

# The Appearance of "Ancestor Religion" in Modern Japan: The Years of Transition from the Meiji to the Taishō Periods

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## INTRODUCTION: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

What is Japanese thinking in regard to the ancestors and how does the average Japanese deal with it? What differences based on class, region, age or sex can be recognized in the conception of and behavior towards the ancestors? How have this concept and practice changed over the generations? Investigating such a series of problems is of fundamental importance if we are to understand the Japanese people, their society and culture. Foreign scholars have turned their attention to this problem area and have published very interesting studies. Such scholars include Lafcadio Hearn (1904, ch. 4) and later Plath (1964), Ooms (1967), and Smith (1974). Of course, many Japanese scholars have also investigated these problems (See References), and I myself have written a few essays on the subject (Morioka 1972 and 1976). Because these are complicated and vast questions, I attempted to unfold one particular aspect after another. The present paper is a product of an endeavor in the same line.

Sakurai Tokutarō, who has commented on the Japanese view of ancestor (1974, pp. 79–96), offers the following three divisions:

- (1) a concrete view of the ancestors based upon direct

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The present paper forms part of a more general study project on the place of Yanagita Kunio in Japan's modern history under the direction of Prof. Ienaga Saburō. Research for this project was made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Education during the years 1971 and 1972. The writer wishes to express his sincerest thanks to all participants in this study project.

- experience
- (2) a conceptualized view of the ancestors formed through indirect experience
  - (3) an ideological abstract view of the ancestors which is a concept developed as an ideology, surpassing the sphere of experience and transcending the actual blood-related lineage.

He explains further that

“the first and second are anchored in the fundamental strata of the ancestor outlook, upon which the third, the legendary and ideological sphere, has accumulated. . . . While some elements of the outermost strata have permeated into the bottom strata, the basic experiential elements have protruded far beyond the outer layer, and there are instances where the bottom strata have influenced the ideological sphere.”

Among the three types of stratified ancestor outlook as given by Sakurai, the third one can be further divided into a “legendary” or “fictitious view of ancestor,” as seen in the genealogy of the powerful and famous local families of the pre-modern era, and in an “abstract ideological view of ancestor,” which was made the foundation of the modern-day family-state ideology (*kazoku kokka kan*). As Aruga Kizaemon has pointed out (1959 and 1967), the former is the “ancestor of one’s lineage.” It is the view of the local families of that time who connected their genealogies to those of famous families in the capital like the Minamoto, Taira, Fujiwara, and Tachibana. In contrast to this outlook deliberately worked out from below, the later ancestor outlook is that imposed from above by the state authority. One of the conditions that made this imposition possible is the existing foundation of the legendary, fictitious ancestor outlook. Consequently, the materialization of the stratified structure is found here also. In the present article I would like to focus my attention on the ideological ancestor view.

It can be said that the ideological ancestor outlook is very

far removed from the people; therefore its influence on the first and second ancestor outlooks have been very slight. Supported by the government, however, it was taught in the compulsory education system and regulated the content of the outlook given by religious groups and others interested in moral training, thus possibly helping to orient and shape the ancestor outlook of the people in an indirect way. Consequently, when attempting to explain the actual ancestor outlook of the people in the modern era, it is of great importance to know how the ideological ancestor look emerged and what roles it performed.

“ANCESTOR RELIGION” AS SEEN IN THE IMPERIAL RESCRIPTS

The term “ancestor religion” (*sosenkyō*) is one which was frequently used by Hozumi Yatsuka (1860–1912), a professor of law influential from the middle to the latter part of the Meiji era. In the present paper ancestor religion is understood as the belief system which connects the household to the state through the medium of the ancestors. The modern-day political authority compelled the masses to accept and practice it. Because it is a belief system, it is an ideology; likewise it is also an ethical system since it provides a normative basis for judging right or wrong, good or evil. Moreover, it is a religious system because it touches, although slightly, something supra-human. Ancestor religion has these three dimensions.

The official belief system upheld by the governmental authority can be clearly seen in the Imperial Rescripts (*shōchoku*) of modern Japan. Let us examine when and how references are made to ancestors in the Imperial Rescripts of the Meiji and Taishō periods. Without citing detailed examples, I will state the conclusion: the ancestors of the Imperial Household are referred to, right from the beginning of the Meiji era, in the Imperial Rescripts written at times of political changes such as the opening of the country, the Meiji Restoration and the enthronement, and in the especially important Imperial Rescripts such as the Rescript on the Promulgation of the Constitution

(*Dai Nippon teikoku kenpō happu no chokugo*) of 1889, the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo*) of 1890, and the Boshin Imperial Letter (*Boshin shōsho*) of 1908. In addition to this it must be noted that in the Imperial Rescripts on the Promulgation of the Constitution and on Education, the “subjects’ ancestors”<sup>1</sup> are also mentioned. The aim of referring to the Imperial Household’s ancestors is to show where the basis of ruling power lies, implying that the imperial authority is hereditary and charismatic. On the other hand, the purpose of relating the people’s ancestors is to conclusively show that the imperial rule is a sort of traditional patriarchal rule and has a paternalistic character.

It is obvious that the Imperial Rescripts referring to the emperor’s ancestors were frequently issued particularly at times of political crises such as the critical period after the death of Emperor Meiji when the crown prince ascended to the throne. The presumed charismatic qualities of the late Emperor Meiji, strengthened even further by Japan’s victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, were in striking contrast to the “mentally weak” Emperor Taishō, who was lacking in the personal qualities that characterized his father. Consequently, it can be said that the death of Emperor Meiji was followed by a serious crisis in the charismatic authority of the imperial rule. However, since it was necessary to attain the reunification of the nation with Emperor Taishō as the central figure, an Imperial Rescript conveying such request as “since I want to carry on the work left by the late emperor, I wish that you would serve me as you did the late emperor,” was bestowed on the dignitaries of the literary and military circles, the army, the representatives

1. “Know ye, Our subjects, that *Our Imperial and Other Ancestors* have, by the support and cooperation of the *ancestors of Our subjects*, built up Our Empire to last to all eternity” (Imperial Rescript on the Promulgation of the Constitution). “*Our Imperial Ancestors* have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue. . . . So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of *your forefathers*” (Imperial Rescript on Education, italics added).

of the imperial clan, elder statesmen, and cabinet members. In other words, through the memory of the "late emperor who was full of wisdom, judgment and benevolence," and centered upon Emperor Taishō, the legitimate successor of the late emperor Meiji, the reunification of the nation was anticipated to come through. In the case of the accession of the present emperor Hirohito, national reunification was expected to be achieved through the memory of his grandfather Emperor Meiji as well as of his father Emperor Taishō. In any case, the crisis in the reunification of the nation at the beginning of the Taishō era was attempted to be overcome by alluding to Emperor Meiji. Because of this, one can conclude that it had a grave meaning to take notice of the ancestors. Again, when Emperor Taishō wrote: "The army that I lead is the army that my father nurtured and loved" (Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (*Rikukai gunjin ni tamawaritaru chokuyū*) of 1912, this had a far richer historical content than the words of Emperor Meiji: "We reflect that Our subjects are the descendants of their loyal and brave ancestors" (Rescript on the Promulgation of the Constitution 1889), and consequently the political significance of referring to the ancestors was perhaps greater. To sum up, we can say that, to overcome the crisis of the transition from Meiji to Taishō, when the charismatic emperor Meiji was replaced by the weak emperor Taishō, it was politically necessary to emphasize the ancestors.

Paternalistic rule was not only manifested by referring to the subjects' ancestors but still more straightforwardly. In 1915, the Imperial Rescript written on the occasion of the accession ceremony of Emperor Taishō at the Shishin Hall states: "You, Our people, faithfully and continuously serving the emperors for many generations, are Our subjects in an official sense. But personal feeling between you and Us is the same as that between father and son; therefore there is no other national polity that can be compared to Ours." The same notion appeared again in the 1928 accession of the present emperor, proclaiming that

“the Imperial Ancestors who built up the country treated the people like their children and made the whole country the same as a household.” This is none other than “family-state ideology,” and ancestor religion had, by definition, a close connection with it.

FAMILY-STATE IDEOLOGY AND “ANCESTOR RELIGION”

According to the studies of a political scientist (Ishida 1954, p. 7), the so-called family-state ideology appeared officially in its full-fledged form in the second state-compiled ethics (*shūshin*) textbook for the seventh-grade pupils that began to be used in 1910. The text specified that “our country based on the family system forms one large household with the emperor as its head. We, the people, revere the Imperial throne, succeeded in an eternally unbroken line, with the sentiments of veneration that a child has for its parents. In view of this, loyalty to the throne (*chū*) and filial piety (*kō*) cannot be separated” (Karasawa 1956, p. 278). From these words it is clear that the family-state ideology contains a set of ideas that the nation as a group is equivalent to one large family, that “the Imperial throne and the people” is equated with “parents and children,” and that the Imperial family is the head family of the nation. This concept also implies that loyalty and filial piety are one and form the basic ethics of the people. Furthermore Hozumi Yatsuka, dean of the Law School, Tokyo Imperial University, who took charge of the revision of the ethics textbooks states that the ancestor religion is the foundation of our family system and of the establishment of the nation, and has supported the national morality (Wagatsuma 1948, pp. 17 and 173). Already in an essay of 1891 he explains this view as follows:

“Our country is the country of ancestor religion... The emperor vis-à-vis his beloved subjects, the head of the clan vis-à-vis his people, and the household head vis-à-vis his family: the quality of power is the same. The bond that keeps group members united is the national custom of an-

cestor religion. The knowledge of ancestor religion is indispensable for understanding Japanese customs, laws, and institutions" (Hozumi Yatsuka 1913, pp. 240-241).

In the textbooks of the second state-compilation, the familistic elements such as "household" and the nationalistic elements such as "emperor" were strongly emphasized. Moreover, in comparison to the earlier officially approved textbooks, the logical coordination of the two elements was improved (Karasawa 1956, p. 10). In this context, teaching materials on "ancestor" were introduced into the textbooks for school children.

There are such topics as "venerate your ancestors" for the second grade of the primary school and "ancestors and household" for the sixth grade. Take for example the topic "ancestor" in the ethics textbook of the seventh year (Monbushō 1911, pp. 48-50). First, the reasons for ancestor veneration are given and the importance of venerating the ancestors each year at a specified time is emphasized. Secondly, the rightful and virtuous attitude towards the ancestors is indicated and it is recommended to carry on the desires of the ancestors, making one's household prosperous and thereby upholding the family name. Additionally it is cautioned that "even if you leave the place of your ancestral graves, so long as you revere your ancestors and try to make your household prosperous, you will be a dutiful descendant." These cautionary comments were timely because there were many who left their home town for the cities after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and also for Korea and Manchuria after the annexation of Korea (1910). Moreover, the recommendation that "if you have no splendid ancestor you should try to be a fine ancestor to your descendants" may be regarded as an attempt to preach ancestor veneration to the people of all classes including those who had neither distinguished ancestors nor a celebrated family name. Motivation for becoming successful in the world was thus reinforced.

The topic of "ancestor" in the ethics textbooks includes what Hozumi Yatsuka called "ancestor religion" and what I have

defined so. In contrast to the self-evident relationship of the ancestors to the household, however, the relationship of the ancestors to the state is not clear. What comments has Hozumi himself made on the textbooks then? In these we might find a clarification of the relationship.

As soon as the Ministry of Education completed the revision of the ethics textbooks, they held a short seminar in December 1910 for teachers in charge of the ethics course at the Normal Schools (*shihan gakkō*), the training organs for primary school teachers,<sup>2</sup> and had Hozumi lecture on “Fundamentals of national morality.” In it Hozumi said: “An infant’s yearning for his parents is from a natural desire. . . . When one’s respect and affection toward his parents are extended to his parents’ parents, a greater respect is due to the latter” (Monbushō 1911, p. 28). Relating thus the psychological basis of “ancestor worship,” he further unfolds the family-state ideology as follows:

“It is quite natural for the human feelings of the people to revere one’s parents, and under their benevolent patronage to remain close and intimate with one’s relatives, thus building up a family group. . . . An extension of the concept of the family makes the concept of the nation” (Monbushō 1911, p. 28).

That the family-state ideology is based upon ancestor veneration is obvious from the following statements in the same lecture:

“The moral obligation of venerating the ancestors is the foundation of our nation and of the household” (p. 25).

And again:

“Thanks to the powerful patronage of the ancestors, the household and our nation have been maintained over a long period of time” (p. 30).

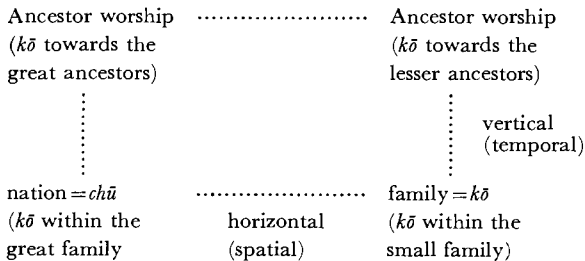
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2. In the October 1910 Ministry of Education’s “Explanation of the principles for the teachers of Normal Schools,” there is written: “When teaching ethics, especially our national morality you should teach very well.” In the following year, in July 1910, similar principles were authorized by the government for the middle schools, higher girls’ schools, and vocational schools. A series of courses based upon these principles were planned for the teachers.



However, these sentences are as assertive as the statement "Our nation is the country of ancestor religion" which Hozumi made twenty years earlier. Especially his explanation about the relation between ancestors and country is logically weak and by no means persuasive.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding — it would be more accurate to say — because of that very fact his opinion gave an adequate emotional support to the family-state ideology. In this way, the notion of the "ancestors" was made one of the key concepts of the ethics textbooks which clearly put forward the family-state ideology. Then, how did the ideological leaders

3. Honjō Eijirō summarized the ancestor religion of Hozumi as follows: "Hozumi argues that the foundation of the building up of our country is to be sought for in the solidarity of the blood lineage and that, as a means to support this, belief in ancestor worship is to be promoted." Honjō criticised this saying: "Whether or not the basis of the building of our country can be said to be the blood lineage and the family system, we must have the exact proof of history scholars. . . . Again, even if the family system was the basis of the founding of our nation, there is no reason to continue it and to preserve it for that sole reason" (Honjō 1913, p. 195.) At this time, Takakusu Junjirō showed the relationship of ancestor religion and the family-state ideology in a more structured form. He said that the family and state are both "familism" (*kazokushugi*). The large (official) family is the family of the ruler who unites the one nation and represents the national ancestors, and the family of the subjects is the little family. The profoundest natural feeling towards the parents is filial piety (*kō*), and loyalty (*chū*) is filial piety that has been extended horizontally. The vertical extension of filial piety is ancestor worship, and expanding it further, it is worship of the imperial ancestors (Takakusu 1911, pp. 118–119). The problem of the relationship of ancestors and nation is made clear in the following diagram, but it is very abstract and gives the impression of being put together in order to look consistent.



of moral education place the “ancestors” within the national morality?

NATIONAL MORALITY AND ANCESTOR RITES

Another leading figure in the revision of the state-compiled textbooks on ethics, Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944), professor at the College of Literature, Tokyo Imperial University, spoke on the subject “The study of national morality” in a lecture meeting sponsored by the Far East Association (Tōa kyōkai) in 1910. In the above-mentioned seminar sponsored by the Ministry of Education Inoue lectured on “Elements of national morality.” In the following year 1911, at a seminar sponsored by the Ministry of Education for middle school teachers, he spoke on “An outline of national morality.” After the death of Hozumi in 1912, Inoue, now respected as the highest authority on the national morality, published the shorthand notes of the last-named lecture as a book under the same title.

In chapter seven, entitled “The family system and ancestor worship,” a distinction is made between the individual family system or the family system of each household and the collective family system, i. e. the family system of the state. It is pointed out that in the former the virtue of filial piety arises and in the latter that of loyalty to the throne. Both family systems are supported and united by ancestor worship, namely, the worship of common ancestors by the descendants. He writes as follows:

“In one household, the common ancestors of the family are worshiped; in the village, it is the *ujigami*, i. e. the common ancestors of the village; in one country, it is the common ancestors of the nation. There is a splendid state shrine for the national ancestor. Such festivals for the ancestors unite the descendants. . . . Ancestor worship is a centripetal force that unites the lineage. This promotes the creation of a custom that values unity. If we extend this custom throughout the whole country, we can foster the attitude of being united as one nation” (1912, pp. 212–213).

Inoue proceeds to say that "ancestor worship is the spiritual side of the family system and the family system is the morphological side of ancestor worship" (p. 212), and also that it is ancestor worship which unites the emperor and the people into one family and makes up the collective family system (p. 228). Compared with the common ancestors of the family (corresponding to the individual family system), the common ancestors of the nation (corresponding to the collective family system) seldom appeal to human feeling. For the common ancestors of the family, the range meant by the term is vague. At any rate, by Inoue's explanation the relationship of the ancestors with the nation is more or less clarified.

With Inoue's *Kokumin dōtoku gairon* as a precedent, from 1915 on books along this line appeared successively. The Tokyo Higher Normal School, central training institute of teachers, modified its regulations that year, increasing the number of ethics classes for the first section of the Literature Division. At this time "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku*) appeared for the first time as a subject in this Division (Tokyo bunri-ka daigaku 1931, pp. 222-223).

In 1915, *Kokumin dōtoku joron* ("An introduction to national morality") by Watari Shōzaburō, professor of ethics at the Tokyo Higher Normal School, was published. First of all, let us see how ancestor rites are treated in this book. Perhaps because of the religious nuance of the word, he did not use the term "ancestor worship" (*sosen sūhai*). Since veneration is motivated by the emotions of love and attachment, he suggested instead the term *sosen keibo*, meaning love and respect for the ancestors (Watari 1915, p. 515). Under this title, he devoted the eighth chapter entirely to a discussion of this idea. Though love and respect for the ancestors is morals, Watari says that "this is based on the natural feeling of man" (p. 517), because "there is no one who does not love and respect his father and mother. . . . Going back from one's parents to one's grandparents and farther still,

this becomes love and respect towards one's ancestors" (p. 527).

Then, who are the ancestors? Ancestors are the ones who founded and have transmitted the household. Among them the greatest individuals remembered by the descendants represent all of the ancestors, or the collective memory of the benevolent ancestors in the past is kept in the hearts of the descendants (p. 530). If we enlarge the sibling relationship into a clan relationship, the "family ancestors" may be regarded as the common ancestors of the clan (p. 531). Further expanding this point of view, Watari presents the concept of the national ancestors in contrast to the family ancestors.

The national ancestors are those who built up the state and managed it in the past (p. 540). Therefore, although the term means in a wider sense the people of the previous generations, it sometimes points in particular to great men and heroes in the nation's history. In other words, having heroes represent all ancestors of the past, it points to the deceased emperors and other famous and great men (p. 545). The latter includes for instance Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, Fujiwara no Kamatari, Sugawara Michizane, and also Kusunoki Masashige and the like (p. 547). In this way, the love and respect towards the national ancestors is manifested in the custom of respecting the *kami* (p. 550). Respect for the *kami* in turn means ancestor veneration (p. 553).

The love and respect towards the (family) ancestors is the central concept that unites the family. In the case of the clan, the common ancestor is made the natural center of the group's organization (p. 531). In the same way, it is the founding ancestor of the state, or the heavenly ancestor of the Imperial Household that is regarded as the natural core of the unification of the nation. In our country, the lineal descendants of the heavenly ancestor came to the throne, forming the center of the national organization (p. 543). What is described here is nothing other than the social function of love and respect towards the ancestors, and is the same as that advocated by others.

Watari says: "When the people are aware that they have their ancestors in common, then the very awareness naturally leads to the spiritual unity of the nation" (p. 540). It is doubtful, however, whether the people come to be aware of the commonness of ancestors through the famous and heroic men of the past. In the same way as in the above-mentioned case of Inoue Te-tsujirō, I have to say, some ambiguities still remain in the conception of the nation's common ancestors. Again, Watari's distinction between family and national ancestors corresponds to Inoue's classification of the individual family system and the collective family system. At any rate, tying the love and respect towards the national ancestors to reverence towards the *kami*, and in this way connecting respect for the *kami* with ancestor veneration is a point worthy of record. This logic later exerted a remarkable influence on how to explain the significance of Shinto shrines.<sup>4</sup>

Fukasaku Yasufumi (1874–1962), professor of ethics at the College of Literature, Tokyo Imperial University, states in the fourth chapter, "The veneration of the ancestors," of his book *Kokumin dōtoku yōgi* ("Elements of national morality") that "ancestor veneration is based upon the descendants' gratitude towards the eternally existing spirits of the ancestors" (1916, p. 140). Among the ancestors he distinguishes public ancestors (Amaterasu Ōmikami, gods of heaven and earth, the eight protector gods of the emperor, the spirits of past emperors, the spirits of meritorious subjects) and private ancestors (tutelary deities, spirits of founding ancestors and of the lineal ancestors of ordinary households) (p. 156). He concludes that ancestor worship is the backbone of Japanese Shinto (p. 151). It is his

4. Fukasaku Yasufumi, just as Watari, did not teach ancestor worship according to reason or logic but rather as an expedient. In other words, since it was of no use to teach the importance of the ancestors to the lower classes who did not even know the name of their own ancestors, he first taught them to have reverence towards the Ise shrine and other shrines (Fukasaku 1911, pp. 149–150).

point of view that ancestor veneration has no religious connotation, but is something which surpasses religion (Fukasaku 1916b, p. 409). While Watari discarded the distinction between the public ancestors and the private ancestors (Watari 1915, p. 540), it is obvious that there are almost parallel opinions in other points between Fukasaku and Watari.

Besides the three views (Inoue, Watari, and Fukasaku) surveyed, *Kokumin dōtoku yōryō* (“Essentials of national morality”) by Yoshida Seichi and associates (1916), another book of the same title published by the Meiji Kyōikusha for the applicants for secondary school teacher’s licenses, and other works were published around the same time. Nevertheless, I think that I have already sufficiently elucidated the main points of the position of ancestors in the whole of national morality theories. In the way of relating the ancestors to the state, and consequently in the explanation of the national or public ancestors, there is little logic to be found, but to the greater part of the people who know little of historical facts the theories on ancestors were probably persuasive. At the very least, they could have definite emotional effects. In addition, for example it was a Japanese custom to call the founder of a feudal clan respectfully the clan ancestor and to venerate him as an ancestor of the entire political community of the clan.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, it is only natural that a nation has a state (but called heavenly) ancestor. Under the system of modern monarchy, the idea that the state ancestor is not only the ancestor of the monarch but also that of the entire nation found an adequate basis for response. Thus, the family-state ideology was strengthened greatly and was also consolidated ideologically by the addition of the “vertical link” of ancestor worship (Matsumoto 1974, p. 73). Such a conception of “ancestor worship” was taught to the young students in the public schools from the 1910’s.

5. For example see the case of the Arima family of the Kurume clan (Furukawa 1975, pp. 21–24).

"ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND JAPANESE LAW"

More than such moralists as Inoue, Watari, and Fukasaku, Hozumi Nobushige (1856–1925), a leading jurist, was successful in founding and reinforcing the family-state ideology by the concept of ancestor rites. Hozumi's book, with the same title as this section, was originally written and published in English as early as 1901. It was translated into Japanese and published in 1917 (based upon the revised English edition of 1912) at a time when the ancestor concept was frequently discussed in the frame of national morality theories.

Hozumi's more noteworthy views include the following distinction of the three types of ancestor rites (Hozumi 1912, p. 32):

- (1) the ancestor rites offered by the entire people to the founding ancestors of the Imperial Household
- (2) the ancestor rites to the local tutelary gods by the people of the region (worship of clan ancestors)
- (3) the ancestor rites of each household towards the family ancestors.

As previously referred to, this distinction was more or less confirmed by other advocates.

Among the three, the first mentioned contains a few problems. It is as a matter of course the ancestor rites of the Imperial Family. But why it should also be the ancestor rites of the people is a question. Hozumi responds to this question that: (a) the imperial ancestors are the ancestors of the sovereign; (b) they were the sovereigns of our ancestors (p. 104); and (c) there has been a way of thinking to consider them as the ancestors of the entire nation. It is sufficient to explain (c) by referring to the above-mentioned custom of the Japanese feudal society to regard the clan ancestors as the ancestors of the entire clan. However, taking present-day thinking into account, let us ask why the ancestors of the Imperial Household should be the ancestors of the entire nation. Hozumi states two reasons:

- (1) "The nation is considered as forming *one vast family*, the Imperial House standing at its head as the *Principal Family*,

and all the subjects under it as members of houses which stand in the relation of *branch families* to the Imperial House” (pp. 99–100).

- (2) “. . . . *the Imperial House has no clan or family name*; the clan or family names being appellations used to designate divisions or constituent units of this great nation-family, or ‘the Great House’ (*ōyake*). As the Emperor is identified with this ‘Great House,’ his Ancestor is regarded in one sense as the *Ancestor of the whole nation*” (p. 100).

What is expressed here is no other than the family-state ideology. From this ideology is derived the idea that regards the ancestors of the Imperial Household as the ancestors of the entire nation. Based upon the historical facts of Japan’s social structure, he concludes that the Imperial ancestors can, in a certain sense, be said to be the ancestors of the whole Japanese nation.

Hozumi rejects the theory that the ancestor rites originated from the fear of souls and the desire to pacify the dreadful souls. Rather, he feels that the rites resulted from the love attachment towards the ghosts, i. e. from the natural feeling of respect and love towards one’s parents (pp. 7–19). Though Hozumi’s theory concerning the origin of ancestor rites should not be overlooked, I would prefer herewith to center my attention on his excellent idea of the function of the ancestor rites. He writes as follows:

“The worship of common ancestors, and the ceremonies connected therewith, kept alive the memory of a common descent amongst a large number of widely scattered kinsmen, who were so far removed from one another that they would, without this link, have fallen away from family intercourse” (p. 23).

To sum up, ancestral rites are the centripetal force which calls together and unites the dispersed and scattered members of a lineage. For Hozumi Nobushige, who was from the samurai family of the former Uwajima clan, this idea was probably rooted in his actual experience of the ancestral rites as ties of lasting



association with the lineage members who remained in the Uwajima area.

Finally, I would like to note that Hozumi regards the ancestor rites as "the *extension of sympathy and love* to distant kinsmen" (p. 23) which therefore "may also be regarded as a moral practice" (p. xv). This view is reflected in his way of translating the original book title "ancestor worship" not as *sosen sūhai* but rather as *sosen saishi* ("ancestor rites"). It is also confirmed in his belief "that the practice of Ancestor-worship is not incompatible with Christianity" (p. xiii).

Hozumi's theory, which was developed for Western readers, is logically well constructed, and even today it has an adequate power of persuasion. He did not use the title "ancestor religion," but it can be said that, far more than his brother Yatsuka, he persuasively made clear the structure and function of ancestor religion. On the other hand, he cannot escape some limitations. That Hozumi describes some new practices having started at governmental instigation as if time-honored customs poses a problem. But by calling our attention to the current custom and, relating it to ancestor rites that existed in the background, he went deeper into an analysis of the subject which the present paper concerns.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE APPEARANCE OF "ANCESTOR RELIGION"  
Why was "ancestor religion" given such an important place in public education? One reason may be found in the crisis that the nation faced just at the time of the transition from Meiji to Taishō. Since the revised edition of the state-compiled textbooks appeared just before that time, there must have existed other background factors during that era. A direct occasion was the bitter attack on the first state-compiled textbooks (in use from 1904) by the ultra-nationalistic advocates who became influential after the Russo-Japanese War (Karasawa 1956, pp. 276-278). But there was a much more important factor than that. After the Russo-Japanese War, there was a collapse and

continuous shaking-up of the traditional local community, urban as well as rural, to such an extent that it was made an urgent task for the government to reunify the people's ideologies. The earliest measures taken to meet this crisis was the promulgation of the Boshin Imperial Letter of 1908, which states: "All superiors and those below must be of one heart and engage in work faithfully, frugally, and diligently." These words stressed the spirit of solidarity and that of frugality and diligence. Following that, the stress on national morality in public education, the governmental grants-in-aid to the *hōtoku* ("repaying virtue") movement among the upper class farmers, the youth movement (first national rally in 1910) that tried to reach down to the lower class farmers, the organization of veterans' associations (1910) and other events, appeared one after another; all aspired towards the same objective. On the one hand, the government oppressed the socialists, executing for murder those involved in the "attempt" to assassinate Emperor Meiji (January 1911); and yet on the other hand it established the imperially-endowed relief society to extend free medical treatment and relief services to the poor and needy (February 1911).

What is meant by a collapse and shaking-up of the community, then? From a macroscopic point of view, as early as 1907 prosperity gave way to depression. While many bankruptcies and business failures took place and a lot of people were extremely impoverished, capitalists accumulating huge money established a monopoly in light industries. Thus, the gap between the rich and poor was greatly widened and the class split was intensified. Under these circumstances the socialist movement exerted a greater influence. The government then placed on socialists a label of being conspirators to assassinate the emperor in order to "erase" them, and at the same time it devised a policy for rescuing the poor in a benevolent manner.

From a microscopic viewpoint, big business came into existence with the Russo-Japanese War in the cities, and modern technolo-

gies with the accompanying labor system were introduced. As a result, the productivity escalated and human relations in the work place were freed from the burden of total involvement of personalities. On the other hand, the relation of labor and capital became shaky and unstable, and problems which were not evident before became manifest. In this way, the organized labor movements started, and labor disputes occurred frequently (Sumiya 1968, p. 67).

In the provinces, a greater part of the tenant farmer groups (41) organized before 1907 were of a "non-opposing, non-confronting" nature, aiming at the betterment and development of farming, the conciliation and harmony of the landowners and tenants, mutual help and consolation of the tenant farmers, and the prevention of competition for more land among the tenants. But a majority of the tenant farmer groups (63) organized from 1908 to 1912 can be characterized as "antagonistic" tenant groups. The number of tenant groups established after 1913 increased rapidly and most of them were also of an "antagonistic" nature (Hamada 1974, p. 101). In this way, both in the cities and in the country side, traditional communities were disturbed and some of them were in the process of collapse.

In the cities and the villages, the elementary community was the household. But there were indications of its deterioration and change, which underlay the collapse of urban and rural communities. Comparatively early, Yanagita Kunio drew attention to this point and commented on the deplorable state of affairs. In the preface of *Saishin sangyō kumiai tsūkai* ("A new commentary on industrial unions") of 1902, he wrote: "A majority of these (urban and over-sea) migrations signal in some sense the ruining of the family morals and the termination of the household rites." In 1906 at a meeting of the Great Japan Agricultural Association, he said: "Today, about 80-90 % of urban migrations are bound to result in the destruction of the household" (Yanagita 1962, vol. 16, p. 39). Furthermore,

after the depression of 1907, the drop in the price of agricultural products promoted the tendency for rural youths to leave their home town for the cities, and this in turn intensified the crisis of the household breakdown.

On the other hand, how was the household faring in the cities? Kawada Shirō, an economist, writes in "The necessity and the means of maintaining the family system" (1910) as follows:

"Up to now, one household as an economic group performed functions in production and distribution of goods. Now, with economic roles leaving the household one after another, the national economy has become entirely based on individuals. It is individuals rather than households or household heads who own enterprises and receive wages from them. Because of this, a complete separation occurs between the family relation which binds one to his household and the economic relation that binds one to his work place" (Kawada 1910, p. 349).

In this way, the present-day household has lost its economic foundation. Kawada concludes that

"the idea of master-servant and consequently the sentiment of ancestor worship which formed the spiritual foundation of the household have disappeared. . . . The family system is dying spiritually and physically and looks like a wreckage" (pp. 349-350).

In these circumstances of the era, what was the model for unifying the national ideology and for restoring the community? It was the "family system" (*kazoku seido*) or the emotional unity of the family, because the well-informed found one cause for winning the Russo-Japanese War in the "family system" of Japan. For example, Inoue Tetsujirō says that "national unity as realized in the case of war is entirely due to the collective family system" (1911, p. 184). Obara Ryōtarō states clearly:

"I admit that the family unit showed its greatest merit in the last war. . . . Among the main reasons for the great defeat that Russia had to bear are: the breakdown of the

family system followed by the rise of individualism, and the breakdown of the village into segregated smaller units" (Obara 1911, pp. 166 and 174).

The model for reunifying ideologies and for strengthening the social organization was close at hand.

The stress on the family-state ideology was oriented on one side, and the development of the emotional aspect of human relations on the other side. That is to say, even in the power relation between superordinates and subordinates, and between the ruler and the ruled, an emotional attachment between the leader and his people came to be emphasized not as a substituting element but as a reinforcing factor. In other words, a re-unifying principle of the decaying community, "paternalism," appeared on the stage (Sumiya 1968, pp. 70-71). It was manifest in the Imperial Rescripts, and, from below, in the administrative (managerial) familism and the familization of army life. Again, for the household, the smallest community, the restoration of its economic basis was not only hardly possible but inappropriate under the developed capitalism. On the contrary, a stress on the ancestor rites which made up the spiritual foundation of the household was possible and necessary. With the ancestor rites as a support, and by means of the family-state ideology, an emotional unity was fostered in the original power relationship between the constitutional monarch and his people. Such was the social background of the period in which "ancestor religion" was taken into public education.

CONCLUSION: THE EFFECTS OF THE APPEARANCE OF "ANCESTOR RELIGION"

Ancestor religion that first appeared in the ethics classes of public education and was advocated also in adult education,<sup>6</sup> is assumed

6. In April 1910, the Ministry of Education made it compulsory not only for the ethics textbooks to be used in the seventh year of the elementary schools but also for those used for the training of the regional youth organizations (Murakami

to have exerted an influence on various sectors of the society such as ideology, morality and religion, not to speak of education. Though my search for relevant data is still inadequate, I would like to outline the points in this concluding chapter.

First of all, the people's interest in the ancestral rites had deepened. Arita Otomatsu's *Sosen sūhai to kokumin no koe* ("Ancestor worship and the voice of the people"), published in 1920, contains his views and the readers' reactions to it. In his statement, the ideology of "ancestor religion" is reflected just as it is. The middle class people who were fervently practising the ancestor rites were fully prepared to receive it.

Secondly, the doctrine and rites of ancestor religion were shaped by Nagasawa Rintarō for the higher class, and crystallized in his *Sosenkyō kyōsho* ("Message of ancestor religion") of 1916. According to this *kyōsho*, the three spirits — Amaterasu Ōmikami at the center, Emperor Jinmu at the left, and Emperor Meiji at the right — shall be worshiped. The faithful shall keep the *shintai* ("object of worship") for the three spirits and the three family treasures (mirror, genealogy, registered seal) and solemnly perform the rites on national festival days. The newly formalized practice seems to have gained the support of the dignitaries of society.

Thirdly, the doctrines of the established religions were under the impact of ancestor religion. In Buddhist ancestor rites, what matters is the household and by no means the state. Yet, for example, even an orthodox scholar of Jōdo Shinshū refers to the doctrines of *ōbōihon* (priority of secular rules over Buddhist laws) and *nitaisōe* (interdependence of secular rules and Buddhist laws) stating that the former is the appropriate model for the society of this present age, and the latter also suited for the era. He

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and Sakata 1955, pp. 163-164). One of the "Twelve rules of the youth organization" decided at the national youth rally held the same year was to place great importance on the national polity (*kokutai*) and to venerate the ancestors (Sumiya 1968, p. 76).

also asserts that the Imperial Rescript on Education and the teachings of Shinshū conform perfectly to one another and he pays no attention to how much the teachings of *ōbōihon* and *nitaisōe* could injure the original doctrines of Shinshū (Yoshitani 1914, pp. 562–563). Accordingly, obedient submission to ancestor religion, it seems to me, was only natural.

The fourth point is the appearance of religious groups that highly valued the ancestor rites, to be concrete, the evangelization in Yokohama of Nishida Shunzō, and the Reiyūkai of Kubo Kakutarō and others who were greatly influenced by Nishida. However, the ancestors taught by ancestor religion are those on the direct line of the house and not the bilateral ancestors of both husband and wife as taught in the Reiyūkai. To the last, in the background of ancestor religion the institutional household and the state exist, but for the Reiyūkai there is only the household as the unit of living together. Was this difference ignored by the power regulating "pseudo-religions"? This is a remaining problem to be investigated along with the responses established religions made towards ancestor religion.

Under a set of social forces at work such as the development of the monetary economy, the decreasing importance of land, the disintegration of hereditary occupation, and the freedom of migration, it is quite doubtful whether the propaganda of ancestor religion was successful in restoring the ancestral rites and in strengthening the household ideologically and religiously. In addition to this, if one gave up his life for the country on the battlefield, there should have occurred a danger of the ancestral rites being discontinued. In the end, a sharp conflict between the love and respect for the family ancestors and that for the national ancestors could not be concealed by ancestor religion. In spite of the propaganda of ancestor religion, the institutional household did not stop to collapse and change, and the family ancestral rites, in a dimension apart from the state, maintained a feeble existence.<sup>7</sup> A new era was about to dawn when students

in the big cities to whom Ebina Danjō, a Christian minister, spoke and wrote, started seeking for the actualization of the self discarding the morals of olden times.<sup>8</sup>

GLOSSARY

Arima 有馬	Kurume 久留米
<i>Boshin shōsho</i> 戊申詔書	Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成
<i>chū</i> 忠	<i>Kyōiku chokugo</i> 教育勅語
<i>Dai Nippon teikoku kenpō happu no</i>	Minamoto 源
<i>chokugo</i> 大日本帝国憲法発布ノ勅語	Nishida Shunzō 西田俊蔵
Fujiwara no Kamatari 藤原謙足	<i>nitaisōe</i> 二諦相依
<i>hōtoku</i> 報徳	<i>ōbōihon</i> 王法為本
Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗	<i>ōyake</i> 大宅
<i>kazoku kokka kan</i> 家族国家観	Reiyūkai 靈友会
<i>kazoku seido</i> 家族制度	<i>Rikukai gunjin ni tamawaritaru chokuyū</i>
<i>kazoku shugi</i> 家族主義	陸海軍人ニ賜ハリタル勅諭
<i>kō</i> 孝	<i>shihan gakkō</i> 師範学校
<i>kokumin dōtoku</i> 国民道德	<i>shintai</i> 神体
<i>kokutai</i> 国体	<i>shōchoku</i> 詔勅
Kubo Kakutarō 久保角太郎	<i>shūshin</i> 修身
	<i>sosen keibo</i> 祖先敬慕

7. When ancestor religion was promulgated, the ancestor rites among the common people had deteriorated to a great extent. For example, Sawayanagi Masatarō wrote: "In regard to ancestor worship, even if this can be observed in the imperial palace, it cannot be observed among the common people. Even if it can be seen rarely, the practice is steadily deteriorating" (1910, Introduction). Okuda Yoshito wrote: "According to the facts in regard to the ancestors' memorial tablets, it can be observed in the country side, but it is rarely seen in the cities" (1911, p. 88). Among the intellectuals who felt that it was impossible to have the ancestor rites as the pillar of the family system, the enactment of such ethical and family related legislative measures was seriously investigated.
8. "Although there have been advocates of the national morality of the family system, it is common knowledge that recently the younger citizens have already transcended such childish concepts and are struggling to fulfill the demands of the self. The individual separating himself from his family and his country is continually struggling to know the value of the individual" (Ebina 1912, p. 12).



<i>sozenkyō</i> 祖先教	Tachibana 橋
<i>Sosenkyō kyōsho</i> 祖先教教書	Taira 平
<i>sozen saishi</i> 祖先祭祀	Tōa kyōkai 東亜協会
<i>sozen sūhai</i> 祖先崇拜	<i>ujigami</i> 氏神
Sugawara Michizane 菅原道真	Uwajima 宇和島

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