism.[74] All that remained were particular forms of ritual, modes of behavior, and ceremonial protocols. Thus in reality there was no independent religion called "Shinto"-the name referred to a mystical system of taboo rituals. Ise Shinto was no different; indeed, it was one of the most typical of such ritual systems. Ise Shinto was anomalous at the time for its "anti-Buddhist" rituals, to be sure, but pilgrimage accounts and collections of stories like the *Shasekishū* suggest that it was popularly interpreted as simply a peculiar aspect of the Buddhist teachings.[75]

[74]KDZ 5, 161.
[75]Kuroda, "The discourse on the 'Land of the Kami' (shinkoku) in medieval Japan." Translated by

The *kenmon taisei* started its decline during the fourteenth century owing to many factors which included the breakup of the *shōen* estate system, the Kenmu Restoration government and the rise of the Muromachi shogunate, all of which contributing to the establishment of a feudal monarchy.[76] It is well-known that the collapse of the system led to the decline of the authority of religious centers of power that resulted in economical, social, political, but also philosophical crises. Shinto was viewed at the time as an esoteric Buddhist teaching that provided a common denominator for exo-esoteric traditions. The crumbling of the system led particularly to the evaluation regarding the place of the emperor within the governing body, and Shinto had already provided a link between Tenshō Kōtaijin (Amaterasu Ōmikami) and the imperial lineage. Tsuda has argued that Ise Shinto, in particular, had always been a kind of politico-religious belief that emphasized the political and national nature of Shinto doctrines.[77] Kuroda also provides the example of the fourteenth century scholars Kitabatake Chikafusa and Jihen (dates unknown, active in mid-14th c.) both preaching "the direct unity of Shinto and *shinkoku* on the one hand and the 'imperial way' and 'imperial lineage' on the other."[78] This is an example of the reorganization of the Shinto doctrines into a proto-nationalist state ideology and the creation of a politico-religious climate that enabled ideas such as those of Chikafusa directly being used in many Muromachi shogunate documents involving the notion of national consciousness.[79] It is thus not difficult to imagine that in such a climate

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Rambelli.

[76]The Kenmu Restoration, and a feudal monarchy following shortly after, both signified major shifts in the positions of power holders. Where the Kenmu Restoration was an attempt to restore the imperial office to glory and an attempt to centralize political power on the seat of the emperor, the Muromachi shogunate that rose after the failure of the Kenmu Restoration brought an end to the sharing of political power.

[77]Tsuda, *Nihon no Shintō*, 111.

[78]Kuroda, *Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai*, 382.

[79]The documents include the *Shōdanchiyo* and *Zenrinkoku hōki*.

Shintō would later develop how it did at the hands of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435-1511).

2.4 The *yuiitsu shintō* of Yoshida Kanetomo

It is not a coincidence that Yoshida Shinto, whose doctrine turned the relationship between kami and buddhas around its head, appeared in the fifteenth century. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had been a time of political change and transition for the mainland of Japan which heavily impacted the already established cultic networks and allowed for the rise of new ones. To briefly iterate the political developments of the time, the Fujiwara regents, who had been the de facto leaders of the country up to the eleventh century, were challenged by emperors who retired in young age and retreated to temples at which they established their own power bases. The twelfth century saw the rise to power of warrior groups who were organized in clans and employed by both the Fujiwara regents and the emperors. These warriors emerged from the power vacuum created in between the Fujiwara and the emperors as the new leaders of the mainland and established the Kamakura shogunate in 1185. We have already stated that this period did not see a clear break in power and the religious institutions as the *kenmon* system operated both in a competitive and complementary sense. It was with the establishment of the Muromachi shogunate in 1333 that this started to change. As the court lost more and more of its power, especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the shrines that were sponsored directly by the court started receiving fewer offerings. Even the Ise Shrine, which was the only shrine that managed to retain continuous court donations was left in ruins by the fifteenth century.[80]

[80]I will give more attention to the cultic centers that received direct support from the court in late

The period of political fragmentation was also the period in which shrines and temples became owners of estates. Especially the institutions that held connections to powerful power bases, including both the court and the various warrior groups, benefited from this. The estates held by the temples and shrines (and mostly temple-shrines) belonged not to men but to the specific *kami* and/or *buddha* to which the site was dedicated. More often than not, powerful shrines held estates in lands that were a considerable distance away from their main complex. In these instances, the institutions established small copies of their main halls on their distant estates and dedicated them to the kami or buddha venerated in the main complex. It was in this way that some deities became popular on a nation-wide level (the aforementioned Sannō of Mt. Hiei spread across the land using this method).[81]

It was after the end of the thirteenth century, when the political triumvirate came to a close, that temples and shrines found it difficult to hold on to their estates, as the warlords now were able to exert almost complete hegemony over the land. As religious institutions lost their old means to fund themselves and expand, they turned to new ways to secure their futures. This was done firstly by legitimizing their existence as the institutions that secure the favor of the deities for the benefit of their respective communities, and secondly through becoming centers of popular pilgrimage (as opposed to elite pilgrimage seen prior to the fourteenth century in which court nobles and warriors participated). Some shrines in Western Japan started to organize themselves as guilds aiming to exert political influence over villages through their positions of having access to means of ritual. In later terminology, these guilds were referred to as *miyaza* 宮座.[82]

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ancient and early medieval times in the next chapter (the so-called twenty two shrines).
[81]Explained thoroughly in Breen & Teeuwen, Grapard etc.
[82]Befu, "Village autonomy and articulation with the state," 311-2.

The downfall of the Muromachi Period and the Ashikaga shoguns came with the Ōnin War that lasted from 1467 to 1477. It would mark the beginning of a hundred years of armed conflict, and it was within this conflict that the subversive shintō doctrine of Yoshida Kanetomo carved a place out for itself.

Kanetomo, born in 1434, was the head of the Yoshida family who traced their lineage of ritualists and diviners to the ancient Urabe clan, who had ties to the court and were previously employed by the Council of Kami Affairs. Kanetomo's teachings, despite being based largely on Buddhist tenets, was named *yuiitsu shintō* (one-and-only shintō) and the doctrine saw itself as a system of belief extant from before Buddhism. It is with *yuiitsu shintō* that we can first observe the notion of a system of belief centered clearly on the land of Japan, as well as the idea of a native religion of Japan consciously locating itself in a superior position to Buddhism. During the Ōnin War, fires lit by the enemies of the shogunate swept through Kyoto and Mt. Yoshida, reducing to ash most of the shrines located there. We know that after these events, the Yoshida Shrine which was previously under the control of the Yoshida family was decided to be put under the control of the Kamo Shrine after its rebuilding. Grapard theorizes that this was the key moment at which Kanetomo decided to reshape and unify a number of shrine practices to ultimately "return" to one-and-only Shinto, that he believed to have been the core ideology of Japan before Buddhism was introduced to the land.[83]

The basis of Kanetomo's doctrine was that because the light of the kami first shone on Japan, it lies at the center of the universe. Kanetomo designates Japan as the land of the kami (*shinkoku*) and the Japanese way as the way of the kami (*shintō*). A passage from his *Shintō taii* as translated by Breen and Teeuwen states that "The

[83]Grapard, "The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo," 41.

teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism are streams, flowing from the sources of the limitless law which is this kami's heart.[84] Buddha and Confucius draw their life from heaven and earth [as created by this kami], and thus owe to this kami their virtues."[85] Kami have now evolved into something beyond their previous identifications as local deities, or even as the original essences of the enlightenment of Dainichi Nyorai, as they were in earlier Shinto doctrines.

Another portion of the *Shintō taii* that lays bare the purpose of Kanetomo is the genealogy of the twelve generations of kami as listed in the *Nihon shoki*. When writing about the twelfth kami, Hiko Nagisatake Ugaya Fukiaezu, Kanetomo provides some detailed commentary. He states that this kami began his rule millions of years after Amaterasu Ōmikami, who herself emerged eons after Kuni-no-Tokotachi did. Amaterasu is said to have softened her light and merged with the dust of samsara, aiding in the birth of Sakyamuni buddha during the 800,000-year rule of Hiko Nagisatake.[86] This genealogy is an absolute denial of the notion that kami are the traces of the buddhas, as in the *honji suijaku* doctrine, as Amaterasu who is not even the primordial kami is presented here as the direct source from which the first buddha emerged.

Kanetomo seems to have been bent on the idea of establishing a new cultic center rather than continuing the traditions of his lineage. He delayed the reconstruction of the ancient Yoshida Shrine, which was dedicated to the worship of the kami of the Kasuga Shrine, to give precedence to erecting new shrines that would represent his newly found *yuiitsu shintō* on Mt. Yoshida. Kanetomo acquired the funds to construct the new shrines by approaching the powerful people of his time

[84]"This kami" refers to Kuni-no-Tokotachi, which Kanetomo imparts a special significance.
[85]Breen & Teeuwen, *A new history of Shinto*, 49.
[86]Ibid, 49-50.

with the request that they help him "rebuild the past." In 1484, Hino Tomiko, the spouse of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, granted him the funds he desired. He then made a request from the court that he be provided with six inscriptions written directly by the emperor himself. Kanetomo claimed that the emperors Jimmu and Saga had written inscriptions like these but they were destroyed in the Ōnin War. The emperor at the time, Go-Tsuchimikado, agreed to Kanetomo's request, thus providing him with authoritative approval and a source of legitimacy.

Of particular significance is Kanetomo's involvement with the Ise Shrine. In the year 1489, Kanetomo informed the emperor that in a stormy night, clouds hovered above the Yoshida cultic site and two streaks of celestial light fell down upon the ground. After investigating the shrine compound, Kanetomo saw a luminous object descending from the heavens and onto the courtyard between two sacred buildings. Upon picking up the object, Kanetomo realized that it was the *shintai*[87] of the Outer Shrine of Ise, which was rumored to have been destroyed when the shrine was burned down two years ago. There was a second instance when another object fell from the sky, and Kanetomo identified it as the *shintai* of the Inner Shrine of Ise, which is argued to be the sacred mirror called *yata no kagami* 八咫鏡. Kanetomo showed these objects to Emperor Go-Tsuchimikado and convinced him of their sacrality. The Ise priests denounced Kanetomo quite quickly as a fraud, but this does not seem to have fazed the emperor too much, as Kanetomo managed to initiate the emperor into *yuiitsu shintō* shortly after.[88] It is not difficult to surmise Kanetomo's purpose. The Ise Shrine complex was clearly in a position to undermine Kanetomo's claims of cosmic scale. Kanetomo's ideology put Ise in a doctrinal

[87]*Shintai* is an object of worship in shrines in which the kami is believed to reside. It is said that the *shintai* of both the Naikū and Gekū are sacred mirrors.
[88]Hagiwara, *Chūsei saishi soshiki no kenkyū*, 639-40.

situation where it would be seen as an object to be rescued from its Buddhist identification, and Ise's own claims of original enlightenment was in direct conflict with him.

Now, most of the methods Kanetomo used to create a base of legitimacy for himself, i.e. receiving inscriptions from the emperor, and his claim that he located the *shintai* of the Ise Shrine, are obviously fraudulent. And although it is significant to note that the legitimacy of Yoshida Shinto is based on false claims, it is also important to realize that the degree of truth to his claims are not particularly relevant. In my opinion, what matters here is that Yoshida Shinto was able to claim for itself a significant portion of the finite doctrinal space available for religions to take hold in a sociopolitical sense. In other words, the fact that Kanetomo was able to legitimize his doctrine based on fraudulent claims shows us that there was room in the late medieval Japanese formations of belief to grow in the direction of a more nativist and exclusivist branch. I am here referring to formations of belief as they relate to state and society, not in a pure doctrinal sense, as doctrines in many cases ground themselves on the sociopolitical aspirations of their creators which are dependent on their respective contexts. This means that the creation and development of new religions shape their own political realities within the society they emerge from, and Yoshida Shinto is a perfect demonstration of a case where the budding of a new doctrine is reflective of an idea lurking in the background, ready to sprout up. Of course in the case of Yoshida Shinto these ideas existed mostly in a political sense, as the tools provided by this new doctrine would prove invaluable and crudely attractive for power holders in Japan. Some growing tendencies that were very much a part of Japan's late medieval and early modern ideological landscape that are also

represented in Yoshida Shinto are, to provide a few, a fusion of religious and political authority, an emphasis on Japaneseness to the extent of searching for a golden age that predates the introduction of Buddhism and other continental traditions, and an ever-growing discomfort between Buddhist and non-Buddhist institutions, all of which would eventually culminate in the Meiji Restoration, the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, and the *haibutsu kishaku* movement.

Kanetomo did not achieve immediate success in taking down the Buddhist cultic systems of Japan or the doctrines of *honji suijaku* and original enlightenment. His ideology, however, was a huge step in the direction of realizing a kami-centered religion that identified itself as distinct from and superior to Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, all the while accommodating various teachings and established notions from these continental traditions. The foundations of *yuiitsu shintō* as it was created by Kanetomo resulted in the Yoshida family being entrusted with major sociopolitical roles in in the early-modern period. For instance, one of many attempts on the part of Kanetomo to create a space for his doctrine among the influential and mainstream traditions was his aspiration to replicate the ancient institutional system wherein the Council of Kami Affairs bound regional shrines to the court and assigned them ranks.[89]

2.5 Shinto in the early Tokugawa period

There are a myriad of topics that can be delved into when writing about the development of belief and ideology in Japan in the late-medieval and early-modern periods, such as the increasing importance on secrecy and an obsession on lineage, the growing crisis relating to the identification of the nature of power and the source

[89]Hagiwara, *Chūsei saishi soshiki no kenkyū*, 647.

of legitimacy that it is derived from, or the incredibly intricate and intimate relationship between politics and religion in Japan that continued to grow and found itself new forms of expression. Unfortunately, it is impossible to address all these problems in this chapter. I will, however, try to point out the problems related to the conceptualization of religion in early-modern Japan to the degree that they will connect us to the modern times. Hopefully, we will be able to realize the connections between different time periods as they relate to the development of Shinto.

Although the Yoshida family rose to prominence during the Tokugawa period, they faced a great deal of competition from different sources. One such obstacle came with the posthumous cults of military leaders. The Yoshida family played a significant role in the posthumous cult of Toyotomi Hideyoshi who was buried on Mount Amidagamine in Kyoto. He was venerated as Hōkoku Daimyōjin, "the great kami who illuminated the land," in the Hōkoku Shrine. Up until this time, venerating the departed spirits of prominent figures as benevolent deities was not a widespread practice. Departed spirits were usually made into divine figures when they were restless and thought to have been causing trouble. They were venerated particularly in attempts to pacify their wrathful nature.[90] The burial of Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1616 was an entirely different matter, as Ieyasu's inner circle included the influential Tendai monk Tenkai. And even though Ieyasu was at first buried on Mount Kunō and venerated there as a Yoshida-style kami (*myōjin*), Tenkai managed to convince Ieyasu's son Ietada to move his father's body to Mount Nikkō where a mausoleum was constructed under Tenkai's watchful eye. Ieyasu was venerated there as Tōshō Daigongen, "the great avatar illuminating the realm from the east."

[90]This kind of veneration of the dead is practiced in what is called *goryō* belief, which I will return to in chapter 3.

Although the Yoshida family lost the battle to appropriate Ieyasu's cult, they continued to grow as a presence, retaining most of their connections to early-modern power holders.

The greatest leap made by the Yoshida family came with the fourth shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna (r. 1651-80). It was during his reign when the Yoshida family was entrusted with the supervision of all shrines across the country. In 1665, the legislative document *jinja jōmoku* 神社条目 ("Shrine Clauses") was published by the shogunate, which granted previously unimaginable authority over shrines to the Yoshida. The move by Ietsuna to grant this authority to the Yoshida was part of a mindset dedicated to establishing direct and stable control over society. The clauses included references to *jingidō,* which was understood as "*yuiitsu shintō*", instead of *shintō,* and demanded from Shinto priests that they "know their kami" and perform traditional rites. In direct reference to the Yoshida family is the third clause which states that shrine priests should wear garments determined in the licenses procured from the Yoshida family. In other words, if shrine managers and ritualists wanted to be recognized as official shrine priests, they would have to buy certificates that assigned them court ranks from the Yoshida house. These licenses procured by the Yoshida household to other shrines formed the backbone of its control over them.

The issuing of licenses came from a seventh century background of assigning court ranks by the imperial court to deities worshiped at several shrines. Although the practice first came to life as expressions of thanks on the part of the court to the shrines and deities who were thought to have brought fortune. The practice was standardized in the ninth century, and the court's ability of issuing ranks to deities and shrines was left unchallenged until Yoshida Kanetomo.[91]

[91]Maeda, "Court rank for village shrines," 329.

Kanetomo began issuing licenses to shrines in the 1480s after he was commissioned by shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436-1490) to investigate the shrines around Kyoto and take note of their deities, branch shrines, priests, and origin myths. Yoshimasa, at the time, was searching for an appropriate cultic site to erect his tutelary shrine. The position allowed him the opportunity to issue licenses to local priests at their requests, although how exactly this became an ambition of his is unclear.[92] Kanetomo's aim was to intercede on behalf of regional shrines with the emperor, who would issue certifications of court ranks. If a shrine purchased a license from the Yoshida family, it also meant that the avatar worshiped at the shrine would be transformed into a *myōjin* or "light-emitting kami" which, as a term, had become associated with the Yoshida family.[93] It was not until mid-sixteenth century, the time of Yoshida Kanemigi, that these licenses started to take hold. They became so influential that Kanemigi eventually stopped seeking imperial sanction to distribute his licenses far and wide, gaining the patronage of local warlords. During the eighteenth century, approximately two thousand shrines received Yoshida licenses. Because the Yoshida house sold the licenses at a much lower price than the court did, many shrines which would not be deemed worthy of a court rank came to possess one.[94] As a result, the Yoshida house came to exert its influence over the operations of a massive amount of local shrines which had bought their licenses.[95] However, we should note that the right to issue court rank had never been granted to the Yoshida house with the *jinja jōmoku* edict. That privilege under Tokugawa rule

[92]Hagiwara, *Chūsei saishi soshiki no kenkyū*, 390-410.
[93]Breen & Teeuwen, *A new history of Shinto*, 51.
[94]Yoshida license were sold for 4 ryō as opposed to the 85 ryō imperial license, according to Miyaji, 1958.
[95]A detailed analysis of growing Yoshida influence over local shrines in the early-modern period is Maeda, "Court rank for village shrines."

still belonged to the emperor, and there were voices rising against the Yoshida appropriation of court licenses from several Shinto thinkers.[96]

It is very interesting that the number of shrines that were actually run by Shinto priests was extremely small. For instance, Toki provides evidence that out of all the shrines in Musashi Province[97] in the early-nineteenth century, the shrines operated by Shinto priests only amounted to four percent of all shrines in the region. The majority of the shrines were under the control of either Buddhist priests or local villagers.[98] At first glance, this picture seems to be underscoring the influence of the Yoshida family because a small number of Shinto priests would normally translate to a limited access of direct doctrinal subordination. We must realize here that firstly, for all its presence in shrine politics, the effect of Yoshida Shinto over popular practice was utterly uninfluential; and secondly, the way that the Yoshida family exerted control over regional shrines was through the licenses they issued, and not the training of Shinto priests of other regions.

Exactly why local shrines sought out the Yoshida licenses to the extent that they did is an issue up for debate. In fact, the licenses issued by the Yoshida house, called *sōgen senji* 宗源宣旨, were formally different than those issued by the imperial household. According to Maeda, *sōgen* refers to the Yoshida house's divine ancestor Ame-no-koyane-no-mikoto, and *senji* means "imperial decree." The compound *sōgen senji* therefore denotes a decree by Ame-no-koyane mediated by the Yoshida, which is an entirely separate decree than the one granted by the court.[99] We know that most of the licenses issued by the Yoshida went to no-name and

[96]Inoue, "Kinsei chūki ni okeru Yoshidake hihan no genjitsuka," 347-8.
[97]The province included modern day Tokyo, Saitama, and parts of Kanagawa prefectures.
[98]Toki, *Jinjashi no kenkyū*, 150-159.
[99]Maeda, "Court rank for village shrines," 331.

insignificant shrines, and that those who applied for the licenses were Buddhist priests rather than Shinto practitioners. Maeda argues that this has to do with the attempts of the shogunate to control and limit the number of shrines and temples. Temples during the Tokugawa Period served a crucial administrative role, in that every household had to register at a temple which was tasked to confirm the status of the households as non-Christians. Too many temples meant that the administrative duties had to be divided more and more between institutions that the shogunate did not necessarily have control over. The number of shrines also was subject to the shogunate's attempts to control them, as the number of religious institutions directly affected the government's tax revenue. More institutions meant that the economic burden on the populace increased, which in turn limited the ability of the shogunate to tax said populace. To control the number of shrines and temples, the shogunate issued a number of decrees in the second half of the seventeenth century that prohibited the construction of such institutions. Although these edicts could only put a dent in the ever-increasing number of temples and shrines, they also helped popularize the Yoshida licenses. Possessing a license either from the court or from the Yoshida household served to improve the status of any given shrine or temple. Official recognition had become a very significant aspect of shrine management, and one way to gain that recognition was through buying a license from the Yoshida household, which were much cheaper than the imperial licenses. Shrines also resorted to fabricating their origins after the decree of 1692, the last and most effective one that forbade the construction of new religious institutions. This process involved the forging of myths of creation and histories for local shrines by the shrine management. Thus, obtaining any sort of certificate to legitimize a shrine's forged

pedigree also became a crucial matter, and shrines were able to achieve this partly via the Yoshida licenses.[100]

The other significant Shinto school of the early-modern period that emerged later than Yoshida Shinto was Shirakawa. Although ultimately the Shirakawa school did not manage to exert as much influence over the shrine world as the Yoshida household did, they were nevertheless a significant factor. The Shirakawa household was a well-known family in religious circles and had played vital roles in the organization of the Council of Kami Affairs many centuries ago. In that sense, the legacy and status of the Shirakawa house was far superior to the diviners of the Yoshida house. The reinstitution of some imperial rites in the seventeenth century revitalized the Shirakawa family, who were entrusted with the application of those rituals. Their rivalry with the Yoshida house in the eighteenth century as Shinto schools seeking to expand their influence to local shrines is well-documented.[101] The two houses eventually laid claim to the same court rituals to varying degrees of success and kept alive separate cults dedicated to the same tutelary deities of the imperial household.[102]

As I have noted before, for all the political influence they held, neither the Yoshida nor the Shirakawa schools of thought managed to exert the extent of their control to popular shrine practice. The priests that were regulated by these schools, who were quite few in number, were not organized under a particular structure that allowed for collective action or the maintenance of a canonical liturgy. Moreover, both the Shirakawa and Yoshida schools advocated different theories that were not

[100]Maeda, 339-342.
[101]Hardacre, "The Shintō priesthood in early Meiji Japan" and *Religion and society in 19th century Japan* delve into detail on the Yoshida-Shirakawa rivalry.
[102]Haga, "Meiji jingikansei no seiritsu to kokka saishi no saihen," 95.

necessarily known by the priests under their control, no doubt owing also to the esoteric nature of the schools. Late eighteenth century was also marked by the rise of the highly nativist *kokugaku* thought, which was openly at odds with the Yoshida and Shirakawa households.[103] Because most shrine priests leaned toward *kokugaku,* shrine practice, even when they were influenced by nativist inclinations, often did not follow the Yoshida/Shirakawa theologies.[104] Because I have been relating the history of Shinto in early-modern Japan, it is easy to fall in to the trap of thinking that when the early-modern Japanese engaged in shrine activities, they also engaged with the concept of "Shinto." This is false, as the word had not yet cemented itself into everyday life in an explanatory sense that referred to an agreed upon meaning. Breen and Teeuwen point out, for instance, that the diaries of pilgrims who visited the Ise Shrine in the seventeenth century reveal that the act of pilgrimage to Ise was mostly based on the agricultural capabilities of the sun-goddess instead of her imperial connections, and that most pilgrimages were undergone for travel and entertainment purposes as much as they were for worship.[105] We will see in chapter four that even the nineteenth century nativist schools such as the Kurozumi-kyō did not conceptualize their belief as constituting "shintō".

[103]*Kokugaku* is the common name used to refer to a branch of Edo Period scholarship that had as its subject the study of ancient Japanese literature and language. Kokugaku scholarship was discursively nativist and nationalist, and explicitly aimed to restore the golden age of ancient Japan. I will deal with *kokugaku* on Chapter 4.
[104]Hardacre, "The Shintō priesthood in early Meiji Japan," 295-6
[105]Breen & Teeuwen, *A new history of Shinto*, 58.

CHAPTER 3

THE GION SHRINE COMPLEX AND THE GION FESTIVAL: A TEMPORAL HISTORY

3.1 *Goryō* belief and the origins of the Gion Cult

Spirit pacification (*chinkon* 鎮魂) is a term that refers to the appeasement of spirits of the dead in *goryō*[106] belief (*goryō shinkō* 御霊信仰), a belief system seen in Japan wherein vengeful spirits are venerated and pacified. The term *goryō* first appears in the *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* 日本三代実録, an officially commissioned Japanese history text that covers the years 858-887, in an entry that is dated year 863. According to this entry, the first time that the court held a *goryō* ceremony was at the grounds of the Shinsen'en temple, presently located in Kyoto, south of the Nijō Castle. The place is significant as it was an imperial garden during the Heian Period where many court gatherings were held. This is in line with the commonly held view regarding the origins of *goryō* rites which tend to argue that they spread from urban centers to rural populace, although this does not mean that the rituals marked the beginnings of *goryō* belief itself.[107] The first recorded *goryō* ritual taking place in the Shinsen'en is doubly important for the purposes of this thesis because the Shinsen'en temple is also a locale where the ties of the Gion cult with its Buddhist *goryō* origins can still be observed, which will be discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

Nevertheless, the reason given in *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* for why the Shinsen'en ceremony was conceived is an epidemic sweeping through the country during the spring of 863. It is indicated that the ceremony conducted there involved a

[106]The word *goryō* can be loosely translated as "vengeful spirit".
[107]Detailed discussion regarding the origins of *goryō* belief can be found in Gorai, et al., *Kōza nihon minzoku shūkyō*.

combination of esoteric rites called *kitō* 祈祷 and rites used among the common people. According to the account, the court had also initiated different measures against the epidemic before holding the ceremony at Shinsen'en.[108] For instance, in the first month of the year 863, a great ritual of purification was held at the Suzaku gate of the imperial palace. Furthermore, the court distributed alms to the poor who were suffering from starvation and disease. The emperor had ordered prayers to be held at the great shrines all around the country where his influence could reach, and following reports of favorable divine reaction to those prayers he ordered offerings to be made at shrines which bore the *myōjin* (名神) title.[109] After a report from the *Onmyōryō,* or the Bureau of Yin and Yang which was tasked to oversee matters of spiritual significance, the court tasked all the provinces under its jurisdiction to perform readings and lectures of Buddhist scriptures and sutras. Despite this, in the third day of the fourth month, a monk from Hōki named Ken'ei reported to the court that the crops were in very bad shape and the epidemic was running rampant, devastating everyone in its path. According to the document, he requested funds from the court to copy scriptures and make offerings in order to request divine intervention from the Buddha to stop the epidemic. His wish was granted by the court.[110]

As can be seen from these accounts, the government issued a number of orders for the prevention and alleviation of the epidemic in 863 before they decided to hold the *goryō* ceremony at Shinsen'en. This ritual was different from the others in some ways, and Neil McMullin also points out this event as a clear case of

[108]Kuroda, *Chinkon no keifu*.
[109]A title granted by the emperor to kami who are deemed to be particularly powerful or have well established shrine complexes.
[110]Description until now was based on Kuroda's account of the *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* document in *Chinkon no keifu* and my own reading of the document.

politicization of the dead.[111] Before going into detail as to why this was very significant, we have to first establish *goryō* belief and the Gion cult in their historical contexts.

The origin story of the Gion cult, as recorded many times from the Nara Period (712-84) up to the Meiji Period (1868-1812), starts with a deity (called *Mutō* 武塔) embarking on a long journey to the court of the Dragon King of the Southern Sea where he is to marry the Dragon King's daughter. As this is a long journey of 80,000 li,[112] the deity becomes tired along the way. Seeking lodging and rest along the road, the deity comes upon two brothers: The younger and wealthy Kotan Shōrai, and the elder and poor Somin Shōrai. The younger brother Kotan Shōrai refuses to shelter the deity, while Somin Shōrai generously opens up his home to him and shares with him what little he has. The deity repays his host for his hospitality by presenting Somin's daughter with a bracelet made of miscanthus reeds. The deity tells her to wear the bracelet whenever disease plagues the land. As long as she wears the bracelet and declares that she is a descendant of Somin Shōrai neither she nor any of her descendants will contract the disease[113]. Saying this, the deity continues his journey to the palace of the Dragon King. After reaching his destination, he weds the daughter of the Dragon King. Over the next twenty years, the two produce eight children and manage to gather a massive retinue comprised of thousands of smaller deities. The deity and his retinue eventually decide to leave the palace and go back to the land whence they came, to the homeland of the Shōrai brothers. Upon returning,

[111]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 288.
[112]Li is a traditional Chinese unit of distance. 1 li is equal to 500 meters.
[113]The use of miscanthus reeds and the declaration that one descends from Somin Shōrai can still be observed in some Gion rituals. The *chimaki* distributed during the Gion festival today bear the words 蘇民将来之子孫也, or "I am the descendant of Somin Shōrai."

the deity wreaks havoc and destroys all the inhabitants of the land, except the descendants of the already dead Somin Shōrai.[114]

According to McMullin, two main beliefs lie at the core of the Gion cult.[115] The first one is disease-causing deities called *ekijin* 疫神. These deities were believed to be fearsome beings who, while causing epidemics, also had the ability to prevent them. The deity *Mutō* in the origin myth, as a figure who can both cause and ward off disease, is a clear example of this dual nature of disease-causing divine agents. The second root of the Gion cult is the belief that disease, calamities and disasters of all sorts were also caused by the departed spirits of the dead, namely *goryō*. We will see that the two roots of Gion belief converged into a coherent belief system commonly referred to as *goryō* belief (*goryō shinkō* 御霊信仰).

The origins of *goryō* belief itself is not clear, as it goes back to very early periods. While Hori[116] states that *goryō* belief originated in the urban centers of Japanese society and subsequently spread among the populace from the early Nara Period onward, Kuroda argues that they were likely an evolution of the folk concept *onryō* 怨霊, which refers to the menacing spirits of deceased people who were wronged in their lifetime.[117] Kuroda's theory is more complex in nature as it prescribes a more intricate path for the evolution of the concept: From popular experiences of belief to urban centers, and a subsequent diffusion of the belief system from urban centers to surrounding areas. Conversely, if we argue that *goryō* spread from either urban centers or the upper strata we act oblivious to obvious connections between the concepts *goryō* and *onryō.* We should also note that popular

[114]"Gion Gozu Tenno Engi," vol. 3 of the "Gionsha-ki," in Yasaka Jinja Sosho, ed. Yasaka Jinja Shamusho, vol. 2, Yasaka Jinja Kiroku (Kyoto: Yasaka Jinja Shamusho, 1961), 49-53. Also in Yamada, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, 65-67.
[115]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 272.
[116]Hori, "Ryōgen to Yokawa fukkō (jō)."
[117]Kuroda, *Chinkon no keifu*.

rural rituals such as *mushiokuri* (“sending off the insects), a rural ritual dedicated to driving off insects from agricultural fields with torches, antedated *goryō* cults and that *goryō* rituals appear to be urbanized versions of such practices.

Goryō belong to the group of kami/spirits who are characterized by their free roaming nature. In some cases, the spirits of the dead are thought to be unable to return to the realm of ancestral spirits, in which case they have to remain in our world as “roaming spirits”. These kami are different than the ancestral kami that are enshrined in establishments and institutions. The existence of those shrine kami were officially approved, so to speak, as their places of dwelling were decided by governments or communally recognized organizations. This made their incorporation into mainstream Shrine Shinto very easy while roaming spirits remained outside the canon, being treated as exceptions or folk deities. *Goryō* can be further contrasted with *onryō,* in that while *onryō* were human-like and uncontrollable entities, *goryō* were more abstract entities who could be appeased and be turned into objects of veneration. Looking at this from the point of view of Kuroda (*onryō* to *goryō*), this marks the process of vengeful spirits being turned into establishment deities, but due to still being worshiped by common people, not completely shedding their histories as unpredictable and dispossessed spirits.

It is worthwhile to note that the appearance of *goryō* was in mid-ninth and into the tenth century when Nara and Kyoto were expanding rapidly, which resulted in epidemics. Takahashi argues that along with the population increase seen in the capital Heiankyō, what became a significant problem was the procurement of sanitation. He especially points to the refuse of animals and humans becoming a problem due to the city not yet having systems in place to get rid of organic waste,

including dead bodies and excrement. Keeping in mind the natural condition of Kyoto's summers, where the Kamo River saw regular flooding and the temperatures and moisture rising to levels that caused food and other organic materials to go bad, the inevitable conclusion was disastrous epidemics.[118] Honda argues that people of the capital, not armed with the tools of modern science did not realize that their plight was caused by poor hygiene and instead explained the rampant epidemics with the concepts of *ekijin* and curses brought upon by vengeful spirits (*onryō*).[119] In arguing so, Honda does fail to realize that the understanding of disease being at least partially caused by filth, and religious experiences regarding those diseases are not mutually exclusive. Arguing for this idea is connected to the troubling stance that modern, enlightened knowledge is a rupture from the obsolete knowledge of the past wherein people could not think for themselves with the end result of attaining a satisfactory solution. Nevertheless, this does not change my argument that *goryō* belief has risen out of a backdrop of poor sanitation and disease.

The use of the word *goryō* came with a political burden, as it was often used to refer to the spirits of deceased members of aristocratic families who lost their lives prematurely, and often violently as victims of political machinations. These people came to haunt the living world as vengeful spirits, causing disasters of grand scale. McMullin argues that this aspect of the *goryō* cults is related to the Chinese belief that reprehensible activities of rulers have cosmically disastrous consequences.[120] Considering all this, it is not hard to see that *goryō* belief had etched into itself quite strong political connotations. Before going into what these political implications for *goryō* belief and specifically the Gion cult might mean, we have to understand the

[118]Explained in Takahashi, chapter 3.
[119]Honda, *Kyōto no jinja to matsuri*, 44-45.
[120]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 272.

connection of the Gion cult to *goryō* belief. In order to do this, I will go back to Gion's myth of origin.

The deities seen in the Gion origin myth, namely the father, the mother and their eight children, are the central divine entities of the Gion cult. The function of the deities were to ward off and/or cure diseases which they themselves have caused. As we shall see, this is still observable today even though the deities have taken different shapes following the Meiji Revolution. This, in itself, is not something entirely new, as the deities of Gion have also taken different shapes in different time periods: In the earliest extant version of the origin story, the chief deity (the father) is referred to as *Mutō Tenjin.*[121] The origins of this word is not particularly clear, but the most credible explanation is made by Shiga Takeshi, who states that *mutō* had a geographical meaning in that it referred to any type of elevated ground such as a hill or a mountain that had a trapezoidal shape. Shiga argues that the word *mutō* was used in reference to indicate deities who took lodgings at the top of trapezoid-shaped hills.[122] McMullin points out that the Gion cult being located in the Higashiyama district of Kyoto, at the western foot of a trapezoid shaped hill is not a coincidence.[123]

Some early versions of the story establishes connections between a figure with the name of *Gozu Tennō* ("bull-headed heavenly prince") and *Mutō Tenjin.*[124] What we're seeing here is the linkage of multiple deities into a single one. The *honji suijaku* doctrine separated kami into two categories: *gonsha* 権社 (temporary kami) and *jissha* 実社 (true kami). The former category referred to kami that were thought of as traces or *gonge* 権化 (temporary manifestation) of buddhas; whereas the latter

[121]The *Bingo Fudōki* in Yamada et al.
[122]Shiga, "Nihon ni Okeru Ekijin Shinkō no Seisei," 168.
[123]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 276.
[124]In one version, *Mutō Tenjin is referred to as Gozu Tennō*, and another version presents *Gozu Tennō* as *Mutō*'s son. The connection is discussed by Kubota, *Yasaka jinja no kenkyū*.

category referred to other kami and spirits rather than the manifestations of buddhas and boddhisatvas.[125] It is clear, however, that the first connection between *Mutō Tenjin* and *Gozu Tennō* was not established by way of *honji suijaku*, but through a rather simple method of name linkage. To borrow McMullin's words: "a certain divinity known by one name is found to have another name, and thus the formerly two divinities that were identified by different names are coalesced into a single divinity known by several names[126]." For comparison's sake, this is not dissimilar to how Ancient Greek and Roman deities came to be identified as the same deities referred to with multiple names.

As for the origins of the figure of *Gozu Tennō,* we can turn to the work of Kubota Osamu, who traces it to India. A story tells of a *Gozu Tennō* who was a guardian deity of an estate that was donated to Siddharta Gautama by a merchant named Sudatta. The estate was called Jetavana ("Jeta Grove") and was translated to Japanese as Gion Shōja, which became an inspiration for the naming of the Gion cultic center at Kyoto.[127]

Having said all of this, the *honji suijaku* doctrine played an important role in the development of the Gion cult, not in the linkage of its primary deity but in its Buddhistification. As mentioned, kami belonging to the second category of *jissha* were not traces of buddhas, and thus, they were not objects worthy of devout veneration. This category included the *goryō* who were worshiped because of their functions to prevent disease and calamity, by way of placating them in order to subdue their wrath. In an environment dominated by Buddhism, however, it was

[125]Detailed discussion can be found in Kuroda, *Chinkon no keifu*.
[126]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 277.
[127]The origins of *Gozu Tennō* is discussed in detail in Kubota, while *Mutō Tenjin* is discussed in Shiga. The most detailed account of both figures in English is McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace."

inevitable that the traditional *honji suijaku* doctrine could not hold its ground. It was ultimately the people who decided what would become a buddha and what would not, and what, if not buddhahood, the essence of a kami whose powers manifested such miraculous powers of curing disease be? The *honji suijaku* doctrine being applied to these spirits not only turned them into harmless deities that promised salvation but at the same time elevated their status to that of buddhahood, and, returning to Kuroda Toshio, incorporated them into the medieval exo-esoteric system (*kenmitsu*). This did not apply to all kami of the same stature, and as we shall later see, even the kami whose statuses were elevated at times retained in themselves, their wrathful origins.

3.2 The deities of Gion and their places in the cultic complex

Let us turn now to the central figures worshiped in the Gion cult and try to trace their origins as well as other traditions and stories. I will discuss in the next section of the chapter their connections to Buddhism. Today, the central divine figure worshiped at the Gion site (known now as Yasaka Shrine) is not Gozu-Tennō but Susanoo-no-Mikoto. This is natural, as the site was converted to a Shinto shrine and stripped off its non-Shinto connotations with the advent of the Meiji government's religion project in 1868. But why did Susanoo-no-Mikoto came to be associated with the site can not be clearly understood without further inspection. Susanoo-no-Mikoto is a deity who has a major role to play in the mythology of the Japanese state created in the *Kojiki* (712 AD.) and the *Nihon shoki*[128] (720 AD.). These two documents, which were sponsored by the ruling elite, were composed as chronicles of the ancient Japanese state. They both provide historical accounts and set up the mythological

[128]Also known as *Nihongi.*

beginnings of mainland Japan, although the way in which they do this is slightly different. They are significant in that they are the oldest extant records of Japan and converge state history with myths regarding the divine origins of the country, setting up the imperial family as a divine lineage, starting with the mythical Emperor Jimmu who is the great grandson of Ninigi-no-Mikoto, who is in turn the grandson of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Susanoo-no-Mikoto, the brother of Amaterasu, is a major actor in both documents.

In both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki,* Susanoo is presented as one of the three noble children, the others being Amaterasu and Tsukuyomi. Although the accounts diverge in how he came to being, he nevertheless plays a similar role. While visiting his sister Amaterasu in Takamanohara (the Plane of High Heaven), Susanoo was suspected for insurrection and was held to "a trial by pledge."[129] Declaring himself the winner of the trial, Susanoo ran amok in Takamanohara, causing Amaterasu to hide away in a rock cave. He was subsequently banished from Takamanohara and forced to descend to the land of Izumo.[130] After landing in Izumo, Susanoo defeated the serpent Yamata no Orochi, rescuing Kushinada-hime (princess Kushinada), whom he later wed, in the process. Susanoo then traveled to *Soshimori* in Korea. According to Shiga, the word *soshimori* is a compound and can be dissected into *so* and *mori,* the prior word meaning "bull" and the latter "head". Shiga states that the word *shi* is a possessive particle and the word *soshimori* refers to a site called "Bull's Head Mountain" in the Korean kingdom of Silla.[131] This theory, needless to say, establishes a link between the figure Mutō Tenjin/Gozu Tennō and Susanoo. What

[129]The term used in Japanese here is *ukei* which indicates an act of divination to determine the divine will over the nature of a certain disposition or act.
[130]Izumo, frequently referred to in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki,* is in today's Shimane prefecture.
[131]Shiga, "Nihon ni Okeru Ekijin Shinkō no Seisei,"150, 168.

Susanoo actually represents as a divine figure, however, is not entirely clear since the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* can hardly be considered representative texts. Takahara states that he was worshiped by the Japanese as well as some Korean peoples in many different places and in a number of guises (as a deity of mountains, storms, agriculture and so on).[132] Exactly when Susanoo actually came to be identified so closely with Mutō Tenjin is also unclear but McMullin argues that it was probably not until the Kamakura Period.[133]

The other deities worshiped in the Gion cult are, as we should remember from the origin story, was the daughter of the Dragon King who is mentioned by many names in different accounts such as Barime no Miya or Kushinada-hime, and the Hachiōji, the eight children who Gozu Tennō and Barime no Miya conceived between them. According to the *Nihon shoki*, Kushinada-hime was rescued by Susanoo from Yamata no Orochi in exchange for becoming his wife. Kushinada-hime is also referred to in different stories in which she has power over snakes and is commonly associated with water. A story recounted by Shiga refers to one "Bari Hime" (*bari* meaning "to reject") who was named as such because her father, producing nothing but daughters rejected her and cast her into the sea after she was conceived. The girl, after being rescued by the Buddha, grew up to be a powerful sorceress with extraordinary healing powers.[134] She is essentially a culmination of many deities coalesced into a single one and incorporated into the Gion cult.

The Hachiōji are a more obscure group of divine beings. Again there are several tales recounting them, one being the origin myths of the Gion cult. They are

[132]Takahara, *Yasaka jinja*, 56-62.
[133]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 278.
[134]See McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 279 and Shiga, "Nihon ni Okeru Ekijin Shinkō no Seisei," 169.

referred to in the *Kojiki* as being created from the blood splatters on Izanagi's[135] sword after he severs Kagutsuchi's head off.[136] They are also referred to often as the byproduct of the aforementioned feud between Susanoo and Amaterasu after which eight deities were born. The incorporation of the Hachiōji into the Gion cult are probably very similar to those of their parental figures.

We can also turn to Kubota's account which provides us with a reliable history of the establishment of Gion. According to him, a Buddhist monk named Ennyo affiliated with the Jōjūji temple in Kyoto built a temple called Kankeiji at the present site of the Yasaka Shrine in the year 876. The temple is widely believed to have been established at the behest of Fujiwara no Mototsune, the head of the powerful Fujiwara family. This was a period when the ritsuryō system[137] was in decline and the Fujiwara family, specifically the northern branch, was in the process of assuming control over the central government. This meant that the establishment of the Kankeiji was, in effect, through the sponsorship of the most powerful people in the country at the time.

The *honden*[138], established shortly after the temple, housed Gozu Tennō/Mutō Tenjin. To his west was his wife Barime no Miya. Later on, the Hachiōji were transferred from a nearby site and erected on the other side of their father, opposite of their mother. Kankeiji was a Buddhist temple established by a

[135]Izanagi is a mythological figure introduced in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki.* Together with his wife Izanami, the two deities are credited to have given birth to the islands of Japan.
[136]Izanagi was one of the creator deities mentioned in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. He cut the fire deity Kagutsuchi's head off after Kagutsuchi burned Izanagi's wife Izanami when she gave birth to him.
[137]The ritsuryō system was a system of law based on Chinese law and Confucianism that started to be applied with the Taika Reforms in 645. Ritsuryō involved both criminal and administrative law, and was heavily influenced by the political and administrative system seen in Tang China. The concept of the decline of the ritsuryō system is used to refer to the monopoly of the most important posts in the country by a select few noble houses, including the Fujiwara, Minamoto and Taira clans.
[138]The *honden*, also called *shinden*, is a building seen in shrines that serves the purpose of enshrining the kami who are worshiped at the site.

Buddhist monk, and in the *hondō*, Yakushi Nyorai, the buddha of medicine was the central object of devotion, having been linked with Gozu Tennō by way of the aforementioned *honji suijaku* doctrine. Interestingly, it wasn't only Yakushi Nyorai who was venerated here but so was Kannon, the female boddhisatva of healing and compassion being associated with Gozu Tennō's wife Barime no Miya. There are several legends claiming that the site at Gion was established by transferring sacred objects from other religious sites. Shiga Takeshi's main argument is that the Gion center came about as a result of several disease related deities that were being worshiped in the Higashiyama section of Kyoto being coalesced into a single cultic complex. The deities were then equated with the appropriate Buddhist deities of Yakushi Nyorai and Kannon in an effort to diffuse Buddhist beliefs and practices into the loosely connected beliefs seen in the region. There are, however, different arguments to be made and Buddhism being such a dominant force during this period may not be accounted fully in Shiga's theory.

Let us return to the first chapter and the system of ruling elites theory. Buddhism during the ninth century was not entirely something to be diffused forcefully to a region from the top-down but probably existed together with the cults in Higashiyama. Popular Buddhism during the Nara Period (710-794) was marked not by scholarly doctrines but were based more prominently on the magical powers that scriptures and imagery entailed. This was especially the case during, but also after, the Nara Period and the magical aspect of Buddhism wherein scriptures were mostly a magical means towards an end was no doubt the basis on which Buddhism expanded so rapidly among the populace in Medieval Japan. To be able to explain this further, I will continue discussing the aforementioned ritual at Shinsen'en.

3.3 Early *goryō* rituals

I have stated in the beginning of this chapter that the imperial ceremony held at the Shinsen'en temple was different than all the other rituals and religious measures the court had taken against the epidemic and that this was very significant for the purposes of our investigation. It should be obvious now that the reason why this was important is because the ceremony at Shinsen'en was a *goryō* ritual that also drew from folk practices, whereas as those preceding it were not. Delving deeper into *goryō* ritual will allow me to make the point that the ingestion of Buddhism by the *goryō* cults was most probably influenced heavily by popular belief. It will also serve to underline the political aspect of *goryō* rituals, and specifically the Gion cultic center. As a precursor, it should be noted in the case of Kyoto, Gion is not the only place in which *goryō* belief developed as a state-sponsored belief system. For instance, Shimogorei, Kamigoryō, Imamiya and Kitano shrines, all of which are old shrines of Kyoto, are also tied closely to this belief. For the purposes of this thesis, I will mostly focus on Gion's *goryō* rituals and mention other sites such as Kitano in passim.

The 863 ceremony at Shinsen'en happened in a background of considerable duress. The latter part of the ninth century was marked by great influxes of people into the cities of Nara and Kyoto due to extraordinary poverty in the provinces. It is noted by McMullin that, by the end of the ninth century, approximately one half of the population in some provinces abandoned their lands and migrated to the cities.[139] The ancient cities of Japan did not have fortified walls that separated the city from the countryside, and the boundaries that determined where the city started and finished were quite vague. Kuroda views the growth of Kyoto at this time as a

[139]McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 287.

natural result of the *kenmon* regime where the core population consisted of those attending to the protection and management of the *kenmon* class and the centers of belief, while the margins of the cities developed free-form, involving the influx of people from lower classes. Kuroda's sketch of the people comprising the population of Kyoto during the Heian Period (794-1185) is as follows:

- The *kenmon* elite class, consisting of aristocrats and priests of imperial or aristocratic lineage who were called *monzeki* 門跡;

- provincial governors (*zuryō* 受領), high ranking stewards in charge of the affairs of the aristocracy (*keishi* 家司), and warriors (*musha* 武者);

- commoners (*Kyōto zōnin* 京都雑人 as well as lower class citizens referred to as *kyōjū genin* 京中下人), artisans working for temples and shrines (*jinnin* 神人), and the guards and subordinates of all noble houses (classified as *aozamurai* 青侍 and *gebu* 下部 respectively);

- farmers who resided in the city;

- people of the margins, namely holy men (*hijiri* 聖), performers, and untouchables (*hinin* 非人).

The margins of the city, and thus, a considerable portion of the influx of people included farmers from the surrounding countryside and the provinces, farmers residing in the city, and the holy men.[140] Toda argues on this issue that the mere identification of the populace in the city does not show us the extent to which they were active in *goryō* rituals. His study of the *dengaku*[141] performances of the rather famous 1096 Gion rituals demonstrates that the participants consisted of farmers

[140]Kuroda, *Chinkon no keifu*.

[141]*Dengaku* can indicate a form of rural entertainment in the form of musical accompaniment to rice planting and field labor. It can also refer to *dengaku odori* (*dengaku* dance) which originated in the temples and shrines of Kyoto, and came to be performed by specialist masters named *hōshi*. In my usage here, *dengaku* refers to a fusion of these two forms of entertainment.

from surrounding areas, general residents of the city, guards and subordinates of main houses, as well as the artisans attached to various temples and shrines.[142] *Dengaku* is a crucial aspect of *goryō* ritual, since it evolved from rural entertainment into a form of expression that went hand in hand with what is called *fūryū* 風流.

Fūryū is a term that is very hard to translate. The Kokugakuin online encyclopedia of Shinto describes its historical usage in the following way: "Originally in China, the word furyū meant tradition (*ifū* 遺風)and nostalgia (*yo-in* 余韻). In Japan, in the *Man'yōshū* (compiled sometime after 759 AD), it was used to express the concept elegance (*miyabi* 雅). In the medieval period it's pronunciation was compressed to furyū, and it acquired a wide range of meanings." *Fūryū* essentially refers to the festival processions that developed during the second half of the Heian period that involved heavily decorated structures and floats used in festivals as well as dance and music performed there by costumed dancers and musicians. It is significant in that *fūryū* was and is often associated with *goryō* rituals, most famously at Gion. Raz argues that the Gion *fūryū dengaku* was a fusion between the two aspects of *dengaku*, that is, its rural and religious forms.[143] This is in line with Toda's findings since it reminds us that the *dengaku* performances brought together the citizens of Kyoto and the people from surrounding areas in one of the biggest gatherings of the time, making it the ideal opportunity for such a fusion to occur. As I shall demonstrate later on, *goryō* ritual had very significant political implications, and *fūryū dengaku* was a crucial part of the affair.

In order to demonstrate those political implications, I will return to the 863 Shinsen'en *goryō* ritual, and tie in Gion and *dengaku* into this discussion once I am

[142]Toda, "Shōen taisei kakuritsuki no shūkyōteki minshū undō."
[143]Raz, "Popular entertainment and politics," 287.

done with it. In the Shinsen'en ceremony, six sanctuaries (*ryōza*) that represented six historical figures were erected. These people were Sudō Tennō, Iyo Shinnō, Fujiwara no Yoshiko, Tachibana no Hayanari, Bunya no Miyatamarō and Fujiwara no Hirotsugu. It is of great cultic significance that these six figures were identified as disease-causing spirits whom the court felt the necessity to placate, because all of them experienced premature and violent deaths at the wake of the Fujiwara family's rise to power. The *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* (901) states that because these six people were subject to political machinations, their innocent spirits were transformed into vengeful ones who caused disease. It adds that in shortly prior to the year 863, a large number of people had been dying due to epidemics which the people believed were caused by these *goryō*.

Sudō Tennō (750-785) was the crown prince of Sawara. In his lifetime, he was accused of involvement in the assassination of Fujiwara no Tanetsugu, the founder of one of the four great Fujiwara houses. Sudō Tennō was disinherited and exiled to Awaji but died on his way there. Sudō's *goryō* was a rather famous one, as there were rumors in the 790s that his spirit was causing the deaths of peasants in Awaji. Eventually Sudō Tennō, previously known as Sawara Shinnō, was elevated posthumously to emperor status in an attempt to placate his wrathful spirit. Iyo Shinnō (died in 807), another crown prince, was accused of involvement in a plot against the Fujiwara. He was, along with his mother Fujiwara no Yoshiko, sent to exile where they both committed suicide. Tachibana no Hayanari (782-844) was accused of being involved in a succession dispute that occurred in 842 (the Jōwa Incident) and died en route to exile to Izu Province. Fujiwara no Hirotsugu (715-740) was a member of the Shikike branch of the Fujiwara who led a rebellion against the

court from Kyushu. He was caught and executed after he was defeated. Hirotsugu is mentioned in the *Shoku Nihongi* as the source of a rumor that identifies him as a spirit causing harm. The last spirit on the list, Bunya no Miyatamaro (died in 843) was condemned to exile after he was accused of a plot with some merchants from Silla.[144]

In addition to the sanctuaries erected on the Shinsen'en grounds, the ceremony was attended by the monk Etatsu who recited the sutras *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Hannyashingyō* which were thought to be effective against calamities. The children of the imperial families and of the warrior families close to them performed courtly dances. The ceremony saw the doors of Shinsen'en being opened to commoners, and musicians and dancers from among the people performed in a more loud and frenzied fashion, using drums and gongs. This was a new interaction between the religious consciousness of the commoners and those of the ruling elite, as the ritual experience combined Buddhist rites with singing and dancing. It is important to note that the Shinsen'en ceremony was not representative of the way popular *goryō* rituals were conducted, as those seem to have included competitions of equestrian archery, acrobatic performances, and sumo matches in an environment more reminiscent of festivals. An exemplary ritual that could be seen in *goryō* rituals can be found in a story recounted in many earliest documents: Amaterasu, the goddess of sun hides in the rock cave after her transgressions with Susanoo. Amaterasu's hiding in the cave also hides the sun from the sky. She is eventually drawn out from the cave by a ritual conducted in front of her cave. In the ritual, Ame-no-Uzume, the goddess of dawn and revelry, starts a suggestive dance in front of the other gods where she starts taking off her clothes, making the other gods laugh and clamor. This ritual is called

[144]These six historical figures are all discussed in Kubota, *Yasaka jinja no kenkyū*, 73-75.

tamashizume no matsuri (spirit pacification), and it is thought that the revelry found in popular *goryō* ritual is of similar character to Ame-no-Uzume's suggestive dance, which also served the purpose of appeasement of the spirit. The *dengaku* dances later seen in *goryō* rituals clearly served a similar, if not the same purpose.

The inclusion, or rather, the central position of the historical figures in the Shinsen'en ceremony tells us a lot, and the concept of McMullin's "politicization of the dead" comes in precisely at this point, as it appears that the ceremony at the Shinsen'en was an effort on the part of the northern branch of the Fujiwara family to co-opt the *goryō* cult for political purposes.[145] Designating these six spirits as the cause of contemporary disasters involved a rather calculated moral interpretation in that the goal of the whole affair was to placate the harmful spirits who were, at the end of their lives, enemies of the Fujiwara. So, the interpretation that the Fujiwara wanted to establish was that the enemies of the Fujiwara were in death, as they were in life, enemies of the people. It is also possible that the Fujiwara felt a need to organize the rituals around these six historical figures (being somewhat forced to do it as opposed to choosing) as they seem to have been subjects of popular rumors within the populace, who were quite obviously not disconnected from politics.[146] The high probability that *goryō* rituals spread from the inner provinces outwards also makes it evident that people in the cities were especially sensitive to political struggles. These arguments can be supported further with historical evidence indicating that the common people used these *goryō* rituals in order express political discontent and frustration, as well as the deliberate efforts made by the Fujiwara to emplace the *goryō* cults in a position where they would serve Fujiwara needs.

[145]This point is also argued by Kitayama, *Nihon no rekishi*, 226-28.
[146]Evidence of popular rumors can be found in extant documents from *Shoku Nihongi* (797) to the *Ban Dainagon Ekotoba* picture scroll (12th century).

Let us think back to the origin story of the Gion cultic center. According to Takahara, the story has a subplot that has to do with what the Shōrai brothers symbolize. He argues that this subplot may have been borrowed from a story of Ainu origin and that the words "Kotan Shōrai" means "to bring riches" whereas "Somin Shōrai" means "to bring that which revives". Takahara thinks that the main theme of the story from which these characters are borrowed is that the rich are selfish people with no sense of justice who hoard their wealth, whereas the poor are generous.[147] Although I find the evidence for Takahara's arguments to be somewhat lacking, the argument resonates strongly with the origin story of the Gion complex where the deity rewards humble benevolence and punishes greedy selfishness. More importantly, the argument suggests that the Gion story contains some criticism towards the urban elite, since the story accuses Kotan Shōrai to be responsible for the disease that wreaked havoc on the land and even threatens the obliteration of him and his family at the hands of the gods. This theme could very well have been an underlying aspect of popular *goryō* rituals, and it is further supported by historical records showing that the ruling elite actively tried to suppress popularly organized *goryō* rituals, which we will go through.

I have already stated that popular *goryō* rituals were events within which a huge number of people came together and activities such as wrestling and equestrian archery was practiced. This was, in a way, a mass assembly in which people engaged in boisterous military-like activities. It should not come as a surprise, then, that the ruling elite attempted, on several occasions, to repress the rituals. One such attempt was in 865, just two years after the Shinsen'en ceremony, when a document that prohibited the populace from assembling privately for the purpose of conducting

[147]Takahara, *Yasaka jinja*, 37.

goryō rituals and engaging in horse racing and archery was issued.[148] Another significant case that this kind of obstruction was attempted was in 998, which was also the first recorded instance of a float (*yama*) being set up for the Gion festival (Figure 3). The event was led by Mukotsu, a *sarugaku*[149] practitioner. According to Hayashiya, Mukotsu built a float that year for the Gion *goryō* ritual. The float closely resembled the Shimeyama float that was seen in the *daijōe*, the enthronement ceremony for a new emperor. The *shimeyama*, or *shime*, were tall wheeled floats that were put out by two provinces for the enthronement ceremony.[150] The crux of the matter is that because the float developed by Mukotsu resembled the *daijōe* floats so much, Fujiwara no Michinaga, the de facto head of the government at the time forbade the float from being displayed and ordered the *keibiishi*[151] to seize Mukotsu. While Mukotsu managed to run away and avoid getting caught, a low-ranking man among the participants was possessed by the Gion deity (Gozu Tennō/Mutō Tenjin). The deity spoke through his mouth and raged against the cancellation of the ritual.[152] Hayashiya explains this account of the man being possessed by the deity as a protest on the part of the people against Michinaga, who forcefully interrupted their ceremony. For Michinaga, the similarity between the *daijōe* and this low-class ritual was unforgivable, and lay at the core of why he attempted to suppress it.[153]

Another significant example that highlights the intersecting political and cultural aspects of Gion is the *dengaku* that took place in 1094. According to the

[148]Kitayama, *Nihon no rekishi*, 228. and McMullin, "On placating the gods and pacifying the populace," 290.
[149]*Sarugaku* is a form of theater that became popular especially during the Kamakura Period. It's beginnings go back to the tenth century.
[150]One of he provinces were granted the title *suki,* and the other *yuki*. They were determined by fortune telling and each held a different but similar role in the *daijōe*.
[151]A judicial and policing body tied to the government under the *ritsuryō* system.
[152]From *Honchōseiki.*
[153]Hayashiya, *Rekishi-Kyōto-geinō*.

Figure 3. Funeboko (left) and Iwatoyama (right) floats, *Gionkai Saiki* 1757.

Chūyūki, written by court noble Fujiwara no Munetada, a group of ten *aozamurai* organized by Chancellor Minamoto no Ietoshi performed a *dengaku* parade through the streets of Kyoto. They marched to the residence of *kanpaku*[154] Fujiwara no Moromichi, loudly singing and playing their flutes. They proceeded to hurl trash at a house in which a gathering of high ranking officials were taking place. They subsequently ran away, although not without clashing with some guardians. Munetada describes their procession as *hyakki yakō*[155], the parade of a hundred demons.[156] Inoue cites this incident as an example of how *dengaku* was used to demonstrate political frustration and discontent.[157] The 1094 *dengaku* was a precursor

[154]The k*anpaku* system refers to the regency system wherein a regent serves as the chief adviser to an adult emperor. More often than not, the role of *kanpaku* was held by members of the Fujiwara. The system was only abolished with the Meiji Restoration of 1868.
[155]The words *hyakki yak*ō were often used to refer to scandalous or obscene scenes. It is originally a concept in Japanese literary tradition referring to demons parading through the city streets in a summer night.
[156]The account was paraphrased from Raz, "Popular entertainment and politics," 289.
[157]Inoue, "Eichō gannen no dengaku sōdō," 11.

of what would happen in the infamous *dengaku* ceremony of 1096. In the spring of 1096, the Sumiyoshi festival in the third month saw the breaking out of riots among the thousands of attendants. Authorities responding with strong measures flamed the event. It is stated in the *Chūyūki* that people committed suicide, probably as a form of protest, by jumping into the shrine pond and drowning. The event resulted in the civilian government halting all cultic rites in Sumiyoshi as well as the Matsuo Festival, which was a month later. Further reaction by commoners followed, as protests started to occur in the shape of *dengaku* parades involving singing newly composed songs and dancing in public.[158]

This heightened sense of protest culminated in the great *dengaku* of the sixth month of 1096, as part of the *goryō* ceremonies at Gion. *Dengaku* was performed for twelve straight days until the climax on June 14th in the city of Kyoto, creating a loud and chaotic cityscape. The performers varied from commoners but also included *jinnin* and *aozamurai.* A mingling of urban commoners and peasants had occurred and *furyū* elements seem to have been abundant. The climax of the *dengaku* ceremonies surprisingly attracted members of the court, as nobles, warriors and priests seem to have attended as spectators. Later, in the seventh month, the nobility organized their own *dengaku* ceremony, effectively incorporating a form of entertainment that had previously belonged to the commoners and contained ambiguous qualities of contempt.[159]

It is clear that the ruling elite of the Heian Period were trying to establish some form of control over *goryō* practices. This attempt no doubt aimed to incorporate *goryō* belief into the official cultic structures so that the common people

[158]Toda, "Shōen taisei kakuritsuki no shūkyōteki minshū undō," 9.
[159]Inoue, "Eichō gannen no dengaku sōdō,"12.

could not practice their own ideologies unchecked, which could harm the interests of other power groups. This is also apparent in the fact that both Kitano and Gion were, in mid-tenth century, incorporated into the twenty-two shrines (*Nijūni-sha*) structure, which was entirely under Fujiwara governance.[160] McMullin argues that it is entirely possible, even probable, that Fujiwara no Mototsune had the Kankeiji built at the Gion site in an effort to centralize and take control of the *goryō* cult. The implications of this discussion is incredibly significant, as it indicates the desire of the ruling elite to incorporate the cults into their system of legitimization and control. The cults formed a part of the religious consciousness of the populace, and they used *goryō* belief and ritual to organize and direct their discontent towards the powerful.

We know today that the 863 *goryō* ritual took place before the establishment of Kankeiji and Tenjindō on the Gion cultic center in 869. Hayashiya argues that the Gion ritual site was in its earliest days, a site dedicated to the Yasaka *ujigami.*[161] The development of the site as a place to prevent misfortune came as a result of people starting to hold *goryō* rituals there against floods and diseases, as we have touched upon earlier. What we can add to that is in the tenth century, the image of the Gion deity as a harbinger and agent of disease gradually turned into a deity who prevented them from happening. It also appears that this period marked the start of the Gion *goryō* ritual turning into an annual event, which is what we call Gion Festival.

Yanagita Kunio argued that the influence urbanization started to exert on native belief also just started to develop during the inception of the Gion temple

[160]The twenty-two shrines were temple-shrine complexes directly supported by the imperial lineage during the Heian Period. The form of the support varied, but included imperial visits, offerings of food, other products and, later on, land estates.

[161]*Ujigami* ("clan kami") are ancestral kami or other tutelary deities worshiped by groups and individuals sharing the same clan (uji) name. The concept later merged with local geographic deities as the warrior class started to adopt those local deities as their own *ujigami*. See Hayashiya, *Rekishi-Kyōto-geinō*.

complex (869 onward). According to him, the changes in the political structure, increasing contact with the world outside Japan as well as the increasing density of population resulted in new varieties of disasters to be envisioned.[162] The most dominant form of these new types of disasters were epidemics. This is the point at which the logic behind the festival changed from a ritual through which plague inducing deities were comforted to one that aimed to influence the deities in a way that they would be helpful to the people.

Although Yanagita's point of view is plausible and indeed valid to an extent, it does not include the influence of Buddhism on the historical experience of belief at the time. The Gion site, as it was incorporated into the twenty-two shrines became a sub-temple of the Enryakuji. This implied two things. First, that the Gion site was now situated within the central establishment of shrines and temples; and second, that it acquired some unmistakable Buddhist qualities over an already extant folk/Buddhist framework.

3.4 Gion as part of a Buddhist framework

The establishment of the Gion complex proper is a story of many unknowns and theories. What is certain and what I have tried to subtly underline up until now is that Gion, since its inception, operated in a framework that Buddhism was at the center of. This Buddhist framework accompanied a strong dose of political significance and the expression of that political aspect in its rituals. The establishment shrines and temples of the exo-esoteric system, and Gion's deity changing in its nature to a more benevolent one was the result of both these factors. In this section I will write about

[162]Yanagita, *Yanagita kunio zenshū*, 426.

the twenty-two shrines system (identified between 965-1039), the incorporation of Gion into the Enryakuji temple complex and the changing nature of the Gion deities.

Although I have briefly explained this above, the term twenty-two shrines indicated twenty-two temple-shrine multiplexes that were supported by the imperial lineage. This support came with a bag full of implications and functions for the said religious sites. Indeed, it is widely agreed that the system was part of a formalization of imperial cults during the Heian Period and influenced the entire religious framework of Medieval Japan and beyond. It is important to note that the wording of the "twenty two shrines", which uses the word "*sha"* 社 to refer to the religious sites, is very misleading, as it is often perceived as indicating shrines dedicated to kami rather than Buddhist complexes. While it is common in today's parlance to separate Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines with the words "*ji"* 寺 and "sha" 社, this was not necessarily the case in the Heian Period. Following this, the twenty-two shrines referred not to "Shinto" shrines but to a combined system between Buddhist and kami worship often referred to as *jisha* 寺社. Throughout this work, I have referred to such sites as cultic sites or complexes. While discussing the twenty-two shrines system it is very important to keep in mind that without it, Shinto as we know it today would not exist, since all of the Shinto schools of the Medieval era emerged from within this system. Kuroda refers to this system of politico-cultural centers of power within sites of religious function and importance as *jisha seiryoku* (寺社勢力 "temple-shrine power complexes").

The system was comprised of the most powerful shrines and temples within exo-esoteric Buddhism that were centered around Nara and Mt. Hiei which indicated a geography of specific religious importance tied closely to the political and social

influence of the sites within the system of ruling elites. The institutional makeup of the twenty-two shrines also shows us a particular geographical alignment (Table 1). The temple-shrines were grouped into three separate groups named Upper, Middle and Lower Shrines as per the classical naming tradition. In this case, this categorization also served as a degree for the perceived importance of the shrines in the eyes of the ruling elite, the Upper group being the most significant.

The Lower eight shrines started off as only a group of two when they were first established in 966. Cultic sites were gradually added to this group until 1039 when the last two were put in to complete the twenty-two shrines. Demonstrating the temples in the table below makes it easier to see the geopolitical importance behind the system. The first groups included only temple-shrines from Yamashiro Province and Heian-kyō as well as the Ise and Kasuga temple-shrine complexes (the ancestral shrines of the imperial lineage and the Fujiwara respectively). The Middle group

Table 1. List of the Twenty-two Shrines and the Temples Associated with Them

The Upper Shrines	The Middle Shrines	The Lower Shrines
Ise – Ise Daijingūji	Ōharano – Ōharano Jingūji	Hie – Enryakuji
Kasuga – Kōfukuji	Yamato – Yamato Jingūji	Umenomiya – Umenomiya Jingūji
Kamo – Kamo Jingūji	Sumiyoshi – Shiragidera	Yoshida – Jingū-in
Iwashimizu – Daijō-in	Isonokami – Isonokami Jingūji	Hirota – Hirota Jingūji
Matsunoo – Mansekiji	Ōmiwa – Daigorinji	Gion – Kankeiji
Inari – Inari Jingūji	Hirose – Hirose Jingūji	Kitano – Kannonji
Hirano – Semuidera (Kannonji)	Tatsuta – Tatsuta Jingūji	Nibunokawakami – Nibunokawakami Jingūji
		Kibune – Jizō-in

includes only sites from Yamato Province, except Sumiyoshi and Ōharano (from Yamashiro and Settsu respectively). The Lower group is comprised of shrines spread between Ōmi, Yamato and Yamashiro. Yamashiro Province was the seat of power of the central government during the conception of the twenty-two shrines concept (966 to 1039). Notably, the Upper group is the most representative of this area. Yamato Province, on the other hand, was the previous seat of power and political center, and is represented by the Middle group. And although the shrines of the Lower group are located both in Yamashiro and Yamato, almost all of the sites lie in the peripheries of the two political centers.

What can be added to this geopolitical positioning of the temple-shrines in question is the Fujiwara dominance over them. Ōharano from the Middle group and Yoshida from the Lower group are both reimaginations of the Kasuga Shrine, which is dedicated to the tutelary deity (*ujigami*) of the Fujiwara. Moreover, most of the shrines in the three groups were either found by members of the Fujiwara house or eventually came into their direct control. As we should remember, Kankeiji on the Gion ritual site was also built under Fujiwara patronage. The twenty-two shrines formed together a system of discursive practices that had specific interpretations regarding morality and political order. What we have discussed under the previous sections of this chapter were part of this system of interpretation, although we have also seen that it was not uncontested and was at times opposed by popular religious practice. Nevertheless, the attempt at incorporating *goryō* belief into the central politico-religious framework came with the inclusion of Gion and Kitano into the twenty-two shrines system. As can be seen in Table 1, the Hie Shrine was associated with Enryakuji, a powerful Tendai monastery/temple.[163] The exact time when the

[163]The Tendai sect is a school of Buddhism descending from the Chinese Tiantai school.

Gion cultic complex was incorporated into Enryakuji's growing network of branch temples is unknown, but it is often predicted to have occurred in the tenth century. This is not a simple matter of assigning dates to the event at hand, however, since Gion had sub-temple relations not only with Enryakuji but also with Kōfukuji before that. Gion's relations with other religious, mostly Buddhist sites are significant from several angles. First, it is extremely vital in order to locate the nature of Gion's deities and its belief system in the complex religious landscape of Medieval Japan. Secondly, although doctrinal differences were indeed significant, sub-temple relations were mostly affairs having to do with political and economic concerns, underlining the fact that religious experience and symbols are as political as they are cultural/religious concepts. In the case of Gion, control over the cultic complex meant that *goryō* belief and all the symbolic baggage that came with it was trying to be incorporated into the central religious framework. The incorporation of the cult into exo-esoteric Buddhism also meant that the distressing aspects of *goryō* belief, namely the wrathful and violent spirits, could be controlled and rendered harmless, to the point where they would start to symbolize the virtues of the establishment and the order that it provides.[164] Let us delve into some detail as to how and why the Gion cult became a sub-temple of Enryakuji. The discussion is relevant to this thesis to the extent that it allows us to conceptualize amalgamative cultic sites in relation with other such sites in a political, economic and cultural environment mostly dominated by Buddhism.

The most important thing to understand about the process of sub-temple relations in the tenth century is the context in which these transactions and conflicts happened. As we have already stated, the *ritsuryō* system was not in a very healthy

[164]Also argued by Kawane, "Yasurai matsuri no seiritsu," and Kuroda, *Chinkon no keifu*.

state during the tenth century. Religious institutions did not have enough financial support to expand their interests and came to rely heavily on noble patronage, most of which involved high ranking members of the northern *sekkanke* branch of the Fujiwara family. This was also a time in which both cultic institutions and noble families were in the process of acquiring land estates that served as major bases of economic support for expansion. Significantly for cultic institutions, the private land that they acquired was also the source from which they drew corvée labor.[165] It is useful here to keep in mind that by this time Kankeiji and Tenjindō had already been built and the Gion complex already established.

The story of Gion's sub-temple relations with other bigger temples is also the story of competition for Fujiwara patronage between Kōfukuji and Enryakuji. Kōfukuji was famously associated with the Kasuga Shrine in which the *ujigami* of the Fujiwara were enshrined. As such, Kōfukuji was almost always at the very top of the list of cultic institutions to receive Fujiwara patronage. Enryakuji on the other hand came to receive such a degree of support in the mid-tenth century.[166] It was indeed Kōfukuji which at first had established sub-temple relations with Gion. In the definition of sub-temple relations, terminology is very important, as there are different words used to indicate the extent and nature of power one institution had over another. This particular relationship was called *betsuin* 別院 and gave right to the Kōfukuji to appoint and dismiss the Gion administration. According to Adolpshon, the way that sub-temple relations came to be established can be separated into two patterns. The first way was local contribution, mostly through donations by influential landowners. Another way was by the petition of the clergy to

[165]McMullin, "The enryaku-ji and the Gion shrine-temple complex," 167.
[166]Discussed in detail by Hori, "Ryōgen to Yokawa fukkō (jō)," 24-55.

become a sub-temple of other bigger institutions.[167] Adolpshon appears to have based this off on extant documents involving cases of cultic sites establishing sub-temple relations with others, and it seems to me that these patterns should not be thought of as the only methods through such a relationship could be established. The concept, all things considered still has many unknown elements pertaining to its nature.

According to McMullin, we should, all in all, think of the *betsuin* relationship mostly as an economic and administrative one whereby the land holdings of one institution were mostly controlled and administered by a bigger institution who the smaller was the *betsuin* of.[168] Kuroda also points out that the *betsuin* of one temple amounted mostly to an estate controlled by the bigger temple. This is supported by the historical tradition of including the names of *betsuin* temples in the list of estates that a temple officially held.[169] Doctrinal control over one institution over the other seems to have been minimal. The *betsuin* system is a whole lot different than the later home temple-branch temple system (本末制度 *honmatsu seido*). This is significant because the Konjaku Monogatarishū refers to Gion as a *matsuji* 末寺 (branch temple) of the Kōfukuji, even though the branch temple system did not develop until the eleventh century. Since the home temple-branch temple system involved a much tighter and stricter relationship between the home and branch temples it is important for us to distinguish between the two. This was to the extent that the abbot of the branch temple had to be a member of the home temple's community and was appointed directly by the home temple.[170] After the branch temple system developed, Gion became a branch temple (*matsuji*) of the Enryakuji

[167]Adolpshon, *Heian Japan, centers and peripheries*, 236.
[168]McMullin, "The enryaku-ji and the Gion shrine-temple complex," 168.
[169]Kuroda, *Jisha seiryoku*, 52.
[170]Ibid, 157.

from the 970s onward, although it is not clear if all components of the Gion center entered into this relationship.[171] What was most significant in this whole affair was probably the interest and subsequent role of the ruling elite in the realization of these relations.

The tenth century marked a large-scale effort of temple construction by the Northern Fujiwara in an attempt to create a new cultic network in the area surrounding Kyoto, the contemporary center of political power. The older Kasuga/Kōfukuji centers were not under the direct control of the Northern Fujiwara leaders and were comparatively far away from Kyoto. Newly built institutions, such as the Hosshōji in Higashiyama and Eshin'in at Yokawa would serve as the *bodaiji* 菩提寺 for the line of Fujiwara no Tadahira (880-949) and later Fujiwara no Morosuke (909-60).[172] The word *bodaiji* refers to a temple that is tasked to perform burials and rituals for the posthumous buddhahood of the person and his family to which the temple is dedicated. According to McMullin, the *bodaiji* were also tasked with performing rituals dedicated to the success and glory of the living descendants of that line.[173] The new temple-shrine network built by the Northern Fujiwara allowed them to reallocate the role of the Kasuga/Kōfukuji complex in these rituals, specifically the portion of them that pertained to Tadahira's line, to the Enryakuji.

For our purposes, the relationship between the Fujiwara and the Enryakuji is intrinsic to understand why the Enryakuji would specifically desire control over Gion. The answer lies in the ritual power that would be acquired by overseeing as much institutions that had to do with placating the dead as possible. According to McMullin, Ryōgen (912-85), the head abbot of the Enryakuji at the time, had

[171]McMullin, "The enryaku-ji and the Gion shrine-temple complex," 169.
[172]These temples are discussed in Hori, *Folk religion in Japan*.
[173]Discussed in detail in McMullin, "The Lotus sutra and politics in the mid-Heian period."

realized that control over rituals that served Fujiwara needs, namely the glorification of their ancestors, was the way in which he could receive full support from the powerful family. Because the way to control the Fujiwara dead was dependent on controlling other institutions that presided over deceased spirits, Ryōgen, established *betsuin* relations with cultic sites such as the Hosshōji, Tōnomine, and Gion.[174]

Moreover, after Gion's acquisition by the Enryakuji, the *jinnin* belonging to the Gion community (犬神人 *inujinnin*)[175] often formed a part of the Enryakuji's army of warrior monks (僧兵 *sōhei*). Hioki also notes that the Gion site was used by the Enryakuji monks as a stronghold before their *gōso* 強訴, or "strong appeal", ceremonies. These referred to cases where monks descended from the Hiei Mountain carrying their deities enshrined inside special palanquins called *mikoshi* 神輿 in an effort to petition the government over grievances. Protests involved armed monks and hints of potential violence by means both divine and worldly. For the Enryakuji's *gōso* attempts, Gion served as the place on which the palanquins were deposited in preparation. The *gōso* became an especially prominent method of expressing discontent by powerful temple-shrine complexes from the tenth century onward,[176] and there are 29 separate accounts of a *gōso* conducted by the Enryakuji in the eleventh century alone.[177] In the most basic sense of the word, establishing *betsuin* relationship with cultic sites such as Gion was a way for the temples to expand their memberships, economic and political power and influence.

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[174]McMullin, "The enryaku-ji and the Gion shrine-temple complex," 172.
[175]The *inujinnin* were low caste members of the Gion that start appear on historical records after the eleventh century. They served as the morticians of their time and were required to clean the grounds of the Gion complex as well as dispose of corpses and animal carcasses.
[176]*Gōso* and other concepts having to do with warrior monks are studied in detail in Hioki, *Nihon sōhei kenkyū*.
[177]Listed in: http://www.wiki-zero.com/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9qYS53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kv5by36Ki0. Sources provided for the information are the *Chūyūki, Denryaku, Hyakuresnhō, Honchōseiki, Heihanki, Akihiro-ōki, Tendaizasuki* and *Gyokuyō.*

Gion's inclusion in the twenty-two shrines system was not a distant process from its relations with the Kōfukuji and Enryakuji. Both processes were an increase in the involvement of the Gion complex with temple-shrines close to the central political establishment and the politico-cultural ideologies surrounding them. It should come as a natural development, then, that its rituals and deities would come to resemble those close to the establishment, whereas in reality, Gion's rituals and the deities associated with them were and still are positioned rather ambivalently. This, I believe, was due to the reason that Gion's *goryō* origins drew heavily from folk belief and its rituals were always a space of intellectual contestation between classes. This is to say that because of the politico-cultural developments behind the conception of Japanese religiosity and those that surround the *goryō* cult, the air of ambiguity was a constitutive part of the cult in the longue durée. The fact that both Kitano and Gion were grouped among the Lower Shrines, and not in the more central Upper and Middle ones, can be thought of in conjunction with this aspect. I will later go on to explain how politico-cultural contestation shows itself in a similar but different way in the modern times.

The inclusion of Gion into the twenty-two shrines coincided with the shift from the *ritsuryō* system to the system of ruling elites. While we are not sure about exactly how Gion was incorporated into the twenty-two shrines, we know that it happened sometime in early eleventh century. This period was the time in which imperial patronage of deities changed drastically. Imperial offerings became restricted to the twenty-two shrines, while in the *ritsuryō* system, offerings were universal in principle.[178] Receiving imperial patronage, and thus, political and economic support, the conception around Gion's cultic presence changed. The

[178]Kuroda, *Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai*, 92.

original conception of *goryō* indicated dangerous spirits that were placated in sites dedicated to folk belief and ritual. The new order in which they found themselves in was a sort of assimilation into the officially established temple-shrine system of the contemporary elite. This meant that the effect deriving from the result of worshiping the *goryō* deities was emphasized more than their characters, and they gradually came to be viewed as protectors of social order rather than wielders of death and destruction.

This transformation is incredibly apparent for Kitano Tenjin, who represents the spirit of Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). Michizane was a scholar and government official who later died in exile due to the political machinations of Fujiwara no Tokihira (871-909). After Michizane's death, the sons of Emperor Daigo died in quick succession, plague spread across the land, and the capital was subjected to endless thunderstorms and flooding, which helped designate him as a restless and wrathful spirit. The name Tenjin was given to the spirit of Michizane in 986, and the temple Kitano Tenmangū was built in an attempt to appease his angry spirit. In line with the developments regarding the conceptualization of *goryō* in popular psyche, he was later associated with the boddhisatva Kannon and acquired a myriad of Buddhist titles and honors.[179] For the Gion temple-shrine complex, the change showed itself in the form of imperial visits. More importantly, because the exo-esoteric system was predominantly a Buddhist one, it meant that Gion would be increasingly associated with Buddhist concepts. For instance, McMullin points out that *goryō* rituals from the tenth century onward were in the process of being replaced by rituals centered on Amida and other esoteric Buddhist rituals that

[179]See Takeuchi, *Tenmangū* for a detailed discussion of Kitano Tenjin.

provided an alternative way of handling departed spirits.[180] Hirabayashi also points out many instances which Buddhist abbots, often from the Enryakuji, performing esoteric rituals that targeted to heal aristocrats or cure epidemics. The fact that these rituals were esoteric limited the practitioners to Tendai abbots. In addition, those that funded these lengthy rituals were often the aristocrats who were in a mutually beneficial relationship with those religious institutions.[181]

McMullin, while discussing the Buddhist development of the cultic site, points to the monk Genshin (942-1017) who deliberately infiltrated the Higashiyama section of Kyoto. According to him, Genshin sent a famous statue of Amida Buddha that he carved for enshrinement in the Hōkanji, an ancient temple in Higashiyama that was deeply involved with the g*oryō* cult. Genshin was the figure responsible in the formation of many popular groups practicing Buddhism in the region including a group called *Jizōko* devoted to the boddhisatva of the present age Jizō,[182] as well as numerous Amida cults.[183] Hayami argues that the Jizō cult incorporated into itself a cult devoted to *sae-no-kami,*[184] who were in turn associated with the Hachiōji of the Gion cultic complex.[185] It can therefore be argued that the new Buddhist formations operated within a framework answering similar types of concerns with the already extant Gion cult. In my view, these new Buddhist formations provided an alternative to the rapidly politicizing Gion cult. The new networks were based on a system of

[180]McMullin, "The enryaku-ji and the Gion shrine-temple complex," 179.
[181]Examples of such rituals, particularly by the head abbot Ryōgen, are discussed in Hirabayashi, *Ryōgen*.
[182]One of the most popular Buddhist deities in Japan, Jizō is revered as the guardian of children and crossroads. He is known to shorten his believers' time in the afterlife and deliver them into Amida's paradise. According to Mahayana Buddhism, as the boddhisatva of the present age, Jizō will remain among the people until the arrival of Miroku (Maitreya).
[183]Most of these groups are discussed in Hori, "Nijūgo sanmaie to Reizan'in Shakakō," 205-32.
[184]*Sae-no-kami* 障の神, also called *dōsōshin* 道祖神 a name for the type of kami often found enshrined at borders and intersections of populated areas as a guard against spirits and evil kami that bring pestilence and disasters to the community from outside.
[185]Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to Bukkyō*, 158-159.

morality significantly different than the framework provided by *goryō* belief, in which departed spirits dished out vengeance on the people regardless of the promise of the Pure Land or any form of Enlightenment.

All of this is not to say that Buddhist transformations did not have an effect on the Gion cult itself. On the contrary, the link between the Enryakuji and Gion is sure to have played some part in the association of the Gion deities with Buddhist counterparts. I have previously stated that Gion's Gozu Tennō was linked with Yakushi Nyorai by way of *honji suijaku*. My guess is that the Enryakuji connection facilitated, even legitimized, this connection, as Yakushi Nyorai was the boddhisatva enshrined in the Konponchūdō, the first building ever constructed by Saichō (767-822) on Mount Hiei.[186] The direct connection with the Enryakuji, as well as the Amida and Jizō cults practiced in the Higashiyama section of Kyoto no doubt provided a logical basis for the doctrinal side of the takeover of Gion by the Enryakuji, as Buddhism became increasingly dominant in both popular and state-sponsored religious experiences.

We have now established the Gion cultic complex within a tradition of syncretic religious experience mostly involving kami worship (Gozu Tennō), folk practices (*goryō*) and Buddhism (Yakushi Nyorai). These different practices were so interlocked that conceptualizing the Gion site without considering the influence of either one is impossible. Moreover, we have concluded that the foundations on which the cult is based, as well as the way it developed from ancient times into the Medieval period, was fraught with political and cultural meaning that resulted in various power groups trying to seize the ground to produce that meaning themselves.

[186]Saichō 最澄 is the monk credited with founding the Tendai school of Buddhism in Japan. The Enryakuji is the head temple of the Tendai school.

3.5 *Fūryū* and the Gion tapestries in the Tokugawa Period

In 1635, the shogunate made it mandatory for all daimyō (feudal lords) to leave their immediate families in the capital Edo, and make one year trips to Edo every other year, leaving their domain behind for the period. The children and wives of the daimyō were effectively hostages in the hands of the central Tokugawa government This system, called the *sankin kōtai* ("alternate attendance"), served to check the activities of the regional lords and ensured their allegiance to the state. The legislation was effective to the extent that when Katō Kiyomasa's fief was confiscated in 1632, one allegation against him was that he took his son back to his domain without permission from the shogunate.[187]

What is so special about the *sankin kōtai* system is that contrary to the methods employed by other countries to keep their provincial power bases in check, it had far reaching economic and social impact. The very act of participating in the *sankin kōtai* system was a huge monetary investment for most domains. The expenditures included travel fees, the construction and maintenance of sustainable compounds in the city of Edo, and the payment for staff who would support the daimyō and his family both in Edo and his own domain, all amounted to sometimes fifty to seventy percent of a domain's income.[188] In order to raise the money to be able to participate in the *sankin kōtai,* domains had to engage in activities that supported the growth of money economy in central Japan. It is in this period and through the participation of the domains that Osaka became a central hub and one of the most important markets in Japan. Some ways that the domains resorted to both earn money and cut expenses were the trading of tax rice and other commodities in

[187]Tsukahira, *Feudal control in Tokugawa Japan*, 50.
[188]Ibid, 26-50.

markets, forced borrowing of stipends from retainers, reducing the sizes of the entourages of the daimyō, and loans attained from merchants.[189] Mitsui argues that the rise of the merchant class in late sixteenth century was partially the result of their role as moneylenders to the wealthy samurai and daimyō families.[190] The expenditures of the wealthy samurai families, including their consumption of expensive goods made by artisans and sold by merchants as well as the participation of the daimyō in the *sankin kōtai* system, far exceeded the fixed income they received from their fiefs. This resulted in a continuous flow of cash from the samurai class to the merchants (who were regarded socially as the lowest class of all, except the untouchable *hinin* class) in the form of patronage, trade and loans. And this relationship also seems to be a big part of the story behind the foreign carpets and tapestries that were started to be displayed in the Gion Festival from the eighteenth century onward.

Observing the processions of the Gion Festival today, one is struck immediately by the tapestries displayed on top of floats besides the traditional *fūryū* displays one is accustomed to observe in festivals derived from the development of *dengaku.* According to Grace Vlam, the entry of these carpets into the Gion Festival happened gradually in the sixteenth century when the wealthy and indebted samurai started paying their loans to the merchants through goods and properties in the absence of readily available of cash.[191] In this light, Sansom's observation that by the year 1700, the total debts accrued by the samurai alone amounted approximately to one hundred times the money available in the whole of Japan is an excellent

[189]Vaporis, "To Edo and back," 26.
[190]Mitsui, "Chōnin kōken roku."
[191]Vlam, "Sixteenth-century European tapestries in Tokugawa Japan," 492.

explanation as to why the debts could not be paid with cash.[192] The properties that the samurai payed the merchants with included carpets and tapestries from mainland Asia and Europe, and this is probably how they made it to the hands of the wealthier portion of the townsfolk. A fundamental question regarding this process is, how exactly did the carpets entered Japan and made it to the hands of the wealthy samurai families? Although a comprehensive answer to this question is beyond the scope of this thesis, some simple theories as to how this happened should be provided in order to understand how and why they eventually ended up in the possession of the Kyoto townsfolk and started to be displayed in the Gion Festival in the eighteenth century.

The international carpets of the Gion Festival come from a variety of different backgrounds, from all around Europe and Asia. Kaneda argues that while Chinese and Korean carpets were brought into Japan since ancient times, Indian and Persian carpets were brought by European merchants in the sixteenth century.[193] The ways in which these carpets entered Japan were not limited to trade, as both European tapestries and Asian carpets were brought as gifts by Europeans to the shogun, as well as being ordered by wealthy samurai families.[194] Grace Vlam is able to locate precisely where some of the European tapestries that are displayed today in the Gion Festival came from. She is able to determine through formal analysis that Flemish tapestries are dominant in number and narrows her target down to the very creator of some of the tapestries, who is Nicaise Aerts, a master weaver from Brussels. Looking at Nicaise's birth and death, and stylistic examination she hypothesizes that his tapestries must have been made in late sixteenth century, and brought into the

[192]Sansom, *Japan, a short cultural history*, 480-495.
[193]Kaneda, *Jūtan ga musubu sekai*, 263.
[194]Ibid, 264.

country by Jesuit missionaries.[195] Parallel to Kaneda's arguments, she also argues that the tapestries were presented as diplomatic gifts prior to and during the *sakoku* period[196] to gain the favor of Ieyasu and his government. The aim of the Jesuits in bringing the tapestries as gifts is not clear, but the depictions on the tapestries were mostly of historical warriors and heroes such as Phillip II, who were later exalted in the Jesuit mythos. The source of most of the Indian and Persian carpets, on the other hand, seem to be the Dutch traders. The Dutch have been regularly gifting the shōgun with Persian carpets purchased in Ormuz from the sixteenth century onward, where they had a trading outpost. Vlam states that although the process of transference is still imperfectly understood, it is certain that the Japanese merchants of the Tokugawa period became the final recipients and owners of them.[197]

A significant reason as to exactly how the townsfolk, mostly merchant families, from Kyoto came to own the tapestries has to do with the rise of the merchant class not only as moneylenders to the samurai, but also a monopoly over trade and craftsmanship. This monopoly ended up playing an enormous role in the transfer of wealth from the samurai to the merchant class that marked the Tokugawa period.[198] Significantly, the shogunate inadvertently or not, had helped bringing about this development by placing commercial centers with lively textile trade under its control. Significantly for our purposes, these centers of textile production were Kyoto, Ōtsu and Nagahama, which are today the three cities in which tapestries and carpets are displayed on top of festival floats. The shogunal protection involved textile merchants who were already connected with the Portuguese silk trade at

[195]See Vlam, "Sixteenth-century European tapestries in Tokugawa Japan" for a detailed analysis of the European tapestries.
[196]*Sakoku* (literally "chained country") refers to the period in which Japan followed a policy of isolating the country against Western/Christian countries.
[197]Vlam, "Sixteenth-century European tapestries in Tokugawa Japan," 491.
[198]Mitsui, "Chōnin kōken roku," 66-68.

Nagasaki, receiving certain privileges in connection with local textile industry, which was flourishing at Nagahama in Ōmi Province and the *nishijin* district in Kyoto.[199] Because the towns received privileges and encouragement with regards to their connections with the textile industry, it is probable that the carpets and tapestries were made available to them for the decoration of the festival floats, probably as gifts. One crucial aspect of the carpets being displayed on floats is that most of them have been cut up and divided among different floats across festivals in all three of these cities, so that pieces of a single tapestry are scattered across the sites. It is also important to note that the festivals, already in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, had a tradition of decorating the floats with luxurious tapestries.

The use of carpets and tapestries from the continent coincide with the rise of the merchant class in the sixteenth century. Kaneda's study points out that sixteenth century paintings of the festival depict carpets whose design look distinct from Japanese embroidery on the floats produced for the festival (Figure 4). Moreover, in a sixteenth century depiction of the Gion Festival, out of the 23 floats depicted, what appear to be Chinese carpets hang from the sides of some floats, such as the Niwatoriboko and Tsukiboko. This kind of depiction is also apparent in a folding screen-type picture of the festival, which as a genre is referred to as *Gionsai reizu byōfu,* which is thought to have been created between 1596 and 1615.[200] An interesting addition to the carpets already in use during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are the Indo-persian carpets and European tapestries, which are thought to have been added into the festival in the eighteenth century. Up until the eighteenth century, there is no trace of carpets that came from the west of China to

[199]Takekoshi, *The economic aspects of the history of the civilization of Japan*, 265.
[200]Kaneda, *Jūtan ga musubu sekai*, 337.

Figure 4. *Sugimoto rakuchū rakugai-zu,* sixteenth century

be found in historical depictions of the festival.[201] The earliest example of these carpets being displayed in the festival is a Deccani carpet found today on the Iwatoyama float (Figure 5).[202]

The period in which foreign carpets became commonplace in the Gion Festival is the nineteenth century, particularly the Bunka and Bunsei eras (1804-1829), which is a period of change with regards to the intellectual attitude towards the West. The ban on foreign goods and the tight control on Western influence over

[201]Ibid, 340, Vlam, "Sixteenth-century European tapestries in Tokugawa Japan," 493.
[202]Yoshida, "Yama-hoko wo kazaru kesōhin," 40.

Figure 5. Deccani carpet, 18th century, on the Iwatoyama of the Gion festival

the country was diminishing during the reign of shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684-1751), who famously relaxed rules regarding the importation of Western books into Japan and encouraged the newly sprouting study of *rangaku* 蘭学 ("Dutch studies"). The period marks a moment in Japanese intellectual history where a general turn towards Western applications of the arts and sciences was making a strong entry into Japan. By early nineteenth century, Western thought, even in the limited form that it was allowed to enter the country had become fashionable. I strongly suspect that the changing intellectual landscape of the country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to a stance more receptive and positive towards Western arts and sciences was the main reason why the Kyoto townsfolk started to display foreign carpets on the festival floats. This approach is also supported by Vlam, who argues that the merchant class, who at this point in time should have had possession over a significant number of carpets, must have found the continental carpets and tapestries very exciting.[203] Thus, the public display of the foreign carpets

[203]Vlam, "Sixteenth-century European tapestries in Tokugawa Japan," 494.

and tapestries was a display of the international sense of culture and aesthetics that had become fashionable at the turn of the century; but more importantly, it was a display of the prestige and wealth which had transferred from the nobles and samurai to the merchant class, who were the biggest sponsors of the festival. The display of the possessions of urban property owners, as we shall see in the last chapter, is a core aspect of the modern Gion Festival, and the starting point of that tradition can be linked to the sixteenth century development of expansion of trade and wealth to the urban merchant class.

CHAPTER 4

SHINTO AND THE GION FESTIVAL IN MODERN HISTORY

4.1 Intellectual developments in early modern Japan and the rise of *kokugaku*

While discussing the historical development of belief in Japan, we have covered the period up until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I have left the eighteenth and nineteenth century discussion to this chapter so as to relate the early-modern winds of change that overwhelmed the Japanese intellectual and political landscape. The eighteenth century was a period in which dominant schools of religious thought, namely Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism were swept away by the sudden rise of nativist ideas that rejected Chinese influence and claimed the superiority of Japanese intellectual traditions over the Chinese. This meant that those traditions of learning that were based on ideas that came from mainland Asia, including Buddhism and Confucianism, started to get shunned. It is slightly misleading to use the word nativist to separate earlier schools of thought with this new one, as the tradition of glorifying and expressing pride in what was considered to be indigenous to Japan was certainly not new. Some clear examples of this are the Nichiren Buddhist or Yoshida Shinto traditions that are known for contrasting native excellence against foreign incompetence. The eighteenth century developments, however, saw the creation of an umbrella discipline that attempted to scoop up the endeavor for nativist scholarship.

That singularly influential discipline is called k*okugaku* 国学 ("national study"). *Kokugaku* scholars studied ancient Japanese literature and hearkened back to a golden age that was meant to be restored. It came about when Neo-Confucianism

established itself as a force that steered the direction of research in the arts after late seventeenth century. Significantly, *kokugaku* was used both by military strategists and scholars to create a field of scholarship that specifically investigated Japanese traditions of literature and thought in an effort to contrast studies that were based on Buddhism or Chinese thought. Interestingly, the term *kokugaku*, which has existed since the Nara Period, was not used by the scholars themselves to refer to their own work. The terms that were used most by the *kokugaku* scholars in narrower senses were *kogaku* 古学 (classical studies) and *wagaku* 和学 (Japanese studies). This is not to say that others did not used the term *kokugaku* to refer to it in the Edo Period, as the word did indeed come to signify this new brand of scholarship. According to the Kokugakuin Encyclopedia of Shinto, *Kokugaku* was used in the Edo Period to refer, in a broader sense, "to the scholarship whose pivotal aim was to elucidate the ancient 'Age of Gods' (*kamiyo*) as well as the method of thought and the moral standards peculiar to Japan before the arrival of foreign ideas".[204] Early *kokugaku* thought included scholars such as Kinoshita Chōshōshi (1569-1649), Toda Mosui (1629-1706), and later on Kada no Azumamarō (1669-1736) and Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769). The later influential scholars who took the spotlight, like Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) whose works constituted the blocks on which the Meiji state managed to build State Shinto, came from an already established tradition of Edo Period scholarship.

How the rise of *kokugaku* actually came to be is not an easy question to answer and is dependent on understanding the developments of the eighteenth century. One significant intellectual historian who tries to find an explanation to the

[204]http://k-amc.kokugakuin.ac.jp/DM/detail.do?class_name=col_eos&data_id=23377. Accessed on May 7th, 2018.

Edo Period intellectual shifts and the rise of *kokugaku* is Maruyama Masao. Neo-Confucianism, which refers to the revival of various aspects of Confucian thought starting in ninth century China. Different strands of Confucian thought were subjected to revival throughout history, but the revival movements that occurred from the seventeenth to nineteenth century, first in China with the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and then in Japan is famous for being the last big Neo-Confucian movement. It was adopted as the official ideology of the Tokugawa shogunate in the seventeenth century as a method of strengthening the principles of secular state control over the population. It is often argued that *kokugaku* appeared in a position of strict opposition against Neo-Confucianism because of its nativist and nationalistic tendencies that stood apart from Chinese traditions.[205] According to Maruyama, however, Neo-Confucian thought that was prevalent in the Tokugawa Period shares the same nativist characteristics with *kokugaku* thought, in that both schools supported the idea of returning to ancient texts in order to search for a Japanese Way that existed before the invasion of foreign thought. Thus, *kokugaku* was not a rupture in the strict sense from the schools of thought that came before it, but a parallel adaptation.[206] Peter Nosco defines the difference between Neo-Confucian and *kokugaku* through the powerful affective relationship that *kokugaku* scholars had with their source material and the emphasis they put in the inherent validity of emotion and humanity. They pointed out the beauty behind the emotions shown by the kami in ancient texts and maintained that the deities should not be judged by

[205]Argued in Tsutsui, *A companion to Japanese history*, 106.
[206]A detailed discussion of Tokugawa intellectual thought can be found in Maruyama, *Studies in the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan*.

standards of human morality.[207] I am inclined to agree with the arguments of Maruyama and Nosco in this discussion.

There were socioeconomic changes that left a great mark in the eighteenth century and most definitely helped the rise of new intellectual currents within Japanese society, including the establishment of private schools that catered to all classes, and the rise in literacy. As is the case with a number of developing countries in this period, the diffusion of ideas for public consumption had sped up considerably thanks to the developments in publishing technologies. Nosco, for instance, argues for a great thirst for knowledge at the turn of the eighteenth century, especially with the inception of the Genroku era (1688-1703).[208] It is significant to note that the academies that were opened by Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane in which the future disciples of these scholars were nurtured, were part of the same private school boom that I iterated above.[209] Whereas before the eighteenth century, texts on kami belief were available only to shrine priests and people of similar occupation, the expansion of publishing helped create a secular readership for these texts. The diffusion of these texts as everyday commodities should be considered a significant enabler for the rise of *kokugaku* scholarship since a large portion of their studies were based on historical texts of this nature, and none of the *kokugaku* thinkers were priests of any kind. Susan Burns refers to this phenomenon as the "explosion of interest in the Divine Age narrative" that were derived mostly from the classical text *Kojiki*.[210] *Kojiki* had been largely neglected as an ancient text before the seventeenth century, but was brought to the light by a republished version in 1644, known as the

[207]Nosco, *Confucianism and Tokugawa culture*, 166-87.
[208]Nosco, *Remembering paradise*, 30.
[209]Ibid, 34.
[210]Burns, *Before the nation*, 40.

Kan'ei version. One of the earlier scholars who picked up the text was the Confucian scholar of the Edo Period, Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), who was the initiator of the claim that the mythical events depicted in the *Kojiki* were allegorical expressions of real historical developments. An almost two century old corpus formed around the text (from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries) through the contributions of early nationalist scholars such as Keichū (1640-1701), who, while identifying Amaterasu with Dainichi as per the *honji suijaku* doctrine, argued that Shinto was something distinct from Buddhism. The aforementioned Kada no Azumamaro (1669-1736) and Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) worked together on the text and were the first to explicitly search for an ancient Way of life through the *Kojiki*. Mabuchi argued that the introduction of of the Chinese writing system was one of the first signs of breaking away from the ancient ways, which resulted in the distortion of society. According to Hardacre, Mabuchi also encouraged his students to recover the spirit of ancient Japan by way of studying the language of the *Kojiki.*[211]

All this accumulation of work resulted in the creation of a shared discourse concerning an ancient, sacred Way among those who read and studied the *Kojiki*. When it was time for newly emerging *kokugaku* scholars of the mid-eighteenth century such as Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane to contribute to this narrative, they built on top of the corpus created by Neo-Confucians and early nativists who had already started looking for a return to that elusive but opulent era of the past. They continued the tradition of approaching literature as an historical source from which one could derive moral lessons and gaze back to the ancient days of glory.

Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) is perhaps the scholar to have set the stage for the development of the study of Japanese language and literature from a very

[211]Hardacre, *Shinto*, 327.

nationalist approach. It was not until his publication of *Kojiki-den*, published in multiple parts between 1790 and 1822, that that the ancient text *Kojiki* started to become popular in both intellectual circles and outside of them. Up to this point in history, the source of knowledge as it concerned matters of kami was the *Nihon shoki*. The entry of *Kojiki* into the scene served in the creation of a different kind of nativist framework that separated itself from the Yoshida and Shirakawa schools. One very significant point had to do with the genealogy of the kami: Whereas the *Nihon shoki*, the text that Yoshida Shinto based itself on, granted Kuni-no-Tokotachi the role of supreme creator, the *Kojiki* did not. Accompanying Motoori in his new approach to kami matters was Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1843), the nationalist intellectual of the Mito school and the creator of the idea of *kokutai* 国体 ("national body") as well as the *sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷 ("revere the emperor, expel the barbarians") slogan for the shogunate.[212] Motoori and Aizawa, contrary to the Yoshida and Shirakawa Shinto schools, shared the idea that Amaterasu the sun-goddess was the chiefest of all kami. This is most definitely a wild spin on the actual content of the text, as Amaterasu in the *Kojiki* is subordinate to Takami-musubi who is described as the greatest among all the kami of the Heavens and the first kami of the sun who generates life. All of this was of little interest to Motoori, however, who was content in his efforts of conceptualizing "the Japanese Way" as well as the goddess Amaterasu as the kami who nurtures life. According to Motoori, because all human emperors have directly descended from Amaterasu, their commands were those of the sun-goddess. Therefore, in ancient Japan, when the emperors of Japan ruled supreme and continually succeeded one another, the realm was ruled in peace

[212]The *kokutai* and *sonnō jōi* ideas went hand in hand with the creation of a discourse that promoted the conceptualization of the nation of Japan, based sternly on the idea of the impeccable sovereignty of the emperor. The ideas provided basic tenets upon which the Meiji state would build.

and justice. Motoori is known to constantly compare China and Japan, as he ties the decline of the Japanese Way to the diffusion of Chinese ideas which resulted in the overthrow of the Japanese emperors, as it so often happens in Chinese history. Although that his ideas were made use of in the creation of State Shinto in the Meiji Period is evident, Motoori's aspirations in creating a radical sociopolitical reform did not match those of Aizawa Seishisai. Aizawa saw an impending crisis in contemporary Japan, which first started with the appearance of foreign sea vessels off the Japanese coast threatening Japan's policy of isolation. It was by the early nineteenth century that the Japanese policy of isolation was increasingly under challenge. Russian, British, as well as US ships are known to have visited Japan, demanding access in early to mid-nineteenth century. In 1844, a letter from King William II of Netherlands urged Japan to end the policy on its own before change was forced upon them. These developments were, in a way, harbingers of the Perry Expedition in1852-4 which resulted in the rather forceful ending of Japan's isolation. In light of this apparent threat on Japan's sovereignty, Aizawa constructed a Confucian social order where the idea of filial piety extended all the way up to the emperor, binding each and every person constructing the *kokutai*. The emperor, not as a person but as an abstract personification of filial devotion with direct blood ties to Amaterasu, invigorated the system by ritual acts directly performed in the presence of the sun-goddess.[213]

A posthumous disciple of Motoori Norinaga who had constructed the main branch of *kokugaku* thought by now, Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) advocated a different approach to nativist narrative. His aim was to unify the different narratives concerning ancient history, and thus emphasize the spiritual and cosmic foundations

[213]Wakabayashi, *Anti-foreignism and Western learning in early modern Japan*, 150-158.

argued to have formed the sociopolitical nature of Japan. What was particularly a concern for Hirata, even though it had been quite inconsequential for both Motoori and Aizawa, was the afterlife. He thought that the spirits of the dead went to shrines all around Japan where their appeasement ensured they rest in peace. He, thus, reread the role of Ōkuninushi as the ruler of the realm of the dead and also assigned the role of creator to the kami Amenominakanushi.[214]

It was with the onset of the nineteenth century that the ideas presented by these intellectuals spread like wildfire in Japan. The most representative text of Aizawa, the *Shinron* 新論 ("New Theses"), was published in the 1850s and was popular among politically active samurai during the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as the group of men who carried out the Meiji Revolution in 1868. Motoori had an active network of half a thousand disciples, and Hirata's ideas expanded nation-wide during the end of the Edo period and the first years of the Meiji era, becoming especially popular among the Shinto priesthood in the countryside. Ten thousand copies of his book *Tama no mihashira* was sold before 1868.[215]

Ōkuni Takamasa (1792-1871) and Fukuba Bisei (1831-1907) were arguably the most influential two people in the creation of State Shinto. Takamasa was a disciple of Hirata Atsutane, while Bisei was the disciple of Takamasa. The two were recruited by the Meiji leaders as ideologues to construct the ideological system that instated the emperors as the descendants of Amaterasu and legitimize the Restoration of the imperial household as a tool of legitimization and unification. They stuck mostly with the ideas of Motoori and Aizawa as they claimed all shrines across the

[214]Endō, *Hirata kokugaku to kinsei shakai* and Sasaki, "Amenominakanushi no kami in late Tokugawa period Kokugaku."
[215]Breen & Teeuwen, *A new history of Shinto*, 64.

country as sites on which state rites would be performed. To realize this aim, they ended the control of the Yoshida and Shirakawa houses over shrines and also put an end to the Watarai clan who controlled the Ise Shrine. The duo also wrote the edict known as *shinbutsu bunri rei* ("the separation of kami and buddhas") which identified and separated Shinto and Buddhism as two distinct entities in 1868 that sought to strip Buddhist characteristics from all shrines, which would since be dedicated to Shinto.[216]

4.2 Shinto in the Meiji Period

In 1868, the year of the Meiji Revolution, the Meiji state separated kami from buddhas in a new institutional arrangement that created and left two types of institutions to their own accords, as well as radically modifying existing ones which were previously identified as worshiping both kami and buddhas (or kami who were buddhas). In an environment teeming with social dissatisfaction with Buddhist institutions, conflict among Shinto priests and politically charged ideas of Enlightenment being thrown around left and right within religious settings, the separation was an effort on the part of the state to also separate and shield the state apparatus from the fledgling concept of religion. In truth, the existing administrative frameworks were not yet, nor would they ever be, equipped to handle such a sudden rupture. Immediately in the air were questions left unanswered having to do with the doctrinal and ritual aspects of shrines. Because the Meiji state had restored the imperial institution in such close proximity to Shinto, the shrines were put in a position where their sectarian competition with both themselves and with their Christian and Buddhist counterparts acquired a new political weight.

[216]The text of this edict and others concerning religion can be found in Toyoda, *Shūkyō seidoshi*.

In his famous *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* (1875), Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) wrote:

> Even though some people draw parallels between Restorationism[217] and Shinto, Shinto has always been the puppet of Buddhism, and it has failed to show its true colors for hundreds of years. One sometimes hears the name of Shinto these days, but it is an insignificant movement trying to make headway by taking advantage of the imperial house at a time of political change. In my opinion, it is only a fortuitous thing and should not be recognized as having an established doctrine.[218]

Even Fukuzawa, one of the most influential thinkers of the Meiji Period did not assign Shinto the significance that it was designed to have. His view also underlines the fact that until the Meiji Period, Shinto was dependent on Buddhism on its doctrines and did not have a clear meaning. This exemplifies that the religion that was attempted to be created by the state was not initially identified as Shinto, which is also evident in the fact that Fukuzawa does not recognize state religion as "Shinto" even in his work published seven years after the Meiji Restoration. Also aiding this was the way through which the state attempted to spread its religion, namely the Great Promulgation Campaign (*taikyō senpu undō*), which was launched in 1870 and went on until 1884. Indeed, State Shinto as we refer it today took shape with the promulgation campaign and one could even argue that the most significant development was the establishment of the Home Ministry bureau in the year 1900. Although earlier policies such as the 1871 declaration of rites which decreed that shrines would conduct "rites of the state" foreshadowed an intimate relationship between Shinto shrines and the imperial institution directly after the Restoration.[219] Maxey argues that through most of the Meiji Period, state support for shrines and

[217]Restorationism, or *fukko*, refers to the nativist idea of restoring imperial rule over Japan, hearkening back to a so called golden age.
[218]Fukuzawa, *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku*, 195.
[219]The 1871 declaration was rescinded only after 1945, when Japan lost the Pacific War.

priests were not so harmonious. The shifts seen in the state's regulatory relationship with shrines mostly meant that shrines would receive less and less direct support, and from 1870 to 1900, the government did not directly promote Shinto as an unmediated expression of state authority.[220] Despite the leanings of the state to sponsor or leave State Shinto alone, the diffusion of ideas concerning Shinto to the public is a somewhat different matter. Surely enough, shortly after the Restoration, Shinto came to be accepted as a popular independent religion.

The Great Promulgation Campaign was essentially a large-scale Restorationist movement undergone by the government in order to publicize the Meiji Restoration. The developments we have discussed up until now, such as the separation of kami and buddhas, was crucial for this movement to have begun. Another crucial movement that accompanied the separation of kami and buddhas and went hand in hand with the campaign at the local level was *haibutsu kishaku*, in which the pent up frustration of nativists and especially Shinto priests against Buddhist institutions was unleashed in fire and fury. Up until that point, Buddhist temples held lands, gave out loans and had other sources of revenue which they depended on. These sources of revenue, at times, became a source of frustration for the common people as Buddhist temples in the Edo Period served as the hands of the shogunate that kept people in check in an economical and social sense. Although the *haibutsu kishaku* movement did not last long, within its duration Buddhist monks were forcibly laicized, lands previously belonging to temples were confiscated, debts canceled, and ritual implements, relics and entire temples were melted down. Buddhist priests were also forbidden to hold certain rites that granted them

[220]Maxey, *The "greatest problem"*, 6.

revenue.[221] The damage caused by the movement was so great that approximately 40,000 temples and halls were destroyed.[222] The deities belonging not only to Buddhist temples but also to shrines in which the object of worship had no connection to the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon Shoki* were eliminated by government order. In the popular pilgrimage destination Enoshima, for instance, the staggering number of deities, including Inari, Daikoku, various Buddhist protector deities, the Ise deities and others which venerated by the three main shrines were stripped away from them as the whole pantheon was reduced to three female kami.[223] In its most broad sense, the *haibutsu kishaku* movement can be thought of as a school of thought stretching back to antiquity, including policies of the Mononobe clan to reject Buddhism as well as the policies of the Aizu, Mito domains in the early-modern period, which were the two domains that introduced nationalist policies earlier than others. Although it is necessary to keep the historical background of the movement in mind, in our case, we are referring to a movement that occurred as the side effect of the *shinbutsu bunri* policy in the period between 1868 and 1872, in which the most violent and active movement of *haibutsu kishaku* took place.

The specifics of *shinbutsu bunri* are significant, in that they were derived mostly from the Bakumatsu period policies of the Mito, Hanada and Tsuwano domains. The ideology of the aforementioned *kokugaku* scholar Ōkuni Takamasa was accepted in the Tsuwano domain, and Tsuwano carried out is *shinbutsu bunri* policy a year before the Restoration under Ōkuni's disciple Fukuba Bisei. Fukuba was also one of the major architects of the Great Promulgation Campaign, and it is

[221] See Tamamura, *Shinbutsu bunri* for a detailed account of the *shinbutsu bunri* and *haibutsu kishaku* movements.
[222]Ketelaar, *Of heretics and martyrs in Meiji Japan*, 50. Most of the destroyed buildings were unoccupied halls that made for easy targets, because they were "the points of least resistance" for Buddhist institutions. Some temples and halls were re-built after the end of the movement.
[223]Hardacre, *Shinto*, 370.

thought that his recruitment of other followers into the campaign was one of the ways in which he widened the influence of Ōkuni's ideas and carried them into early Meiji state policy.[224]

Another policy of the state to fully separate Shinto and Buddhism included the profession of *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics)[225] being outlawed. In effect, *yamabushi* had to become Shinto priests, Buddhists, or return to lay life. Becoming Shinto priests was directly in conflict with the way of life of the *yamabushi,* and those who didn't return to lay life became Buddhists. Those few people who practice *shugendō* today are Buddhists precisely because of this decree. Yasumaru points out that, in accordance with the degree was the Shintoization of pilgrimage sites that lay on mountains, such as Yoshino and Dewa Sanzan. These sites whose objects of worship were *gongen*[226] (avatar) were attempted to be assigned to the Shinto category, and while in the case of Dewa Sanzan this was successful, Yoshino reverted to Buddhism before 1888.[227]

The shrine registration system was another grand project of the Meiji state. In the year of the Restoration, the state had already tried to bring all shrines under the umbrella of the Ise Shrine, whose traditional priest lineages had been purged. This effectively meant that shrines had to line their rites up directly with those of Ise. The Yokohama shrine rites were treated as national liturgy that all shrines had to imitate along with the new rites that were introduced by the state in 1870-1. In these new rites, priests, similar to how Muslims turn to qibla during salah, had to sit on mats

[224]Sakamoto, *Meiji Shintō-shi no kenkyū*, 424-69 deals with this topic.
[225]*Yamabushi* were mountain ascetics who adhered to *shugendō*, a heterogeneous and syncretic belief system involving esoteric Shingon and Tendai doctrines as well as Taoism and kami belief.
[226]The use of the term *gongen* in a deity's name generally indicates that the deity was conceptualized with the *honji suijaku* doctrine, i.e. a kami whose essence is a buddha.
[227]Yasumaru, *Kamigami no Meiji ishin*, 150-59.

that were turned towards Yamato.[228] The organizing attempts were increased in 1871 as the state attempted to introduce the shrine registration system (*ujiko shirabe*) to replace the former Buddhist temple registration. What this meant was that everyone now had to register to a designated shrine upon changing their residence. Newborns were to receive a talisman from a specific shrine to which s/he would become a parishioner. The policy also tried to popularize the process through which one became a parishioner, as the previous *ujiko* system was insular and limited to privileged households. With this move, the state tried to transfer the census keeping functions of Buddhist institutions to Shinto shrines and at the same time aimed for the creation of a national religious solidarity through the distribution of the same talismans to everyone around the nation. The new registration system, however, failed soon after it was implemented as the newly independent Shinto institutions did not have the organizational finesse to keep it going in a systematic manner. The lack of historical popular practice was no doubt one of the major reasons it did not take hold, as it required participation in the absence of top-down efficiency.

It is in such an environment that the Great Promulgation Campaign began. Officially, it had three major components in *taikyō* (the Great Teachings), *daikyōin* (the Great Teaching Institute), and a number of *kyōdōshoku* (evangelists and preachers). The core aim of the campaign was to create a state religion that would transcend sectarian divides. And even though the new creed was not called Shinto from the beginning, it was made clear that the general direction of the campaign would be a dislike towards Buddhist and Christian faith. Despite this, the diverse evangelist corps included Buddhist and Shinto priests, as well as *kokugaku* preachers

[228]Tamamura, "Meiji-ki no shūkyō seisaku," 1972.

and *rakugo*[229] practitioners. The common denominator was obviously the ability to speak and a socially accepted role of storyteller.

There were three teachings included in the *taikyō*: respect for the gods and love for the country; making clear the principles of Heaven and the way of man; reverence for the emperor and the need to obey the will of the court. It is not only to us that these three teachings seem incredibly vague, as this appears to have been the case for the people who were subjected to them. They had no basis whatsoever in popular life, and this was made clear when chapbooks on how to preach the three teachings explained to the preachers that they had to preach about paying taxes, complying with compulsory conscription, *fukoku kyōhei* (rich country, strong army) and *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment),[230] all of which were top-down imperial policies of the state trying to be introduced shortly after the Meiji Restoration. Yasumaru states that the disconnection between the teachings and popular religious life was so great that in the Echizen Uprising against the campaign in 1873, the teachings were mistaken for Christian doctrine that aimed to destroy Buddhism.[231] This also had to do with the campaign imposing the Gregorian calendar and upholding Western dress code. The idea that the Great Promulgation Campaign was set out to destroy Buddhism was not too far off the mark either, as the memory of destruction caused by *shinbutsu bunri* in the country was still fresh.[232] Resistance to the campaign could be observed not only in Echizen but in other regions, due to

[229]*Rakugo* is a form of entertainment where a storyteller depicts a long and often comical tale while using a paper fan and small cloth as props. Some practitioners were also associated with popular *kokugaku* movements in the Bakumatsu period.
[230]*Fukoku kyōhei* and *bunmei kaika* were two slogans of the Meiji Period, the former having to do with a nationalist/imperialist sense of solidarity and power, while the latter involved the proper way of Westernization and modernization of Japanese culture.
[231]Yasumaru, *Kamigami no Meiji ishin*, 190.
[232]Buddhism in Toyama suffered great losses in the years leading to 1873. As Toyama bordered on Echizen, locals there knew just how big of a damage Buddhism could suffer.

the introduction of radical changes that threatened to dominate peoples' lives. In addition to compulsory conscription and education, the new land tax introduced with the campaign was only payable in cash whereas the previous tax could be payed in kind. This exacerbated regional inequalities and forced many independent farmers into tenancy.

When dealing with this topic, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the state, equipped with Shinto, was on a constant offensive against Buddhism and anything left over from the early-modern period without encountering any resistance. This could not be farther from the truth, however, as exemplified by uprisings such as the one in Echizen. Another instance of direct resistance was in 1873 when approximately four thousand men bearing *nenbutsu* flags and bamboo spears marched into Ōno Village and attacked anything that appeared Western, burning down the campaign's branch office in the process. When the police detained five suspects, rioters set fire to the village office and damaged the mayor's house. The riot spread to the surrounding counties and could only be quenched after three weeks when the Meiji state hanged the priests leading the movement.[233]

The Great Teaching Institute, in a way, reflected the problems experienced by the campaign itself. Among the many problems the institute faced was the variety of beliefs represented at any given time within the staff of the institute. The institute included ideologies from a wide spread of *kokugaku* thought, which largely prevented collective action. Members were moved around so quickly in and out of the institute that it made it hard to accomplish anything within the time provided.[234] Hardacre shows that the incompetence of the institute and the campaign itself even

[233]Hardacre, *Shinto*, 378-9.
[234]Hirai, "Taikyō senpu ni okeru sekkyō katsudō," 45-6.

became the subject of popular ridicule.[235] This only started to change when the institute was taken over by the Ise Shrine in 1875. The management of the Ise Shrine managed to combine the Office of Shinto Affairs, which was the head office of the institute, with the office of the chief priest of the Ise Shrine. This change allowed Ise to administer directly the preachers and evangelists under the umbrella of the institute. 1875 was also the year in which most Buddhists broke away from the campaign, and other independent religious groups such as the influential Kurozumikyō followed suit shortly after. Combined with Ise leadership and Buddhist withdrawal, for the first time the campaign acquired an unambiguous Shinto characteristic. In the year 1876, it is thought that the number of evangelists under the bulwark of the institution grew to ten thousand strong, with local shrines and temples participating in the campaign numbering over a hundred thousand at its height.[236]

The fate of the Great Promulgation Campaign was ultimately sealed. The upkeep of such an enormous project based on secular creeds issued in the name of kami with no popular following whatsoever was nigh impossible without state funding, which was nonexistent. A such, it was the private Shinto sects (sometimes referred to as “new religions”) like the Kurozumikyō and Tenrikyō that bore most of the financial burden. Their gradual withdrawal from the campaign resulted in its end, and confined Shinto to a secluded environment of rites as opposed to one with popular support. It is also useful to keep in mind that “the new religions” only came to identify themselves as Shinto sects after their participation in the Great Promulgation Campaign, which they owed their legitimization in the eyes of the state.

[235]Hardacre, “The Shintō priesthood in early Meiji Japan,” 46.
[236]Uno, “Shinkyō soshiki monogatari," 271.

4.3 The organization of contemporary Kyoto and the Gion Festival

Naturally, if and when we try to conceptualize the modern Gion Festival, the effort comes packed with unanswered questions about issues concerning imperialism and nationalism, and how these concepts have integrated into contemporary religion. These issues are especially significant because the Gion Festival is a joint effort between the Yasaka Shrine, bereft now of its Buddhist ties, and the people of Kyoto. Because the organization of the Gion Festival is intricately linked with the city of Kyoto, to understand its current form one has to understand the modern organization of Kyoto to a certain extent.

One significant landmark that is crucial to the organization of Kyoto, and also unique to it, are the *kyōmachiya* 京町家. The prefix 京 stands for Kyoto, and while word *machiya* itself can be translated into "town house." the word can apply to any building built in traditional style. Most of the *kyōmachiya* were built before the 1950s. This is not the case in most metropolitan areas of Japan, as most *machiya* style buildings were destroyed during the bombings towards the end of World War II. The *kyōmachiya* remain because Kyoto was deliberately made exempt from air strikes by the United States. Like most buildings in Kyoto, the *machiya* are built with natural materials which mostly include unpainted wood, bamboo, and mud.

Land plots on central Kyoto are typically very narrow and long, with building lengths often several times larger than their widths. The *machiya* of Kyoto are famously built this way. The most prototypical *machiya* consists of two buildings, one small at the side of the street, and a larger residential building further back that is connected to the smaller one with a room in between (called *genkan* 玄関). A significant part of the *machiya* is the traditional storehouse (*kura* 倉). The

storehouses of residential *machiya* units almost have a sacred nature to them, and they are generally the structures built farthest away from the street. Similar to the main *machiya* building, the storehouse is often a two-storey building with thick walls and clunky doors in which valuables are stored. For towns that participate in the Gion Festival, the *furyū* materials, carpets and idols are generally stored in the storehouse. Typically, a garden encircled by the building walls can be found in between the storehouse and the residential area (Figure 6).

Kyoto's *machiya* are closely related to the historical form of household organization in Japan, namely the *ie* ("household") system. *Ie* ideology drew from Confucian values, and its primary concern was the continuity of the household through the transmission of the *tōshu* title ("male-head of the household") through the male bloodline. The *ie* household included only the stem family, and the sons and husbands of daughters who did not inherit the *tōshu* title formed branch families (*bunke* 分家) which were subordinate to the main house (*honke* 本家). Needless to say, the main family-branch family system was historically both a source of solidarity and friction between families. The rural application of this system in the Meiji Period became a motivation for second and third sons of families to move into the cities.

Although most of the practical inequalities of the *ie* system such as unequal inheritance and elevated official standing for the household head, was abolished with post-war legislation, *ie* was the defining mode of household organization in the Meiji Period, during which it was mandatory. It should be noted that a significant number of *ie* households, especially among the landowners of Kyoto, go much farther back than the Meiji Period.

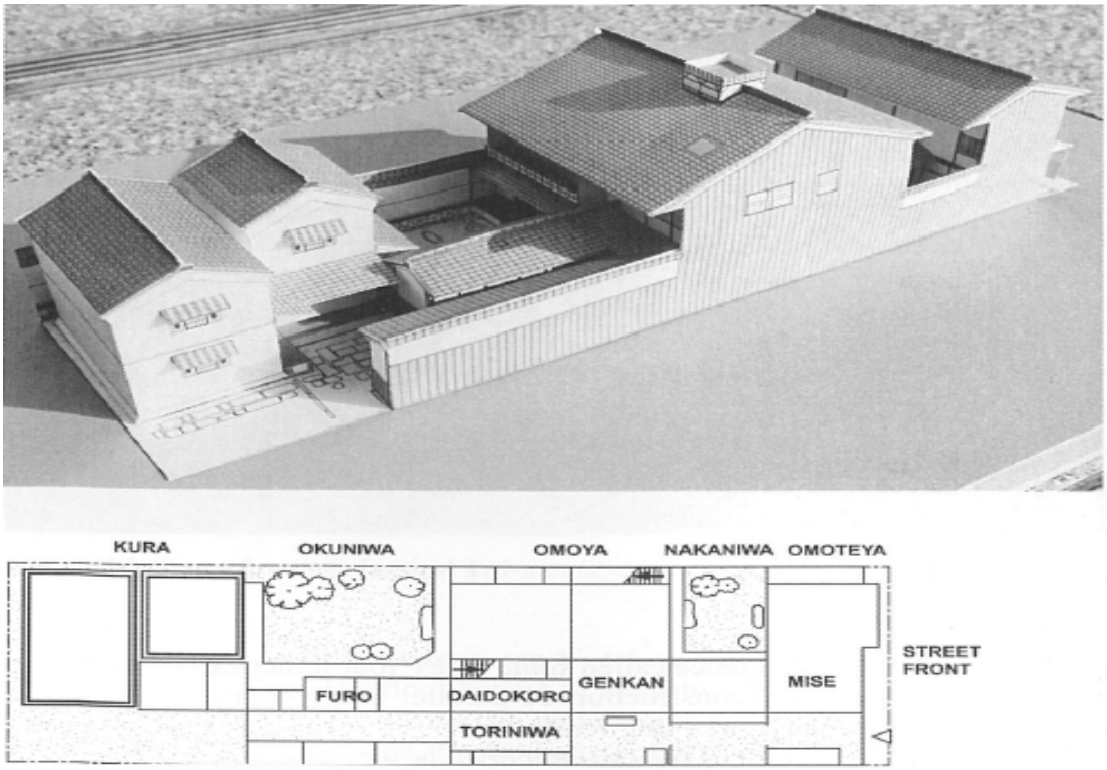

Figure 6. Floor plan for a prototypical *machiya.*[237]

Indeed, some landlords I spoke with were able to trace their *ie* as further back as ten or eleven generations.

Machiya in any given town within Kyoto are extremely easy to spot among small shops and the ever-increasing ten storey *manshon* structures. Only a few decades ago, entrance to the connecting room (*genkan*) of the *machiya* was publicly permitted and the frontal building of the *machiya* was considered a semi-public space. Even in the summer of 2018, I was casually allowed entry to several entryways of the *machiya* buildings during the preparation for the Gion Festival.

The divide between building types that represent land ownership versus tenancy in Kyoto is quite large, as the city is extremely land-scarce and clumped, owing to its street-block structure left over from the Heian Period. *Machiya* in Kyoto were historically built by the class of people who in Kyoto are referred to as

[237]Figure from Brumann, *Tradition, democracy and the townscape of Kyoto*.

machishū 町衆: wealthy merchants and craftsmen. Even today a difference can be observed between *machiya* style rental units, or shops, and actual owned properties. In the Edo period, those among the *machishū* who owned property were denoted as *mochiie sō* ("house owning class"), and to this day, they serve as the horse power behind every communal event in central Kyoto, save for some companies who now own land in that area. The Gion Festival is perhaps the most defining among these events, and it can be said that it is enacted mostly by the combined power of a significant portion of landowners in the central neighborhoods who produce floats for the festival. This divide translates into something observable in town communities and events, as tenants do not generally play a role in their organization even though they are often required to make contributions in the form of town-wide payments for their realization. In other words, the tradition of *machiya* and land ownership in Kyoto is intimately related to one of the most core units of social organization in the city, which are neighborhood communities. The *machiya* structure as it refers to traditionally owned property cannot be separated from the *chō* 町. The term *chō*, which simply means "neighborhood,"refers to a very specific form of neighborhood community in Kyoto: One that is strictly organized in local street-block communities in which decision-making rests solely in the grasp of property-owners.

So, even though the Gion Festival today is considered to be a spectacle event for millions of people from within and without Japan, it is best conceptualized as an affair that belongs to the property owners of central Kyoto, which, as a city, is infamous for pushing unwanted people to its margins. This divide that is not so difficult to observe in the organization of the neighborhood communities, as well as

the festival, is unfortunately only treated as an afterthought or not at all among Japanese scholars, who often hide behind a romantic folkloric standpoint.[238] The thousand year development of literature, arts and architecture that was led by the city of Kyoto came to life through the relationship between the privileged groups, such as samurai, priests, wealthy merchants and craftsmen etc. The *machishū* and the *machiya* centered townships acted as a sort of politico-cultural base on which different layers of cultural activity was based. And although it can be argued that the myth of Kyoto as a center of harmony and culture can be cleanly challenged from this standpoint, as it seemed to have come to life, to some extent, at the expense of the unwanted, I feel that it is sufficient to mention it in passim as the issue is slightly beyond the scope of this thesis.[239]

As I pointed out above, the Gion Festival is organized mostly by the *machishū* in their respective neighbourhoods, who produce floats in order to display them during the festival. Significantly, not all neighborhoods produce floats, and those that do are called *yamabokochō*.[240] Because most of the visibility of the Gion Festival comes from the two processions (*yamaboko junkō*) organized by the townspeople, it is generally not known that the festival is an affair of multiple actors contributing towards its realization. The most effective of these actors next to the townspeople is the Yasaka Shrine, who acts semi-independently, but maintains intimate connections with the *machishū* through various events and meetings. Within this duality lies an interesting dynamic: The Yasaka Shrine, the direct continuation of the temple-complex from which the festival originated, sees itself and is seen by

[238]Yoneyama, Hayashiya are good examples.
[239]Takagi has written more on this topic in Takagi, et al., "Koto Kyoto imeeji to kindai."
[240]*Yamaboko* 山鉾 is an umbrella term that denotes festival floats. In truth, *yama* and *hoko* are separate terms that refer to two stylistically distinct categories of floats.

many as the very reason that the Gion Festival exists. As I have related in the introduction, the Gion Festival is the main ritual event of the Yasaka Shrine. For Yasaka, the festival is a month-long cycle that involves significant rituals on almost every day of the month. In this regard, the meaning Yasaka assigns to the Gion festival is very different from the common conceptualization of it as an organization brought to life by the *machishū*. The public knows the Gion Festival mostly through the parades organized by the *machishū*, which are *saki no matsuri* and *ato no matsuri*, happening separately in a seventeen day interval in July. And while the townspeople draw legitimization and solidarity from the Yasaka Shrine, there is also a certain degree of animosity toward it precisely because of its central role as a Shinto shrine. Before getting too ahead of myself here, I will first relate how the contemporary Gion Festival is organized, which will help lay bare the intricate dynamics that are in play in its organization, especially as they relate to religious experience.

The contemporary Gion Festival is one of Japan's so-called "three great festivals," and the largest public event in Kyoto. It is the annual festival of the Yasaka Shrine in the Higashiyama district in the eastern margins of the old city. Because Kyoto grew around the city, Higashiyama today is in central eastern Kyoto. In a way, the festival today is the result of a gradual appropriation of a politico-cultural event belonging to the margins into the mainstream culture of the city.[241] The festival lasts for about a month, and includes throughout its duration some of the most important ritual events in the Yasaka Shrine ritual cycle. The birth of the Yasaka Shrine was the result of the *shinbutsu bunri rei* after which the Gion Shrine

[241]For a study of the appropriation of urban space and the confinement of non-desirable practice in Kyoto, see Fiévé & Waley, *Japanese capitals in historical perspective*, 67-99.

was singularly dedicated to the Shinto kami and the main objects of worship in the shrine premises shed their multi-faceted aspects. The shrine itself, however, is still referred to as "Gion-san" by many Kyotoites.

The duration of the Gion Festival is exactly one month: From the 1st of July to the 31st. And even though this is the case, the festival has come to be identified with the *yamaboko junkō*, or the parade of floats, which is organized on July 17th by the townspeople and neighborhood communities, which also integrates some ritual events of the Yasaka Shrine (Figure 7). The *yamaboko junkō*, and most of the other public events organized by the *machishū*, are the historical leftovers from the older public Gion rites which we have gone through in chapter 3. These events, especially those with religious significance, come from the historical worship of a myriad of mythical figures and deities from different traditions with noticeable continental influence. They are naturally inclusive, and in this sense, different from the Shintoist perspective to which the shrine is officially dedicated. To say the least, this signifies a disconnect between the public perception and practice of the festival, and the official shrine ideology that governs the rites belonging to it. This will be our main focus as I iterate the ritual events organized by the two main actors of the Gion Festival: the *yamabokochō* and the Yasaka Shrine.

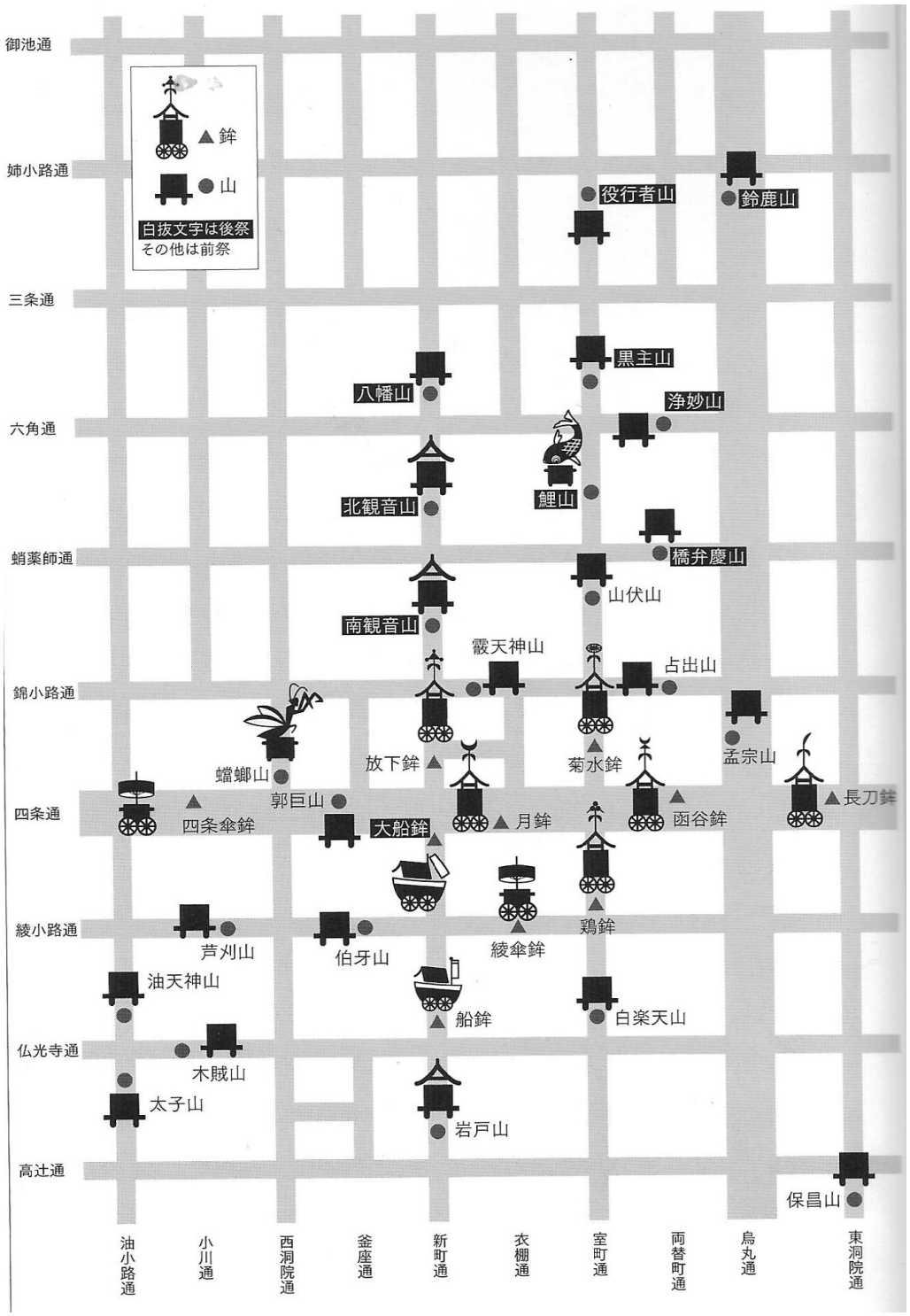

Figure 7. Map of Kyoto's float towns with their corresponding floats.

4.4 Ritual events of the Gion Festival

The rituals conducted by the Yasaka Shrine in the month of July are many in number, and all of them are done in the expanded context of the Gion Festival. Some rituals are more well-known than others and those ones attract viewers from a variety of backgrounds, while less-known rituals are only observed by those directly affected or passersby. Although comparing the accounts from a few decades ago regarding the rituals that I have personally witnessed leads me to believe that the number of viewers is significantly larger today than it was in the late Shōwa Period (1926-1989).

The ritual cycle involving Gion are organized around the dates on which the three *mikoshi* [242] of the Yasaka shrine are taken out of and back into the shrine. On the 7th day of July, in the *saki no matsuri* 先祭り, the *goshinrei* 御神霊 ("spirit of the kami") of the shrine is put on top of three separate *mikoshi* and taken to the *otabisho* 御旅所 in Shijō Teramachi, which is the resting place of the kami when they are taken out of the shrine. They stay there until the *ato no matsuri* 後祭り (July 24th) after which they are taken back to the shrine on top of the *mikoshi* once again. All people who are in charge of rituals in the various townships that produce floats for the parade visit Yasaka Shrine in short pilgrimages. Likewise, the *chigo* 稚児 ("child")[243] is accompanied to the shrine grounds for ritual purposes, and the *hayashi* 囃子[244] takes care to proceed to the *otabisho* in a bustling performance. It is important to notice that the festival itself can only be realized through this underlying purpose of ritual. Quite a lot of people among the townsfolk also claim that all the

[242] *Mikoshi* are vessels that are used to house and carry the spirit of the kami in and out of their respective shrines, usually placed on top of carts. The Gion *mikoshi* are used to carry out Susanoo, Kushinada-hime and the Mikogami Yahashira.
[243] *Chigo* is a child who, in festivals, is put on makeup and is thought to be the proxy of a shrine's kami.
[244] People who perform music on floats and carriages with specific instruments on festival days. There are many *hayashi* groups who are active in the Gion Festival.

hard work they undergo in realization of the festival is bearable because they think of it as "religious work" and not something that is done inherently to please sightseers.

There is a significant religious concern among the townsfolk that I was able to observe when I delved in a bit deeper to the events undergone in the festival. Some of this concern rears its head through the creation of a strict divide between genders. For instance, on the day of the *yamaboko* parade, it is taboo to let women pull the float or have the ropes pulling the float in between their legs. According to the *kurumagata*[245] of a certain float, women were not allowed to touch or ride the ropes on the day of the parades. In a previous year, when a woman happened to sit on top of a rope, with the rope between her legs, she was shoved aside, salt was poured on the rope and then washed away with water. A historical example of gender inequality based on religious concern can be found in the *Yamaboko junkōshi* 山鉾巡行志 in which it is written that the *Tsuki hoko* tumbled towards the north in 1951 because it's right side could not support its weight. It took severe damage to its parts, as its roof fell apart. This was significant because after the war, American soldiers from the occupation forces went atop the floats alongside women. *Tsuki hoko* had also started to allow women on the floats since 1950, and it was said afterwards that the accident happened because the *Tsuki hoko* let women ride the float, and broke away from tradition. In a field diary written in 1973 written by a student of the Kyoto University, the student reported that he had been told beforehand by someone that women not being able to ride the float was a thing of the past, but later on was asked by the *kurumagata* to watch over the float to ensure that no women went aboard. In a conversation with a woman who he appeared to know, that *kurumagata* indicated

[245]A person who is granted the *kurumagata* title is in charge of a given float during the parade.

that he believed divine punishment (*tenbatsu*) would be handed to the woman who boarded the *Naginata hoko*.[246]

The exclusion of women in ritually significant events, and thus the religious importance ascribed to the festival, is most clearly observed in the handling of the *chigo* 稚児. The word *chigo* refers to a young boy of elementary school age or younger who is elected from the *ujiko* families of the Yasaka shrine. If no suitable candidate is found among the *ujiko* households he can also be picked from outside, in which case he is called *yatoi chigo* 雇稚児 ("hired *chigo*"). He wears characteristic clothing and makeup during rituals and is thought to be a vessel for the kami of the shrine throughout the duration of the festival. Even though every float town had developed a *chigo* for the festival in the earlier days of the festival, today it is only the Naginatabokochō that does it. On July 13th, the *chigo* visits the Yasaka Shrine. On that day, the *chigo*, being a child dependent on adult supervision is only taken care of by grown men. His food, which doesn't include meat, is cooked by men. If he is to eat food cooked by his mother, it is only fed to him after the meal is purified by fire. Although I have heard from people involved in the observation of these taboos that they remain valid only in form and have lost their meaning, they inevitably sounded like excuses for having discriminatory tendencies being present in the festival. Dismissive arguments such as this, as easy they seem to pop up, do not justify the labor that is put in by men to feed and take care of the *chigo* (these most likely being the responsibility of his mother in day-to-day life), and go to the extent of purifying his meals prepared by his mother. Although it is not the place of this thesis to delve deep into this phenomenon, the argument that these taboos are not

[246]Yoneyama, *Gion Matsuri*, 123-4.

important anymore serves only to justify them and prevents asking the very basic question “Why do they exist?”.

The involvement of the Yasaka Shrine is not very apparent in the *yamaboko* parades but in the rituals that it organizes around the event. The earliest of the most significant rituals is the *kiyobarai* 水清. This is the purification ritual for the floats to be displayed in the parade, and the shrine does this for all the floats. The earliest ritual to be completed is done for the *Naginata hoko*, which is always the float to lead the *yamaboko* parade. The following is the detailed account of the ritual conducted in 2018:

The *kiyobarai* ritual starts at about 10:00 in the morning, in the 10th of July. In 2018, it was conducted in a tatami room *machiya* of about 20 tatami breadth (33 square meters). To the left of the altar sat three Shinto priests, and to the right of it was a bag including various treasures. The *machishū*, all wearing haori sat towards the altar in a line of two, numbering up to twenty people. First, the *negi* (禰宜, indicating a Shinto priest) goes up to the altar, bows twice. He recites a prayer to the emperor (*norito*), then bows twice once again, claps two times, and bows in prayer position, hands pressed together before him, before returning to his seat. The *kurumagata* lights up the lamp inside the altar, as well as two candles resting on top of it. The *negi* goes up to the altar once again and purifies the altar, the treasures, the priests and the *machishū* in that order. Then, the *gongūji* (権宮司, the priest who is directly above the *negi* in position) takes his place near the altar and raises a prayer for the emperor while the attendees all bow. The *gongūji* repeats the *negi’s* mannerisms, in that he bows, claps, and bows, twice each time. The *negi* is led by the *kurumagata* to the storehouse wherein the float is kept and he purifies the second

floor, the first floor, the entrance to the car carrying the float, three spots where materials are kept, and the wooden frame that is keeping the float stable (*yagura*). The *kurumagata* spreads salt on the purified spots while other attendees wait and watch the proceedings.

After that comes the offering of a branch of a sakaki tree[247]. Firstly, the *gongūji* takes two *negi* along with him, offers the tree branch, and claps twice. The townsfolk are then handed a sakaki branch by the *negi,* which they proceed to sacrifice similarly. The representative of the Naginata Preservation Association, representative for the *chigo* and the *kamuro*[248]*,* the *kurumagata*, the representative for the *hayashi* also offer sacrifices of sakaki branches the same way. They salute the treasures before backing out.

Lastly, the *gongūji* sits in front of the altar and all three priests salute it. The *gongūji* stands up and salutes the attendees, as the priests salute each other. Approximately one hour has passed since the ritual started when it is finally over. After the ritual, a mass is held at the house. This mass is a historical tradition called *naorai* and those without permission cannot participate in it. Other rituals of this kind are held in other float towns under similar circumstances, but I was not able to observe them like I did this one.

A ritual of equal importance is also held in the 10th of July, which is the *mikoshiarai* 神輿洗. This one takes place exactly at 18 o'clock and coincides with the *Omukae Chōchin*, which is a parade of lanterns dedicated to the *mikoshiarai*. The main purpose is the purification of the *mikoshi* which will serve as the vessels for the Yasaka kami who will be taken out of the shrine in a week's time. For this ritual to

[247]The sakaki tree ritual is called *tamagushi hōten,* and is a mainstay ritual of Shinto.
[248]*Kamuro* are the attendants of the *chigo.*

take place, the priests have to spend some time in a building called *saikan,* which is where they have to shut themselves in for purification in order to conduct the ritual. The priests line up in the Yasaka Shrine grounds until a drum is struck to signal the start of the ritual. Following them are some members the *Seisei kōsha* and *Miyamoto gumi*, a number of people from each group follow the priests into the sanctum. *Miyamoto gumi,* the association of people from the school district where the Yasaka Shrine is located, takes to the left, wearing white robes. The *Seisei kōsha,* a Meiji Period association consisting of the *ujiko* of the Yasaka Shrine, takes to the right, wearing *montsuki hakama*, the most formal type of traditional men's ware today. Although these are different groups, they operate similarly and are the main supporters of Yasaka rituals. People participating in the parade become quiet once the prayer starts from inside the shrine. This is apparently the sign indicating the start of the festival. After a while, a priest holding a wooden wand (*gohei)* comes out and purifies the attendees. The other priests also come out and take a seat.

The chief priest stands up after a short while and after bowing once facing the front, he takes a seat on the left side and prepares the offering of food and alcohol. With the *gongūji* at their helm, the other priests also stand up and form a line facing the front. Offerings perched atop specialized wooden plates (*sanbō*) are relayed from right to left to the *gongūji,* who offers them before the altar. At the center of the offerings is *kamizake,* which is wine specifically made for ritual purposes. To the right of it is *kagami mochi*, and moreover to the left and right are five types of vegetables and seaweed, all of which are food with ritual significance. After the sacrifice is made, everyone takes their seat once again, and the chief priest sings a prayer.

The last part of the ritual is once again the offering of a sakaki branch. The ritual is similar to the one seen in the *kiyobarai* ritual, but in this one, the *seisei kōsha* and *miyamoto gumi* members are the ones participating instead of people from the float town communities, and the *mikoshi* being purified belongs to the shrine iteslf. A *negi* places a sakaki branch on top of a plate. They call out the names of the representatives of the *Miyamoto gumi*, Yasaka shrine's *ujiko*, and the *Seisei kōsha* in that order. All representatives present their sakaki branches. When they clap their hands in prayer, those from the same organization do it at the same time. After this, the offerings are taken away the same way they were put down, but in reverse order. The chief priest stands up to pray and signals the end of the ritual with a short bob of his head. The tension in the air and among those present is quickly relieved. The priests form a line and return to the *saikan*, followed by the *kōsha* members. A mass again takes place. As the ritual goes on, the *mikoshi* outside the shrine grounds are being readied.

At approximately 18 o'clock in the afternoon, which coincides with the start of the ritual, some 50 people carrying the *mikoshi* appear before the hall of worship (*haiden)*. They proceed to form a circle and clap their hands in prayer. From the *shinyoko* (the storage in which the *mikoshi* are kept) they first take out and start carrying the *Nakamikura,* which is specifically *mikoshi* that will carry the spirit of *Susanoo.* They take it outside via the southern gate (*Minamirōmon*) and set it right in front of its seat. At 18:30, they take out the *Higashigoza mikoshi* for *Kushinada-hime* and set it in the hall of worship. Their anxiety is apparent as they go up to the hall of worship, as they clap hands both before and after they bear the *mikoshi*. The *Nishigoza mikoshi* for the *Mikogami Yahashira* is likewise set in the hall of worship

alongside the *Higashigoza*. This way, the three *mikoshi* of the Yasaka Shrine mimic the similar structures that lie inside the sanctuary of the shrine (*honden*). These two rituals, as well as other ones throughout the course of July, carry exclusive Shinto elements, such as the sakaki tree, the garbs and mannerisms of the priests and the prayers they recite. Moreover, they are easy to identify as such to the familiar eye. The role of the Yasaka Shrine in the purification rituals of the festival floats, and the participation of the float-town communities in the shrine rituals are indicative of the shared interests of the *machishū* and the shrine itself.

Interestingly enough, the Yasaka Shrine is not the only Shinto shrine that is intimately involved with the Gion Festival. There is another shrine called Ayatokunaka Jinja that is located in the Kuse district of Kyoto. According to legend, the Ayatokunaka shrine was created by Susanoo-no-mikoto when he descended from heaven to stop an epidemic that had spread in Kyoto. And without the participation of this shrine, the Gion Festival cannot truly begin. This shrine also elects and produces a *chigo* for the festival and brings him from Kuse district to Higashiyama district. He is referred straightforwardly as the *Kuse chigo*, or as *komagata chigo* on account of the large wooden carving in the shape of a horse's head he wears on his chest. The wood carving also serves as the vessel which contains the essence of the kami (*goshintai*). Interestingly enough, this information is nowhere to be found in the official web page of the Yasaka shrine nor in other publicly available and easily reachable sources. The importance of the *Kuse chigo* for the Gion center also shows itself in the fact that he accompanies the *Nakamikura* both in the *Shinkōsai* (July 17th) and the *Kankōsai* (July 24th), which are important rites in the ritual cycle of the Yasaka Shrine.

Whereas the *chigo* from the Naginata float is considered to be a figure more like a Shinto priest or *miko*, the *Kuse chigo* is thought of as the avatar of the kami and that is the reason behind how, still in the age of State Shinto, he is able to enter the Yasaka Shrine grounds on his white horse, which is normally forbidden. According to the townsfolk of Kyoto, because the *Kuse chigo* hails from the countryside, he did not enjoy as much respect and reverence as the *chigo* produced by the floats in the earlier days of the festival. I was told during conversations with the *machishū* that, in pre-modern times when the *Kuse chigo* had to come to central and eastern Kyoto on horseback, his makeup could not withstand the heat and would crumble away, and the people of Kyoto would tease children who fooled around with makeup saying that they looked like the *Kuse chigo*.[249] I did not observe anyone within and without the shrine treating the *Kuse chigo* differently and the rituals surrounding the two *chigo* were practically the same, although the chief priest and the *ujiko* of the Ayatokunaka Shrine participate in the rituals involving the *Kuse chigo.*

I was able to observe in my time in Kyoto that the townsfolk are quite adamant in quickly claiming the festival for themselves. I was told on several occasions that this was the festival of the people, and a man involved with the organization of a certain float even claimed in distaste that the Yasaka Shrine is merely a later add-on to the festival. In discussing my concerns regarding the changes that the festival underwent since the Meiji Restoration, I was told by a member of the Takayama Preservation Association (*Takayama hozon iinkai*) that because the festival is "my festival" the state can not really touch it. Be that as it

[249]I also came across a similar account in Yoneyama, *Gion Matsuri*.

may, considering the close association of the Yasaka Shrine with the organizers of the festival, as well as the profound impact of the shrine in organizing Shinto rituals that directly effects legitimization of the towns and the floats produced there, it is undeniable that the post-Meiji changes concerning religion still have significant sway over the organization of the festival and the perception of the people. Perhaps unfortunately for many people, but not so for others, it is evident that the state was indeed able to influence the Gion Festival (Figure 8). It did not happen directly as it did with some other shrine complexes where some shrine structures, deities, and festivals were changed overnight, but in a more indirect manner and as a result of changes that affected the religious landscape of the whole country. In a way, the shrine and State Shinto ideology does not care if their Shinto rituals do not reflect popular practice. Their presence in the conceptualization of the festival as Gion-san is still an inherent part of the package, and without the presence of the Yasaka Shrine, the Gion Festival is almost unimaginable. Within, the organization of the festival, however, there is a significant presence of multi-cultural religious heritage. Most of the floats produced for the festival are indicative of a different tradition of belief that cannot be touched directly by state ideology. Objects of worship on top of the floats belong to a myriad of different traditions. Where most of the floats have some kind of Buddhist element associated with them, there are even floats that revere more obscure cultic traditions. For instance, the *Taishiyama* float produced by *Taishiyamachō* has the mythical figure of Shōtoku Taishi, a mythical historical figure who is an aristocrat credited with being the engineering force behind the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, as its central object of worship.

Figure 8. The Niwatoriboko float in 1942. The characters on the hanging scroll reads *Kōgun bu'unchōkyū* ("We wish the emperor's army good fortunes of war").

To this day, the town holds an event of some kind on every 22nd day of the month, which is considered to be the death anniversary of Shōtoku Taishi. Beside Shōtoku Taishi, the *Taishiyama* has a representation of Yoirin Kannon, who is a representation of Avalokiteśvara, perched on top of a cedar tree. The reason for this particular representation is not clear, but according to the townsfolk, it goes back to the story of Shōtoku Taishi cutting off a branch from a cedar tree from which Kannon was hanging. It's interesting to note that all the other yama floats have pine trees on top of them instead of cedars.

A ritual that Yasaka Shrine participates willingly on the 24th of July is one that is conducted by the Shinsen'en temple. As it should be remembered from the previous chapter, the Shinsen'en was the first site on which an imperial *goryō* ritual was conducted. It has an intimate historical relationship with the Gion Festival, as the festival is acknowledged as a result of the historical development of *goryō* belief. Significantly, the Shinsen'en is a Shingon Buddhist temple, and the ritual conducted here involves the *mikoshi* of Susanoo. brought to the temple on its way back to the Yasaka Shrine. The ritual here is conducted by Buddhist monks, but the *mikoshi* is brought to the temple by the same men who then take it back to the shrine to put the *mikoshi* back on the elevated platform at the center of the Yasaka Shrine courtyard. Whereas all other Yasaka Shrine rituals attract a great number of tourists from within and without Japan, the ritual at Shinsen'en is not known to tourists. In fact, this ritual is the only one among those I attended whose viewers appeared to think of not as a touristic spectacle, but as a more intimate and immediate ritual. My presence there came as a surprise to many participants, and both viewers and participants attempted to spark conversations with me multiple times, which had happened the other way

around in other events. As a foreign research student taking notes on the ritual, I was immediately invited to a radio interview with a local station host, who was very sensitive to the issue of the separation of religions. He lamented the fact that this ritual at the Shinsen'en used to be the norm, whereas now, it was an exception. My conversation with an old woman who claimed to come and watch the ritual every year was also a stark contrast from the viewers of the more common Shinto rituals. She was there not as a direct participant, nor a tourist, but as a local audience who derived meaning from the event in a different sense than the persons involved in other rituals, who derived meaning either from direct participation or distant admiration.

The Gion Festival is not free from the institutional and ideological clutches of State Shinto, and in a sense, it does not want to be. The Yasaka Shrine is intrinsically connected to the Gion Festival, and that puts it in a position of advantage where it can exert legitimacy just by existing and continuing its display of Shinto rituals to millions of people from around the world who now take the term Shinto for granted. In a way, the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, which has come to define the organization of religion in Japan since the Meiji Restoration thins down to a blur in the central towns of Kyoto. The presence of the Yasaka Shrine in many activities and events surrounding the Gion Festival is ironic in a sense, as its participation as a Shinto shrine to events that represent many distinct traditions of belief is a testament to the deep-rooted nature of varied popular practice. Let us keep in mind, ultimately, that the very presence of the Yasaka Shrine as the central religious institution in the festival both forces along the narrative of Shinto as native belief, and amplifies the politico-cultural effect Shinto has on modern Japanese society.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In a sunny day on mid-April 2018, I had went to an exhibition regarding the Takayama float in the Kyoto City Library of Historical Documents. There, I met with the chairman of the institution, a professor from the Kokugakuin University, and a member of the Takayama Preservation Society, to whom I briefly described the aims of this thesis, stating that I would like to bring into light the development of Japanese religiosity through the Gion Festival. Hearing that this thesis was very much about the historical development and changes regarding the Gion cultic site and festival, the chairman immediately felt the need to point out that compared to the festivals in the Kanto Region, the Gion Festival had not changed that much. The member from the Takayama society maintained that the festival remained untouched because it belonged to the townsfolk and not the shrine, while the professor stated that a line between state-sponsored and privately-funded festivals between festivals was drawn in the Meiji Period so that there were bound to be some changes, although not too many. Although that conversation did not go too far from that point onward, later that day I realized most of the arguments I heard from the trio reflected my gripes with extant Japanese scholarship on the Gion Festival, in that they did not attempt to conceptualize the bigger picture of the development of mentalities regarding belief and religion, as well as failing to see the inner contradictions of the state of organizing a festival in the greater of scope change that dominated the Japanese intellectual and sociopolitical landscape from the sixteenth century onward. At the same time, I realized that even if the Gion festival had not been the subject of much

change from the sixteenth century on, which is true to an extent, this would not be a significant deterrent for my purposes. My aim was not to identify change as much as it was to explain the context surrounding the festival in a macrohistorical sense and provide a framework through which I could understand how the perception of the cultic site as well as the festival had changed, how its conceptualization throughout key moments in history was different, and ultimately how it found its ground on the shaky soil that is the conceptualization of religion in Japan.

My chief concern was to place historical discourses of power that developed throughout Japanese history in parallel to ideas concerning belief. I have found that so great had the impact of privileged groups been in the organization of belief systems in Japan that sites of cultic importance always served as ideological battlegrounds on which political and doctrinal ideas interlocked with and contested one another. This, I believe, was effective to the extent that conceptualizing what we call religion today is impossible without taking a deep look into the intellectual history of Japan that formed in light of political concerns and developments. The chapters that came before this conclusion is a direct effort of contextualizing and understanding belief in Japan through the analysis of a central cultic site and its primary ritual.

I argued in this thesis that developments at the shrine had more to do with defining and acquiring power rather than doctrinal concerns. In most instances doctrinal development went hand in hand with political development. Furthermore, this did not happen unilaterally. The Gion rituals were meaningful as events of popular belief, but were also way of expressing discontent with power holders. I have thus identified Gion as a ground on which ideological battles for the shape of belief

was fought. I have concluded that the separation of Buddhism and Shinto, the destruction that ensued in its aftermath and the changing religious landscape of Japan did not result in the old faiths being completely destroyed. Indeed, they still exist today in different forms and within peculiar negotiations or amalgamations of formal religious institutions. Behind the scenes, people in Japan still continue practicing their own forms of belief.

Due to constraints of time and space, I aimed in this thesis to focus on particular moments throughout time which I thought to be significant. I approached the topic from a longue durée perspective because I thought that a major overview of the development of political ideas vis-à-vis belief was necessary. This inevitably meant that local shifts and developments within short time frames sometimes had to be left untouched. Trying to bring a respectable amount of detail to an argument stretched over a long period of time, I also had to pick and choose between which time periods I focused on. What was left behind, however, can be used later on as starting points to branch off from my research in different ways. Essentially because of the politico-cultural developments behind the conception of Japanese religiosity and those that surround the local cult, the air of ambiguity was a constitutive part of the Gion cult in the longue durée.

This thesis was the result of an effort to marry theological and theoretical discussion with historical application and experience. I feel that this methodology could be taken further in order to bridge the gap between what is theological and what is political. Although the experience found within the historical organization of the Gion cultic site cannot strictly be considered a representation of all historical belief in Japan, my hope is that it reflects a significant enough portion so as to be

taken into account in further research. There are other significant research done in this vein by Western scholars such as Alan Grapard and Barbara Ambros, wherein monographs are used in an effort to inductively reconstruct the religious landscape of Japan. Their work has influenced the writing of this thesis tremendously. Naturally, every such research focuses on different aspects of the development of religion in Japan, and I believe that enough of an accumulation of such research can in the end provide us with a framework through which we can go beyond histories that have been constructed for political ends, and notice political ideas behind popular conceptualizations of religion in Japan. For the subject of my thesis, further archival research for the Tokugawa, Meiji and WWII periods can be helpful in conceptualizing modern religiosity and the development of imperialist ideas; structural and economic analyses of shrine complexes can also provide valuable information in understanding the socioeconomic role of shrines and people who are directly involved in them. As the macrohistorical approach of this thesis culminates in a final chapter where I adopt a more anthropological stance, further ethnographic and oral historical research is one of the ways in which the grounds of this thesis can be extended to form a framework where further research can be fruitfully conducted. My contribution to extant anthropological data on the Gion Festival is fairly limited if we should take into account research done in the Japanese language, but I find that most anthropological studies tend to neglect placing their research in a historical context.

Another significant branch that this study can veer off to have to do with issues of gender. Problems regarding gender have popped up time and time again in this thesis even as the problems I was dealing with were issues not directly related to

gender studies. As such, I feel that a future study of the Gion cultic complex can benefit from asking questions regarding gender. How, for instance, women who are part of the towns that have a great deal of agency in the organization of the Gion Festival negotiate their involvement in various portions of the festival. The same question can be applied to the involvement of women in the Yasaka Shrine events. One aspect of the Gion Festival that I did not have the space to mention in this thesis is the *Hanagasa junkō* ("The Flower Hat Procession"). This parade was added to the Gion Festival in 1966 and it starts just after the main parade of July 24th. It is performed exclusively by women and children, and even portable floats and *mikoshi* are pulled by children, whereas that role is filled by grown men in every other major event that is organized within the context of the Gion Festival. Most of the participants in this parade wear much more colorful clothing and all kinds of hats with flowers embroidered on top of them. The parade culminates in a succession of performances by the same participants, such as dances, in the Yasaka Shrine complex. The meaning of this parade for its participants is understudied and can be a great point from which to embark on a research that asks questions regarding how it affects relations and politics of gender in the festival.

As I write my last sentences for this project, I feel the need to reflect on contemporary Shinto. Some argue that the religious formations introduced by the Meiji state was a failure because they could not manage to instate Shinto as an all-encompassing creed and oust Buddhism, deleting it from popular practice. It can be further argued that the state could not diffuse Shinto to the public and their persecution of popular religion ultimately ended up short of its aim. One can agree that the significance of Buddhism in people's lives went on strong and it never was a

close call whether it would remain as a popular religion. And although there is some truth to these arguments, it cannot be argued that the policies of the Meiji state, even those that did not achieve their original aims, were failures in any sense of the word. Firstly, the suppression of popular religion that did not go hand in hand with the nation-centered myths of Shinto resulted in permanent damage for the persecuted traditions. More importantly, we have to realize that a few generations of Japanese ideologues managed to create out of thin air, a framework called Shinto which, even as a term that kept its ambiguity well into the Meiji Period, served as the official foundation of the modern Japanese state. Their invention became something that convinced people of all kinds both within and without Japan, especially scholars, that it was indeed the ancient tradition of the Japanese landscape. As a result, the idea that Shinto was what it claimed to be went unchallenged from late nineteenth century until the 1980s, and came to be the basis on which Japan established its entire imperial apparatus and l'esprit de nation. That which was created as Shinto during the Bakumatsu and Meiji Periods is still what defines religious experience in Japan today, so much so that it is impossible to understand its contemporary meaning without knowing its troubled history.

It is commonly thought that after World War II, the Allied Occupation permanently changed the religious landscape of Japan, as it interfered and impeded on matters such as the status of the emperor as sovereign, and Shinto's active usage as state religion and tool of propaganda. It might come as a surprise, then, to notice that the National Association of Shrine (NAS) established in 1946 as the governing body of Shinto operates on the very same principles as prewar Shinto institutions. And even though NAS now participates in the Nihon Shūkyō Renmei (the Japanese

Association of Religions), which includes Buddhist, Christian and sect Shinto groups, the agenda of NAS remains the upholding of Shinto as the non-religion above all other religions. The main task of NAS is the enactment of rites, most of which belong to the prewar legacy and have only been increasing in number as time goes on. The political movement of NAS has similarly been based on the desire of the promulgation of an independent Japanese constitution that emphasizes the unbroken nature of the imperial line and emperor as head of the state.[250]

The contemporary political interests of NAS are represented by the Shinseiren group.[251] The organization currently has branch offices in each and every prefecture of Japan, and has incredible sway over the Diet. The extent of their presence in the Diet can be noticed by taking a look at the affiliations of recent politicians with the group. For instance, the Prime Minister of Japan in 2000, Mori Yoshirō, has served as the chairman of the Shinseiren in the late 2000s. He is known for his speech to Diet Members on 15 May 2000 at a political gathering of the Shinseiren in which he stated that Japan is "a nation of divinities with the Emperor at its heart" (*tennō wo chūshin to suru kami no kuni*).[252] The current Prime Minister Shinzō Abe is also known for his close ties with the group, to the extent that after his cabinet reshuffle in 2014, sixteen of the total nineteen members, including the minister of defense and foreign affairs, were members of the Shinseiren.[253] This is the same prime minister who has recently won the recent snap election by a landslide in the summer of 2018. It is therefore, a fleeting dream to think that Japan has gotten rid of state sponsored Shinto after the Great Pacific War. Furthermore, it can be argued with great certainty

[250]This political stance is easy to spot in the newspaper *Jinja shinpō.* Some issues I have looked at are 20.09.2008 and 3.12.2007.
[251]Shinseiren is the abbreviated form of Shintō Seiji Renmei ("The Political Association of Shinto").
[252]Mullins in Burchardt et al., *Multiple secularities beyond the West*, 160.
[253]This number was fourteen in the 2012 cabinet. See Penney, M., "The Abe cabinet: An ideological breakdown."

that State Shinto is still a looming shadow over matters of contemporary religious experience and the political reality of Japan.

In most questionnaires conducted today to determine the total adherents of the various religions that are alive in Japan, only a small percentage of people identify themselves as Shintoists. Some questionnaires find that more than half the population consider themselves to be non-religious, while approximately one half thinks that they do not belong to any single religion. For instance, in a survey that includes data from up to 2014, it was found that 51.8% of the Japanese population thought of themselves as not belonging to a religion.[254] The results are curious, to say the least, as participation in religious activities on a nation-wide scale is incredibly high in Japan. Many Japanese openly participate in events organized by shrines and utilize the ritual services provided by them. It can be seen from the official records that approximately 14,204,000 people, which is over 10% of the country's population, attended the vicennial renewal of the Ise Shrine in the year 2013.[255] One can also consider the very high rate of New Year visits to shrines, which no doubt includes the part of the population who identify themselves as non-religious. Similarly, narratives and images seen in contemporary popular culture are full of Shinto references that dazzles their consumers and sets new trends that determine the public discourse towards religion and specifically Shinto, especially among young people in a way never experienced before. The continuous production of these popular narratives also contribute to the ongoing transmutation of Shinto.

The disconnection of identifying oneself as non-religious but nevertheless fulfilling what would be required from those who adhere to religions is due to several

[254]Surveys conducted on this topic are not rare. The survey conducted by the Dentsū Communication Institute can be accessed at http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/honkawa/9460.html as of June 11th, 2018.
[255]http://www.city.ise.mie.jp/secure/12124/25kankotoukei.pdf, accessed in June 11th, 2018.

factors closely linked to this thesis. A very central reason is the rather apparent application of the concept of religion to modern Shinto and Buddhism. Whereas today, it feels natural to Western and Mediterranean societies that activities which have to do with one's beliefs would be qualified under the rubric of religion, this conceptualization does not work so cleanly in Japan. My aim in this thesis has been to underline that the modern and common form of the conceptualization of belief in Japan does not reflect the experience of belief that people deal with in their everyday lives. Furthermore, because the idea of adhering to a religion is so disconnected from the reality of everyday participation in religious organizations in Japan, the political meaning of participation is blurred into oblivion. The second reason for the disconnection is the problematic identification of contemporary Shinto. While the public image of Shinto as something that finds value through the ability to emphasize public solidarity through ritual functions is increasingly accepted, it is still not regarded as religious identity. Although this is undoubtedly linked with the shaky definition of religion, it has more to do with contemporary Shinto being a very vague concept in the eyes of the public. Its separation from Buddhism in the Meiji Period was effective enough in the sense that it can now be conceptualized differently than Buddhism. What that conceptualization entails, and how Shinto is supposed to be different than Buddhist traditions is still very shady territory, and the result is a religious environment in which no clear distinctions can be made between Shintoist and Buddhist people. In a sense, kami and buddhas have been separated but remain connected. The creation of a state religion as a distinct entity from Buddhism was indeed successful to a great degree. I strongly doubt, however, that anyone was expecting the creation of the fluid product that came to be contemporary Shinto,

which dares anything and everything that comes in contact with it to define it properly.

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