

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS



Is Shrine Shinto a Religion ?

— A Correction —

In discussing this subject in the June issue of *Contemporary Religions in Japan* (p. 85) the editor inadvertently created the impression that Dr. Sokyō Ono, a professor of Kokugakuin University and a member of the editorial board of this journal, approves of and supports current efforts being made in certain quarters to revive State Shinto. This was done by following a quotation from Dr. Yoshio Ōishi, a proponent of the revival of State Shinto, with the statement that "Dr. Sokyō Ono supports this [Dr. Ōishi's] position when he says in *The Kami Way* that "In its general aspects Shinto is more than a religious faith."

It was the writer's intention to indicate that both of these men agreed that Shrine Shinto was a religion, although both also believe that it is "more than a religion." It is clear, however, that the statement, as it stands, implies a greater degree of approval than was intended and than actual exists. Therefore an explanation and an apology is in order.

The explanation may be best presented in Dr. Ono's own words. He writes:

"In other words, Prof. Ōishi and I are dealing with different subjects. Accordingly, I must say that the quotation is not quite fair, because it does not take this into consideration. Furthermore, there is a difference in the standpoints of both of us, for while Prof. Ōishi is a constitutionalist, I am, in the first place, a student of Shinto. As a matter of fact, I do not quite approve his legalistic

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argument in favour of revival of State Shinto, and I would feel very embarrassed if this difference should be ignored and if the above statements were used in connexion with the argument of Prof. Ōishi who insists upon the legitimacy of State Shintō. As for me, I have no inclination to deny that Shinto, in general, as well as Shrine Shinto in particular, has a religious character and is a religion.

“The problem of the revival of State Shinto is, of course, a delicate one which is very liable to cause trouble. At present, therefore, the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja Honchō*) does not have the least intention of taking political procedures for the revival of State Shinto, nor even to inaugurate an investigation of the problem. Accordingly, I, as a scholar having a post in that organization, should also like to abstain from any steps which may give rise to political controversy.

“The article also seems to attach a particular importance to my position as a member of the Association of Shinto Shrines, for this is explicitly stated in quoting from my book. But for the reasons I have just given above, this is a misunderstanding which I would like to have corrected. In writing my book: *The Kami Way* I attempted to pay due attention to the neutral character of the International Institute for the Study of Religions, the publisher, and to hold to the purely scholarly, unprejudiced position of a commentator. In order to make this clear, I usually state my post as a professor of the Kokugakuin University or give it together with my other post, as a lecturer of the Association of Shintō Shrines. The book in question was written from such a standpoint and with such an intention.”

The editor sincerely regrets that Dr. Ono's position was misrepresented.

(WPW)