

The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945-1952 and Japanese Religions

By William P. Woodard. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972. xx, 282 pp., Appendices (pp. 283-375), Sources (pp. 376-380), Index (pp. 381-303).

Much has been written on the Allied Occupation of Japan and even more on the impact this Occupation had on Japanese society in general, and on the political and social structure of the country in particular. In all these writings one is sure to find some reference made to the Occupation's policy of removing the causes of militarism and

ultranationalism from public life and institutions. As one of the instruments in the implementation of this policy the Shinto Directive is usually mentioned in passing to pave the way for the more pressing issue of the revision of the constitution of Japan. Often the impression is given that the more important of the two documents is the re-

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vised constitution, while in reality the constitution could not possibly have been formulated in the present terminology (especially in the articles 20 and 89) if the Shinto Directive had not first stated the principle underlying this terminology.

The Shinto Directive's great merit is the clear guidelines it gives for the separation of religion and state, not only in the particular case of the state's involvement with Shinto but in a much larger sense when it states that "The purpose of this directive is to separate religion from the state, to prevent misuse of religion for political ends, and to put all religions, faiths, and creeds upon exactly the same legal basis, entitled to precisely the same opportunities and protection. It forbids affiliation with the government, and the propagation and dissemination of militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideology not only to Shinto but to followers of all

religions, faiths, sects, creeds, or philosophies" (art. 2 a).

Even if the legislative validity of the Shinto Directive did not extend beyond the period of the Allied Occupation, its impact has been such that the principle of separation of religion and state found its way into subsequent Japanese legislation, notably in the Constitution of Japan of 1947 and the Religious Juridical Persons Law of 1951.

From the above it should be clear that the Shinto Directive was not just one of the many directives issued by the Occupation in its effort to establish a new Japan based on democratic principles. Neither is it just a document recording the Occupation's interference in Japanese religious affairs. Although its first purpose was the solution of a pressing and immediate problem in the religious field, its impact was much more far-reaching in that it formulated a fundamental principle for a dem-

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ocratic society.

In recent years *Contemporary Religions in Japan* has published a number of documents and translations around the background of and the motives for the making of the Shinto Directive¹. Also this reviewer has made an effort to come to a deeper understanding of the precise impact and consequences of the directive². So far, however, much was left up to speculation and inadequate reconstruction of events as a result of the non-availability of documentation on many important matters.

All students of the history of Japanese religions of the postwar period are in debt to Dr. Woodard who in the book under review has made available a wealth of information on our subject not found elsewhere for easy access. As head of the Religions Research Unit during the occupation Dr. Woodard was in a position which afforded him

to keep in close touch with all that happened in the field of religions in the immediate post-war period. As the author was not in a policy-making post he is able to describe and judge events in a more detached way than if he had been an active participant in the events that took place. The account of the observations and the experiences alone of a person in this position would make worthwhile reading. However, not satisfied with his own firsthand observations and experiences, Dr. Woodard has made every effort to support his findings by locating the necessary source materials and by corroborating evidence thus found by interviews and correspondence with people who were directly involved in the events. This method, together with the author's own critical and careful wording of any statement he makes, make the book an authoritative source of information of the first rank.

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The strongest point of the book is the use of many official U.S. documents which the author managed to unearth from the World War II archives and to have declassified for use in this book. This enabled the author to judge critically any statements made in Japanese-language materials on the same subject.

The book consists of twenty-eight chapters in eight parts. Part one explains why the Allied Powers found themselves involved in Japanese religions; it clarifies a number of terms used throughout the book, such as Shrine Shinto, State Shinto, *Kokutai Shinto*, Sect Shinto, and introduces the term *Kokutai Cult* as the author's term for Japan's emperor-state-centered cult of ultranationalism and militarism (p. 11); it further describes the religious policy of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP).

Part two discusses the organizations responsible for SCAP's

policy in the field of religions, the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) under Brigadier General Kenneth R. Dyke, its Religions Division headed by Dr. William Kenneth Bunce, the Government Civil Affairs Teams whose task it was to survey the implementation of the Occupation policies, and the Japanese government agencies through which SCAP exercised its authority in matters concerning religion, namely the Shrine Board of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Religious Affairs Section of the Ministry of Education.

Part three takes up the discussion of the two major policy documents of the Occupation in matters concerning religion. These are the Civil Liberties Directive of October 4, 1945 which clearly stated the principle of religious freedom, and the Shinto Directive of December 15, 1945 which established the principle of the separation of religion

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and state and strengthened the principle of religious freedom.

The implementation in law of the principles expressed in these two directives is the topic of Part four. The author first discusses the making of the new constitution which incorporated the principles of religious freedom and of the separation of religion and state, especially in the articles 20 and 89. The second law is the Religious Corporations Ordinance promulgated on December 28, 1945. This ordinance simplified the procedures for incorporating religious groups, it removed the necessity of government recognition as a prerequisite to incorporation, and it deprived government administrative agencies of any control over the internal organization and religious activities of incorporated religious bodies (p. 91). The third law discussed here is the Religious Juridical Persons Law promulgated on April 3, 1951. It replaced the Religious Corpora-

tions Ordinance and "was the result of the cooperative effort of the Japanese Government, Japanese religious leaders, and the [SCAP] Religions Division. ...probably none of the major participants were entirely satisfied with the results. ...it was the best that could be devised under the circumstances" (p. 97).

Part five treats of the numerous difficulties encountered in implementing the principle of the separation of religion and state. The three major issues were the place of religion in public education, the restoration to shrines and temples of titles to their properties, and the enforced solicitation of funds for the shrines by neighborhood associations.

Part six deals with a number of items which were not directly of a religious nature but were in some way connected with religious matters. These items were problematic not in the

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first place because of any direct connection with Shinto, but because of their ultranationalistic and militaristic coloring. Specifically they are the following issues: the national holidays which in many cases had originated in Shinto mythology and “were created to further ultranationalistic tendencies of State Shinto” (p. 143), the public commemoration of the war dead which “in the past had been subverted by militarists and ultranationalists to provide religious sanction for their program of national aggrandizement” (p. 148), the veneration of the Emperor, a problem connected with “the Emperor’s alleged more-than-human nature” (p. 164). In this part we find discussions on the Yasukuni Shrine, the Imperial Rescript on Education, the Imperial portraits, etc.

Part seven covers a topic very close to the author’s heart: the Occupation’s concern “to develop a desire for freedom of religion”

(p. 178). The author emphasizes the Religions Division’s official attitude of respect for all religions and of the willingness to help with advice and guidance at the request of the religious organizations. At the same time, he points out, CIE assumed a strict attitude of non-involvement in that it did not allow itself to be identified with any specific religion. In five chapters (on Shinto, Buddhism, the New Sects, Christianity and the Christian Missionary Movement) he goes into the details of the relationship between the Occupation and the religions in Japan.

In the eighth and final part the author gives us some insights into the roles played by ‘a “prophet” of American democracy’ and ‘the “high priest” of the Japanese nation’ (p. 240). General Douglas MacArthur’s preference for Christianity and his derogatory statements on the indigenous religions often made him violate the official policy of

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the Occupation, and caused the Buddhists and Shintoists to question the sincerity of the official pronouncements on religious freedom and the separation of religion and state. However, once the General became aware of the inappropriateness of his attitude he refrained from speaking on Christianity in official statements.

The feelings concerning the Emperor's mystic relation to the Japanese people were of great concern to the Occupation, not so much because of the religious nature of this relationship, but specifically because of the danger of ultranationalism and national aggrandizement emanating from these feelings. As a result of the way in which the "divinity" of the Emperor had been treated in the American press it seems plausible to suppose that in the highest circles of the Occupation authorities some thought must have been given to this problem. However, no evidence of this can

be found. Many contradictory statements have been made on the history of the making of the Emperor's New Year's message of January 1, 1946, the so-called "Declaration of Humanity." The author, with the help of the various statements and documents at his disposal, tries to reconstruct the course of events leading up to the imperial message. As it is very doubtful that in the future any more new data will be found, it would seem that here (chapter 27) we have the most authoritative account that ever will be written.

This general description of the content of Dr. Woodard's book certainly does not do justice to the enormous amount of work that must have gone into the making of the book. Almost any topic the author raises throws a new light on the bewildering maze of issues the Occupation found itself involved in. In spite of the wealth of information the author presents to us, he

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himself admits that his book "is not a definitive discussion of any of the problems raised" (xii). Much more can be said on the Occupation's involvement in the religious scene of Japan, and it is hoped that those who take up any of the issues for more thorough study will be able to do so in the same almost inimitable way and with a similar eye for detail as Dr. Woodard.

Anyone who in the future will occupy himself with the further study of our topic owes a vote of thanks to the author also for the

many documents he has made available to the general public. In the appendices he presents us with almost 100 pages of official documents from both the Occupation and the Japanese Government sides, and with many other sources of information which so far were not available.

The high price of the book was doubtless beyond the author's control. It is hoped nevertheless that the book will be accessible to interested students through libraries which appreciate having valuable books on their shelves.

1. Union of New Religious Organizations of Japan (comp.). "Reminiscences of Religion in Postwar Japan," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (June 1965), pp. 111-203; No. 3 (September 1965), pp. 295-314; No. 4 (December 1965), pp. 382-402; Vol. VII, No. 1 (March 1966), pp. 51-79; No. 2 (June 1966), pp. 166-187; No. 3 (September 1966), pp. 217-273. "Disposition of State-owned Land Currently Used by Religious Institutions-Official Documents," *CRJ*, Vol. VII, No. 3 (September 1966), pp. 209-216. General Headquarters SCAP, CI&E Section. "Shinto, A Study," *CRJ*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (December 1966), pp. 321-360. General Headquarters SCAP. "Religion in Relation to the Public Schools of Japan - Official Documents," *CRJ*, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (March 1967), pp. 85-100.
2. Creemers, Wilhelmus H.M. *Shrine Shinto After World War II*. Leiden: Brill, 1968.

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