Religion, Ideology of Domination, and Nationalism

Kuroda Toshio on the Discourse of *Shinkoku*

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This essay examines Kuroda Toshio's analysis of the concept of shinkoku (land of the kami) as it evolved in medieval Japan, and the part this concept played in the development of a state ideology. Kuroda showed that the shinkoku discourse developed within the exo-esoteric system (kenmitsu taisei), the dominant politico-religious ethos of the times, as a reactionary ideology employed against new tendencies and movements in medieval Japanese society that were potentially disruptive for the ruling regime. This discourse eventually came to constitute the basic conceptual paradigm for reactionary ideology and politics in Japan until the present day.

THE ENSEMBLE OF CONCEPTS, discursive practices, and institutions related to the idea that Japan is the "land of the kami" (*shinkoku* 神国) is one of the most important themes in the research of Kuroda Toshio.[1] An important chapter in *Mōko shūrai* (KURODA 1965) already dealt with the issue in a way that was revolutionary for its time.[2] KURODA continued his research on the *shinkoku* concept, systematizing his vision in two important sections of *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* (1975).[3] His treatment of the subject, the depth of his historical reconstruction, and the scope of his research are masterful examples of his own historical method, and are remarkable for the attention devoted to insti-

[1] Volume 4 of his collected works is dedicated to the subject; see KURODA 1995.

[2] See the chapter "Shinkoku Nihon" in KURODA 1965. In this book Kuroda develops his critique of the notions that the *shinkoku* concept was related to Shinto as the autochthonous religion of the Japanese, that it was related to an awareness of national identity, and that it was diffused among all social strata already at the time of the Mongol invasions.

[3] See KURODA 1975, in particular the chapter "Chūsei kokka to shinkoku shisō," pp. 253–330 (included in KURODA 1995, pp. 3–82), and the section "Chūsei no shinkoku shisō" of the chapter "Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai," pp. 504–38 (included in KURODA 1994, pp. 45–182); my translation of the latter appears in the present issue (pp. 353–85). My discussion in the present article is based on the above two sections.

tutions, modalities of power, and relationships between philosophical concepts, ideological constructs, and actual social praxis and material life. An important aspect of Kuroda's approach to the *shinkoku* concept is his vision of it as closely related, and diametrically opposed, to the thought and ideology of the medieval *senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏 movements. As we shall see later, Kuroda regarded *shinkoku* discourse as essentially a reactionary attempt to counter the development of "heterodox" movements that were threatening the existence of the *kenmitsu* system and its mode of domination. In the present paper I shall present a critical appraisal of Kuroda's treatment of the *shinkoku* discourse in medieval Japan, and also mention further areas of possible research.

"Shinkoku Shisō" as a Discursive Field

According to KURODA, the ideas related to the notion of Japan as the land of the kami do not form an organic and coherent philosophical system, but rather a set of cults, intellectual trends, and attitudes. It is thus impossible to gain a clear picture of this complex set of tendencies from a single text, such as Kitabatake Chikafusa's *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記. It is necessary instead to define the field and chart an entire discursive area, one that covers religious doctrines, philosophy, logic, cosmology, ontology, politics, doctrines of sovereignty, and so forth (KURODA 1975, p. 257). KURODA also distinguishes between the intellectual positions related to the *shinkoku* concept and their function as an ideology of the state. I believe that the Japanese expression *shinkoku shisō* 神国思想 (*shinkoku* thought) as employed by Kuroda refers to a discursive field, and accordingly I translate it as "*shinkoku* discourse." In fact, it is possible to identify in it a more or less organized body of ideas and concepts connected to other discursive formations such as religion, politics, and cultural identity; these conceptual elements were related to (and implied the existence of) social practices, a repertoire of metaphors and rhetorical rules, and institutional apparatuses in which the discourse was carried out. These could be deployed as ideological formations to support a particular ordering of society called by Kuroda the *kenmon taisei* 権門体制, a ruling system composed of multiple centers of influence. In this regime, which dominated Japan from the end of the Heian period to the Nanboku-chō era, the imperial court, the bakufu, and the *kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制 (the "exo-esoteric system," an important group of religious institutions regarded as the depository of orthodoxy), concurred in the maintenance of a critical and dynamic balance of power. The ideological, conceptual, and ritual framework of medieval Japanese culture was provided mainly by elaborations of the *kenmitsu* religious institu-

tions, elaborations that Kuroda calls "exo-esotericism" (*kenmitsu-shugi* 顕密主義). This political and ideological system of medieval Japan began to decline at the end of the Kamakura period as a result of radical social changes, but extended its influence until the end of the sixteenth century.[4]

Needless to say, at the core of the *shinkoku* discursive field lies the idea that Japan is the land of the kami. This statement appears for the first time in the *Nihonshoki*, and recurs in countless texts and documents starting from the end of the Heian period throughout subsequent Japanese history until the end of World War II. However, the fact that the same term is used (*shinkoku* or similar expressions such as *shinmei no kuni* 神明の国, "the land of the deities") does not mean that the same concept is always being referred to, a concept related—as many scholars would have it—to the supremacy of the emperor, the autochthonous nature of "Shinto," and so forth. Kuroda shows that the *shinkoku* idea, however vague, presented a remarkable complexity. The concepts of kami and *kuni* 国 (territory) and the intellectual framework in which they operated, all changed dramatically in the course of history. Kuroda focuses on the medieval *shinkoku* discourse because it was an essential part of medieval Japanese culture and society, inextricably related to medieval modes of understanding, logic, religious and political thought, and power relations.

In this sense, I believe that early modern and modern usages of the term are necessarily anachronisms—mystified and reactionary attempts to repropose an ordering of the world and society already dissolved centuries ago. In addition, the usages of the term in recent Japanese history were blind to the historical conditions of medieval Japan that determined the development of the *shinkoku* discourse, and pointed instead to a supposedly original condition of sacredness and order. However, it is clear from Kuroda's treatment that even in medieval Japan the *shinkoku* discourse proposed a mystified vision of an original condition. In the vision presented, more or less explicitly, in most *shinkoku* texts, the emperor was a direct descendant of the kami, the kami were clearly visible in the territory and the environment, and the people were "docile" because aware of the fundamental "harmony" that connected them to the source of authority; moreover, "Japan" had a clearly dominant and proto-imperialistic role in East Asia.

Thus we could say that the *shinkoku* discourse was, from the very beginning, an active mis-remembering of the history of the Japanese

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[4] On the changes that occurred in medieval Japan beginning around the beginning of the fourteenth century, see AMINO 1990 and 1991. These changes were related to the decline of the social and ideological order of which *kenmitsu* religious institutions were an organic and essential component.

archipelago, in the sense that it selected certain events and certain ideas and framed them within a certain ideological structure in order to produce a distorted vision of the past upon which a cultural identity and a system of domination could be built. Kuroda explains that the reactionary *shinkoku* discourse remained remarkably unchanged in nature throughout the history of Japan (KURODA 1975, pp. 323, 326–7, and passim). However, more recently SATŌ Hiroo (1995a) has shown the archaic vision of *shinkoku* found in the *Nihonshoki* to have been notably different from medieval constructs of it. In any case, subsequent changes in the *shinkoku* discourse (late Muromachi, Edo, and post-Meiji) still need to be analyzed in detail.[5]

For a Genealogy of Reactionary State Ideology in Modern Japan

For Kuroda the *shinkoku* concept is important because it constitutes the core of modern Japanese forms of totalitarianism, imperialism, and ultranationalism. In this sense, Kuroda's interest in the Japanese past is deeply rooted in contemporary concerns. The mystifications of the totalitarian regime that dominated Japan until the end of World War II can be unveiled through an accurate historical reconstruction of the concepts and practices that it employed. Kuroda engaged in a study of a vast array of primary sources. In so doing, he revealed as mystified fictions the Japanese cultural definitions based on the idea that Japan is the land of the kami or a kind of "sacred land." Kuroda was thus able to reconstruct, in a way that reminds one of Michel Foucault's genealogical project, the context of occurrence of that discourse during the middle ages, as a key to understanding its later development in the Edo period and in Meiji and post-Meiji Japan.

The novelty and interest of Kuroda's method lie precisely in its interpretive approach. Kuroda, unlike most scholars before him, did not concern himself solely with doctrinal debates or with disembodied ideas based on the small number of texts that an academic establishment at the service of conservative or reactionary forces had defined

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[5] For KURODA, the rapid decline of the aristocracy (the class that controlled the production of the *shinkoku* discourse) after the Ōnin disturbance in the late fifteenth century was followed by a change in the *shinkoku* discourse, owing particularly to its separation from Buddhism and adoption of Neoconfucianist thought. This new form of *shinkoku* discourse was not, however, essentially different from the earlier one (1975, p. 323). The *shinkoku* discourse contributed to the production of Confucian forms of Shinto during the Edo period, influenced the reactionary Shinto (*fukko shintō* 復古神道) of the Nativists, and eventually became part of State Shinto (*kokka shintō* 国家神道) during the Meiji regime. Kuroda underscores that, although in this process of change Buddhism was repressed and excluded, early modern and modern forms of *shinkoku* were not different, in their conceptual essence, from the medieval *shinkoku* discourse (KURODA 1975, pp. 326–27).

as "classics." To borrow the words of Dominick LaCapra, Kuroda does not take "the perspective of a social history that inquires into the uses of texts for the empirical reconstruction of past society but...the distinctive perspective of an intellectual history that inquires into the relationship between social processes and the interpretation of texts" (1983, p. 51). In line with this Kuroda rejected the standard view of *shinkoku* ideology as a self-evident and well-defined conceptual entity related to supposedly authochtonous and originally Japanese visions of the cosmos, religion, and imperial authority. KURODA dismissed such an approach for its tendency to study the *shinkoku* discourse "in isolation rather than in the context of the various historical factors with which it was inseparably linked" (see above, p. 353). His approach was to expand vertiginously the field of inquiry, underscoring the fact that the *shinkoku* discourse should be understood in relation to the religious history of medieval Japan in its totality, and not only in relation to developments in so-called "Shinto." In Kuroda's treatment the *shinkoku* concept transcends the sectarian boundaries of traditional historical scholarship, and the received notion of Shinto is thoroughly criticized and rewritten.

Kuroda shows that the *shinkoku* discursive field emerged within a complex cultural and social situation as a function of several interconnected factors: the consolidation of the exo-esoteric (*kenmitsu*) religious system and the social tensions related to it; the development at several sacerdotal centers of so-called Shinto doctrines aimed at reinforcing the ideological control of the exo-esoteric institutions; and the complex redistribution of power and authority that thus ensued. The *shinkoku* discourse assumed from the beginning a reactionary nature, both in theory and practice. It was reactionary in theory in that it pointed back to a mythical origin of Japan (as the ultimate place of the exo-esoteric system); it was reactionary in practice in that it was used to prevent social change and preserve the multi-centered system of rule (*kenmon taisei*), of which the exo-esoteric system constituted the religious, cosmological, and ideological pillar. Kuroda emphasized the social, ideological, and intellectual roles of the local-deity cults (*jingi sūhai* 神祇崇拝) as essential for our understanding of the *shinkoku* discourse. The kami cults appear to be far less "natural" and part of the "Japanese ethos" than received scholarship would have us believe.

Kuroda dismantled received views of Shinto and Buddhism in Japan, and of their relations with the *shinkoku* discourse. Kuroda began by locating Shinto, on the basis of a thorough analysis of various documents, within the exo-esoteric doctrinal framework; next he proved that the *shinkoku* concept developed as a part of the general

kenmitsu conceptual and ritual framework (visions of the cosmos, of salvation, of power, and so forth). Kuroda also systematically critiqued the received interpretation of the *shinkoku* discourse as a manifestation of the national consciousness of the Japanese people at large. According to this classical view, there was a national consciousness in medieval Japan of virtually the same order as the modern nation-state consciousness. This was triggered by both internal and external causes: internally by the "rediscovery" of autochthonous and originally Japanese forms of belief (an allegedly "pure" Shinto), and by related accounts of Japan as centered on the figure of an emperor envisioned as the divine descendant of the kami; and externally by the threat of the Mongol invasions, which further strengthened Japanese feelings concerning their own identity.

In his systematic critique Kuroda denounced the conflation of traditional accounts of the *shinkoku* concept with post-Meiji "national Shinto" (*kokka shintō* 国家神道) and the imperial system (*tennōsei* 天皇制). He also exposed the ideological implications of the traditional vision of the *shinkoku* discourse presented above. For Kuroda, this discourse was in fact an ideology of domination that stressed the existence of an original, uncontaminated Japanese essence, an essence to be found in Shinto beliefs and practices centered on the role of the emperor as a divine figure. Japan at large was described as a sacred land, and its inhabitants as sharing the divine nature of their emperor and of the kami protecting the country. Interestingly enough, many of these exclusivistic and potentially racist assumptions are still present in much popular and political imagery today, as well as in important sectors of the study of Japanese religion and culture, emphasizing an alleged "uniqueness" of Japan based in one way or another on an ahistorical "Shinto" (see KATŌ 1979–83 and KITAGAWA 1969). This fact is a matter of concern, and the significance of Kuroda Toshio's contribution to the demystification of this ideological position cannot be overestimated. In the following pages I shall present a more detailed picture of Kuroda's treatment of the *shinkoku* discourse, pointing out some controversial aspects and referring to more recent scholarship that sheds new light on the issues dealt with by Kuroda.

Characteristics of the Shinkoku Discourse: Space, Time, Divinity, the State, and Salvation

Kuroda emphasizes that the *shinkoku* concept was neither a purely religious nor a purely political idea, but an essentially religious discursive field in which religious themes intersected with political ideol-

ogy.[6] This is why it must be studied not as an isolated conceptual formation, but within the wider context of the intellectual world of medieval Japan. The *shinkoku* discourse presupposes notions of space and territory (drawn mainly from Buddhist cosmology and geography), time (derived from the Buddhist doctrine of the three ages of the Dharma), the status and role of the deities (interpreted in light of Indian and Chinese notions, in particular the doctrine of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹), the state (based on a distorted knowledge of the international situation), and salvation (expressed in Buddhist terms).

The *shinkoku* discourse showed an interesting development between its first occurrences during the early Heian period and its more mature medieval forms. The term *shinkoku* starts appearing as a frequent attribute of the word "Nippon" from the Insei era at the end of the Heian period. Prior to this, a sporadic appearance in the *Nihon shoki* was followed by mentions in several documents dated 869–70, during the reign of Emperor Seiwa (r. 858–76). In those years, two ships from Silla landed in Kyūshū and sacked areas of the island; meanwhile, earthquakes and natural calamities occurred in several provinces. In the episteme of the time, these events were understood as clear signs of a cosmic disorder that could destroy the country. The court took military measures and ordered temples and shrines throughout Japan to perform rituals of protection. Envoys were dispatched by the emperor to Ise, Iwashimizu, and Usa Hachiman to petition the deities there to restore peace to the country. In these prayers, expressions referring to Japan as *shinmei no kuni* or *shinkoku* appear sporadically.

These early usages of the concept are strikingly different from their medieval counterparts. The term *kokka* 国家 (read *mikado* at the time) as it appears in the documents referred not to the "state" but rather to the emperor, the imperial clan, and the imperial lineage—meaning, almost literally, "the clan ruling the country." These documents show that, in the ancient usage of the term, "land of the kami" referred primarily to the protection given by the kami to the emperor (SATŌ 1995a, p. 13). At this early stage the concept of *shinkoku,* as SATŌ has pointed out (1995a, pp. 13–14), did not contain Buddhist elements: the kami are never described as manifestations of buddhas, nor were Buddhist rituals ever performed for them. Rather, the kami were those described in the myths recounted in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon*

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[6] As shown by previous scholarship, the term *shinkoku* basically refers to two different but related concepts: Japan as ruled by the descendants of the kami, and Japan as protected by the kami. See for example TAMURA 1957 (quoted in KURODA 1975, p. 257); see also SATŌ 1995a and SAKURAI 1993.

shoki, closely related to the rule of the Yamato sovereigns. The concept of "Japan" itself was rather vague. The word *kuni* probably referred to the land under the jurisdiction of the emperor, as stipulated in the Ritsuryō legal system. Moreover, detailed definitions of the sacred nature of territory and connections between the deities and particular sites—features that typified medieval religiosity and the medieval ideology of domination—are completely absent. Still, it is interesting to note that foreign invasions were placed in the same class of phenomena as natural calamities, with both being viewed as dangerous irruptions of chaos in the dimension of orderly imperial rule. According to this mode of thought, foreigners, strangers, and those who in general did not belong to the center were perceived as frightening agents of disruption, if not real monsters (*oni*). This vision of otherness governed official interactions with foreigners throughout most of premodern Japan (MURAI 1982), operating also on the level of the village communities.[7]

In the medieval era the situation changed. A new type of *shinkoku* discourse appeared in the Insei era that did not deal with a particular set of kami, but rather concerned itself with the totality of the Japanese deities (SATŌ 1995a, p. 14). The kami were conceived of in terms of the Buddhist combinatory doctrines and practices known as *honji suijaku,* and, despite their differences, were all attributed functions of "protecting the country" (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家), which was one of the main ideological features of ancient and medieval Japanese Buddhism. The term *kokka* no longer designated the imperial clan, but rather the area of the Japanese archipelago controlled by the *kenmon* power centers—that is, the "country" variously called Yamato, Hinomoto, or Nippon. However, as Kuroda himself points out, one should be cautious in considering medieval Japan as a state, or nation-state, in the modern sense, as certain scholars have attempted to do. Recent studies have shown that the medieval term "Nippon" was much more vague than is generally realized today, and hence that notions of a medieval Japanese "state," or even "Japan" should be problematized and relativized (see AMINO 1990, pp. 5–20).

Although in the medieval *shinkoku* discourse the "divine land" concept referred to the totality of Japan (however vague that notion was), the country was envisioned as a patchwork of several concrete territories, each controlled by certain deities conceived of as manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas. These lands were considered to be either "domains of the kami" (*shinryō* 神領) or "Buddha-lands" (*butsudo*

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[7] Seminal studies on these issues are those of YAMAGUCHI Masao (1975 and 1980). See also KOMATSU 1986. On the social marginality of *oni,* see KOMATSU and NAITŌ 1985.

仏土).[8] Thus the idea developed that all of Japan was sacred, for everywhere in Japan buddhas and bodhisattvas manifested themselves in one form or another: "Plants and trees and the land, mountains, rivers, and swamps, the earth and the sky—there is no place where the manifestation of traces [of buddhas and bodhisattvas] (*suijaku*) and the softening of the light [of the deities] (*wakō* 和光) does not occur."[9] This idea is obviously related to the medieval discourse on the Buddhahood of plants (*sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成仏), which, contrary to current interpretations, was a manifestation not of Buddhist ecological thought but of the *kenmitsu* institutions' ideology of domination (see RAMBELLI 1993, pp. 191–209). This vision determined numerous ideas and practices of sacralization, in a process that I call "generalized mandalization."

Kuroda also showed that the *shinkoku* discourse presupposed the location of Japan within the Buddhist cosmology centered on Mount Sumeru (Shumisen 須彌山). In the medieval vision, Japan was a small, marginal archipelago in the Eastern Ocean, east of the southern continent of Jambudvīpa (Nansenbushū 南贍部州). The discourse of the sacrality of Japan implied and was rooted in an understanding of Buddhist cosmology and cosmography, as well as in notions concerning other countries as described in the Buddhist texts. Particularly important was the intellectual framework provided by the schema of the Three Countries (*sangoku* 三国). The Three Countries, respectively India (Tenjiku 天竺), China (Shintan 震旦), and Japan (Honchō 本朝 or Dainipponkoku 大日本国), represent a sort of distillate of Buddhist cosmology, based on Buddhism's route of diffusion.[10]

Scholars dealing with issues of cultural identity in medieval Japan usually focus on relations with China, and recently, with the Korean peninsula (see MURAI 1982 and 1988). The received image is that of a history of alternating phases of openness and closure, in which China constitutes for the Japanese sometimes the model to imitate, sometimes the example from which to distance themselves (see KATŌ 1979–1983). China often lay in the background of Japanese cultural formations, either as a negative force or as the rational element on which the ineffability of the Japanese national character was built (POLLACK 1985). This latter vision, combining Roland BARTHES's (1982) sketch

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[8] On the conceptions of sacred land in medieval Japan, see in particular SATŌ 1987 (esp. pp. 15–46), 1995a, and 1995b. See also RAMBELLI 1996a.

[9] *Kamakura ibun* 5:323 (quoted in KURODA 1975, p. 271).

[10] On the imagery of the Three Countries as presented in medieval texts such as Gyōnen's *Sangoku buppō denzū engi* 三国仏法伝通縁起 and *Hasshū kōyō* 八宗綱要, and its early modern transformations, see KETELAAR 1991. Significantly, the states of the Korean peninsula were not part of this schema, despite their continuous relations with Japan.

of Japanese culture with *Nihonjinron* exclusivist positions, is just a variant of modern nativist ideologies of cultural identity that present Japaneseness as an ineffable spiritual dynamic that organizes foreign techniques/technologies, be they Buddhist, Chinese/ Korean, or Western in origin. They thus reproduce the old schema of *wakon kansai* 和魂漢才, "Yamato spirit and Chinese technology," which later became *wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才, "Yamato spirit and Western technology."

I would like to emphasize that medieval cultural definitions compared Japan not only with China but also with a third entity, India (Tenjiku), on which the superiority and uniqueness of Japan was grounded. Religious institutions presented Japan, "a small country like millet seeds dispersed" (*zokuhensankoku* 粟辺散国) in the vast Eastern Ocean of Jambudvīpa, as a reproduction of India, the original land of the Buddha: mountains were identified with the Vulture Peak, gardens with the Jetavana Grove, and temples with places were the Buddha lived and preached. It was the combinatory and correlative logic of *honji suijaku* that allowed this identification of Japan with the sacred country par excellence, India. In due time the sacrality of Japan was stressed to a greater degree, with the result that *kenmitsu* or post-*kenmitsu* theoreticians started considering Japan as *superior* to India, thus reversing the *hon-jaku* relation in the discourse of cultural geography. By the fifteenth century, Japan had become in the minds of nationalistic theorists the center of the world, the place from which the sacred power originally emanated and subsequently reached the other countries. This process of the "Indianization" of Japan, closely associated with the generalized mandalization that constructed medieval Japan and the *kenmitsu* social order as a sacred entity, has never been studied in depth; nevertheless Kuroda deserves credit for having pointed out the presence of India (Tenjiku) in the construction of medieval Japan as the land of the kami.[11]

Kuroda also emphasized that the *shinkoku* discourse presupposed a Buddhist concept of time. The land of the kami was not only a small archipelago, spatially marginal to the development of Buddhist history; it was also a place where Buddhism arrived when the Dharma had entered its Final Age (*mappō matsudai* 末法末代). Buddhism therefore needed to be adapted to the particular characteristics of the place, time, and the people in order to be salvationally effective.[12] Current

[11] Despite the lack of direct contacts between Japan and India, a rather impressive knowledge of the land of the Buddha was available to the premodern Japanese, scattered in several Buddhist and Chinese texts, as Hirata Atsutane showed in his *Indo zōshi* 印度蔵志. Although many of these data were inaccurate or false, still the "imaginary of India" in premodern Japan was an important feature of Japanese culture, and one that deserves scrutiny. I am indebted to Iyanaga Nobumi for drawing my attention to these issues.

[12] According to an early theory, the Final Age of the Dharma began in 552, the very

understanding of the impact of the *mappō* concept is essentially a modern, post-Meiji construct. As Hayami Tasuku has shown, *mappō* was not generally understood during the Heian and Kamakura periods as the end of Buddhism, nor did it imply that *kenmitsu* institutions and doctrines were no longer effective. On the contrary, such traditional *kenmitsu* devotional practices as donating to religious institutions, constructing temples and sacred images, copying sūtras, and so forth had to be increased and intensified.[13] I believe that "orthodox" religious institutions exploited the doctrine of *mappō* through a clever marketing operation in order to diffuse among the populace new religious ideas and practices, which mainly related to the idea that salvation was difficult and could be ensured only through the proliferation of donations, sacred signs of the presence of the Buddha (temples, images, texts, rituals), and ritual activities (in particular funeral rites and postmortem accumulations of merit).[14] The *shinkoku* discourse was part of this huge religious marketing operation that attempted to cope with the historical situation represented by the Final Age of the Dharma. As SATŌ has shown (1995a, note 21), *shinkoku* discourse also addressed questions concerning what kind of activities and what kind of salvation were possible in the marginal land of Japan, far away from the source of Buddhism, in a time when the Buddha-Dharma was weak and people were hard to convert.

Another important source of the *shinkoku* discourse was the Buddhist doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚). In his research, KURODA has brought to light the cultural and ideological role of these doctrines in medieval Japan, and pointed to their position within the *kenmitsu taisei* as an organic part of esoteric Buddhism (1975, pp. 443–47). The doctrine of original enlightenment provided an ontological ground for the kami, the territory, and human beings in the world, and allowed for the general mandalization of Japan, an operation that had a deep impact on the everyday life of the Japanese.

same year that Buddhism entered Japan; the most influential theory, however, situated the beginning of *mappō* in 1052.

[13] This was the position of the heterodox/reformist movements, such as those of Hōnen and Shinran. Those movements attempted to radically undermine the conceptual basis of the *kenmitsu taisei*, but did not have a large following until after the Nanbokuchō era. However, post-Meiji scholarship has made of them the representatives of medieval Japanese Buddhism, thus misrepresenting the actual intellectual structure and power relations in the religious field in medieval Japan.

[14] On "religious marketing," see RAMBELLI 1995b. The Japanese traditions of esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*), in particular the Shingon school, tended to minimize the effects of *mappō*. As the supreme and unconditioned teachings of the Buddha Mahāvairocana, they were independent from historical, geographical, or human conditions. This vision, in which the *mappō* affected only the exoteric traditions, was used as an instrument to convert the common people. On the nature of the esoteric teachings, see RAMBELLI 1994.

Kuroda presented evidence that access to *hongaku* doctrines were not limited to a few initiated, but circulated in various forms among the people at large and helped shape medieval Japanese mentalities. Nevertheless, the nature of *hongaku* thought's impact remains an important question requiring further research in several directions.[15]

At an initiatory level the *shinkoku* discourse denied the doctrine of *mappō* as an exoteric, partial truth. This was a result of the esoteric vision of the territory, in which the present land is in fact the Pure Land of Esoteric Splendor (Mitsugon Jōdo) described in Tantric texts. According to the common *kenmitsu* formulation, the everyday world is unconditioned, and Japan as envisioned by the *kenmitsu* elites is the Pure Land. All those who live there are saved, provided they follow the instructions of the religious and secular institutions. Everyday activities, thoughts, and passions testify to enlightenment. *Shinkoku* discourse thus holds that all Japanese are kami, or, at least, share the divine nature of the kami; in this sense *shinkoku* discourse paralleled the esoteric doctrine of original enlightenment, according to which all Buddhists are buddhas and part of the unconditioned Realm of Essence (*hokkai* 法界).

There is thus a flaw in the received vision of the development of Pure Land thought and practice as a way to overcome the soteric difficulties of the Japanese living in their marginal land during the Final Age of the Dharma. In fact, the notions of the *mappō* and of Japan's marginality in the Buddhist world system were actively employed in the medieval *shinkoku* discourse as the *kenmitsu* establishment strove to develop new religious markets (see RAMBELLI 1996b). It is precisely because Japan was marginal and its people evil that the buddhas had to manifest themselves in the forms of violent kami endowed with the power to convert and save particularly ignorant people in hard times. We can see here the complex interrelationship connecting the *shinkoku* discourse; the ideology of territory and the state; the location of Japan within Buddhist cosmology; the doctrines and practices of *honji suijaku*; visions of salvation; and power relations within the medieval Japanese state.

Kuroda explains in detail all of the above relationships, and shows that the *shinkoku* discourse had several ideological functions in medieval Japan. It was primarily the ideology of the manorial (*shōen*) system; secondly, it was an instrument of the *kenmitsu* establishment against

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[15] The studies of *hongaku* doctrines by SHIMAJI Daitō (esp. 1929), and TAMURA Yoshirō (esp. 1991) are doubtless very important. However, besides the fact that they limit themselves to the Tendai versions, their basic perspective on the history of ideas renders them unable to locate the impact of these doctrines on the history of Japanese mentalities and on social history.

new and "heretical" religious movements; thirdly, it played an important role in the formation of a concept of state and in the structuring of knowledge concerning the international situation. In the following pages I shall briefly outline Kuroda's treatment of each of these points.

Kuroda argues that the *shinkoku* discourse has always been conscious of its political nature as an instrument for religious legitimization of political authority. It emerged as a reactionary mode of thought when the feudal system based on *shōen* manors began to collapse, and was used in order to provide a religious defense of this system's principles. As such, it played an active role in the domination of the peasants by the manorial lords and in the repression of new social tendencies, seriously hindering the possibility of liberation from the feudal mode of production.[16] The *shinkoku* discourse, as it was deployed in countless texts belonging to both "high" and "popular" culture, presented the feudal ordering of things as the paradise in this world. Reality, however, was much different, as continuous warfare, endemic diseases, famines, and heavy taxation kept the majority of the populace barely at the level of survival. The peasants reacted empirically against the mystifications of *shinkoku*: the continuous presence throughout the middle ages of movements against the cult of the kami clearly indicates the contradictions and the weaknesses in the *shinkoku* discourse (KURODA 1975, p. 322).

Shinkoku and the Cults for the Deities of Heaven and Earth (Jingi sūhai)

Kuroda held that in order to understand the relations between the *shinkoku* discourse and the medieval Japanese state it is first necessary to examine the sociopolitical nature of the coeval cults of the deities of heaven and earth (*jingi sūhai*). As mentioned above, Kuroda stressed that the multifarious cults and beliefs dedicated to various deities, commonly known as "Shinto," did not constitute a coherent and unified "religion" typical of and original to Japan, and endowed with an ahistorical nature (KURODA 1975, p. 262). On the contrary, numerous doctrines on the kami developed from the end of the Heian period as an integral part of the *kenmitsu taisei*. Far from being a native expression of Japanese culture and spirituality, they were the result of complex combinations and correlations of several intellectual and ritual systems (KURODA 1981, pp. 1–21).

But more importantly, Kuroda showed that the kami cults were not

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[16] SATŌ has recently presented a different interpretation of the role of the *shinkoku* discourse (see "Conclusion," 1995a).

the "Japanese popular religion" in the sense of being embraced by the entire Japanese populace, as traditional scholarship maintains. On the contrary, the religious history of medieval Japan is filled with cases of disbelief and open rejection of them. Although Kuroda never explicitly stated so, it would seem that the organized kami cults were imposed from above as an instrument of domination by the *kenmitsu* institutions, and thus, indirectly, by the medieval state. Local forms of cult served to reinforce power relations and the social structure within peasant communities, and were probably unrelated to the major centers of influence (*kenmon*). In this sense, Shinto beliefs, far from being original and autochthonous to Japan, appear to be a more recent, medieval construct, artificially created on the base of Indian, Chinese, and local traditions as instruments of domination and social control.

Medieval Japanese religiosity was a field of struggle and contestation. It does not present a bucolic picture of peaceful life in the ancestral village, where human beings dwelt in harmony with the kami, as most studies influenced by nativism or neo-nativist ethnography would have us believe. People reacted and even rebelled against the imposition of new forms of cult aimed at subjugating them under the *kenmitsu taisei*. Movements against the *kenmitsu* kami cults are generally grouped by scholars under the label *jingi fuhai* 神祇不拝, "refusal to venerate the deities." Kuroda was probably the first to understand the social importance of those tendencies and to address them in his studies. What follows is a brief introduction to Kuroda's treatment of the *jingi fuhai* movements, which he considers one of the most striking phenomena in the religious history of medieval Japan (KURODA 1975, p. 258). These movements are relevant to our discussion in that the *shinkoku* discourse developed at precisely the time of the upsurge in these popular movements explicitly advocating disbelief and blasphemy.

Tendencies towards disbelief were not limited to a single group or sect, but were diffused throughout the whole of Japanese society (KURODA 1975, p. 260). Movements against the kami cults first became part of general, public discourse toward the end of the eleventh century with the diffusion of Hōnen's 法然 *senju nenbutsu*, and later with the formation and development of Shinran's 親鸞 movement. Although little proof exists that Hōnen and Shinran openly supported disbelief in the kami, it is clear that they never encouraged the cult of the *kenmitsu* deities. In any case, the "real intentions" of Hōnen and Shinran notwithstanding, their followers had a strong inclination toward this rejection of the kami, an inclination that sometimes took violent forms (see SATŌ 1987; TAIRA 1991).

In this respect it is important to note that *jingi fuhai* was not the result of misunderstandings of Hōnen's and Shinran's teachings by

uneducated followers; on the contrary, the reformers' radical logic expressed in dramatic terms specific contemporaneous social needs and attitudes. In particular, the iconoclastic movements indicated the emergence of tendencies in medieval Japanese society opposed to the hegemony of the *kenmitsu taisei*. Several documents testify to the continuous presence of such tendencies,[17] despite the efforts of the *kenmitsu* establishment and Shinshū 真宗 ideologues to sanitize and minimize the problem. The phenomenon of disbelief and active or passive subversion against religious institutions in medieval Japan is one of enormous importance; Kuroda focuses exclusively on the Pure Land tradition, thus leaving open the questions of whether there were *jingi fuhai* movements or tendencies in other sectarian traditions or in groups without clear religious affiliations, and of what the characteristics of such movements may have been. In any case, Kuroda's treatment paved the way for a radical revision of the position in medieval Japan religious history of the Pure Land movements of Hōnen and Shinran. Far from being embodiments of the simple religious needs of the Japanese people,[18] they represented a radical initiative that borrowed a religious vocabulary while carrying out a political agenda aimed at revolutionizing power relations and institutional structures of the medieval order.

Nevertheless, the force and pervasiveness of the vague and reactionary *shinkoku* discourse was such that it was able to infiltrate even its most strenuous sources of opposition. Kuroda recognized the *ikkō ikki* 一向一揆 (Shinshū-related peasant uprisings), for example, as a typical reaction against the *shinkoku* discourse, insofar as they rebelled against the dominant classes and their deities. Yet their desire for a feudal realization of Amida's Pure Land in this world, "the manorial land of the Buddha" (*buppōryō* 仏法領) as they called it, showed a strong similarity with the dominant forms of the *shinkoku* discourse (KURODA 1975, p. 322).

All of this clarifies why the medieval *shinkoku* discourse developed in response to the contemporaneous social reality. It provided a strong alternative to the *jingi fuhai* movements, which were threatening the very basis of the *kenmitsu taisei*, while at the same time proposing new

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[17] KURODA lists letters of Shinran, the *Shasekishū* 沙石集, various Shinshū texts, the *Tengu zōshi* 天狗草紙, and the *Nomori kagami* 野守鏡 (1975, p. 259).

[18] According to Joseph KITAGAWA, for instance, "the Kamakura period was marked by the rejection of the artificial culture delicately concocted by courtiers and clergy, in favor of a more natural spirit and indigenous forms of culture and society" (1969, p. 88). Later, Kitagawa quotes Anesaki Masaharu: "The Buddhist religion of the new age [Kamakura] was not one of ceremonies and mysteries but a religion of simple piety or of spiritual exercise" (1969, pp. 109–10).

forms of kami belief different from the ancient ones. In other words, whereas the ancient *shinkoku* discourse was used to justify politics on the basis of the will of the kami, the medieval discourse took the shape of a reactionary politico-religious response to the popular movements against the kami. In this respect the *honji suijaku* doctrine, which lay at the core of the *shinkoku* discourse, was the conscious, reactionary response of the religious establishment to the *jingi fuhai* movements. The critique of *jingi fuhai* did not operate from a purely theoretical point of view, for it was invested with issues relating to imperial and state authority, as well as to the role of the *kenmitsu taisei*, as is evident in the *Kōfuku-ji sōjō* 興福寺奏状.[19] This bears further testimony to the fact that the kami cults were neither spontaneous nor autochthonous, but explicitly theorized and developed by the Buddhist establishment. In this context, the major "Shinto" shrines could not exist on the basis of simple and primitive beliefs, and were forced to undergo a rationalization in Buddhist terms. It is thus clear that the medieval *shinkoku* discourse was more or less explicitly the result of Buddhist theories, in particular *honji suijaku* and the doctrine of original enlightenment (KURODA 1975, p. 261).

On the other hand, the process of hegemonic formation in which the *kenmitsu* system was involved implied the negotiation of elite and popular concepts and practices. The result was what Kuroda calls a "vulgarization" of Mahāyāna to make it more compatible with simple cults and beliefs in the Japanese countryside. In this way, *shinkoku* ideology spread and served as a means to better control the vast *shōen* domains belonging to *kenmitsu* institutions.

Shinkoku and the Ideology of the Shōen Manorial System

According to Kuroda, the *shinkoku* discourse was also an organic element of *kenmitsu* "Shinto," and was used primarily as a reactionary ideology of land control by the manorial authorities. Kuroda shows that cults and beliefs related to the deities varied according to the social position of the "believers"—landholders (*ryōshu* 領主) and peasants (*hyakushō* 百姓) had different shrines for different purposes. Also, very often the communal shrine for *shōen* agrarian rites was reformulated as the place where a buddha or a bodhisattva manifested its traces (*suijaku*) (KURODA 1975, pp. 262–66). In this way *kenmitsu* institutions spread their presence among the rural populace, appropriating and redefining social practices and forms of belief.

[19] See English translation in MORRELL 1987, pp. 66–88.

What is particularly interesting here is the concrete, material aspect of the *shinkoku* discourse. As Kuroda pointed out, and Satō Hiroo further elaborated, the *shinkoku* concept was not an abstract notion of territory, for it was deeply rooted in the medieval manorial system—in its *imaginaire* and its social practices. The development of the *shinkoku* discourse paralleled that of the *shōen* system and its landholder class (*ryōshu*). This is to be expected, given the active role of the *kenmitsu* institutions (responsible for the production of the discourse) in the *shōen* system—temples relied for their survival upon the acquisition and management of manors (see SATŌ 1987, TAIRA 1991, HAYAMI 1986). Thus one is not surprised to see the kami defined in several medieval documents and *engimono* texts as the "landholders" (*ryōshu* or *jinushi* 地主) of certain sacred places: Kōyasan is said to be "owned" by Niu Myōjin 丹生明神 (*Heian ibun,* no. 431; quoted in KURODA 1975, p. 266), and Hieizan by Sannō 山王. More interestingly, the buddhas and kami were also made the landholders of numerous secular *shōen*, which in this way became "sacred lands"—more precisely, *shinkoku* or *butsudo*.[20] Since the *honji suijaku* doctrines envision the kami as manifestations of particular levels of awakening, the *shinkoku* (as referring to a specific territory belonging to a shrine) became concrete manifestations of the esoteric Pure Land and of the related soteric ideal of *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏 (becoming Buddha in this very body) (KURODA 1975, p. 266). The most influential sacerdotal centers magnified the importance of their deities; thus the *Keiran shūyōshū* 渓嵐拾葉集 and the *Yōtenki* 耀天記 present Sannō, the *gongen* landlord of Hie, as the "landlord of Japan" and the father of Tenshō Daijin 天照大神 (the way in which the name of the deity of Ise was read in medieval Japan; KURODA 1975, p. 290). Similar claims occur also in the texts of so-called Ise Shinto. In this manner, says Kuroda, the idea that Japan is the land of the kami was the result of an expansion of Sannō Shinto, Ryōbu Shinto, and Ise Shinto doctrines envisioning Tenshō Daijin as the landlord of Japan—doctrines based on concrete social and historical factors concerned with control over land (KURODA 1975, p. 266). This is another example of how the new social and economical order that developed in medieval Japan was explained by the *kenmitsu* institutions in cosmological and religious terms. Tenshō Daijin was described as the top of a network of local kami—each a landholder in its own right—that protected the country and the people.[21] Obviously, each sacerdotal center situated its own

[20] On the ideology of territory belonging to religious institutions, see SATŌ 1987, 1995a, and 1995b.

[21] See the section "Sannō no koto" in *Yōtenki,* HANAWA 1972a, pp. 601–2.

deities in a particular relation with Tenshō Daijin. This is the way in which the *shinkoku* concept was explained in medieval Japan, and its discursive regimen would be inconceivable without the existence of a manorial system (KURODA 1975, pp. 266–67).

Kuroda also makes clear that the *kenmitsu* institutions, owners of enormous landholdings, developed the *shinkoku* idea as a reactionary instrument to counter tendencies toward autonomy in the local village communities. He uses "reactionary" not in the sense that *shinkoku* discourse tried to preserve, or go back to, ancient systems, but that it reacted against the new social and intellectual situations developing in medieval Japan. For Kuroda the *shinkoku* discourse was doubly reactionary: on the one hand, it was a conservative reaction on a religious level against popular movements contesting the imposition of the kami cults as instruments of domination by the *kenmitsu* institutions and the state; on the other hand, it was an opportunistic response by the dominant institutions to the simple beliefs of the peasants, in that it tried to suppress upsurging tendencies toward local political and economic autonomy. Thus, concludes KURODA, the emphasis placed on Shinto by the *kenmitsu* institutions, and the ultimate development of so-called "anti-*honji-suijaku*" doctrines attributing more importance to "local" deities than to buddhas and bodhisattvas, is to be understood on the basis of the social dynamics of medieval Japan (1975, p. 268).

Shinkoku and the Principles of Legitimacy and Exclusion of the Kenmitsu Institutions

The *shinkoku* discourse functioned also as a regimen of social control for the exclusion of heretics and subversive elements that might menace the religious establishment (SATō 1995a, pp. 22–23). The system of the Eight Schools (*hasshū* 八宗), after its consolidation as the basis of the *kenmitsu taisei*, engaged itself in excluding all new sectarian denominations that arose in Japan (Jōdo 浄土, Shinshū, Nichiren 日蓮, Zen 禅, Jishū 時宗) by claiming legitimacy and orthodoxy uniquely for itself. Although the system eventually came to terms with most of the new Buddhist traditions and integrated them, some remained marginal until the Meiji period.

Hōnen's *senju nenbutsu*, and later the movement led by Shinran, constituted enormous threats to the doctrinal and ideological basis of the *kenmitsu* regime, thus menacing also the secular dimension of the *kenmitsu* religious institutions. The leading members of the major "orthodox" sects (Tendai, Shingon, Kegon, Hossō) were well aware of this, and issued several documents requesting the court and the

emperor to ban these movements as heretical and inimical to Buddhism and the kami, and therefore, to the state. The most famous of these petitions today is the above-mentioned *Kōfuku-ji sōjō*, compiled by Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213). These documents in general accused the followers of *senju nenbutsu* of "disrespecting the state" for not venerating the kami. The evil deeds of the groups practicing radical forms of *nenbutsu* were crimes against the laws of the land of the kami, and were therefore to be punished on the basis of the imperial law.[22]

Recourse to the *shinkoku* concept in order to delegitimize and exclude as heretic the new movements arising at the margins or outside of the *kenmitsu taisei* was very often purely ideological. Actually, most of the new forms of Buddhism (especially Rinzai Zen and Nichiren) were explicitly influenced by the *shinkoku* concept, and claimed to represent new and more powerful systems for the protection of the state—a function traditionally associated with the *kenmitsu* establishment. In this respect, Hōnen's *senju nenbutsu* movement was radically different. Its most prominent characteristic was a fundamental opposition to the *shinkoku* concept, to the *honji suijaku* doctrine, and to the related systems of domination. As such, it could provide a voice to peasant rebellions proposing a different model of power.

However, as Yamaguchi Masao, among others, has shown, mechanisms of exclusion operate for the consolidation of the ordered system (1975, 1980). The *shinkoku* discourse was no exception. When employed in order to exclude heretical and subversive elements from the *kenmitsu taisei*, it also proved useful in efforts to solve the violent disputes and confrontations that frequently arose between medieval religious institutions, in particular over matters of prestige, power, and territorial control.[23] Religious institutions formed the spiritual support of the medieval state based on the dialectic of *ōbō* and *buppō*; violent confrontations, should they escalate, could have shaken the foundations of social order and threatened the survival of the state.[24] Thus Satō suggests that the *shinkoku* concept was developed by the retired emperors (*in* 院) and their entourages and deployed in medieval Japan in order to surmount and harmonize the individual contrasts between religious institutions (1995a, p. 21). This is an important suggestion that deserves further inquiry as a clue for understanding the

[22] From a petition issued by Enryaku-ji asking for a ban on *senju nenbutsu*, in *Kamakura ibun* 5:3234. Jōkei's *Kōfuku-ji sōjō* presents similar arguments.

[23] For descriptions of modalities of such violent confrontations in medieval Japan, see Grapard 1992a, esp. pp. 137–41, and Keirstead 1992.

[24] This is why the *gōso* 強訴 (violent confrontations) were considered "matters of primary importance for the state" (*kokka daiji* 国家大事), issues whose solution had absolute priority (Satō 1995a, p. 21).

actual "authors," or rather, producers, of the *shinkoku* discourse.

Shinkoku and the Formation of State Consciousness in Medieval Japan

Traditional scholarship has presented the development of the *shin-koku* discourse as related to the emergence in medieval Japan of a state consciousness. As mentioned above, certain scholars have even claimed that the medieval idea of *shinkoku* was a manifestation of national consciousness on the same order as the modern nation-state consciousness. Kuroda, in addition to questioning the very possibility of a medieval state (and therefore of a national consciousness), emphasizes the importance of the East Asian international context in the formation of a "national identity" by the Japanese elites. In short, for Kuroda it is impossible to talk about a nation-state in medieval Japan, and the "state" is apparently reduced to "centers of influence" (*kenmon taisei*). The consciousness of being a "Japanese," as opposed to being a "Korean," "Chinese," "Indian," or, more generally, a "barbarian" (*emishi*) or even an "ogre" (*oni*), was therefore limited to the elites governing the *kenmon* centers of influence (see MURAI 1982; YAMAGUCHI 1975, 1980; KOMATSU 1986; and KOMATSU and NAITŌ 1985).

The peculiar characteristics that, according to the *shinkoku* discourse, differentiate Japan from all other countries thus result from both internal and external conditions. Whereas the former can be summarized as the need of the elites to strengthen the *kenmon* system in a time of major social change characterized by the presence of important oppositional movements, the latter concerns the knowledge (more or less direct, more or less accurate) of the international situation, which became a vital issue at the time of the Mongol invasions.

Concerning the first reaction of the Japanese government to the Mongols' request of surrender, in which Sugawara Naganari emphasized that "the realm of the [Japanese] emperors will always be called the 'land of the kami'," Kuroda writes that such a position was "obviously meaningless in the East Asian international context of the time" (KURODA 1975; see above, p. 380). However, it should be noticed that a synonym for *shinkoku* circulating also in Japan, namely *shinshū* 神州, had been used by the Chinese to refer to their country since its first occurrence in the *Book of History*. Interestingly, this term also referred to the land inhabited by Daoist immortals. In other words, the idea of the sacrality of the state, whatever its political status, was central to the Chinese world and lay at the basis of the dominant forms of pre-modern governmentality in the East Asian region. Kuroda seems to have overlooked this fact. The Japanese appropriated the notion and

modified it, perhaps exploiting the original ambiguity of the Chinese term as referring both to "visible" China and the invisible realm of the Immortals, to this world and a transcendent Elsewhere. In their usage, Japan was constructed as the Elsewhere of China, a paradisiac land of deities understood in Buddhist terms as manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Therefore, it is not true that, as Kuroda says, the Japanese claims that their country was a sacred realm were "meaningless" in the East Asian context of the time—this claim might have sounded ridiculous to the Mongols, but they knew all too well what the Japanese were talking about.

The period between the reception of the Mongol demand that Japan surrender or face invasion and the end of the Kamakura period was an extremely important one for the development of the Shinto doctrines and the *shinkoku* discourse. During this time the Japanese elites (the court, the bakufu, the religious institutions, and various individuals) engaged themselves in an unprecedented ritual frenzy, involving even the commoners, that was aimed at the "subjugation of the foreign enemy" (*tekikoku gōbuku* 敵国降伏) (see Aida 1958, chapter 3). The language, as it appears in prayers and invocations, was heavily loaded with such ideas as the divine origin of the emperor, the protection of the kami (particularly Tenshō Daijin), and the sacrality of the whole territory of Japan. One document, the *Kaibyakumon* 開白文, presented to Iwashimizu Hachiman 石清水八明 by Tōgon Ean of Shōden-ji, is especially representative of this discursive regimen, stating that "the Mongols are to us like a cat is to a lion"[25] and supporting its claims of Japanese superiority over all other countries with a rhetorical apparatus praising the bellic virtues personified by Empress Jingū 神功 and the deity Hachiman. The text also calls upon certain combinatory deities to penetrate the body of the Japanese and infuse them with good fortune and strength in battle, or to change themselves into clouds and wind, thunder and rain, in order to destroy the foreign enemy. Kuroda notes how at this stage the *shinkoku* discourse was not a manifestation of ethnic consciousness or patriotism, but a simple religious affirmation of the sacred nature of the territory, a belief that everything in Japan is filled with a divine power (called explicitly *suijaku*) able to defeat foreign invaders (1975, p. 271). Moreover, it is clear that this kind of language was employed because the members of the *kenmon* power centers were aware of their inability to resist invasion—their last resort was a desperate appeal to divine intervention. The sense of national superiority expressed in these texts was but a

[25] See the section "Kōkaku zenji kigan kaibyakumon" in the *Shōden-ji monjo* 正伝寺文書 (quoted in Kuroda 1975, p. 271).

form of religious fanaticism invoking the sacred nature of the territory, a concept that had been constructed by the *kenmitsu taisei* for the completely different reason of supporting its claims to land ownership (KURODA 1975, p. 273).

However, it should be emphasized that the ritual frenzy displayed on the occasion of the Mongol invasions was not a simple "religious" activity invoking supernatural intervention. Rather, it amounted to a huge campaign of normalization and propaganda aimed at reinforcing the declining *kenmon* system. A common base was found in the supposed superiority of "Japan," and in the *kenmon* elites' claim to represent the legitimate government of the "land of the kami."

This strategy of religious and ideological marketing was not immediately successful. Kuroda brings our attention to the fact that even the warriors directly involved in fighting the Mongols were concerned only with acquiring personal benefits (glory, prestige, land), and had no awareness of "national danger."[26] This shows rather well the elitist nature of the medieval *shinkoku* discourse. However, the unpredictability of the weather played in favor of the *kenmitsu* establishment. The typhoons that twice destroyed the Mongol fleets were interpreted by *kenmitsu* ideologues as *kamikaze*, divine storms sent by the kami in answer to the prayers, and were taken as proof of the active protection of the deities. The *shinkoku* discourse, at once an ideology of cultural self-definition and of domination, received important "empirical support." The idea of the *kamikaze*, or *jinpū*, was very popular, as can be inferred by the number of contemporary texts that mention it and cannot be reduced to a single author.[27] The *Nomori kagami* 野守鏡 even states that the foreign invasions were triggered by the Japanese kami as an *upāya* to strengthen the power of Buddhism during the Final Age. This interpretation aimed at "domesticating" the Mongols, making them an instrument of the Japanese ruling system through the mechanisms of purification and victimization ultimately grounded in esoteric Buddhist rituals.[28]

Kuroda notes that the Mongol invasions helped speed up social changes already under way in Japan. The *shinkoku* concept, now fully legitimated and widely circulating, was employed in the reaction of

[26] KURODA 1975, p. 274. Kuroda bases his argument, which appears already in his *Mōko shūrai* of 1965, primarily on the *Mōko shūrai ekotoba* 瞻古襲来絵詞 (also known as *Takesaki Gorō ekotoba* 竹崎五郎絵詞) (HANAWA 1972b).

[27] Among these texts, the *Hachiman gudōkin* 八明愚童訓 (in *Jisha engi*, SAKURAI et al, eds., 1975), the *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記, and the *Taiheiki* 鷲平記 are the most representative.

[28] The esoteric rituals of subjugation aim in fact at destroying the enemy, while at the same time reintegrating him as a protector of the system that he fought. The *goryō* cults are a good example of this cultural attitude. On the rituals of subjugation, see IYANAGA 1985.

the religious institutions as manorial centers against new feudal forces. The bakufu, in deep crisis because of land allotments and the general pauperization of its retainers, used the *shinkoku* discourse, as SATŌ suggests (1995a, pp. 23–24), to surmount private and local contrasts and strengthen its own role by producing a sense of "national" unity against a common foreign enemy.

In order to understand the relation between *shinkoku* discourse and political authority in the wider field of the relations between state and religion, one must first understand the medieval concept of state and its structure of power. As we have seen, the *shinkoku* discourse was closely related to the *kenmitsu taisei*, the orthodox religious apparatus of medieval Japan, traditionally responsible for the protection of the country (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家) through religious and ritual means. Kuroda explains as follows the differences in the vision of the state and of religion's role within it as presupposed by the two ideologies of *chingo kokka* and *shinkoku*.

In the original doctrines and practices of *chingo kokka*, religion (Buddhism) was not only objectively at the service of the state, but was subjectively conscious and proud of this fact. Even during the period of the Ritsuryō legal system this vision had several elements in common with the concept of a "sacred state" (*shinsei kokka* 神政国家) governed by the kami, in which religious rituals and political activities coincided (KURODA 1975, p. 305). In this system religion was at the service of politics, and in this sense *chingo kokka* thought typifies the ancient Japanese regime. However, there is an important difference between the political visions of the *shinsei kokka* and the *chingo kokka*. Whereas in the former the ruler is a kami and religious and political principles are not different, in the latter the state is protected by a complex entity (religion) located outside of it. Thus we are confronted here with two different conceptions, the differences between which were due not merely to the fact that Buddhism, the main force behind *chingo kokka* thought, was a foreign religion. The *shinkoku* discourse, too, presupposes the fact that the country is protected by religious institutions and activities, and in this sense it still lies within the *chingo kokka* framework. The difference is that in *shinkoku* thought the state is protected by supernatural agencies because it is an essentially religious entity existing on sacred territory. Thus religion was not at the service of politics from the outside, as before, but was superior to politics; the only principles were religious, and the state lacked any autonomy.

It goes without saying that objectively (that is, from an external perspective) religion was at the service of politics and the state, but subjectively (that is, from the viewpoint of the religious institutions) it was religion that lay at the basis of all institutions and social practices. For

Kuroda this type of state-concept, based on an aristocratic administration centered on the emperor and the court, developed at the precise time the aristocratic regime went into crisis at the end of the Heian period; its theoretical definitions can be found in the works of Jien, particularly the *Jichin oshō musōki* 慈鎮和尚夢想記 and the *Gukanshō* 愚管抄 (KURODA 1975, pp. 307–10).[29]

Shinkoku and the Role of the Emperor in Medieval Japan

The above discussion of the ancient and medieval visions of the state may lead us to wonder what the role of the emperor was in medieval Japan, as well as what the theoretical positions of the *shinkoku* discourse were on this issue. In fact several different visions of the imperial system are presented in the *Jinnō shōtōki* and in the *Taiheiki*, a fact which might be accounted for by Kuroda's argument that the *shinkoku* discourse never developed a serious and coherent philosophy, and that therefore several positions always coexisted without rational systematization. However, Kuroda also emphasizes that the *shinkoku* discourse was always used by political authority to legitimize and religiously rationalize itself; as we have seen, in medieval Japan it served particularly as a religious defense of the aristocratic system of feudal domination.

Most past studies have pointed out that the divine protection of the state was directly related to the legitimacy of the Japanese imperial lineage; thus, the emperor seems to have had an essential role in the *shinkoku* discourse. SATŌ has recently shown that the primary goal of medieval *shinkoku* discourse was not praise of imperial authority, but rather the legitimization of the whole system of domination based on the *kenmon* centers of influence, of which the emperor was only a component, however important (1995a, p. 26). In medieval Japan the emperor was not the supreme leader of the state, as many post-Meiji scholars maintain. The imperial clan was primarily a manorial landholding agency, of the same order as the other centers of influence that interacted to form the medieval state, including the Fujiwara clan (the *sekkanke* 摂関家), the *kenmitsu* religious institutions, and the bakufu. Incidentally, the major figures of these groups were all connected by blood and familial relations, reinforcing the solidity of the overall system. All of these centers of power were rather independent of each other and self-conscious of their status. This was one reason they

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[29]On Jien's vision of the state, which appear to be representative of the entire political discourse of the *kenmitsu taisei*, see also the chapter "*Jichin oshō musōki* ni tsuite" in AKAMATSU 1957, pp. 317–35.

needed a form of coordination in order to avoid excessive conflict, lest the system degenerate into complete anarchy. Thus the various *kenmon* centers agreed to recognize the imperial lineage as the top of the system, the glue that kept together the potentially centrifugal forces of the medieval Japanese regime. This is evident in the works of Jien, for whom the emperor was a spiritual and religious entity rather than a real person (Kuroda 1975, p. 312). The sacrality and inviolability of the emperor was unrelated to his actual authority; they were increasingly stressed by the ideologues of the system as a reactionary move to prevent change when the crisis of the *kenmon* system worsened. Therefore, although medieval *shinkoku* ideology attributed to the emperor a particular function within the system, it placed him in a position inherently different from the one he had held in the ancient regime. In medieval Japan, as Satō puts it (1995a, pp. 26–27), the emperor was little more than a symbolic instrument to ensure the survival of the system.

The Logic of the Shinkoku Discourse

So far I have traced Kuroda's reconstruction of the doctrinal and philosophical concepts of the *shinkoku* discourse, as well as its function in medieval Japan as a reactionary instrument of domination and social control. However, on a deeper level, I would like to stress that the *shinkoku* discourse also presupposed elements, more difficult to summarize, pertaining to the Japanese medieval *mentalité*. I believe that the *shinkoku* discourse was successful also because it strategically deployed contemporaneous "commonsense" notions and practices, while giving them new meanings finalized to its logic of domination.[30] One of the major points of interest in Kuroda's treatment is that he unearthed and investigated social practices and popular intellectual formations usually ignored by traditional scholarship, which is generally concerned with sectarian histories, doctrinal debates, and stereotyped histories of ideas. As we shall see, however, Kuroda's interpretation of the basic constructs informing the medieval *shinkoku* discourse is not without its problems. In this section I will present a critical outline of the major elements of the "logic" (as Kuroda calls it) of the *shinkoku* discourse as explained in *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* (1975). According to Kuroda, these elements consist of 1) a fundamental dimension of magical and mythical thought; 2) beliefs on the nature

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[30] On common sense, see Clifford Geertz's chapter "Common Sense as a Cultural System," (Geertz 1983, pp. 73–93). For an introduction to methods and goals of the history of mentalities, see Darnton 1985.

of the deities; 3) visions of paradise; and 4) ritual taboos and ethical norms.

MAGICAL AND MYTHICAL THOUGHT, OR THE UNDERLYING EPISTEME OF
THE *SHINKOKU* DISCOURSE

This is undoubtedly the most problematic issue in Kuroda's entire treatment of the *shinkoku* discourse. He opens the section titled "Magic" of the long chapter on *shinkoku* with a quote from Benedetto Croce, the Italian idealist philosopher, in order to make the point that the medieval age is the second period of myth, during which all religious systems stood upon magical beliefs (KURODA 1975, p. 280). He says, furthermore, that myth and magic are characteristics of periods in which rational social relations and scientific thought have not yet developed.

Although I will not go into detail, there are several questionable points here relating to important methodological issues:

1 the concept of a religious system is a reflexive, theoretical construct of an elite, and therefore differs from a magical worldview, which is characterized, in the traditional vision, by irrationality or pre-rationality;

2 Kuroda treats the medieval age as a universal stage of human development ("the second period of myth");

3 Kuroda's category of magic and myth is vague—he seems to understand myth as anything related to the supernatural agencies of the kami, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other transhuman beings in the Buddhist combinatory cosmology (KURODA 1975, p. 281). Myth is related to belief in magical powers existing in things;

4 Kuroda opposes myth and magic to "rational social relations and scientific thought," as if in medieval Japan social relations were "irrational," and as if Western scientific thought would have been ideal for all cultures.[31]

It seems that Kuroda's militant criticism of the reactionary aspects of the *shinkoku* discourse prevented him from acknowledging the epistemic constructs on which it was grounded. Such epistemic constructs are de facto dismissed by Kuroda as nonrational and as sources of "spells" that kept the people enslaved under the feudal mode of domination. As I see it, an engaged critique of a reactionary ideological formation such as the *shinkoku* discourse should pay greater attention

[31] On these complex issues, see for instance TAMBIAH 1990 and SAHLINS 1995.

to the epistemic structures that it presupposes, especially since this provides a better understanding of the anachronistic nature of the attempts to revive it in the modern period.

The kami cults are, for Kuroda, essentially a form of animism and magical belief; the *shinkoku* discourse can also be characterized in this way, for it considers everything as endowed with spiritual power, and therefore as kami. However, Kuroda is aware that he is dealing with a sophisticated form of theoretical animism, one quite different from the animism appearing in most ethnographic studies of illiterate cultures, for he recognizes that in its more mature forms the *shinkoku* discourse presented aspects of a pantheistic philosophy, created through the rationalization of animism on the basis of Chinese thought. Another aspect of the *shinkoku* discourse is its exclusive concern with worldly benefits and security in everyday life, all granted by the kami to those who respect their rules. But since, as we have seen, the notion of divine protection of the people was directly grounded in the feudal ideology of protection/domination of the land and populace (KURODA 1975, p. 284), respect for the kami was constructed as identical with respect for secular authority and systems of domination. This is the reason why heretical movements against the cult of the kami were so threatening to the system.

Kuroda's research on *setsuwa* 説話 stories and *engi* 縁起 narratives has contributed enormously to our understanding of premodern popular literature; however, his reliance on outdated categories and concepts (such as myth, magic, and animism) in describing religious phenomena seriously hinders his attempts at understanding the mentalities of those who composed the stories and of those for whose ears they were destined. Kuroda seems to believe that *setsuwa* and *engi*, with their descriptions of a mythical realm of communication and exchange between men and kami (KURODA 1975, p. 281), played an essential role in the diffusion and preservation among the masses of a magico-mythical vision of the world. The places where magical events and miracles occurred, as described in these literary genres, became the loci of pilgrimages and flourishing religious institutions.

In fact, although the clergy developed sophisticated doctrines, the common people, as long as they were not free from material needs, clung to magical and animistic beliefs. I think that this aspect of Kuroda's argument needs revision, unless we are ready to interpret most of the intellectual production of premodern Japan (which can be characterized, in Kuroda's terms, as "magico-mythical") through the perspective of a "hermeneutics of suspicion," seeing it as an enormous attempt of the dominant classes to keep the masses in a superti-

tious ignorance by reproducing their "magico-mythical" vision of the world. Actually, ignorance is often a function of poverty, which in turns produces and reproduces forms of exploitation.

I also believe we should pay more attention to the fact that the dominant classes (a category that begs clarification itself) in medieval Japan used their power over discursive formations, ideological state apparatuses, and the media (literary, artistic, and intellectual productions, public performances, rituals, etc.) to spread certain ideas of social order and to consolidate their own mechanisms of control (see RAMBELLI 1996b). This does not mean, however, that the masses followed passively the directives from above—as Kuroda himself has shown, peasants engaged themselves in a continuous struggle against the establishment, a history of warfare and rebellion that has been neglected by most historians until very recently (medieval warfare is usually attributed solely to the warrior class, thus reproducing Tokugawa and Meiji discourses of domination and class). Phenomena such as disbelief, social protest, and subversion in general can be detected throughout all levels of medieval society, indicating that the establishment was far less solid than it presented itself to be. I believe that intellectuals and scholar-monks in medieval Japan shared the same basic worldview as that of the common people, the difference being that the dominant classes had the means to impose their hegemony upon the masses. We need a "heretological" approach to the study of premodern Japan, as proposed by Michel DE CERTEAU (1984, 1986), one that investigates individual ruses and tactics against the systems of domination.

But the question remains as to how to describe the basic epistemic constructs shared by the medieval Japanese (at least those exposed to the systems of knowledge, ideology, and domination of the *kenmon* power structure). Elsewhere I have suggested that medieval Japanese mentalities were, to a large extent, permeated by intellectual and ritual elements originating in esoteric Buddhism. Of particular significance were ideas concerning cosmology and soteriology, with a semiotic nucleus defining phenomena as meaningful manifestations of the Dharmakāya and above all dealing with the power of symbolic actions to produce salvation (see RAMBELLI 1994). In such a cosmos, each phenomenon was deemed "formally" similar to all others and to the totality. This Japanese "episteme of identity" lay at the basis of *honji suijaku* doctrines and practices that, as Kuroda, Allan GRAPARD (1992a), and others have demonstrated, were mainly locale-specific, lineage-grounded, and supportive of the system of feudal domination.

Borrowing terminology developed by Tsuda Shin'ichi and modify-

ing its conceptual framework, I have suggested (RAMBELLI 1994) that such an episteme was characterized by three fundamental elements: the "logic of yoga," the principle of "symbolic omnipotency," and symbolic practices. According the logic of yoga, which appears in various forms in most esoteric texts, every object is 1) part of or reducible to one of several cosmic series (natural elements, seasons, directions, colors, internal organs of the body, stages in the process leading to salvation, and so forth) that constitute multiple microcosmic orders; 2) correlated to homologous objects in all other cosmic series (earth=spring=east=yellow=liver=arousing the thought of enlightenment, and so forth); and 3) ontologically identical to the totality of the enlightened universe. This correlative and combinatory principle allowed for the possibility of controlling objects and states of the world through the manipulation of certain symbolic entities connected to them (the principle of symbolic omnipotency). Here lay the conceptual nucleus of the so-called magic practices in medieval Japan. This principle in turn generated religious practices based on the actual manipulation of the symbolic entities. It should be emphasized, however, that symbolic practices were not necessarily mere ritual or meditative escamotages, for they were directly related to the creation of a ritualized world (closely embedded within power relations and connected to the dominant ideology) in which each event and each phenomenon were cosmologically marked and played a soteric function. When they developed into complex forms of visualization based on a sophisticated semantic and ritual network, symbolic practices produced a cognitive transformation in the subject.

This episteme operated on various orders of significance, the most relevant of which were semiosophia and semiognosis (on a theoretical and initiatory level), and semiopietas (on an uninformed level of everyday praxis) (RAMBELLI 1994, pp. 394–97). Together they generated a common mentality, the core of which was a combinatory and transformative nebula of beliefs and practices centered on the idea that the cosmos was a continuous transformation of shapes. Understood in this way, the concept expressed in the *shinkoku* discourse that everything in Japan was sacred and endowed with spiritual power as a manifold manifestation-embodiment (*suijaku*) of buddhas and bodhisattvas loses what in the eyes of most scholars are its illogical and nonrational aspects and reveals its foundation in a coherent epistemic system. It is quite possible that several epistemic fields or formations coexisted in medieval Japan, and also that movements developed displacing dominant epistemic constructs and employing them in different ways. These are all issues that require further examination.

BELIEFS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE KAMI

In *shinkoku* texts the kami are always described as manifest traces (*sui-jaku*) of some Buddhist original form (*honji*). Moreover, the kami are considered to possess a particular ethical power (*shintoku* 神徳), expressed in Buddhist terms as the result of the original vow of compassion, wisdom, and sincerity. This vow leads them to perform miracles and to bestow worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) and protection (*yōgo* 擁護) upon righteous persons. The idea of the kami's compassion was clearly emphasized in order to counter and neutralize heretical Pure Land positions.[32] For Kuroda, all this testifies to the fact that in medieval Japanese mentalities, the kami were not original and autochthonous, but recent constructs based on Buddhist doctrines and logic. This is particularly evident in the ontological status of the kami and their function of protection. Kuroda interestingly suggests that the idea of "protection by the kami" (a rather vague idea that could refer to almost anything, and that became abstract and idealized) produced the concept of a supreme deity, transcendent and omnipotent, identified with Tenshō Daijin (KURODA 1975, pp. 289–90). Sacerdotal lineages developed analogous ideas, variously centered on Sannō (Hie), Ōkuninushi (Miwa), and so forth, but they all recognized the status of Tenshō Daijin as the "landlord" (*jinushi*) of Japan, thus reproducing on a sacred, cosmic level the role of emperor within the medieval regime. The idea of a supreme and omnipotent deity was then preached to the common people in order to secure their support for their cult centers, often in competition with the Buddhist temples supervising them.

Kuroda argues that several conflicting "Shinto" positions rendered the status of the kami rather confusing.[33] Yoshida Kanetomo's Yuiitsu Shinto emerged as an attempt to synthesize these manifold tendencies from a new perspective. In Kanetomo's view, "kami" referred to neither a magico-mythical notion nor a pantheistic spiritual entity, but to the supreme and absolute divine creator (KURODA 1975, p. 291; see also Grapard 1992b and 1992c). The confused and unsystematic nature of the kami concept testified to its recent intellectual inven-

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[32] In this respect, the *Hachiman gudōkin* presents a functional distinction between buddhas, which are especially concerned with rebirth in the Pure Land, and kami, which are especially concerned with worldly benefits (quoted in KURODA 1975, p. 297). This appears to be a strategy aiming at differentiating the religious market of the *honji* from that of *suijaku*.

[33] The *Yōtenki*, a text on the Sannō cult, even stated that Japan is the land of the kami not because there are kami everywhere, but because it is the land where Śākyamuni appeared for the first time, in the form of Hie Sannō, and began preaching Buddhism. Subsequently he moved to India. See ISHIDA 1970, pp. 39–105.

tion, and was particularly evident in discussions concerning the status of evil deities. As Kuroda explains, this was not a problem from the point of view of local cults—difficulties arose only when the kami were defined within a Buddhist framework. Are evil deities manifestations of buddhas or bodhisattvas? The problem was displaced with the introduction of the categories of *gonja* 権社 (provisional deities) and *jissha* 実社 (real deities), the former referring to kami that are temporary manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas and the latter denoting evil spirits and demons that need to be pacified in order to avoid evil retribution (*tatari*). This was but a displacement because, as the *Shintōshū* puts it, ignorant folks cannot understand if a kami is a provisional or a real deity. The solution offered by the *Shintōshū* is that all deities should be venerated because Japan is the land of the kami. Moreover, in the nondualistic perspective typical of exo-esotericism, there is ultimately no distinction between *gonja* and *jissha* (*Shintōshū* 1, story 1; KONDŌ and KISHI, ed. 1968).

This stage remained, however, beyond the understanding of the common people, for it required initiatory knowledge. KURODA suggests that when the distinction between *gonja* and *jissha* began to fade "anti-*honji-suijaku*" doctrines appeared, as in the *Keiran shūyōshū* and the *Taiheiki* (1975, pp. 287–88), or in the teaching of the *Yuiitsu shintō myōbō yōshū* 唯一神道名法要集, that the Japanese kami are actually the original condition and the buddhas and bodhisattvas only temporary, conditioned manifestations (a position usually referred to as *shinpon butsujaku* 神本仏迹). However, KURODA also stresses that these new, reversed positions were not the result of an anti-Buddhist reaction on the part of an original and autochthonous form of kami cult, as suggested by traditional Shinto scholarship, but a logical development of certain Mahāyāna doctrines (1975, p. 288), with which they shared vocabulary and a conceptual framework. But in order to grasp the position of the *shinkoku* concept in the medieval Japanese *imaginaire* it is insufficient to understand the nature of the kami. We must also analyze the meaning of "land" (*kuni*).

VISIONS OF PARADISE ON EARTH

The establishment of a new doctrine of kami was accompanied by the development of a new concept of territory, in which the kami were always present and ruling. This sacralization of land was in stark contrast to medieval Pure Land doctrines and practices, according to which one should loathe the present defiled world and long for rebirth in a distant paradise (although even this paradise was envisioned as a real "land," a space with concrete and well-defined charac-

teristics).[34] According to KURODA, the land of the kami was not the state, as it has often been misunderstood as, but simply land—the actual territory where people live, as expressed by the formula "mountains and rivers, plants and trees" (1975, p. 293). Such a sacralization of the territory opened the way to the deification of all the people inhabiting the *shinkoku*, as stated by several medieval texts.[35]

It appears that the *shinkoku* was understood as a kind of Pure Land, a paradise on earth, or rather as a "Pure Land in this world that ensures rebirth into a paradise in the next life" (KURODA 1975, p. 297). This concept was fundamentally in agreement with esoteric Buddhist soteriology, dominant in the *kenmitsu taisei*, according to which enlightenment (and thus the Pure Land) should be attained in this world.[36] As we have seen, the generalization of the *shinkoku* concept to all of medieval Japan was essentially due to the presence within Japan of numerous "sacred spaces," where the very concept of the *shinkoku* originally arose. Although the belief in sacred places is very old in Japan, for Kuroda the medieval *shinkoku* discourse was unrelated to primitive forms of mountain cult—its paradisiacal vision of the world (or rather, of the part of Japan controlled by the *kenmon* system of rule) was a result of both the development of the Pure Land movements and the contemporaneous growth of the *shōen* manorial system. These processes determined the role of *shinkoku* as a political ideology with religious foundations that could account for the sacrality and superiority of Japan.

It is quite surprising that Kuroda does not emphasize much the role of esoteric Buddhism (in particular the doctrine of original enlightenment) in the articulation of the concept of a paradise in this world. Japan as the *shinkoku* could be rationally justified only in terms of the logic of nondualism (*funi* 不二) developed by the *kenmitsu* ideologues (see GRAPARD 1989 and 1994). Kuroda limits his inquiries to medieval visions of a Pure Land in this world, ignoring the fact that as a discursive formation *shinkoku* had a strong normative and performative import. As mentioned above, the *kenmitsu* institutions attempted a

[34] It is doubtful, though, that the reason this view arose was that, as KURODA suggested, in feudal society, with its continuous warfare and miserable life conditions, people could only hope for happiness in the next life (1975, pp. 292–93).

[35] For example, the *Keiran shūyōshū* states that all Japanese (i.e., all those who live in the geographical territory of Japan) are descendants of Tenshō Daijin (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 76.521); the *Hachiman gudōkin* explains that all Japanese are descendants of the kami; they receive protection from the kami and help from the Buddha.

[36] The Shingon tradition, beginning with Kakuban 覚鑁 (1095–1143) in particular, developed the doctrines of this world as Mahāvairocana's Pure Land, known as Mitsugon Jōdo, the Pure Land of Esoteric Splendor. See SANFORD 1994, pp. 65–95.

generalized mandalization of the land of Japan that affected the everyday life of the Japanese. Space limitations prevent me from dealing in detail with this complex and important issue;[37] suffice it to say that the consciousness of living in paradise was systematically constructed, represented, taught, and imposed in several ways, such as an intense ritual activity involving all social classes and all provinces of Japan and aimed, in part, at making visible the "invisible realm" of the *honji suijaku* combinatory systems; the imposition of an economic order centered on buddhas and kami as the agents of productive and commercial activities; the implementation of mechanisms of exclusion in order to ensure measures of "sacred policing" against subversives, thus making visible in negative terms the sacrality of the *shinkoku* (see RAMBELLI 1996a); and the impositions of rules and regulations sacralizing work and everyday activities (birth, death, sex, eating, and so forth).

RITUAL TABOOS AND ETHICAL NORMS

KURODA notes that the *shinkoku* discourse also contained religious precepts, ritual taboos, and secular ethical norms (1975, pp. 301–2). According to Kuroda, these regulations were the result of the ambiguous notion of the "protection" extended by the kami to their sacred territory and to the righteous people living there—a notion that implied a principle of domination by the kami. Such domination was justified doctrinally through everyday rituals, which had to be properly performed in order not to jeopardize the cosmological order of the kingdom. Thus the *shinkoku* discourse attempted to ground the feudal power system in the "invisible realm" from which the kami rule their lands, giving everyone responsibility in maintaining the sacred order of the medieval state.

In order to justify the *shinkoku* view that Japan was a paradise, it was necessary, as Kuroda explains, to rationalize secular ethics and primitive taboos (generally concerned with the management of impurity) into a system of theological precepts. This strengthened the doctrinal positions of the *shinkoku* discourse, especially those concerning the sacrality of the territory and the active presence of the kami (KURODA 1975, p. 302). Kuroda stresses, however, that such a rationalization was not easy to carry out. The *Shintōshū*, for example, struggles to explain the contradictory aspects of Shinto and Buddhism (KURODA 1975, pp. 205–206). The integration in a coherent and logical system of ritual taboos belonging to two different religions was an impossible task to

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[37] The doctrines and practices of generalized mandalization are the subject of a book-length manuscript I am presently writing.

begin with. The kami cults originally had no defined doctrine on a textual and institutional level; the practice of taking sentences from Chinese systems of thought and ritual (Confucianism, yin-yang doctrine, divination, etc.) and applying them through "forced analogy" (*fukai* 付会) to medieval Shinto doctrines, heavily influenced by Buddhism, confused things even more. For KURODA these analogies did not establish a coherent religious system: the fundamentals of the kami cults, though expressed in pseudodoctrinal terms, were nothing more than primitive taboos and secular ethical norms (1975, pp. 302–303). Here we can see again Kuroda's fundamental dislike for the medieval combinatory and correlative practices that integrated the numerous components of the *kenmitsu* intellectual system. However complex and sometimes confused, these linguistic practices were nonetheless grounded in the epistemic field that dominated Japanese mentalities for centuries. Kuroda is right, however, when he points to the difficulties, both logical and practical, of the combinatory systems, although his overt sympathy for the *senju nenbutsu* doctrines of Hōnen and Shinran tends to bias his understanding.[38] He writes:

> In the *shinkoku* doctrines are always present incomprehensible facts and insoluble contradictions. In those cases the authors always avoid the problems with expressions like "what pertains to the way of the kami is hard to understand," or try to present as even more sacred what is not rational. In this sense the *shinkoku* discourse was a form of blind mysticism without foundation; its poor conceptual strength cannot be compared with the rigorous logic of the *ikkō senju* doctrines.
>
> (KURODA 1975, p. 303)

Hermetic and pseudo-mystical positions were often taken in order to hide serious doctrinal problems that could not be solved within the system. However, medieval combinatory texts seem frequently obscure and confused simply because today we have lost the keys to the codes that govern their signification.

Conclusion

In the *Nihon shoki* the term *shinkoku* is mentioned only once, by the King of Silla to refer to the Japanese archipelago. It relates to Nippon's superiority over other countries because of its divine protection,

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[38] KURODA stated that the *shinkoku* discourse was not just an incoherent religious formation, but that it also repressed and defeated genuine medieval religious developments, and eventually came to permeate all Japanese religion (1975, p. 330).

protection manifesting itself as natural disasters (strong winds, storms, tidal waves) visited upon enemy countries.[39] A term used in the *Nihon shoki* with regard to the only victorious battle of "Nippon" against a foreign country was used several centuries later as a paradigm of the "national identity" of the medieval Japanese state. As we have seen, this identity was grounded on a sacred vision of the territory as protected by the kami; divine protection, in turn, manifested itself in natural phenomena. Interestingly, *shinkoku* as a term defining the unique specificity of Japan was in origin a foreign concept of the "elsewhere," referring to otherness and sacred space. The mark of Japanese cultural specificity was thus since the beginning the product of intercultural mediation and stipulation. Japan's desire to present itself as superior to other countries is deeply embedded in a foreign vision of otherness and sacrality.

The *shinkoku* discourse cannot be reduced to a manifestation of national consciousness produced mainly in reaction to the threat of the Mongol invasions. This discourse has a long and complex history, and was deeply related to the structure of institutions, ideologies, social practices, and mentalities in that area of the Japanese archipelago ruled by the medieval *kenmon* system. It was certainly not a simple mobilization of abstract ideas of national identity or sacrality. Satō has suggested that it was used primarily to strengthen the system from within, by providing each center of influence (*kenmon*) with an awareness of being an integral part of a more general order, and promoting concerted action against the forces that, in a time of major social change, were threatening the survival of the medieval manorial system (1995a, p. 25). The kami of the *shinkoku* protected not only certain centers of power but the entire order of domination centered on the emperor. For Satō, the *shinkoku* discourse was part of the ideology of the *kenmon* elites, and was employed essentially in order to consolidate the system by harmonizing its centrifugal components. As such, its direct importance as an ideology of domination of the masses was secondary (1995a, p. 25). Murai Shōsuke suggests that *shinkoku* ideas circulated widely and penetrated all social classes (1988), and this is

[39] The relevant passage in the *Nihon shoki*, which allegedly reports the words of the King of Silla on the occasion of the invasion by the Yamato empress Jingō, reads: "I have heard that in the East there is a divine country named Nippon, and also that there is there a wise sovereign called the Tennō. This divine force [i.e., great wind, storm, and a tidal wave that "reached far up into the interior of the country," which helped the invaders from Yamato to defeat the armies of Silla] must belong to that country. How could we resist them by force of arms?" Thereupon, the king surrendered to the invaders. Quoted in Aston 1956, p. 230. The *Kojiki* does not contain the term *shinkoku*, but does mention the natural calamities that afflicted Silla and contributed to the success of the Yamato expedition.

certainly a point that requires further investigation. However, the diffusion of a certain ideology and its primary functions are two different issues. According to SATŌ (1995a, p. 25), the domination of the masses in medieval Japan was based on the "logic of Buddha-land" (*butsudo*) and "kami-land" (*shindo*), dealing with particular deities manifesting themselves and controlling particular local territories (*shōen*). This suggestion sheds new light on the mechanisms of the generalized mandalization, the process of sacralization of the land I have mentioned before. If Satō is right, such a phenomenon was the result of numerous discrete interventions in localized territories; in medieval Japan, in fact, domination occurred on a local level, and not on a global level as it does in modern nation-states. However, Satō's argument should not be interpreted as a disavowal of Kuroda's picture; on the contrary, it provides a further clarification of the dynamics of the production of the *shinkoku* discourse. It is impossible to deny that the *shinkoku* discourse was also effective as an ideology for the domination of the masses, as pointed out by Kuroda.

Kuroda showed that the *shinkoku* discourse developed within the *kenmitsu taisei* as a reactionary ideology employed against new tendencies and movements in medieval society that were potentially disruptive for the *kenmon* regime. Although Kuroda did not expand on later developments in the network of concepts, practices, and institutions stemming from the idea that Japan is the land of the kami, he suggested that the medieval *shinkoku* discourse came eventually to constitute the basic conceptual paradigm for reactionary ideology and politics in Japan until the present day.[40] Although they may not make explicit mention of the sacrality of the territory or imperial lineage, current representations of Japanese cultural identity focus on exclusivity, supremacy, and incommensurability. All of these representations are grounded in a myth of direct access of the Japanese to the essence of reality, usually expressed in terms of a mystified "Shintoism." Kuroda Toshio gave us the conceptual tools and historical knowledge to unveil the intellectual framework hidden in modern Japanese discourses of cultural identity.

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[40] According to KURODA (1975, p. 329), the *Jinnō shōtōki* is perhaps the best example of the reactionary attitude of the *shinkoku* discourse, an attitude that after the Meiji Restoration enabled the *shinkoku* discourse to become the base of imperial absolutism and xenophobic nationalism.

COLLECTIONS

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