



THE PRINCIPLES OF SHRINE SHINTO

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Let us quietly look about us at the earth on which we live. There are lovely mountains and rivers, green plains and forests. The salty breezes blowing in from oceans rich with treasures bring about a comfortable, pleasant climate. In the spring the new grass springs forth, and in the autumn the ripening of various fruits and grains is expected.

When the winds and rains, which ought to be in normal amount according to the seasons, are even slightly insufficient or overly abundant, then the earth is visited by unseasonable calamities and human life is endangered.

The traditional Japanese way of thinking is characterized by not thinking of these mysterious natural conditions as being simply nothing more than physical phenomena. Through the many thousands of years of their long life-experience, the people have come to feel that this nature surrounding them is held in some great invisible hand.

Norinaga Motoori* (1730—1801) expresses this sense of wonder and awe at the mysteries of nature in the following two poems:**

* 本居宣長 Norinaga Motoori is best known by his first name, which will be used hereinafter.

** *Tamaboko Hyaku-shu* (玉鉢百首)

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Ayashiki wo あやしき を	To deny
Araji to yu wa あらしといふは	The existence of the mysterious
Yo no naka no 世の中 の	Is a foolish attitude,
Ayashiki shiranu あやしき 知らぬ	Ignorant of the mysterious
Shire-gokoro ka mo しれ 心 かも	Nature of the world itself.
Ayashiki wa あやしき は	Heaven and earth
Kore no ame-tsuchi これの 天地	Themselves are mysterious;
Ube na ube na うべな うべな	It is only natural
Kami-yo wa koto ni 神代は ことに	That the Age of the Kami
Ayashiku arikemu あやしく ありけむ	Should have been especially
	filled with mystery!

In the gradual progress of the seasons, in the motion of the sun and moon, in human happiness and unhappiness, fortune and misfortune—in all these ways of the world our ancestors apprehended the workings of some mystic, awesome, invisible power. Realizing their own indivisible relationship with this power, they sought naturally to discover a way of life. The same Norinaga puts it thus:*

Tana-tsu-mono たな つもの	The foods we eat,
Momo no ki-kusa mo ももの 木草も	The trees and grasses,
Ama terasu 天 てらす	Are all vouchsafed
Hi no Ō-kami no 日の 大神の	Through the blessings

* Ibid.

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Megumi ete koso めぐみ 得てこそ	Of the Sun Goddess.
Ame-tsuchi no 天 地 の	Without the blessings
Kami no megumi shi 神 の めぐみ し	Of the Kami
Nakariscba なかりせば	Of heaven and earth,
Hito-hi hito-yo mo 一 日 一 夜 も	How could we exist
Ari ete mashi ya あり得てましや	For one day, for one night?

The divine blessing partly consists in the fact of the availability of daily food, clothing, and shelter. Is not the fact that everyday life is peaceful and safe in itself a proof that man is saved?

Thus, from a humble attitude, which shows an awareness of the divine blessings in even the trivial matters of daily life, is born the spirit of Shinto in each detail of life.

The divine in Shinto is usually expressed in polytheistic terms. There are wise kami, kami of great strength, kami of rich humor. In the mountains are mountain kami, in the sea sea kami. There are philosophical and wisdom kami, as well as historical personages worshipped as kami.

Shinto does not preach a monistic god behind these kami, underlying and comprehending them. Rather, it perceives within the workings of the individual kami the "Way," the source of truth, law, and standards, which is immanent in the universe.

It is commonly said that polytheism is on a lower order than monotheism. This is an idea originating in monotheism, and

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we cannot agree with it. As a renowned Christian theologian* has said, in the world today there are no absolutely monotheistic religions. The theological problem in polytheism is the lack of unity among its deities. But, as the classical story of the divine council held in the bed of the Heavenly River (Ame-no-yasu-no-kawara)^a proves, the Shinto kami are beings moving toward the definite ideal and exhibiting qualities of harmony and cooperation. Our understanding of the word "Shinto" as meaning "The Way of the Kami," "The Way revealed by the Kami," "The principles of life understood through the actions of the Kami," is predicated on the belief that the kami, that are perceived separately, are really united and harmonious in revealing the Way for men to follow and are in unison in protecting the lives of men and in assisting them in accomplishing their mission.

The Blessings of the Kami The workings of the kami thus speak of truth and law as the "Way" immanent in the universe and constitute the source of human life-standards. However, the kami are not merely abstract beings, but are individually endowed with divinity and respond to real prayer.

On the other hand, when we think of this in connection with the growth and unfolding of things in the world, the functioning of the kami is also spoken of as the fundamental life-force at work in the coming into being and the growth of the myriad creatures existing in the universe.

* Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) I, 225.

a. 天安之河原

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This life-force, using an ancient expression, is the *musubi*,^a or a vitalizing force of the two *musubi* kami :

Moro-moro no もろもろ の	The source of all
Nari-zuru moto wa なり出るもとは	That comes into existence
Kami-musubi 神 むすび	Is the <i>musubi</i>
Taka-mi-musubi no たかみむすびの	Of the kami, Kami-musubi
Kami no musubi zo 神のむすびぞ	And Taka-mi-musubi.

The life of men and animals is fundamentally something imparted by the kami. In every thing in the universe a portion of this great divine life indwells ; being born, growing, and finally dissolving and becoming reduced to the original Great Life. Or when we observe the movement of the world, we notice that in personal undertakings and in the progress of common works, many times in the process leading to their completion strange occurrences, which cannot be accidental, are met with. In this we feel the activity of a mysterious power beyond our shallow human knowledge.

Through these experiences the ancestors of the Japanese, from the period of ancient Shinto, perceived the existence of this life-force, which they called *musubi*, or the power of becoming. In the wondrous surgings of the life-force, which are to be seen everywhere in the world, they had an immediate sense of the *functioning* and *blessings* of the kami.

a. 産靈

WORLD VIEW

Then how has Shinto viewed this world? And how should it view it? In the classics, the creation of the land of Japan is related as the *kuni-umi*^a or "land-bearing" of the two kami Izanagi^b and Izanami.^c

In other words, this land was not something created, but was characteristically thought of as something born of the kami, as a sacred land related by blood to the kami.

But does this mean that only the land of Japan, the islands of Yamato,^d are sacred?

The ancient Japanese are said to be a mixture of racial stocks. However, after coming to this island country the migrants lived in comparative isolation from the neighboring races, and at the time of the compilation of the classical myths these islands of Yamato were their world, their universe. And although fundamentally they regarded the abode of all human life as sacred, their world-view was necessarily restricted and conditioned by their limited geographical knowledge. Consequently, the ancient Japanese regarded only the Japanese islands, that is, their own life-environment, as sacred. However, if we were to examine the ideas upheld by the classical mythology in a modern setting, we feel that it would be quite consistent with the true spirit of ancient Shinto to regard all of the world and the universe, the stage of human life, as mystical and sacred.

a. 国生み

b. 伊邪那岐命

c. 伊邪那美命

d. 大和島根

VIEW OF MAN

What is man? How did he appear on this planet? What is his original nature? How are fate and death to be understood? Where are we to find the meaning of life, the value of living?

These questions, not only today, but in the future no matter how highly science develops, will remain as problems which each man must eternally face as long as man is mortal.

How, then, does Shrine Shinto try to explain these problems?

The Nature of Man An outstanding Shinto scholar of the Muromachi period, Urabe no Kanetomo,^a said that man essentially is derived from the same source as the kami and all things. He put it thus:

That which is in the universe is called kami; that which is in all things is called spirit (*tama*)^b; and that which is in man is called heart (*kokoro*).^c

The same divine reality, when it appears in the universe, is called kami; when it dwells in all things it is known as "spirit," and in man, it is "heart." In other words, the human heart is a reflection of the divine.

The belief that human life is imparted by the kami has already been mentioned in connection with the *musubi* view of life. In the classical mythology we can note a belief that man is the child of the kami. This means that, not only is there latent in man a kami-related nature, but that the human

a. 卜部兼俱 (1435—1511)

b. 靈

c. 心

heart itself is sacred and that man may also be revered as divine.

From of old the Emperor was regarded as divine because of the belief in him as the representative of the kami, as the conveyor or transmitter of their words. In this view, we see clearly indicated the need for conscientiousness and responsibility on the part of the Emperor as the priest and leader acting under divine protection and in accordance with the divine will. But this does not mean the apotheosis of the Emperor alone.

When men embody the divine will as representatives of the kami, when they practice the Shinto ideal of a selfless life attitude, and thus show forth an example, these men are also to be revered as divine beings. The worship of historical personages such as Michizane Sugawara,^a Sontoku Ninomiya^b and Maresuke Nogi^c as kami is based on this religious tradition.

The Conquest of Imperfection There is in man, born with the divine life-force, something essentially connected with the divine. If we are permitted to say that "good" is an action consonant with the functioning of growth and development, and that "evil" is its opposite, then man is born with an ability to do good.

However, while it is true that the divine essence courses through the body of man as he lives in this world, still it is difficult to say that the people in the world in general can commune directly with the divine.

a. 菅原道真

b. 二宮尊徳

c. 乃木希典

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Rather, when we consider ourselves, we merely discover our feeble selves ever submerged in selfish feelings and ever ready to choose the easy path. The peaks of the ideal are far away and steep, and the mirror of the heart is easily beclouded.

Therefore, in order to approach the divine and to discover the will of the kami, it is necessary first to rid ourselves of bodily and spiritual pollution: thus the concept of purity comes into being. The ceremonies and practices of purification (*mi-sogi*) and exorcism (*harai*) have their origin far back in ancient Shinto. Yet, behind the many-faceted development of these practices since the medieval period, we can perceive that the removal of the sins and pollutions of the heart through cooperation between kami and man was felt to be ever more necessary.

If a person were to polish himself and restore himself once more to the purity of heart he was born with, then truly his heart would be an "abode of the kami." It would be possible for him to experience the divine presence indwelling within his heart.

The baby, because his heart is pure, is an unlearned saint.

The saint, because his heart is pure, is a learned baby.^a

These are the words of Nobuyoshi Watarai,^b a Shinto scholar of the early Edo period. Was not the state of mind of returning to "a learned baby" in itself somewhat near to that of "worshipping the kami of one's heart"?^c

a. *Yōfuku-ki* (陽復記)

b. 度会延佳

c. Kanetomo Urabe

Human Life What, then, is human life?

In ancient Japanese, a human generation was called by the word (*yo* 世), which also meant a segment (*yo* 節) between two knots on a bamboo plant. One generation was, in other words, the segment of life between two points like a segment on a stick of bamboo; a segment which terminates when one passes on to his offspring the baton he has received from his parents.

Shinto has been called a "religion of association." It views the individual as the point of intersection between the long vertical association from ancestors to descendants and the broad horizontal associations of the individual as a member of society. As a person, the individual may be insignificant, but nevertheless he has a responsibility as one link which must not be broken in the chain of history. He also has a mission with regard to social solidarity. This fact is connected with the meaning of life for the individual.

According to Norinaga, who interpreted the meaning of the myths recorded in the *Kojiki* and analyzed the religious view of human life of the ancient Japanese, actual human life is something in which good and bad, fortune and misfortune, alternate without a moment's cessation.

Fortune in human life does not remain forever, but is always followed by misfortune. But misfortune also does not plague us forever; it is finally dissolved, and then greater good fortune arrives. Good and bad, fortune and misfortune are like two strands woven together into a rope; they alternately appear on the surface and then disappear. However, this is not merely

a process of repetition.

Bad exists for the sake of good and has significance as an element occasioning an even greater good. In other words, bad is not absolute; good is the positive element. All things come into existence through the constant fluctuation and alternation of good and evil, fortune and misfortune. In the way that grains and plants grow to fruition in the alternation of heat and cold, warm and cool seasons, so all processes are going forward towards the ideal.

View of History This idea of Norinaga is carried on today as a fundamental view of human life based on the classical mythology; not only that, it has a unique flavor when considered as a view of history.

History, in its never-ending mutations, is ceaseless progress towards the ideal. The individuals in charge of each scene must, while heading for the same ideal, put forth their utmost efforts during the time allotted to them. Rather than yearning for the past or dreaming about the far-away future, to live plainly and fully in the present, the time allotted to us, must be our true mission.

This spirit appears clearly in the Imperial Edicts (*semmiyō*)^a of the *Shoku Nihongi*^b (ca. 8th cent.) In them there appears the interesting idea of the "middle-present." (*naka-ima*)^c This is a view of history which, while believing in eternal prosperity, attaches the highest value to the present age, located in the

a. 宣命

b. 続日本紀

c. 中今

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middle between the past and the future. In later years, this spirit, living in the 14th century loyalist, Chikafusa Kitabatake,^a was given further impetus.

In Shinto, there is no “end of the world,” no “last day.” There is only progress through endless growth and evolution, birth and development. Viewed from the standpoint of man, this means that each day is the “beginning of history,” that throughout the past, present, and future, every day is the “best day”; and it is our task to make it full and complete.

The Life-Attitude of “Sincerity” Religion is said to aim at the ultimate solution of human problems. Human problems include the afflictions of life such as poverty, the loss of physical strength through sickness and old age, and the fear of death. They also comprehend the search for values, and the question of where to find the meaning in life which will enable us to conquer these afflictions.

One of the methods of dealing with these afflictions of life is to seek for a fundamental human life-attitude and to live consistently by it. In actual Shinto belief, this life-attitude is *makoto*,^b often translated as “sincerity.”

Makoto is a sincere approach to life with all one's heart, an approach in which nothing is shunned or treated with neglect. It stems from an awareness of the divine. It is the humble, single-minded reaction which wells up within us when we touch directly or indirectly upon the workings of the kami, know that they exist, and have the assurance of their close presence with

a. 北畠親房

b. まこと

us.

Then, while on the one hand we sense keenly our baseness and imperfection in the presence of the kami, on the other hand, we will be overwhelmed with ineffable joy and gratitude at the privilege of living within the harmony of nature.

While the conditions of life surrounding us remain the same, a new life-view will be born. Then, when this new life is opened before us as we have a change of heart, we will find many cases of poverty and sickness being well on the way to being righted.

The source of Shinto ethics is really in the life-attitude of *makoto*. When a person has this attitude in his contacts with others, in the case of his parents, for instance, then naturally there appears conduct which can appropriately be called by the name of the moral virtue of filial piety. Although the attitude of the individual is always the same, there appear actions suitable to be called benevolence towards children, faithfulness towards friends, loyalty towards the ruler, and love towards neighbors. Because judgements of good and evil in religious ethics vary in meaning and value with each individual and because we are emphasizing rather a dynamic life-attitude, which in itself will cause people to perform moral acts, we do not desire the forcible application of rigidly formalized virtues.

The Ideals of Shinto Nevertheless, Shinto does not consider that most human problems can be solved within the framework of mere individual ability. This is, for one thing, because human life is necessarily connected with society, and these solutions can in many cases be accomplished by cooperation

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with such non-religious fields as medicine and social welfare work.

At this point, man is considered as an individual who is a member of the family and a member of society; thus building—building the family, the village, the country—becomes important.

For example, speaking of building the family, it is said that in modern Western society the loss of the family ties is the greatest source of tragedy. In our country as well, the collapse of family consciousness in society is no longer merely a problem for other people.

The building of the social group, based on a new life-consciousness of gratefully receiving the divine blessings, must first begin from the reconstruction of the basic structure: the family and the village. We pray that this movement, although small at first, may eventually make Japan a land without abandoned children, without adolescent and parent-child suicides.

Furthermore the mission of Shinto does not end with building the country, that is, with the reconstruction of the land of Japan only. Since the war, the leaders of the Shrine Shinto world have chosen of their own free will the path in which Shinto can contribute to world peace and welfare. This is fully in accord with the long historical tradition of Shinto, which has always prayed for a world where the four oceans are calm.

We believe that the ultimate mission of Shinto is, through the building of the family, the village, and the country, to bring about universal peace, well-being, and prosperity for mankind, and that the kami extend their blessings and protection upon all efforts in this direction.

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View of Life and Death There have been religions which, because of the afflictions found in life in this world, have regarded this world as a mere temporary world, and the world to come as the real world. However, Shinto has always regarded the present world as the place in which to realize the divine ideals; and consistently from great antiquity Shinto has upheld as the highest value of life the fulfillment and perfection of human life in the present world.

Man must live in as meaningful a way as possible the years of life given him in this world. This way of living is not a mere abstract teaching, but is one which has been learned effortlessly by countless simple, humble, elderly peasants in their various experiences of life. The will to labor which impels the Japanese to seek out their duties as human beings and makes them feel that it is shameful not to work,—this is rooted in this affirmative attitude to reality and has been one of the motive forces in the reconstruction of Japan.

The Shintoist is impelled to continue his diligent building for the sake of raising the cultural level of his fellowmen, and for the sake of a better tomorrow. The ideals which could not be attained by him in this generation will be realized by his descendants and successors. Even after we die, we will protect the lives of those who follow after us in order to realize these ideals. In this consists Shinto's view of life and death.

Umare konu
生れ 来ぬ

Before birth,

Saki mo umarete
先 も 生れて

After birth, and living here

Sumeru yo mo
住める 世も

In this world,

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Shinite mo kami no
死にても神の
Futokoro no uchi^a
ふところのうち

And after death—all is
Within the Divine bosom.

Receiving life from the kami, we enter into this world; then dying we go again to the bosom of the kami. Is this not like rising with the sun and going to sleep at sunset?

SHRINES AND FESTIVALS

It is with these principles as their background that Shinto shrines are maintained and their festivals celebrated. The shrine is a symbol of the presence of the kami and a place of individual prayer, as well as the spiritual homeland of the community.

The festival (*matsuri*)^b begins with the purification of the mirror of the heart, and becomes an opportunity of renewing one's awareness of the boundless significance of the privilege of living in the world of man through the realization of the divine will, and through the reporting of its accomplishment.

Prayer at the shrines of the kami and participation in the festivals are the disciplines of religious faith. Is not the proper realm of the activities of Shrine Shinto, in the last analysis, the problem of a way of life for man as he seriously considers human life?

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a. Mitsuyoshi Tachibana (橘 三喜) (1635—1703)

b. まつり