

## The Establishment of Shrine Shinto in Meiji Japan

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In what follows I propose to inquire more fully into the administrative relations between the Japanese state and Shinto shrines during the Meiji period, or 1868-1912. The specific problem I wish to investigate is the process whereby the shrines of the nation were "established" as institutions of state. Although considerable work has been done on the early-Meiji history of shrine administration,<sup>1</sup> from mid-Meiji the record is not nearly so clear. To help rectify this situation, a first step is to analyze shrine administrative patterns at least through the crucial late-Meiji years; for it was during this late-Meiji period that the government, after years of uncertainty, finally fixed upon a formula for shrine governance which subsequently held in its basic essentials until 1945.<sup>2</sup>

In order to place pre-1945 Shinto shrines in their broadest national context, we must begin with the notion of *kokutai*. This was the "sacred canopy"<sup>3</sup> which overarched the entire Japanese

1. See, e.g., Daniel C. Holtom, *The national faith of Japan: A study in modern Shinto* (London: Kegan Paul, 1938 [now available through Paragon Book Reprint Corp., New York, N. Y.]), chap. 3 and the same author's *The political philosophy of modern Shinto: A study of the state religion of Japan*, in TASJ, series 2, vol. 49, pt. 2 (London: Kegan Paul, 1922), chap. 1. Also: Kishimoto Hideo, ed., *Japanese religion in the Meiji era*, transl. by John F. Howes (Tokyo: Ōbunsha, 1956), pt. 1, "Shinto"; Muraoka Tsunetsugu, *Studies in Shinto thought*, transl. by Delmer M. Brown and James T. Araki (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1964), chap. 6; and Floyd H. Ross, *Shinto: The way of Japan* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), chap. 8.
2. Quite broadly, one might say that Shinto shrines were "established" as state institutions in the Meiji period, and that the process thus begun was consolidated in the Taishō era (1912-26) and brought to culmination in early Shōwa (1925-45).
3. The expression is borrowed from Peter Berger's book *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday

national consciousness during the critical decades of prewar modern nation-building, or from the Meiji period until 1945. *Kokutai*, literally “national structure,” was understood to mean the national entity, or the unique characteristics of Japan. The central image was of a great familial nation presided over by the emperor, the supreme father-figure, who was sacred by virtue of his descent in unbroken line from Amaterasu-ō-mikami, the highest kami of the Shinto pantheon. It was the privilege and duty of every Japanese subject to serve the patriarchal emperor in a spirit of willing filial piety. At its highest peak of expression filial piety became indistinguishably fused with emperor-loyalty or patriotism. This entire national structure was ultimate, eternal, immutable, irreducible—in the language of the day, “coeval with heaven and earth.”<sup>4</sup>

As the unifying principle and sacred center of Japanese national life, the *kokutai*, it was expected, would be supported by every element within Japanese society. Here we will be concerned only with the contribution of Shinto shrines; but in addition to the shrines, other key supports of *kokutai* could be mentioned. These would include the *Imperial rescript on education* (1890), ethical training (*shūshin*) in the schools, the sentiments and special observances associated with national holidays, and basic social patterns such as filial piety and emperor-loyalty, to mention but a few. Of course, various religious and intellectual groups were also expected to fortify the national self-image. Religious groups would include the Buddhists, Christians, and those various bodies classified under the rubric of Sect Shinto (*kyōha shintō*). (As we shall see, state authorities eventually made a very careful distinction between these sectarian Shinto groups and the traditional Shinto shrines, the latter being accorded a uniquely privileged

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and Co., 1967) without necessarily applying his interpretation to the Japanese scene.

4. Robert K. Hall, ed., *Kokutai no hongi: Cardinal principles of the national entity of Japan*, transl. by John O. Gauntlett (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 183.

position in national life.)

Against the backdrop of this broader context, we come now to the specific contribution of the traditional Shinto shrines, which played such a key role in the promotion of national consciousness during the whole prewar modern period, or from the beginning of the Meiji period until 1945. In Shinto studies, this period of approximately three-quarters of a century is commonly designated the "State Shinto period." By this we simply mean that during this time, the Japanese state exercised considerable control over Shinto shrines of various types as focal points for the unification of the nation and the mobilization of national spirit. The Japanese expression *kokka shintō* (state or national Shinto) appears to be a post-1945 term, one which refers retrospectively to a range of institutional and thought patterns within the Shinto tradition which came under direct governmental administration or control and which directly supported *kokutai* during the decades under discussion.<sup>5</sup>

State Shinto should be seen as a complex of components, the main elements of which may be elaborated as follows (for the State Shinto period):

1. The Grand Shrine of Ise, in Mie Prefecture—Actually a number of interrelated shrines, Ise has traditionally stood in a class by itself. This is because the principal kami enshrined at Ise is Amaterasu-ō-mikami, ancestress of the Imperial House and chief of all Shinto kami.
2. Imperial Household Shinto (*kōshitsu shintō*)—Three shrines within the Imperial Palace grounds in Tokyo, dedicated to Amaterasu-ō-mikami, the sacred spirits of deceased emperors, and to all the kami of heaven and earth.
3. Shrines for the war dead (*shōkonsha* or *gokoku jinja*)—Num-

5. For substantive discussions of the manner in which Shinto supported the various national-imperial dimensions of the *kokutai* vision, see D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto nationalism: A study of present-day trends in Japanese religions*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947) and Wilbur M. Fridell, *Japanese shrine mergers, 1906-12: State Shinto moves to the grassroots* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973).

bering 148 by the year 1945, these shrines were set aside especially to memorialize the spirits of those who died in military service. The chief shrine of this type: Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo.

4. Shrine Shinto (*jinjashintō*), or the shrine system proper—Here we come to the great mass of local, regional, and central-government shrines across the country, ranging in number from approximately 125,000 to 195,000. (Shrine mergers in late-Meiji largely account for this wide statistical spread.) It is this large body of traditional shrines that we generally mean when we refer simply to “the shrines.”

At least in theory, all of the shrines in these four categories were regarded as integral parts of the State Shinto system during the decades of the State Shinto period. All four types continue in existence today, the major difference being that they are no longer connected with the state.

Having delineated the components of State Shinto within the larger national context, let it be understood that in what follows we will be dealing only with Shrine Shinto, or the shrine system proper, as it related to the Japanese government. The shrines of Shrine Shinto were of crucial importance in the development of State Shinto—by their very number, as well as by the fact that they constituted a complete network of agencies intimately entwined with the feelings and daily lives of the people at the grassroots level of Japanese society. Another point to keep in mind is that our inquiry will be confined to the Meiji period, during which time the modern formula for state governance of the shrines was devised and institutionalized.

The scope of the study thus defined, we may restate the problem as follows: when, how, and in what sense were the shrines of Shrine Shinto “established” as institutions of state (or as operational components of State Shinto) in the Meiji era? If these numerous shrines across the land were indeed as central to State Shinto as is here assumed, it is reasonable to suppose that an answer to this question about Shrine Shinto may supply important data for a more thorough understanding of the larger

phenomenon of State Shinto itself.

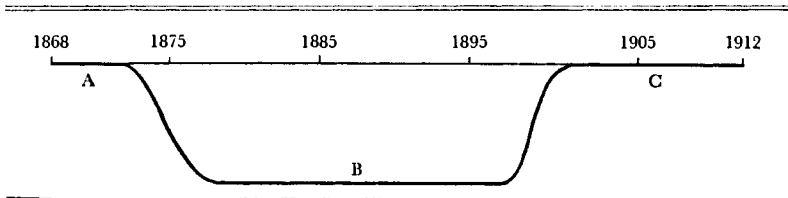
#### A PROFILE

The overall picture of state shrine administration during the Meiji era is generally familiar. First was the brief opening phase when the leaders of the Meiji Restoration attempted to promote the shrines as a kind of state religion that would buttress national loyalties. The authorities worked for a time with the shrines alone, next in awkward alliance with the Buddhists. Such experimental programs could not succeed, however, in the face of powerful counterforces, particularly those Western influences that swept Japan with such impact in the 1870s and '80s. These abortive first efforts were therefore abandoned around the mid-'70s, with the consequence that the shrines were relegated to the background so far as government policy and support were concerned. For two decades, or approximately from the mid-'70s until the mid-'90s, the shrines endured what one Japanese writer has called an interval of "shrine-reverence stagnation."

As the Japanese people recovered from their first excesses of Westernization and affirmed more traditional interests, the shrines gained immensely in popular favor. This was especially so during the decade 1894-1905, during which time the shrines rode a wave of nationalistic feeling generated in part by wars with China and Russia. In 1900 the government was able to reestablish the shrines in a favored position *vis-à-vis* the state, administering them this time as "nonreligious" state institutions under a special shrine office.

The profile of Meiji shrine administration here roughly sketched is one which begins high, quickly sinks, then rises again. This general is represented diagrammatically in figure 1. (This diagram simply blocks out the overall pattern of fluctuating state commitment to and support of the shrines during the Meiji decades. Refinements on this crude curve will be elaborated in the course of the inquiry.) Against the background of this pattern, we return to our query: when, and in what sense, were the shrines

FIGURE I  
OVERALL PROFILE OF SHRINE ADMINISTRATION  
IN THE MEIJI ERA



“established” as state institutions during this period? Were the shrines established as components of a State Shinto complex in early Meiji (A)? Or in late Meiji (C)? And what were the dynamics which contributed to the process at whatever stage (A, B or C) along the way?

#### A KEY TERM

As we take up this problem, it may be helpful to examine a key expression which perhaps comes closest to epitomizing the official government view of the shrines as state institutions. We will employ this expression as a kind of measuring rod against which to determine the extent to which the shrines were indeed “established” as components of a state-centered Shinto complex at any given time during the Meiji era.

The expression in question appears in a number of Dajōkan (“Council of State”) proclamations in the early Meiji years, as the state was staking out its prerogatives *vis-à-vis* the shrines. Its first usage seems to have been in that history-making order of 14 May 1871 which abolished the hereditary Shinto priesthood and private ownership of shrines as first steps in their nationalization.<sup>6</sup> Though slightly varied in some cases, the essential

6. *Fukoku zensho* 布告全書 [A compendium of proclamations], vol. 5 (Tokyo: Gaishi Kyoku, 1871), *Dajōkan fukoku* 太政官布告, no. 234, pp. 21-22. The order can also be found in Sakamoto Ken'ichi 阪本健一, ed., *Meiji ikō jinja kankei hōrei shiryō* 明治以降神社関係法令資料 [Materials for a history of shrine-related laws and ordinances, beginning with the Meiji era] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1968), pp. 29-30.

expression runs, *jinja wa kokka no sōshi nari* or, “the shrines (*jinja*) constitute (*nari*) the rites (*sōshi*) of the state or nation (*kokka*).”

The most important word here is *sōshi*, which may roughly be translated “rites” or “ceremonies.” *Sōshi* is compounded of two characters: *sō* (宗), the Japanese reading for which is *tōtobo* or *tattobu*, meaning in this instance “to revere, worship, show respect”; and *shi* (祀), with its Japanese reading *matsuri*, “festival,” or in verb form *matsuru*, “to celebrate, worship.” The primary dictionary meaning of the term is correspondingly *tattobi matsuru*, “to revere and worship.” If a single nominative is desired, it would probably be “rites”—those rites through which reverence, worship, celebration, etc. are expressed.

Toward what or whom were these ceremonial rites and their associated feelings directed? Without going into detailed exegesis, permit me simply to give my conclusions.<sup>7</sup> Rites were reverently offered to the kami enshrined in Shinto shrines, with emphasis on that nuance of kami worship so favored by the modern pre-1945 Japanese government, namely, the interpretation which stressed the ancestral connotations of the practice. Thus, alternative dictionary definitions of *sōshi* are *sosen no matsuri*, “ancestral festival,” and *sosen to shite matsuru*, “to worship [the kami] as ancestors.”<sup>8</sup>

We may conclude that when early-Meiji government authorities defined the shrines as constituting the ceremonial rites of state and nation (*kokka no sōshi*), they meant that the shrines were fundamentally places where the state or nation (and by implication, emperor and people) expressed reverence for the kami as the sacred ancestral source of what came to be known as the Japanese family-state. A concise translation of the entire expression *jinja wa kokka no sōshi nari*, and one which I believe gets at its

7. For a fuller discussion of this matter, see Fridell, *Japanese shrine mergers*, Appendix G, pp. 131-132.

8. Ueda's *daijiten*, American ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), character no. 2322; cf. Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次 et al., eds., *Shin kanwa jiten* 新漢和辞典 [New Chinese-Japanese dictionary], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1968), p. 245.

fundamental meaning, might be simply this: shrines are the state (or nation) at worship. The sense seems to be that the shrines were unique state institutions in which national worship took place or national reverence was expressed. Such reverence was encouraged by state authorities, of course, as a support for national-imperial loyalties, which were directed toward making Japan a strong united nation in the modern world.

If we can take *kokka no sōshi* as a more or less official view of the shrines from early Meiji, one which saw the shrines as central to what we in retrospect call the State Shinto system, the question now becomes, when and how were the shrines “established” as *kokka no sōshi*? The employment of the *kokka no sōshi* definition of the shrines becomes a means of lending more definitively concrete substance to our earlier question, namely, when and how were the shrines established as state institutions?

In posing these questions we will do well to heed Robert Bellah’s caution to the effect that ideology and history are always different. The historian who studies the relationship of the Japanese government to Shinto shrines cannot afford to neglect the crucial distinction between idealized policy and the actual institutionalization of policy within the political context; for the actualization of policy consistently fell short of the idealized model.

#### THESIS

We come now to the thesis of this paper, which can be stated very simply. In what follows I hope to demonstrate that although the Meiji government early established the *principle* (idealized model) that the shrines were *kokka no sōshi* and set up the basic machinery for realizing that principle, it was not until late Meiji, or around the turn of the century, that it met any substantial success in its efforts to implement the entire model *in fact*. What I am saying is that State Shinto, or at least the shrine system which stood at its heart, was not fully operable until the late Meiji years. Even then, as we shall see, important qualifications



will have to be entered.

In order to document this thesis, I have selected three foci of government shrine administration: (1) the shrine office in the bureaucracy, (2) priestly rank and status, and (3) government financial aid for the shrines. Other areas could also be examined, but I believe that these three will serve as accurate indicators of the shifting patterns of government-shrine relations at different levels of the shrine system over the crucial Meiji years. In the case of each indicator, the chronological account falls naturally into three segments: early, mid-, and late Meiji.

### THREE INDICATORS OF GOVERNMENT-SHRINE RELATIONS

#### 1. SHRINE OFFICE

Basic arrangements for shrine administration changed considerably over the Meiji years. These changes are not so important in themselves. Their significance derives from the fact that the changing nature of this office and its shifting position in the bureaucratic hierarchy accurately reflect the fluctuating status of the shrines in government policy and the variable way in which they were treated.

*Early Meiji.* It is well known that, in keeping with their intention to establish the new regime on ancient Shinto ritualistic and ideological patterns, the Meiji leaders began by restoring the traditional *Jingikan* or "Ministry of Kami Affairs" (1868).<sup>9</sup> This office went back to the time of the Taihō Code of 701. As in the ancient period, the new *Jingikan* was placed on an equal footing with the highest state office, the *Dajōkan* or Council of State. Shrine administration thus began in an exalted position, with a special office for the shrines alone, located at the very highest bureaucratic level.

The new Meiji shrine programs soon ran into serious difficul-

9. On the difficulty of translating the term *jingikan* 神祇官, see Felicia Gressitt Bock, *Engi-shiki: Procedures of the Engi era, Books 1-5* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), p. 18.

ties, and already by the summer of 1871 the government pulled back somewhat in terms of administrative machinery by changing the Jingikan to a Jingishō (“Department of Kami Affairs”). The very next year it placed shrine administration under what was called the Kyōbushō or “Department of Religious Instruction,” a middle-level unit designed to supervise the joint Shinto-Buddhist effort known as the “Great Teaching.” This program floundered, and in 1877 shrine affairs were further demoted, this time combined with the administration of Buddhist temples under a Shajikyoku or “Bureau of Shrines and Temples.” This was one of fourteen bureaus in the Ministry for Home Affairs. Thus in just a few short years the shrines had lost their special high office and were thrown in with the Buddhists at a very ordinary level in the bureaucratic structure.

*Mid-Meiji.* From 1877 to 1900, or for over two decades, shrines continued to be supervised from the Bureau of Shrines and Temples, an arrangement indicative of their comparatively low status in governmental administration during this period. As the national mood began to move along more conservative lines from the late 1880s, shrine leaders tried to get the Jingikan restored, but without success.<sup>10</sup>

*Late-Meiji.* By the late 1890s, a decade later, nationalistic feeling had grown powerfully, and shrine fortunes were clearly on the upswing. From about 1897, the principal Shinto publications began to stress the idea that the shrines were “nonreligious” patriotic institutions which held a higher claim on Japanese subjects than any mere religion.

In looking back, it becomes clear that a shift had already begun in the direction of a nonreligious definition of the shrines with the official recognition of the *kyōha* or Shinto-oriented religious sects in 1882. At that time, in order to distinguish tradi-

10. “Jinja sūkei no kokkateki hatten” 神社崇敬の国家的発展 [The nationalistic development of shrine reverence], *Nippon shūkyō daikōza; Jinja hen* 日本宗教大講座, 神社篇 [Series on Japanese religion: Shrines volume], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoin, 1927), p. 65.

tional Shinto shrines from the popular sects, shrines had been instructed to stop performing funerals and to leave matters of religion and morals to the sects. When, in 1889, the Meiji constitution called for freedom of religious belief, with the implicit corollary that the state should not favor one religion over another, shrine and government leaders activated the "nonreligious" principle implicit in the 1882 actions. By the simple device of treating the shrines as "nonreligious" organs, the authorities bypassed the freedom of religion issue, and at the same time managed to place the shrines in a privileged position above the religions as transcendent symbols of ultimate patriotic devotion. (The religions officially recognized and regulated by the government at that time were Buddhism and the Shinto religious sects.)

If the shrines were thus to be distinguished from and elevated above the religions, they required a separate government administrative office. Such an office was extremely important to shrine leaders and to those government authorities who worked to magnify the role of the shrines in national life. This was because an office independent of and over the office administering religions would give official recognition to the unique and privileged status of the shrines as special civil institutions of state.

In 1899 the first issue of the *Bulletin* of the National Priests Association listed three major objectives "for which we have aspired these many years." The very first of these was the reestablishment of a special government office for shrine administration alone.<sup>11</sup> Shrine leaders no doubt had something like the Jingikan in mind. They did not get their Jingikan, but they did get a separate office for the shrines. In 1900 the Bureau of Shrines and Temples was divided into a Bureau of Shrines and a Bureau of Religions. As an indication of the importance the authorities attached to the shrines as compared with the religions, of seven bureaus in the Ministry for Home Affairs, the Bureau of Shrines stood at the very top, while Religions was sixth, wedg-

11. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

12. Holtom, *Political philosophy*, p. 28.

ed in between Sanitation and Prisons!<sup>12</sup> In a “vertical” or hierarchical society, these formal distinctions are not without significance.

With the shrines once again under special administration, this time distinguished from the religions as “nonreligious” state institutions, the authorities could pursue a much more vigorous shrine policy, unencumbered by those constitutional restrictions which guarded *religious* freedom. It was particularly after 1900, therefore, that government leaders were free to extend government patronage and control over the shrines, and weld them into civil instruments for the implementation of national goals.

It was thus in late Meiji that, in the area of shrine administration, the government was finally able to realize in *fact* the principle it had enunciated in the early years of the era, namely, that the shrines were *kokka no sōshi* or special state institutions for the expression of national reverence. In institutionalizing this principle the government secured the administrative base for a state-dominated shrine system which held, in essence, until the end of the Pacific War.

## 2. PRIESTLY RANK AND STATUS

Another indicator of government-shrine relations during the Meiji era is the fluctuating status of certain ranks of Shinto priests. Here we must distinguish two types of status: priestly rank within the Shinto hierarchy, and civil status as a government official. The government liked to accord both of these distinctions to Shinto priests in order to give them special recognition and underline their ties with the state. Whenever the Meiji government was able to honor Shinto priests in this fashion, the two types of recognition always went together.

*Early Meiji.* To begin with priestly ranks within the Shinto hierarchy, it should be observed that the classification of priests by rank ran parallel to the grades of shrines in the overall shrine system. In order to understand this first type of priestly status, therefore, it is first necessary to understand the general outline of

the shrine system itself as formalized in 1871.

The basic modern shrine system was established 14 May 1871 through a Dajōkan proclamation issued immediately after the one mentioned earlier in connection with the expression *kokka no*

TABLE 1  
THE BASIC MODERN SHRINE SYSTEM  
AS OF 14 MAY 1871

Major Divisions	Subdivisions	Shrine Ranks
<i>kansha</i> ("central government shrines")	<i>kanpeisha</i> ("government shrines")	<i>kanpei taisha</i> ("government shrines of higher grade") <i>kanpei chūsha</i> ("government shrines of middle grade") <i>kanpei shōsha</i> ("government shrines of lower grade")
	<i>kokuheisha</i> ("national shrines")	<i>kokuhei taisha</i> ("national shrines of higher grade") <i>kokuhei chūsha</i> ("national shrines of middle grade") <i>kokuhei shōsha</i> ("national shrines of lower grade")
Lower Shrines or <i>minsha</i> ("people's shrines") <sup>a</sup>	<i>fusha</i> ("metropolitan shrines") <i>hansha</i> ("clan shrines") <i>kensha</i> ("prefectural shrines") <i>gōsha</i> ("district shrines") <sup>b</sup>	

SOURCE: *Fukoku zensho: Dajōkan fukoku*, no. 235, pp. 22-31; cf. Sakamoto, pp. 30-33.

a. An unofficial but commonly used term.

b. By far the largest number of shrines fell below the district shrine rank in this hierarchical scheme. On 4 July 1871, a few weeks after the basic system was established as indicated above, the place of these lowest shrines was clarified by a District Shrine Law (*gōsha teisoku* 郷社定則). This law specified that village shrines (*sonsha*) were to come under their respective district shrines, while the even smaller local shrines (*hokora*) were to come under village shrines. See Umeda Yoshihiko 梅田義彦, *Nihon shūkyō seido shi* 日本宗教制度史 [A history of Japanese religious institutions] (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1963), p. 414.

*sōshi*. By this action the Meiji authorities blocked out the following two major categories of shrines, each with specified subdivisions as indicated in table 1.<sup>13</sup> *Kansha*, which occupied the honored top position in the regular shrine system, were often related to the Imperial Family or in some other way carried a national-imperial import in the minds of the people. There were 97 *kansha* in 1871. The lower shrines or *minsha* consisted of that large number of regional and local shrines which focused more on everyday concerns such as crops, health, and community welfare.

The same 14 May proclamation which set forth the grades of shrines within the shrine system also specified by rank the kinds of priests who could serve at the various levels. The priestly ranks assigned to the levels of shrines are shown in table 2.

The Dajōkan action of 14 May 1871 having established the distribution of priestly ranks, the authorities went one step further and granted the priests within the specified ranks the status of *kanri* or "government officials." This included all the priests mentioned in the above categories, from those serving large *kansha* all the way down to and including the *shishō* of local village shrines.<sup>14</sup> All carried the dignity of serving the state as officials of the Japanese government.<sup>15</sup>

Thus during the first years of the Meiji era, the position of Shinto priests was clearly and positively defined in the shrine system, both in term of priestly rank and in terms of civil status as government officials.

*Mid-Meiji*. The decline of the shrines in national life from around the mid-1870s was soon reflected in the status of Shinto priests—but only at the *minsha* level. The authorities seemed determined to maintain the position of *kansha* priests, and with

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13. I do not include here the Grand Shrine of Ise, which stood above and beyond the ordinary shrine system.

14. From conversation with Umeda Yoshihiko.

15. In addition, priests were paid salaries from the central government treasury. (See n. 37.)

them there was no essential change. The erosion can clearly be seen, however, at the lower levels.

The telling is brief. On 11 November 1879, in a terse, one-sentence Dajōkan notification, the government simply abolished the categories of priests (*shikan* and *shishō*) earlier assigned to the

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF PRIESTLY RANKS  
AS OF 14 MAY 1871

SHRINES		PRIESTLY RANKS
Major Divisions	Subdivisions	
<i>kansha</i> ("central government shrines")	<i>kanpei-kokuhei taisha</i> ("government and national shrines of higher grade")	<i>daigūji</i> ("high priest"), <i>shōgūji</i> ("assistant priest"), <i>negi</i> ("priest"), etc.
	<i>kanpei-kokuhei chūsha</i> ("government and national shrines of middle grade")	<i>gūji</i> ("chief priest"), <i>gongūji</i> ("deputy priest"), <i>negi</i> ("priest"), etc.
	<i>kanpei-kokuhei shōsha</i> ("government and national shrines of lower grade")	<i>gūji</i> ("chief priest"), <i>gongūji</i> ("deputy priest"), <i>negi</i> ("priest"), etc.
Lower Shrines or <i>minsha</i> ("people's shrines") <sup>a</sup>	<i>fusha</i> ("metropolitan shrines")	<i>shikan</i> ("priest") and <i>shishō</i> ("priest")
	<i>hansha</i> ("clan shrines")	<i>shikan</i> and <i>shishō</i>
	<i>kensha</i> ("prefectural shrines")	<i>shikan</i> and <i>shishō</i>
	<i>gōsha</i> ("district shrines") [ <i>sonsha</i> ("village shrines")]	<i>shikan</i> and <i>shishō</i> [ <i>shishō</i> ] <sup>b</sup>

SOURCE: *Fukoku zensho: Dajōkan fukoku*, no. 235. See also Umeda, 413, 423-424.

a. See table 1, note a.

b. Though the rank assigned to priests serving village shrines is not mentioned in the proclamation, Umeda Yoshihiko affirmed in conversation that *shishō* were authorized for *sonsha* at this time. *Sonsha* were numerous and close to hamlet and village life.

lower shrines. In abolishing the priestly rank of *minsha* men, the authorities placed them on the same administrative footing as the priests of Buddhist temples.<sup>16</sup> By this action they also took from *minsha* priests their status as government officials. Thus the priests of the great mass of the nation's shrines, in one administrative order, were stripped of the special dual status it had been their privilege to enjoy for a few brief years.

*Late Meiji.* As Shinto prospects brightened in the 1890s, the restoration of priestly status at the *minsha* level was one of the first signs of renewed support for the shrines.

By an Imperial Order issued 28 February 1894,<sup>17</sup> the government reestablished for *minsha* priests those categories of rank it had abolished fifteen years earlier.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in the same order it once again made them *kanri* or government officials. It thus fully restored what it had earlier taken away—and more: for it went beyond its former position in several respects.

For example, the government not only returned *minsha* priests to the status of government officials, it assigned them for the first time a specific government rank—that of *hanninkan* or “minor officials.” The Imperial Order also systematized more thoroughly than before the appointments and duties of *minsha* priests, in the process drawing them more closely under government supervision. Finally, and in some ways most significant of all, the provisions of this 1894 order were made to apply to all *minsha* priests down to and including the priests of *sonsha* (“village shrines”) and *mukakusha* (“ungraded shrines,” or literally “shrines

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16. *Hōrei zensho* 法令全書 [Compendium of laws and ordinances] (Tokyo: Naikaku Insatsu Kyoku, 1885- ): *Dajōkan tasshi* 大政官達し, no. 45, vol. for Meiji 12 (1879), p. 292. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 117.

17. *Ibid.*: *Chokurei* 勅令, no. 22, vol. for Meiji 27 (1894), pp. 34-35. Cf. Sakamoto, pp. 146-147.

18. The only difference was that the names of the restored ranks were changed. Former *shikan* were now called *shashi*, and former *shishō* were now known as *shashō*.



of no rank").<sup>19</sup> Since the great bulk of the "people's shrines" were in these two lowest categories, this extension of double recognition (priestly and civil) to such a large number of local priests represented an unprecedented effort on the part of the authorities to integrate the lower-level shrines into the state system.<sup>20</sup> This was very much in harmony with the government's consistent intent to render all the shrines of the land state institutions (in the sense of *kokka no sōshi*), in fact as well as in principle.

### 3. FINANCIAL AID FOR THE SHRINES

Shrine income varied greatly from shrine to shrine and from period to period over the Meiji decades. I will not attempt here to give a full picture of shrine finance, but simply trace the evolu-

19. The priests of village shrines had been informally recognized as government officials in connection with the action of 1871. This time, however, the priests of both village and ungraded shrines were explicitly included in the provisions of the order.
20. Some idea as to the number of shrines in the various categories may be obtained from the following figures for 1903 (adapted from Holtom, *Political philosophy*, p. 324):

*Kansha*

Government shrines .....	95 (0.05)	
National shrines .....	75 (0.04)	170 (0.09)

*Minsha*

Metropolitan and prefectural shrines	571 (0.29)	
District shrines.....	3,476 (1.80)	
Village shrines.....	52,133 (26.97)	
Ungraded shrines .....	136,947 (70.85)	<u>193,127 (99.91)</u>
Total .....		193,297 (100.00)

In comparing this information with that given earlier for 1871, two changes should perhaps be explained. First, the number of *kansha* increased, as some higher *minsha* were raised in rank and other *kansha* created de novo. This was in accord with government policy to emphasize the *kansha* as symbols of national-imperial values. Second, the terminology for the top *minsha* changed slightly. With the replacement of the *han* ("clans" or "clan domains") by *ken* ("prefectures") in the summer of 1871, the old *hansha* ("clan shrines") had been made *kensha* ("prefectural shrines"). Subsequently, the *kensha* were lumped together with the *fusha* ("metropolitan shrines") into one composite category: *fukensha* ("metropolitan and prefectural shrines").

tion of one important segment of the financial situation as it related to government-shrine relations.

One traditional source of income enjoyed by many of the larger shrines such as *kansha*, and even some of the smaller *minsha*, was that derived from shrine *shōen*, or land holdings. What happened to these estates, and the chain of events growing out of government actions relative to them, will serve as one more indicator of fluctuating governmental policy toward the shrines over the Meiji period.

*Early Meiji.* In order to enlarge its resources and extend its control over the land, the central government confiscated shrine (and temple) estates in 1871, promising to compensate with rice allowances in proportion to the amount of land taken.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the original intention may have been, by the time the government got around to announcing its compensation plan in 1874, shrine administration had already begun to slip on the scale of national priorities, with the consequence that arrangements finalized with the shrines favored only the *kansha*, leaving the *minsha* in a deteriorating position. Specifically, the state undertook to pay the *kansha* fixed annual allowances over an indefinite period of time (a kind of ongoing operational subsidy),<sup>22</sup> whereas compensatory allowances for the *minsha* (and Buddhist temples) were placed on a diminishing scale, to cease entirely after ten years. In 1875 these allowances, originally paid in rice, were commuted to cash.<sup>23</sup>

*Mid-Meiji.* The payoff to the *minsha* went as planned, everything winding up in a decade, that is, by 1884. Meanwhile, the *kansha* continued secure in their perpetual government payments. Even during the mid-Meiji decades when shrine admin-

21. *Fukoku zensho: Dajōkan fukoku*, no. 4, 5 January 1871. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 29. The lands taken were those lying outside the immediate precincts of the shrine and temple compounds.

22. *Hōrei zensho: Dajōkan fukoku*, no. 91, 3 September 1874, vol. for Meiji 7 (1874), pp. 97-101. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 80.

23. *Ibid.: Dajōkan fukoku*, no. 92, 3 September 1874, vol. for Meiji 7 (1874), pp. 101-102. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 81.

istration sank to a low level, it was generally the *minsha* that suffered, not the favored *kansha*.

In 1887, however, reportedly as an economy measure, it was announced that compensatory payments to *kansha* would cease entirely after another fifteen years, or in 1902. Payments would continue in full during the interval of grace, but by 1902 the *kansha* must devise means for complete self-support.<sup>24</sup> Even the *kansha* would now feel the mid-Meiji pinch. *Kansha* priests were shocked, not only over the prospect of financial loss, but over the disruption of an important state connection which carried such prestige in the shrine world.

After several years, those who worked on behalf of the *kansha* were able, in 1890, to get the subsidy cutoff extended another fifteen years, or from 1902 until 1917. Nevertheless, the prospect of being deprived of state funds was a bleak one, and the *kansha* people were unhappy with the arrangement.

*Late Meiji.* As we already know, a changing national mood provided the shrines increasing support in the 1890s and around the turn of the century. One way in which the *kansha* benefited from this development was in the reinstatement of permanent state subsidies. In April 1906 the government once again committed itself to perpetual operating allowances for the *kansha*.<sup>25</sup> The mid-Meiji threat to *kansha* financial security had successfully been turned back.

Meanwhile, efforts had also been made to improve the position of the *minsha*, which had not fared so well in the matter of compensation some years before. The idea had evolved that some sort of government financial help should be provided for all *minsha*, not just those that had lost estates. A bill was formulated along these lines and introduced in the lower House in 1901. This measure would have required regional and local govern-

24. Ibid.: *Naimushō kunrei* 内務省訓令, no. 15, 17 March 1887, vol. for Meiji 20 (1887), pp. 69-72. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 125.

25. Ibid.: *Hōritsu* 法律, no. 24, 7 April 1906, vol. for Meiji 39 (1906), pp. 61-62. Cf. Sakamoto, p. 292.

mental bodies (prefectures, counties, cities, towns, and villages) to defray the general operating expenses of all *minsha* within their respective jurisdictions. Because of concern, however, that a general defrayment of shrine expenses might lay too heavy a financial burden on the regional and local bodies that would have to supply the funds, the bill was referred back to committee. When it was reported out again, it had undergone an interesting change: in place of a general defrayment of shrine expenses, it was now proposed that regional and local governmental bodies provide annual ceremonial offerings for the *minsha* within their areas.<sup>26</sup>

Ceremonial offerings were the traditional *shinsen* and *heihaku*, consisting of food, sake, cloth, etc. presented to the kami. It is reported in Book 9 of the tenth century compilation known as the *Engi-shiki* [Ceremonial procedures of the Engi era] that imperial messengers were sent out on stated occasions from the ancient Jingikan to present such offerings to the kami of certain shrines in the capital area, while an even larger number of offerings were made in local shrines by provincial governments. This system of government offerings may never have been completely carried out just as described in the *Engi-shiki*, and over the centuries it fell into serious neglect. Nevertheless, it early established the precedent, whether at the national or provincial level, of government-sponsored worship before the kami of shrines throughout the land.<sup>27</sup>

Although the authorities had reinstated ceremonial offerings for the *kansha* in early Meiji,<sup>28</sup> they had not yet undertaken to extend this ancient practice to the lower shrines. In 1902, however, it was proposed that funds for offerings be provided for

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26. *Dai nippon teikoku gikai shi* 大日本帝国議事誌 [Records of the Japanese Imperial Diet], 18 vols. (Tokyo, 1926-30), vol. 5, pp. 1055, 1660-1661.

27. For much of the information in this paragraph I am indebted to Felicia Gressitt Bock and her book, *Engi-shiki: Procedures of the Engi era*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970, 1972).

28. See Umeda, p. 417.

*minsha* by the regional and local governmental bodies within which they were located. The plan was approved in 1902 and authorized by Imperial Ordinance in 1906. Two modifications, however, should be noted. As concern was again expressed over the ability of governmental units to supply funds for ceremonial offerings to all *minsha* within their respective areas, it was specified that payments for this purpose should be limited to designated shrines only. Further, the ordinance was made to apply only to shrines down through village rank, thereby eliminating the largest category, namely, the ungraded shrines.<sup>29</sup>

What was the significance of these government offerings presented to the kami through local shrines? Certainly money was not the biggest consideration, as the amounts involved were not that large. The significance of the offerings went much deeper, involving as they did a formal symbolic or ceremonial connection between the shrines and government.

In a 1908 speech before a conference of government officials, Mizuno Rentarō, chief of the Bureau of Shrines, explained some of the thinking behind the decision to forge financial and ceremonial links between government and the *minsha*:

We conceived a plan to relate them by having local governmental bodies offer ceremonial offerings at their corresponding shrines, as an expression of the worship of the people in their respective administrative units. Thus, two years ago we [implemented the plan through the promulgation of an Imperial Ordinance].... In this manner a connection has been established for the first time between community bodies and their local shrines.<sup>30</sup>

In this quotation Mr. Mizuno speaks of regional and local governmental bodies providing the people an occasion for cor-

29. *Genkō hōrei shūran* 現行法令輯覽 [Collection of laws and ordinances in force] (Tokyo: Naikaku Kanbō, 1916), *Chokurei*, no. 96, vol. 1, sect. 8, p. 32. See also Umeda, p. 420.
30. Mizuno Rentarō 水野鍊太郎, "Jinja seido no kōryō" 神社制度の綱領 [General plan of the shrine system], in *Jinja keiichi sankō shiryō* 神社経営參考資料 [Reference materials on shrine administration] (Tokyo: Jinja Kyōkai, 1909), pp. 19-20.

porate worship before the kami. Ceremonial offerings were, to use his words, "an expression of the worship of the people" in their respective administrative units. This was exactly the sense of *kokka no sōshi* ("rites of the nation" or the state, nation or people at worship)—only transferred to the local scene.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the Meiji years the authorities had taken pains to maintain the *kansha* as symbols of *kokka no sōshi*. Now Mr. Mizuno seemed to be saying that when "the people" gathered for the presentation of official government offerings to their local kami, they were likewise participating in *kokka no sōshi*—at the very grassroots level of national life.

That Mr. Mizuno did indeed see *minsha* ceremonial offerings as the actualization of the *kokka no sōshi* ideal in local communities is attested in a speech he made before a national assembly of Shinto priests in 1906. In fact he refers to both of the late-Meiji measures we have been considering here (perpetual subsidies for the *kansha*, and ceremonial offerings for *minsha*), and suggests that by these actions the *kokka no sōshi* ideal had been actualized throughout the entire shrine system. These are his words:

31. Even at the local level, the presentation of ceremonial offerings carried certain national-imperial meanings. The local or regional governmental bodies supplying funds for the offerings did so on the authorization of the state through an Imperial Ordinance, and they performed the task as a "delegated state duty" (*kuni no inin jinū*). The regional or local governmental officials who actually made the ceremonial presentations in the shrines, moreover, were known as "offering messengers" and were legally regarded as agents of the state (*kuni no kikan*). See Chiba Masashi 千葉正士, "Ichi shi-chō-son ichi jinja no rinen to sōchinju no sei"—市町村—神社の理念と総鎮守の制 [The "one shrine per city, town, or village" idea and the leading-shrine system], *Shakai to denshō* 社会と伝承, vol. 8 (1964), pp. 4-5.

Imperial themes were likewise emphasized in the *norito* ("ritual prayers") read on the occasion of the presentations, the *norito* themselves having been written in the national shrine office by government officials desirous of stressing imperial loyalties. Official ceremonial offerings were thus a logical means of reaching down to penetrate the lower shrines with that way of thinking which defined the shrines primarily in national terms. (Adapted from Fridell, *Japanese shrine mergers*, pp. 69-70.)

...It is an undeniable fact that by these (two) laws the fundamental basis of the shrines has been confirmed. There is that express statement which says that shrines are *kokka no sōshi*; and as long as the state maintains this sort of relationship with the shrines, it must worship at the shrines and steadfastly support them to the end.... It is only as we enact and implement such laws as these that the shrines can be brought to perfection.<sup>32</sup>

SUMMARY OF THE THREE INDICATORS

We have examined three indicators of the Meiji government's administrative relationship to Shinto shrines, and from this data a general pattern has emerged. The profiles of the three indicators are presented diagrammatically in figure 2.<sup>33</sup>

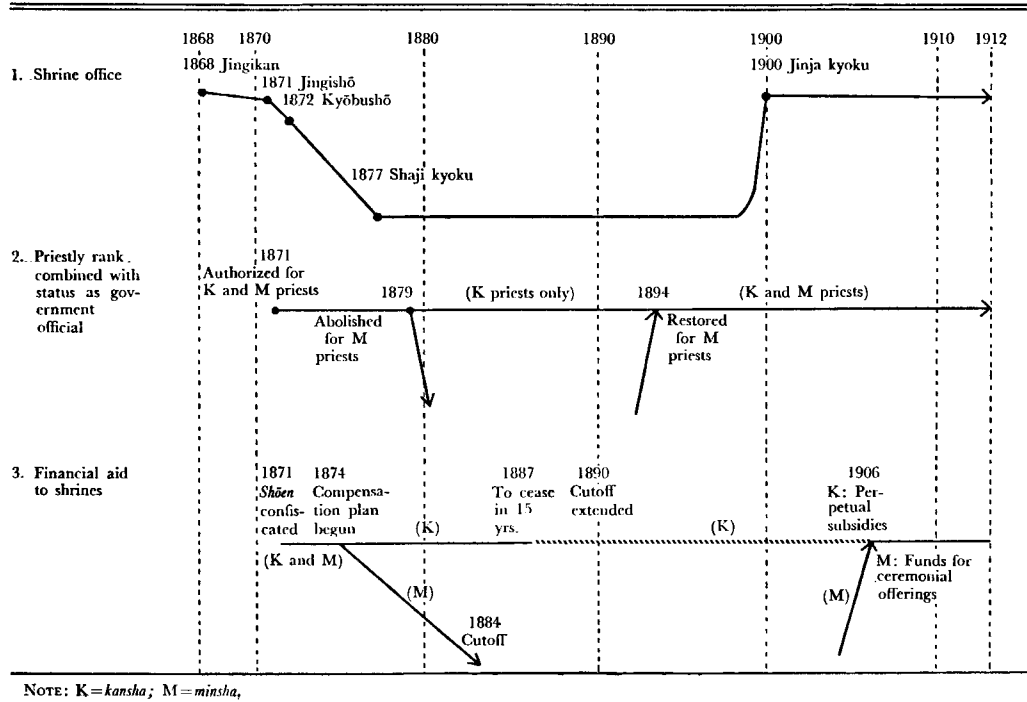
32. Nishikawa Masatani 西川順土, "Jinja seiri mondai no shiteki kōsatsu" 神社整理問題の史的考察 [A historical inquiry into the problem of shrine consolidation], *Shintō kenkyū* 神道研究, vol. 3 (1942), p. 57.
33. We could go beyond these three indicators to others, but I believe the pattern would not be altered significantly. For example, an examination of the salaries or stipends paid Shinto priests bears out what has been presented thus far. A brief resume follows.

In the optimistic opening phase of the Meiji era (in 1872) the government fixed the amount to be paid priests of all ranks, *kansha* and *minsha* alike (down through village shrines). The state undertook to pay these amounts from the central government treasury in the case of *kansha* priests and the priests of shrines in the top *minsha* category; *minsha* priests at the lower levels (by far the greatest number) were to be paid the government-determined amounts by their local parishioners.

The very next year (1873) the government had to abandon any attempt to regulate or determine salaries for *minsha* priests, and left it entirely to local parishes to work out suitable allowances as they saw fit. The salaries of *kansha* priests, however, continued to be paid from the central government treasury throughout Meiji and right up to the end of the Pacific War.

Renewed government support for *minsha* priests in the matter of salary came slowly, beginning in the late Meiji years. Largely between 1907-10, on the encouragement of central government authorities, most local prefectures specified the amounts that local shrines should pay their *minsha* priests, an approximate return to the position briefly attempted in early Meiji. In 1921 regional and local governmental bodies were given the responsibility for actually paying *minsha* salaries. From that time until 1945 all these governmental bodies paid their respective priests something,

FIGURE 2  
 THREE INDICATORS OF GOVERNMENT-SHRINE RELATIONS  
 IN THE MEIJI ERA (1868-1912)





If the nature and status of the shrine office can be seen as a fairly accurate reflection of the significance attached to shrine policy at any given time, the first profile is of fundamental importance. The pattern in this instance is as follows: a brief, precarious high in early Meiji, followed by a serious sag in mid-Meiji, and finally a strong upswing in late Meiji.

In the next two profiles we distinguish those few high-ranking shrines known as *kansha* from the masses of regional and local shrines commonly called *minsha* or "people's shrines." It is apparent that both in the matter of priestly rank/ status and financial aid to shrines, the *kansha* received consistently better treatment than the *minsha*. Whereas *kansha* were sustained in both rank/ status and financial aid throughout the Meiji years, the *minsha* lost out on both counts during the shaky mid-Meiji period. As shrine fortunes rose again in late Meiji, however, the *minsha* essentially regained what they had lost, in the form of restored rank/ status and funds for ceremonial offerings.

If we place these patterns within the overall context of Meiji society, several summary observations can be made. (1) When early-Meiji shrine programs proved anachronistic in the new age, governmental authorities accommodated as follows: they (a) lowered shrine administration in the scale of national priorities and (b) largely abandoned earlier efforts to render the *minsha* into state institutions, but (c) made a serious attempt to maintain support and close state connections for the relatively few *kansha*.<sup>34</sup> (2) When a radically changed political climate permitted the authorities to give more aggressive support to the shrines, they (a) reestablished a separate shrine office above the religions, now

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even if it did not always come up to the amounts officially specified. (See Umeda, pp. 424-425, 430.)

34. There were many more *minsha* than *kansha*. During the Meiji era, the number of *minsha* fluctuated between approximately 125,000 and 195,000, while *kansha* never numbered more than 170. Over most of the period, in fact, the ratio was well over 1,000 *minsha* to each *kansha*. (See Holtom, *Political philosophy*, p. 324.) Balanced against the number factor, of course, is the fact that aid to *kansha* was on a more generous scale than aid to *minsha*.

on the basis that "nonreligious" shrines could be favored by the state, (b) reaffirmed their full commitment to the *kansha*, and (c) took steps to integrate the *minsha* into a state-controlled shrine system reaching all the way to the village and hamlet level of Japanese society.<sup>35</sup> These essential late-Meiji patterns held, with various elaborations and consolidations, until 1945.

Throughout this discussion I have spoken of the ups and downs of official policy toward the shrines, and from the evidence examined it is clear that the government position *vis-à-vis* the shrines did fluctuate considerably over the Meiji years. It should be stressed, however, that official *intent* in the matter of shrine policy was more constant than the shifting patterns of actual shrine administration would seem to indicate. That is, from what we know of the fundamental aims of government leaders, it seems that their desire to build a state shrine system patterned on the *kokka no sōshi* model was held rather consistently; changes in the arrangements for shrine administration were more in the nature of accommodations to political circumstance than revisions of basic attitude. One might say that while overall strategy held more or less firm, the tactics employed at any given moment were tailored to meet the variable circumstances of national mood and political feasibility.

## CONCLUSION

### ESTABLISHMENT: PRINCIPLE AND FACT

In this article we have considered the question, when, how and in what sense the Shinto shrines of the land were "established" as institutions of state (or, as operational components of State Shinto) during the Meiji era. We advanced the concept of *kokka no sōshi* (national rites; state institutions where national reverence was expressed), suggesting that it epitomized the official government view of the shrines. We further proposed that

35. For a detailed study of one of the late-Meiji *minsha* programs which penetrated to local levels, see Fridell, *Japanese shrine mergers*.

the shrines might be regarded as having been “established” once they became *kokka no sōshi* in fact as well as in principle. The problem, then, has been to determine just when the principle of the shrines as *kokka no sōshi* was concretely actualized within the context of state administration.

It is clear that the Meiji authorities conceived the shrines to be state agencies from at least 1871, when they abolished the hereditary priesthood and nationalized the shrines. In a Dajōkan proclamation of 14 May 1871, it was stated that all shrines from Ise down to the humblest hamlet shrine were now public institutions to be supervised by and for the state or nation. The words *kokka no sōshi* were expressly used to define the shrines of the new era. In principle, then, the shrines were *kokka no sōshi* from early Meiji. How about the actualization of this principle in fact?

A strong effort was made in the early Meiji years to translate the *kokka no sōshi* principle into reality. A national shrine system was organized, setting forth the grades of shrines and corresponding ranks of priests, with the government either subsidizing the shrines (at the upper levels) or specifying how local support should be provided (at the lower levels). Though we have not gone into the matter of ritual in this article, shrine ritual too was brought under considerable control at this time. All of this was administered from a special shrine office, the Jōgikan, which stood exceedingly high in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Thus a substantial beginning was made.

As documented in the preceding pages, however, changed circumstances of national life very soon necessitated a drastic retreat from this ambitious start. True, the structure of the shrine system itself was formally retained, and the government continued to give rather steady support to the relatively few upper-level shrines. But fundamental questions had been raised about the nature and place of the shrines in the new order, questions which could not as yet be answered; and in the rush to modernize along Western lines the shrines found themselves pushed to a very low level of official priority. Early programs of sup-

port, recognition, etc. were abolished for the many lower-level shrines; and even the upper shrines were financially threatened at one point. We must conclude from this that early-Meiji efforts to establish the shrines as *kokka no sōshi* in fact were largely a failure. For two decades, over the mid-Meiji years, this depressed state continued.

The most pressing problem for the shrines was their fundamental nature and actual role in modern national life. This is a problem which must be studied at greater length, but the general outlines of the situation are clear. Early Meiji attempts to promote Shinto as a state religion manifestly had not worked; and the subsequent guarantee of religious freedom in the Meiji constitution (1889) made any such policy even less promising of success. The winning formula for the role of the shrines in post-Restoration Japan took shape slowly over the 1880s and 1890s, and by the turn of the century it was being vigorously expounded. It ran as follows. At least for administrative purposes, the government would treat the shrines as "nonreligious" patriotic institutions which occupied a special category above the religions. As civil organs, the shrines should not be regarded as in any way in conflict with the religions. Quite aside from private religious affiliation or conviction, every good Japanese was expected to join his fellow-subjects at the shrines for corporate expression of national reverence. This precisely embodied the *kokka no sōshi* view of the shrines within the larger context of the national *kokutai* ideal. That is, the "nation at worship" both undergirded and gave articulation to the unique characteristics of the Japanese ethos.

We may say by way of conclusion that, whereas in *principle* the shrines were "established" as state institutions (in the sense of *kokka no sōshi*) in early Meiji, it was not until late Meiji that this principle began to be realized substantially in *fact* at all levels of the shrine system. By late Meiji the authorities had instituted the theoretical and administrative base from which subsequently they were able to launch a variety of practical governmental

programs designed to consolidate and strengthen state backing for the shrines. These programs supplied the shrines lasting and generally steady support to the end of the Pacific War. In this sense we may say that the late-Meiji shrine policy was successful, and that it was at this point in Japan's modern history that the state shrine system truly came into its own.

#### A PROVISIONAL POSTSCRIPT

Having used the word "successful" in regard to shrine patterns established in the late-Meiji years, certain qualifications should be made. What I discuss next requires additional research, but I should like to close with two brief observations which may be considered hypotheses for further investigation.

The first qualification on the "success" of the pre-1945 shrine system has to do with fundamental difficulties in the government's view that the shrines were nonreligious institutions. There was considerable discussion in Japanese religious and intellectual circles, from the second decade of the twentieth century right up into the 1930s, over the fact that the shrines, while officially treated as "nonreligious" state organs, actually retained many religious features deeply rooted in traditional Shinto worship.<sup>36</sup> Because of this, the authorities were careful to say that they simply "treated" the shrines as nonreligious bodies "for administrative purposes," refusing to make any absolute judgment on the ultimate nature of the shrines themselves. Nevertheless, this ambiguity clouded the shrines' participation in the State Shinto system, particularly at the local level where folk-religious elements have been prominent in shrine practice.

Another aspect of the same problem points to an apparent contradiction at the very heart of official shrine policy. The

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36. Daniel Holtom documents this discussion for the Taishō era in his 1922 book, *The political philosophy of modern Shinto*, especially from chapter 2. The problem broke out again in early Shōwa, in connection with the recommendations of two state-appointed bodies, the Religions System Inquiry Board (1926), and the Shrine System Inquiry Board (1929).

authorities supported the position that the shrines were to be treated as “nonreligious” institutions, while at the same time declaring them *kokka no sōshi* or vehicles for the expression of national reverence or worship. Here, presumably, was a religious element at the very heart of the official view of the shrines, thus giving rise to the question how national worship or reverence could take place in “nonreligious” institutions.<sup>37</sup>

A second fundamental problem confronting the shrines under state management was the matter of their own inner strength and vitality. Available evidence suggests that while the late-Meiji institutionalization of the state shrine system succeeded in a bureaucratic or managerial sense, it may actually have weakened the spiritual base of the shrines in the parishioners' experience. The government achieved its aim of administering the shrines as nonreligious civil institutions of state, and that was all very neat and efficient, in some ways even effective. It seems, however, that the heavy hand of bureaucratic management often threatened, and sometimes even damaged, the shrines' inner life.

The very effort of the authorities to deemphasize religious practices in the shrines tended to impair the traditional dynamics of local shrine practice. Stress on the national aspects of Shinto, moreover, was frequently achieved at the cost of neglecting or

37. Any consideration of this problem would have to begin with the Japanese understanding of “religious” and “nonreligious,” and the differences between worship and reverence. The problem is compounded by the fact that the very word “religion” (*shūkyō*) was a modern word carrying Western nuances which did not always correspond to traditional Japanese ways of thinking.

Japanese governmental authorities distinguished worship in the religious sense from reverence, holding the latter to be nonreligious. Although many Japanese disagreed with this interpretation, a case could still be made for it.

When it is recalled, however, that shrine reverence and its associated Japanese values (focus on *kokutai*) were set forth as the first and highest claim on all Japanese, above private religious loyalties, it is hard to escape the conclusion that in its broadest impact, shrine reverence as officially promoted during the State Shinto period did assume what would almost have to be called religious, even super-religious dimensions.

overriding those rich, diverse, earthy, emotionally-laden dimensions of local shrine life which have always been so vital to Shinto tradition. However important the shrines may actually have become as *kokka no sōshi* (national rites), and however this ideology may have contributed to modern Japanese nation-building, such a definition and role for the shrines could hardly exhaust their meaning for Japanese parishioners; and the efforts to force the shrines into rigid official molds often had the unfortunate effect of weakening the ties that bound them to the people. This seems to have been the case especially among the great mass of local *minsha* ("people's shrines"), where Shrine Shinto has since ancient times been primarily rooted, and where it has traditionally generated its greatest strength.

In these concluding paragraphs I have touched all too briefly on some rather large problems which invite further exploration as we attempt to comprehend the role of Shinto shrines during those decades we now call the State Shinto period. Since the shrines of today maintain a living continuity with the shrines of yesterday, it is hoped that an objective yet sympathetic examination of the recent historical record may help us see more clearly the nature of the problems Shinto shrines are currently facing in the difficult adjustments of postwar Japan.

## Glossary

<i>daigūji</i> 大宮司	<i>kokuhei chūsha</i> 国幣中社
Dajōkan 太政官	<i>kokuheisha</i> 国幣社
<i>fūsha</i> 府社	<i>kokuhei shōsha</i> 国幣小社
<i>gokoku jinja</i> 護国神社	<i>kokuhei taisha</i> 国幣大社
<i>gongūji</i> 権宮司	<i>kokutai</i> 国体
<i>gōsha</i> 郷社	<i>kōshitsushintō</i> 皇室神道
<i>gūji</i> 宮司	Kyōbushō 教部省
<i>hanninkan</i> 判任官	<i>kyōhashintō</i> 教派神道
<i>hansha</i> 藩社	<i>minsha</i> 民社
Jingikan 神祇官	<i>mukakusha</i> 無格社
Jingishō 神祇省	<i>negi</i> 禰宜
<i>jinjashintō</i> 神社神道	Shajikyoku 社寺局
<i>kanpei chūsha</i> 官幣中社	<i>shikan</i> 祠堂
<i>kanpeisha</i> 官幣社	<i>shishō</i> 祠掌
<i>kanpei shōsha</i> 官幣小社	<i>shōen</i> 莊園
<i>kanpei taisha</i> 官幣大社	<i>shōgūji</i> 少宮司
<i>kanri</i> 官吏	<i>shōkonsha</i> 招魂社
<i>kansha</i> 官社	<i>shūshin</i> 修身
<i>kensha</i> 県社	<i>sonsha</i> 村社
<i>kokkashintō</i> 国家神道	<i>sōshi</i> 宗祀