

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. NAOKAZU MIYAJI

The following is a report prepared by Dr. Antei Hiyane of an interview the Director of the Institute had with Dr. Miyaji on October 15, 1946. At that time the Director was in charge of Religious Research in the Civil Information and Education Section, SCAP. The reader must remember that this interview occurred 20 years ago and that what was true then may not be true today.

(1) Shrine Shinto as Religion

Woodard — The shrines have been protected by the nation and have not been treated as religion. Many problems must have arisen because of this. For example, are all shrines religious? Do not Hachiman shrines and Inari (kami of harvest) shrines resemble Sect Shinto more than State Shinto? Did not the Inari shrines tend to lower the level of State Shinto?

Miyaji — The point of this question seems to be: what is religion? In my opinion religion is intercourse between human beings and what is superhuman. Therefore, all shrines naturally fall into the category of religion. The loyal spirit towers (*chū-rei-tō*) would become religion, if associations organized for the purpose of their maintenance should hold services there. Hero-worship is a sort of religion. The government did not negate the religious activities of the shrines even when it did not regard the shrines as religion. The belief in Inari is an influential religion of the people which seemingly has nothing to do with the belief of the nation, but the upper part of that belief is connected with the belief of the nation and the lower part is related to the folk faith of the people.

(2) **Relations between Shrines and the Shrine Association.**

W. —Why do some shrines not join the Shrine Association?

M. —Some shrines are members of the Shrine Association and others are not. The association does not have controlling power over the shrines and so is unable to compel the shrines to join it. There are two reasons why certain shrines refuse to join the association. One is a matter of feeling or emotion. According to the regulations of the Shrine Association, the chief of the association is authorized at his discretion to appoint and dismiss the chief priests of the state and government shrines. This provision is not literally enforced, but such a clause gives rise to the feeling that the association authorities are bureaucratic or act importantly. The second reason is economic. Some shrines do not join the association because membership is accompanied by assessments.

The appointment and dismissal of priests are within the competence of the association, but the decision of the association is not everything. The appointment and dismissal are not to be simply decided, for the history and the will of the parishioners and worshippers of the shrines have to be respected. There exists a hereditary system in the priesthood and this tends to make shrines something like personal property and prevents progress by such shrines. In this connection change of personnel is sometimes necessary. A shrine may desire the transfer of a priest in order to have a change of atmosphere, because he has served one shrine for as long as 30 years. There may be doubt if a priest, who has been serving Inari

can suddenly turn and become the priest of a Hachiman shrine, but, because in Shinto all the kami are regarded as fundamentally the same, there should be no room for complaint in the transfer of a priest from an Inari shrine to a Hachiman shrine. At present, perhaps one or more priests out of a hundred take a religious attitude so definite that he can not conscientiously serve a kami whom hitherto he has not served. A priest of the Tōshōgū refused to be transferred to another shrine, but he is rather an exception.

The changes in the positions of priests include changes for the better. For example, transfer from a small shrine to a larger one; transfer to a shrine of like status is called *hei-ten* (parallel transfer) by the priests. In 1884, the *Kyōdoshoku* (official preacher of Shinto appointed by the government in the beginning of the Meiji era who propagated the creed of Shinto and performed ceremonies. TN.) was abolished and since then Shinto priests have given up propaganda and have become the clerks of shrines. It was at that time that priests lost their religious influence.

(3) Problems Concerning the Gokoku Jinja and Yasukuni Jinja.

W. —What type of men are priests of Gokoku Shrines?

M. —Some of the priests of the Gokoku Shrines are former officials, retired soldiers, and retired policemen. Those priests who have served in the police are highly spoken of, for they are well disciplined. Some of the priests who have been government officials are more unpopular than retired soldiers.

The naming of the Gokoku Shrines took place in 1939 under

the influence of the army. In creating the "Gokoku Jinja," apparently the officials of the prefectural offices were active, but the wire-pullers were the associations of reservists. According to what I heard, the government preferred the name of "Yasukuni Jinja," but the governing body of the army claimed a monopoly of that name for the shrine on the Kudan Hill and so named the local ones "Gokoku Jinja." This compound word, *go-koku*, means to guard the nation, but the direct origin of the name of "Gokoku Jinja" is probably an epigraph by Prince Tarahito Arisugawa-no-miya in the beginning of the "Chronicle of the Yasukuni Jinja."

W. —Why was the Tokyo Shōkon-sha changed into Yasukuni Jinja so soon after establishment?

M. —The establishment of Yasukuni aimed at the consolation and pacification of the souls. The approximate cause of its establishment was, as a prayer of the shrine reads, "to make the souls free from reluctance when going to another world." That is, to console the souls of the dead and quiet them so they would not be restless. Commendation of their merits, respect and gratitude to their loyal spirits were later ideas.

The spirit-invoking shrines, sacred to those who have not long been dead, are rare. The Hōkoku Jinja (Kyoto) was dedicated to Hideyoshi Toyotomi after only one year had elapsed after his death. The Tōshōgū was also established not long after the passing of Ieyasu Tokugawa. The shrines dedicated to the heads of clans have something in common with the above two shrines. The nature of the spirit-invoking shrine is quite different. The Sei-nan (west and south) Incident in 1877

completely changed the character of the spirit-invoking shrines. In the following year, 1865, war dead of the government's army were enshrined. In 1879, the shrine changed its title to Yasukuni Jinja and was ranked as a Special Government Shrine (Bekkaku Kampei-sha). Thus, suddenly the human souls were converted into spirits of the kami and the idea came into existence that those who sacrifice their lives for the Emperor were to be enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine as kami.

Prior to this there were people who thought of devoting themselves to the heads of their respective clans. Some lacked in intention to serve their country and some opposed compulsory military service. This tendency, however, was completely changed when, in 1878, the many war dead of the Sei-nan Incident were enshrined. The change of the name "Spirit-Invoking Shrine" to "Yasukuni Jinja" raised the status of the shrine and its nature in relation to the country was unified.

W. —Isn't Yasukuni Shrine different in that it is the Emperor who orders the enshrinement?

M. —The authority to make the war dead kami rested with the Emperor who has been expressing this in his visits to the shrine.

In the case of other shrines, it is the Home Minister who possesses that authority. In the beginning of the Meiji era, the *Dajōkan* (Prime Minister) possessed that authority. During the Tokugawa period, the Shirakawas and Yoshidas, both Shinto families, made the kami and authorized them to receive rites. Yasukuni Jinja is a Special Government Shrine. The shrine dedicated to Yodo Yamanouchi, head of the Tosa clan

and the shrine sacred to Kansō Nabeshima, head of the Saga clan, are also a Special Government Shrines. Yasukuni Shrine, however, was the only shrine to be visited personally by the Emperor, and so it was very precious to the bereaved families of the war dead and was promoted by the army to be the greatest shrine in Japan. The Emperor makes a slight bow (*eshaku*) to the people as a greeting, but to the Yasukuni Shrine he pays personal homage. This is the reason why Yasukuni Shrine has come to be regarded as a special shrine.

The ordinary festival is held once a year at other shrines, while at the Yasukuni it is held twice, in spring and autumn. At first, the chief priest of Yasukuni was not a retired soldier, but the chief priest of Meiji Shrine was General Ichinose and so General Suzuki was appointed as chief priest of Yasukuni. The appointment of the Assistant Chief Priest (*gongūji*) was another measure to exalt the standing of the Yasukuni by making it similar to Meiji and Ise Shrines.

W. —Is not Yasukuni Shrine the peculiar property of the army?

M. —The War Ministry had Yasukuni Jinja under its control and disliked any interference with the shrine by the Home Ministry. The Yasukuni Shrine authorities seem to be planning to put the Gokoku Shrines under its influence, but the latter looked unfavourably on this project.

I have heard that the enshrinement at Yasukuni Shrine this autumn is not going to be held but, I think, the festival had better continue to be celebrated. Not as a gay festival presided over by the nation, but as a festival for the purpose of pacifying and consoling the souls of the kami, just as in the beginning of the Yasukuni Jinja. Such a festival should not be designed

for respect and gratitude to the kami enshrined there, but for their peaceful settlement and consolation.

W. —What is the future of Yasukuni Jinja?

M. —The dead after the termination of the war are not enshrined at Yasukuni. According to hearsay, there seems to be a plan to dedicate this shrine not only to soldiers but also to cultural people, but that is another problem. All the war dead up to the end of the war were enshrined there last fall. Beginning with the enshrinement festival this spring, the dead who are identified will be enshrined. Yasukuni was held in high esteem even in the prewar years, and the local young men's associations used to dedicate rice to the Imperial Family, Ise and Yasukuni.

Now that Yasukuni has become a religion, some Buddhists and Christians may not want to be enshrined there. This is quite a natural phenomenon, for the shrine has become connected with religion. This problem will arise concerning the local Gokoku Shrines too. Those who fail to understand the fact that the shrine has become religion may feel unpleasant, due to misapprehension because of the existence of the Buddhists and Christians who refuse to be treated as the kami of Yasukuni.

(4) The Future of the Gokoku Shrines

M. —The existence, I think, of the Gokoku Shrines will not last long, for the bereaved families of the enshrined kami decrease in number and gradually the memory of these kami will go out of the mind of the people in general. A survey of the visitors to Yasukuni would make this clear. Very few

bereaved families of the war dead of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars ever visit the shrine, although they are enshrined there; much less the bereaved families of enshrined loyalists at the time of the Meiji Restoration. The Ryūzan Gokoku Shrine in Kyōto was dedicated to the loyalists of the Meiji Restoration and so visitors were very scarce in the pre-war years. If the Gokoku Shrines are left just as they are, their existence will be quite short. Their conversion to something like loyal-spirit towers sounds good, but in my opinion priests appointed solely for these shrines had better not be appointed. The Gokoku Shrines which were damaged or burnt down should not be reconstructed. The Chiba Gokoku Shrine was reduced to ashes, and now a small provisional building has been built.

Some of the priests of the Gokoku Jinja are retired soldiers and government officials, but they are to be dismissed. Priests who are ex-soldiers include such young men that had nothing to do with the Sino-Japanese or Russo-Japanese wars, but some ex-officials are much more unfit for the present state of affairs.

National Foundation Day (Kigen-setsu) and the Festival of the Emperor's Birthday (Tenchō-setsu) should not be celebrated at Yasukuni Shrine. Its festivals should be limited to the spirit-consolation festivals, vernal and autumnal. Both the Yasukuni Shrine and the Gokoku Shrines should be returned to their old status of the spirit-invoking shrines.

W. —Why were the Gokoku Shrines located where they are?

M. —The Gokoku Shrines are situated at the capital cities of the prefectures and the headquarters of regimental districts.

Therefore the army seems to have been in collaboration with the associations of the reservists and managed to establish shrines in the places where the headquarters of the regimental districts were located.

The location of the Gokoku Shrine at Ōmiya, Saitama prefecture, is not the place where the prefectural office is situated, nor has it anything to do with the army.

The establishment of a Gokoku Shrine dedicated to the loyalists to the emperor in Hikone may be a countermeasure against the Ii family, head of the clan supporting the Tokugawa Shogunate.

The reason why there is no Gokoku Jinja in Miyazaki prefecture is unknown, but that prefecture is poor.

The opposition of the army against a naval plan seems to have prevented the establishment of a Gokoku Shrine in Yokosuka.

There are Gokoku Shrines at Matsue and Hamada in Shimane prefecture and at Kobe and Himeji in Hyogo prefecture, but they should be incorporated into one.

The distribution of charms at the Gokoku Shrines is at the request of the bereaved families and worshippers. Some people are of the opinion that since the kami of the Gokoku Shrines are the war dead, wearers of the charms, therefore, will be killed in battles like the kami.

Plans have appeared to rename Gokoku Shrines or to dedicate them to cultural people, but these plans must be carefully considered. The rumour is afloat that a directive of SCAP has ordered the enshrinement of cultural people, but is it true? The kami of the Gokoku Shrines create self-respect in bereaved

families and prevent their posterity from doing evil.

W. —What is the effect of religious freedom on the shrines?

M. —Freedom of religion has been guaranteed and shrine worship has become a religion. The shrines have so long been relying upon the government that they are now at a loss as to what to do. They will be embarrassed unless they can obtain support from the Religions League (Shūkyō Remmei).

W. —How did the Emperor's disclaimer of divinity affect the shrines?

M. —The Emperor's acknowledgment that he is not divine has completely changed the basis of Shinto, and ancestors as the enshrined kami have lost their status as such. There remains the question: What is the difference between the kami in the definition by Shinto and the gods of other religion? Shinto Taikyō has believed in the Emperor as a living kami.

W. —Where does Shinto show the most strength and promise?

M. —Although there are 13 sects of Shinto, the influential ones are only Tenri, Konkō and Kurozumi sects. The other sects show so little influence that they are not worth discussing. Concerning the Tenri and Konkō sects, it is a question whether the creeds they assert and realities can be identified or not.

(5) Dr. Miyaji's Work

I am now establishing the Institute for the Study of the Beliefs of the People. Money contributed by shrines amounts to ¥50—60,000. It seems to me that the study of Shinto must be approached from the standpoint of *Onyōdō* (positive and negative principles). I should like to make a study of the *Engishikinai-sha* (shrines listed in the *Engi-shiki*). Now I am making

an historical study of the three sacred treasures. More than a decade ago, Dr. Tetsujirō Inoue dealt with the three sacred treasures in such a manner that he was attacked by a certain group of people. I think he should not have gone so far. Hitherto there has been no freedom of study, and I myself have been very unhappy because it has been impossible for me to lay before the public the results of my thought. I am very glad that hereafter we shall not suffer from such suppression. I am now writing a treatise on the three sacred treasures. I should like to make a careful study of the meaning of the mirror.

Concerning the future of Christianity in Japan, it is most necessary to adapt it to Japan. It is desired that in propagating Christianity careful consideration should be given to Japanese customs and manners.