



SHINTO

A History

Helen Hardacre

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For Linda

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NOTES FOR THE READER

Romanization of Japanese terms follows the Hepburn system, and Japanese names are written with the surname first, followed by the personal name. This study capitalizes terms for major deities and other supernatural beings. Thus the terms *Kami* and *Buddha* are both capitalized.

Shinto

Introduction



From earliest times, the Japanese people have worshipped Kami. Kami may be the spirits of a particular place or natural forces like wind, rivers, and mountains. Kami such as these would neither be regarded anthropomorphically nor be seen as embodying moral principles. Some are intimidating, and not all of them are good to humans. Only under Buddhist influence did the Kami come to be conceptualized anthropomorphically. Figures of myth, such as the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami, make up a distinctive group of Kami. Other Kami, such as Inari, associated with agriculture and commercial success, grew out of communal customs and have no textual basis. Some Kami originated as the deified spirits of human beings, such as the Heian period courtier Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), apotheosized as Tenjin. In the early modern era, feudal lords, peasant martyrs, and founders of new religious movements were deified as Kami. In the modern period, the spirits of the war dead were apotheosized, and the idea of the emperor’s divinity was promoted, not only by Shinto but also through such influential institutions as the schools and the military.

Wherever new settlements are founded, a shrine (often very small and not necessarily a permanent structure) would be erected for the spirits of that place, as a way of honoring them and soliciting their benevolence and protection. The motivation to build a shrine wherever people live stems from the idea that Kami are everywhere, or could be anywhere, that there is no place in Japan that is not under their dominion. If people plan to disturb their domain by digging in the earth, planting crops, and erecting buildings, it is “only proper” to begin by asking permission from the Kami, with prayer, food, drink, gifts, and a place for them to receive these offerings, or in which to dwell ongoingly, that is, a shrine. Without a shrine, a place is “unfit for human habitation,” because proper relations with the Kami have not been established.

Shinto encompasses doctrines, institutions, ritual, and communal life based on Kami worship, including representations of Kami in the arts. In particular, this

study investigates the history of an ideal of Shinto that has structured its internal debates, social roles, and politics. In this construct, a divinely descended monarch rules through rituals for the Kami, including his ancestral deities and all the Kami of heaven and earth. A priestly order assists the sovereign by coordinating rituals for the Kami in shrines across the realm, so that they mirror the ruler's ceremonies. The priesthood unifies the people with imperial rule, uniting them through the power of solemn rituals and joyous festivals. Center and periphery join together in untroubled harmony through this theater of state. The Kami bless and protect the people, who attain their greatest self-realization through fulfilling their obligations to the collective.

While this ideal has operated with greatest clarity in the modern period, its constituent elements have much longer histories. They did not all appear at once or emerge as whole cloth. The basic building blocks include concepts of imperial rule associating it with ritual, a government unit devoted to coordinating ritual throughout the nation's shrines, a code of law mandating an annual calendar of Kami ritual, the claim that rituals for the Kami are public in character, and the assertion that this complex of ideas and institutions devoted to the Kami embodies Japan's "indigenous" tradition. This study addresses the story of the emergence and development of these elements and debate concerning them. It is structured around two themes, the idea of Shinto as belonging to the "public," and the idea that it represents the "indigenous." In addition, it examines a variety of materials that shed light on Shinto's devotional aspects in order to show how Shinto acquired personal significance and achieved motivational power.

Because Shinto has Kami at its center, it might be assumed that it is a religion, but this study resists starting out with that assumption. Instead, I question the character of the tradition at each stage of its history and ask how Shinto was regarded at the time. Even today, the question whether Shinto should be considered a religion remains controversial. Shinto is highly diverse and stratified in every historical era. It is never "just one thing." In some respects and some eras, the concept of religion is not particularly helpful in understanding it. Government figures administering the shrines from the late 1860s to the end of World War II argued that Shinto was not a religion, then or in previous epochs. They claimed that Shinto is so inextricable from Japanese identity that it must not be debated in the manner of "mere" theological wrangling. Unlike religion, they claimed, it is not something individuals are free to choose.

Writing the History of Shinto

Through most of the twentieth century and especially up to Japan's surrender in 1945, a variety of taboos surrounded academic research on Shinto. Before the surrender, the Japanese government administered Shinto shrine ceremonies, using

them to unite the people behind the regime, specifying minutely what rites were to be performed, when, by what rank of priests, at what kinds of shrines, and with what kind of offerings. Some of the rites were structured to mirror the emperor's rituals for his ancestors, traced back to the age of the Kami, from whom he was believed to be descended. Academics who questioned the historical premise of Shinto ceremonies or hesitated to participate in them could—and did—lose their jobs. Even after the war's end, unspoken taboos remained, into the 1970s. These sensitivities made it difficult, for example, for scholars to research the obvious connections between ancient Japan and the Asian continent, since to do so would inevitably reveal the Japanese imperial cult's many borrowings from China and Korea, and hence undermine the notion of its uniqueness. Postwar Shinto scholars who are also Shinto priests tended to write from the perspective of engaged proponents, or as Shinto theologians. The result was a perspective portraying Shinto ahistorically, as something that has existed unchanged since the beginning of time, or as the essence of Japanese ethnicity.

Shinto, The Kami Way: An Introduction to Shrine Shinto, published in 1962 by Ono Sokyō, a celebrated professor of Kokugakuin University, exemplifies the point. He writes here as a Shinto partisan or theologian, addressing non-Japanese readers.¹

Shinto [is] the indigenous faith of the Japanese people. . . . From time immemorial the Japanese people have believed in and worshipped kami as an expression of their native racial faith which arose in the mystic days of remote antiquity. To be sure, foreign influences are evident. This kami-faith cannot be fully understood without some reference to them. Yet it is as indigenous as the people that brought the Japanese nation into existence and ushered in its new civilization.²

Ono structures this description around a dichotomy of the indigenous and the foreign, aligning Shinto with something native to Japan and the ethnic identity of the Japanese people, calling it their “racial faith.” He insists on the remote origins of Shinto, beginning in “the mystic days of remote antiquity,” as if it would be improper to pin it down to a particular time. Ono also asserts that the Japanese people are unified in their worship of the Kami, even though he was undoubtedly aware that many Japanese reject Shinto entirely, on the basis of their affiliations with Buddhism, Christianity, new religious movements, or disinterest in religion of any kind. Ono goes on to enlarge Shinto beyond the category of religion:

Shinto is more than a religious faith. It is an amalgam of attitudes, ideas, and ways of doing things that through two millenniums and more have become an integral part of the *way* of the Japanese people. Thus, Shinto is both a personal faith in the kami and a communal way of life according to the mind of the kami, which emerged in the course of the centuries as

various ethnic and cultural influences, both indigenous and foreign, were fused, and the country attained unity under the Imperial Family.³

Whatever is meant by the “way of the Japanese people,” it is clear that it trumps religion, based on the assertion that Shinto is both an individual faith and a communal way of life that somehow accords with or perhaps responds to “the mind of the kami,” which is not further defined. Above all, Shinto is said to have emerged with or through the unification of the people under the Yamato dynasty. This mystifying unity seems to be promoted here in order to insulate Shinto from closer historical investigation. Long after the restoration of academic freedom, the idea that Shinto’s ancient ties to the imperial institution place the tradition off limits for historical scholarship has been a constraint.

Theological slants, idealization, and willful falsification of historical reality caused many secular historians to criticize Shinto scholarship for failing to distinguish between theological and historical standards. Perhaps we should understand works like *Shinto: The Kami Way*, written for non-Japanese readers on the eve of Japan’s rehabilitation into the company of nations against which it had fought in World War II, as part of the aestheticization of Japanese culture typical of that time. Certainly, we can also see the English-language works of D. T. Suzuki on Buddhism as similarly idealizing, essentialist, and concerned to paper over Japanese Buddhism’s recent history as enthusiastic cheerleader for empire and war.⁴ By contrast, when Ono wrote in Japanese as an historian of Shinto for an audience of Japanese scholars, as in his encyclopedic work of 1963, *Basic Knowledge and Problems of Shinto*, romanticizing and idealizing were absent. His empirical scholarship is sober, balanced, and authoritative.⁵

Medieval historian Kuroda Toshio (1926–1993) unapologetically ripped through the obfuscation in the late 1970s, continuing into the 1980s, in studies that subjected Shinto to historical analysis with no holds barred. Among researchers working in Western languages, his essay, “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion” was especially influential.⁶ He demonstrated persuasively that conceptualizing Shinto as Japan’s timeless, indigenous faith cannot be sustained. He saw a covert ethnic nationalism in ahistorical studies of Shinto. In place of romanticized images, he proposed instead that from ancient times Shinto had been cocooned within Japanese Buddhism, so much so that it is nearly impossible to discern its separate existence for most of Japanese history. Shinto, in Kuroda’s judgment, comes into view only as one way of promoting theories that are fundamentally Buddhist.

So electrifying, refreshing, and liberating was Kuroda’s stance that it instantly garnered widespread support. Shinto became a respectable subject for historical inquiry, while those in the Shinto universities were challenged to reorient their research in light of Kuroda’s work.

Kuroda was at Osaka University in the 1980s, and it was there that I encountered him when he was my mentor during a study of the religious life of Japan’s Korean

minority in 1981. I asked him what reactions he was receiving to his insistence on treating Shinto like any other subject of historical inquiry. He told me that he had anticipated a far more hostile reception. It seemed strange to him that the ahistorical view of Shinto should be abandoned so easily, given the persistence with which it had been asserted. He was surprised, he said, having fully expected that many questions would be raised about his work. He found it odd that his perspective should easily find so much support and be so little criticized. That was in 1981; Kuroda died in 1993.

Kuroda influenced Shinto scholarship profoundly. Though there may be some lingering resistance, respected scholars of Shinto have left behind the ahistoricism and veiled nationalism of earlier generations. Since Kuroda, it has become conventional to hold that Shinto only becomes institutionally independent of Buddhism with the 1868 government order for a “separation of Buddhas from Kami,” regularly referred to as the “Separation of Buddhism from Shinto.” More recently, medieval historians identify the beginning of Shinto thought in the work of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511). In convincing a generation of researchers so completely of Shinto’s envelopment within Buddhism until such late dates in history, Kuroda may have succeeded too well. In place of the rhetoric of Shinto as “the indigenous religion of Japan,” now it has become difficult to perceive meaningful continuity from the ancient period to the present, or to discuss Shinto’s early history without “scare quotes.” This study tries to address the issue of continuity in Shinto history from a new vantage point.

The Organization of This Study

One of the most enduring themes running through Shinto’s history is the rhetoric of the “indigenous,” identifying Shinto with that which is native (*koyū*, and other terms) to Japan. But how can “the indigenous” be discerned in Kami worship when it is so clear that so much has been absorbed from so many other places and traditions, including Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism? Debates about the indigenous and the foreign, and shifting definitions of both, constitute a core issue. This study does not champion the notion that Shinto *is* “indigenous.” Instead, it tries to analyze the rhetoric of Shinto as Japan’s “indigenous tradition” and its relation to the “foreign.”

A second dichotomy that structures Shinto is that between the “public” (*kō*, *ōyake*) and the “private” (*shi*, *watakushi*). Like the indigenous and the foreign, “public” and “private” are wide-ranging terms that have been understood differently in different epochs. From the ancient period until the present, we find the assertion that shrines and their rituals are or should be “public” in character. Preeminently, this contention holds that shrine rites are necessary to the emperor and governance, but the assertion has assumed various forms and nuances at different times. I do

not argue that Shinto is, in fact, rightfully “public” in any sense; instead, I seek to understand the variety of claims to that effect and how they have changed over time.

I do not mean to suggest that indigenous/foreign and public/private are the only lenses by which we can make sense of Shinto’s history. In the course of this study, I have encountered many phenomena that do not fit the framework adopted here, and I have tried to make clear the limitations of my approach. I have struggled to find a way to discuss Shinto in the eras before the term comes into widespread use, but I am under no illusion that I have overcome all the challenges involved. I adopt this framework of rhetorical distinctions because I believe that it helps us to grasp the origins and formation of powerful ideas about Shinto, and to see continuity from ancient times to the present, but I make no grand claims for my approach, anticipating that future researchers will supersede it with more precise analytic tools.

Chapter 1, the first of four treating the ancient period, begins with the flow of knowledge into Japan from the Asian continent, its influence on ancient Kami worship and concepts of rulership. The idea of *jingi* arose to distinguish the sovereign’s worship of Kami, regarded as “indigenous,” from his court’s Buddhist rites. An annual calendar of Kami rituals was embodied in a distinct law code called *Jingiryō*, while separate codes governed Buddhism. A branch of government called the *Jingikan*, literally the *jingi* ministry, or Ministry of Divinities, was formed to oversee Kami-related affairs at court and at provincial shrines. I argue that although the term *Shinto* scarcely appears, we can identify Shinto’s institutional origins in the late seventh- and early eighth-century coordination of Kami worship, regarded as embodying indigenous tradition, by a government ministry following legal mandates.

Chapter 2 examines two eighth-century compilations of myth and history, *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon shoki* (720), provincial gazetteers and alternative myth-histories composed by clans outside the ruling dynasty. Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* expounded the dynasty’s divine origins and claimed that the heavenly deities had charged their scions to rule eternally. *Nihon shoki*, the more immediately influential of the two, described the dynasty as eminently strong, in a message meant to impress continental rulers with Yamato mastery of Chinese statecraft and its patronage of arts, culture, and learning. *Kojiki* is more concerned to assert the sovereign’s support for the “indigenous” tradition of Kami worship, never mentioning Buddhism (the preeminent embodiment of the “foreign” at the time), though Buddhism had been a part of the realm for centuries. *Kojiki* upholds the indigenous by erasing the foreign. The monarch is positioned as the arbiter of different social groups’ claims to public status, funding, and patronage. The official histories portray major political antagonism between the champions of the “indigenous” (clans particularly specializing in Kami worship) and the “foreign” (those promoting Buddhism’s expanded presence). The main elements of the “indigenous” consist of the Kami, a divine monarch, and a publicly authorized corps of Kami ritualists. Variants of

this scheme can be seen in the alternate narratives of the Inbe and Nakatomi clans, which stress their own divine descent and legacy of assisting the sovereign.

Chapter 3 examines the Jingikan's coordination of provincial shrines' rites with the sovereign's Kami worship in the capital, under the Ritsuryō system of government, from the seventh through the ninth centuries. The push-pull between center and periphery revealed the provinces' determination to maintain maximum autonomy in all things, including their distinctive deities, even as they coveted the benefits of connections with the court. While the Jingikan enjoyed only limited success, the court emerged as the preeminent patron of shrines. Annual Kami rituals at court, enthronement rites, and the Vicennial Renewal of the Ise Shrines took shape during this era. Jingikan practice clarified that Kami ritualists would not debate matters of theology but instead would rely on the theater of ritual to embody the indigenous tradition. Meanwhile, at a popular level, a variety of institutional combinations of temples and shrines appeared. Buddhist scholarship explained the relation between Kami and Buddhas in several different ways.

Chapter 4 examines Shinto from the tenth through the twelfth centuries. The Jingikan's ability to coordinate shrine rites was so weakened that by the tenth century, provincial shrine priests treated the ministry contemptuously, with impunity. While the older calendar of annual *jingi* ritual continued, courtiers routinely ignored ceremonies required by their official appointments. A new group of twenty-two shrines emerged as the shrunken focus for *jingi* ritual. At the same time that the Ritsuryō system was disintegrating, however, the pantheon was expanding to encompass a variety of new supernaturals, including "vengeful spirits" (*goryō*), and the scope of "public rites" (*kōsai*) widened to include them. The court's anxiety concerning wrathful spirits led it to sponsor many ad hoc performances of the Great Purification Rite (*Ōharae*), originally a biannual observance of the yearly *jingi* calendar, for such purposes as purifying the imperial residence or exorcising ghosts. The aristocracy rapidly followed suit, with the result that many "private" elements became part of Shinto. These new ritual performances also revealed changing conceptions of Kami, now upholding moral principles, rather than merely striking down those who transgressed taboos. As the Kyoto populace began celebrating ceremonies for vengeful spirits, they staged large festivals with music, dancing, and parades of gorgeous floats, establishing a prototype for urban shrine festivals. These trends intensified during the era of cloister government (eleventh and twelfth centuries), when we find the court and the aristocracy increasingly worshipping specific Kami on a personal basis, not merely in fulfillment of their official duties or familial obligations. Meanwhile, pairing the Kami with various Buddhist supernaturals in the *honji-suijaku* theory, and the claim that the two were ultimately identical, undermined the image of the Kami's unique embodiment of the indigenous, even as it projected the new idea of the Kami as agents of salvation.

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters concerning the medieval period (thirteenth through sixteenth centuries); it examines the esotericization of Shinto. I use

this expression to refer to the development of thought about the Kami within the philosophical framework of esoteric Buddhism. Medieval Shinto esoteric thought was propounded both by Buddhist thinkers and within shrines' sacerdotal lineages. Both camps created distinctive rituals of rich symbolism and complex correspondences between the Kami and Buddhist divinities, such as Kami initiations culminating in the initiate's "enthronement," making him symbolically equivalent to an emperor. The Jingikan, such as it was at the time, was powerless to resist this encroachment on its turf. Esotericism called for secret transmissions from master to disciple, valorizing a privatized understanding of knowledge over public exposition. Esotericism's claim that the Kami and Buddhas were ultimately one and undifferentiated vitiated any sense of the superiority of the indigenous.

Oaths sworn to the Kami show that the Kami were increasingly perceived as requiring people to conform to a moral code. The Great Purification Prayer was fully loosed from its original moorings in annual *jingi* rites. It came to be used in shortened form for all manner of personal, individual, and private devotional purposes. Even as it continued to be seen as embodying something quintessentially "Shinto," it acquired an ecumenical character as it was appropriated by all manner of practitioners. Newly formed lineages of Shugendō, the cult of sacred mountains, practiced myriad ceremonies for mountain deities, who came to be roughly classed with the Kami, contributing to the ongoing diversification of the pantheon. In the late thirteenth century, the Mongol invasions threatened to destroy Japan entirely, but typhoons called "Kamikaze" (divine winds) diverted them. The popular sense that the Kami had delivered Japan greatly strengthened ideas of Japan as a divine land (*shinkoku*). Tens of thousands flooded the Ise Shrines in 1287 to give thanks to the Kami for Japan's deliverance.

Chapter 6 examines Shinto art, literature, dance-drama, and aspects of architecture to uncover medieval Shinto's devotional patterns. New architectural spaces were created for encountering "foreign," violent, or malevolent supernaturals who had not appeared in *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*, and who were outside the *honji-suijaku* framework. Through these encounters, threatening forces could be "domesticated," transformed into beneficent Kami, and practitioners could absorb some of their power. New interpretations of *Nihon shoki* myth produced many popular tales in several genres. Tale literature, shrine mandalas, and the monumental work of twenty illustrated scrolls called "Kasuga Gongen Genki-e" portrayed the Kami as compassionately leading humanity to salvation, blessing, protecting, and ultimately guiding them to the Pure Land. Shrines were pictured as Pure Lands on earth, and the idea of Kami and Buddhas as ultimately the same was given pictorial form. Humanity and the Kami are bound together in reciprocity. Not only do the Kami bless their human devotees, but also, when humanity builds shrines to reverence the Kami, the Kami are glorified and revived, so that a circle of mutual benefit is formed. The *shinkoku* idea assumed a personal guise in this connection. All those living in the divine land were believed descended from the Kami, and to live in

the divine land was to lack for nothing that might be required to attain salvation. Moreover, those who trust completely in the Kami could eventually become Kami themselves.

Chapter 7 treats the late medieval period (end of the fifteenth century through the sixteenth century), emphasizing the work of Yoshida Kanetomo, a courtier serving in the Jingikan. Kanetomo initiated revolutionary changes, producing the first structured exposition of Shinto, creating rituals for initiation into his secret teachings, and laying the groundwork for a system coordinating shrines nationwide. Kanetomo's use of the term *Shinto* for his philosophical system was virtually the first use of the word in that way. After the Jingikan burned down in the Ōnin War (1467–1477), Kanetomo appropriated its functions for an eccentric shrine of his own design, meant to be the symbolic center for all Kami worship, even securing imperial recognition for it as a substitute Jingikan. In Kanetomo's philosophical system, Shinto was essential to imperial rule. He reversed the *honji-suijaku* theory to present the Kami as the primal deities, with Buddhist figures as their traces. He asserted that the Kami and humanity are united through the heart-mind. Kanetomo's descendants perpetuated his doctrinal and ritual systems, providing instruction and initiations for priests, licensing them to recruit others, and thereby creating regional networks of shrines and priests linked through Yoshida affiliation.

Chapter 8 is the first of four chapters dealing with the early modern period (seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries). It investigates Confucianism's influence on Shinto in the seventeenth century, when Confucianism experienced a revival. The early modern term for legally constituted public authority, *kōgi*, encompassed the imperial court, shogunal government, and provincial rulers called *daimyō*. In fact, however, the shogunate completely overshadowed the monarchy. The shogunate provided the court's material support, revived its ceremonial life, and underwrote the Vicennial Renewals of the Ise Shrines. But while the shogunate was the major power, it lacked a correspondingly magnificent legitimation. Originally intended as a temporary military force, from the mid-seventeenth century there were few uprisings for it to quell, and as a result, erstwhile warriors were transformed into bureaucrats.

Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), Yoshikawa Koretaru (1616–1694), and Yamazaki Ansai (1616–1657) launched new Shinto theories, asserting the oneness of Shinto and Confucianism, and offering legitimating rationales to the shogunate. They stressed such ideas as the unity of Kami and Principle (a central term in Confucianism), the virtue of loyalty, and the symbol of the Heavenly Jeweled Spear as the emblem of benevolent shogunal rule. The spear was the instrument of creation in myth, and because it appeared before the Sun Goddess or the imperial regalia were created, temporal priority subtly validated shogunal rule as having originated before imperial rule. Razan, Koretaru, and Ansai consistently asserted that Shinto is an essential element of governance and a precious embodiment of indigenous tradition. They recommended purifications as a way to regain humanity's

primordial union with Kami, primarily conceived of not as a vast pantheon, but focusing on a single, ultimate deity. Ansai taught his theories openly, and while Razan and Koretaru perpetuated esoteric transmission, Koretaru also breached that custom, teaching the Yoshida lineage's secret doctrines to outsiders. The Yoshida house secured the legal authority to spread their licensing system, though it caused much resentment in some quarters and inflamed critics to expose the deficiencies of Yoshida sacred texts.

To understand the devotional character of early modern Kami worship, Chapter 9 examines veneration of the Kami Inari and pilgrimage to the Ise Shrines. Both were concerned with the pursuit of happiness, elevating the value of ordinary people and validating their desire for well-being and abundance. Inari, who is not mentioned in ancient myth, began as a food god or Kami of rice, with foxes for messengers. By the early modern period, either the Kami Inari or its messengers could be referred to by the name "Inari." Shrines for Inari proliferated, so that by the 1830s there were over one hundred of them in Edo. Short-lived fads for particular Inari shrines sprang up repeatedly. Urban commercialism colored Inari worship pervasively. A variety of figures like *miko* and "Shintoists" (*Shintōsha*) promoted Inari fads, spread the tales that sparked them, and then found ways to make a living from the devotees.

Pilgrim masters (*onshi* or *oshi*) from the Ise Shrines developed village networks covering most of the country, compiling and spreading miracle tales about the Ise Kami to stimulate pilgrimage. Ise mandalas and travel guides instructed pilgrims how to travel to Ise and worship there. Village-based pilgrimage was a regular occurrence, but in addition, mass pilgrimage occurred many times. Often, pilgrims threw off all the restraints of ordinary life, dancing ecstatically in a carnival atmosphere, but mass pilgrimage seemed ominous to its observers. Pilgrims frequently traveled without money, became separated from their companions, or fell victim to sickness or thieves. Many could not explain why they were walking to Ise, only that they felt an overwhelming compulsion to go. No one spoke of these popular observances as "Shinto"; instead, they were regarded as expressions of "faith" (*shinkō*). Nevertheless, the term "Shintoist" began to be used as a term of self-reference, a significant change in popular usage.

Chapter 10 addresses the appearance within Shinto of three religious movements, each based on a regimen of self-cultivation, seeking salvation through uniting oneself with Amaterasu. The three groups, Kurozumikyō, Misogikyō, and Uden Shinto, arose in the early to mid-nineteenth century. These movements built on the foundation laid by Shinto popularizers, active from the sixteenth century, who spread recitation of the Great Purification Prayer. Popularizers encouraged ordinary people outside the shrine priesthood to recite this prayer daily. If they or a loved one were ill, it should be recited many times—as often as possible. The ancient prayer that began as a pillar of annual *jingi* ritual monopolized by priests was transformed into a means of self-cultivation for all, bringing healing and revealing Amaterasu's boundless power. The popular dissemination of Shinto prayers and communal

worship before scrolls of The Oracle of the Three Shrines, as well as Ise pilgrimage and Inari faith, were part of a matrix of popular Kami worship, transformed by the founders of new religious movements into functional monotheisms devoted to Amaterasu. Revelation, preaching, healing, and frequent communal meetings for chanting and sermons characterized these groups. Kurozumikyō was founded in the Okayama domain in Western Japan, a prosperous area with a tradition of commoner education. The founder, Kurozumi Munetada, was a samurai shrine priest before his revelations, and his followers included samurai as well as farmers. Misogikyō and Uden Shinto were established in Edo, but both founders' concerns for the urban poor were taken as veiled criticism of the shogunate, leading to their suppression. By contrast, village headmen found Kurozumi's teachings useful in maintaining the social order. The three groups' early histories diverged significantly, in spite of important similarities among their teachings and practices.

Chapter 11 examines nativist thought, Kokugaku, in relation to Shinto. Calling for wholesale rejection of foreign influence in thought, culture, and politics, nativist scholars idealized the mythical Age of the Gods. Motoori Norinaga, Hirata Atsutane, and their students tried to recover a time before Japanese life had been corrupted by foreign influence, and openly denounced what they saw as the excessive rationalism of Confucianism and Buddhism. Kokugaku scholars elevated emotion above analytic thought as a positive, defining quality of human life. In his scholarship on the *Kojiki*, Norinaga declared that the text originally had been spoken by the emperor and was a true account of actual events. Read correctly, he believed, *Kojiki* would reveal a golden age when the Kami, the emperor, and his people were united in complete harmony. Atsutane, who also upheld this ideal, composed prayers that specified more minutely how people should worship the Kami and the emperor. He conceived of the ancestors as Kami, though the prevalent understanding at the time called for ancestors to be memorialized in Buddhist style, starting with Buddhist funerals. While Atsutane was critical of both the Yoshida and Shirakawa lineages, he accepted employment as a Yoshida teacher, subsequently using its shrine networks to promote his own teachings. He and Norinaga both attracted shrine priests as students. Late Edo period Kokugaku texts portray the cosmos as having been created by Kami, who entrust the imperial line with rule over the human world. Humanity will find its ultimate fulfillment in self-sufficient villages, where all residents farm the land, have many children, and assist fellow villagers.

At the end of the period, Japan was threatened by Western powers that successfully pressured the shogunate to sign humiliating trade treaties. With that, Kokugaku's definition of the foreign switched from China to the West, and nativism became an anticolonialist discourse seeking to replace the shogunate with direct imperial rule. Emperor Kōmei frequently appealed for divine assistance in expelling the foreigners, and in the process re-established palace ties to the Ise Shrines, as well as instituting novel ceremonies. Nativists called for restoration of the Jingikan as a central unit of government. Those in service to the monarch should utterly devote

themselves to their official appointments, eliminating all trace of the private, so that Japan could be delivered from the foreign threat and recreate the way of life it had had in the Age of the Gods.

Chapter 12 is the first of five chapters examining modern Shinto. The term *State Shinto* has often been used, including by myself, to describe the modern Japanese government's takeover of shrine affairs that began in the Meiji period, but a variety of problems have been raised regarding the term. An alternative, "state management," has been proposed, and in this chapter I experiment with it, to question its usefulness and limitations as an alternative to State Shinto. This chapter examines the period from the Meiji Restoration of 1868 to the creation in 1900 of a branch of government solely dedicated to shrine administration. In 1868, Shinto finally achieved independence from Buddhism through a government-mandated separation of shrines from temples, and the Jingikan was briefly reinstated. It was downgraded and then abolished, however, as provisions were made for the emperor to begin performing rites based on ancient *jingi* in the new palace in the capital Tokyo.

The government initiated a campaign to unite the nation behind a state-authored creed, to be promulgated by Buddhist and Shinto priests, among others. Shinto-derived associations like Kurozumikyō, Misogikyō, and a variety of newly founded religious movements were involved in the campaign, but cordoned off from the shrines in a separate administrative category. Far from uniting the populace, however, the campaign was a spectacular failure.

A new formula holding that shrines represent "the nation's rites and creed" (*kokka no sōshi*) explained that shrines are not religious. A powerful ideal of Shinto providing state ritual through which the populace would unite to glorify the nation and its sovereign emerged. Shrines were ranked according to a unitary hierarchy with the Ise Shrines at the apex, though they had never before all been put beneath a single umbrella. Shrines devoted to Kami other than those connected to the throne found their deities replaced by government decree. Temples' and shrines' land was commandeered, and shrines had to scramble for popular support. Measures for supporting the shrines from public funds placed Shinto explicitly and unmistakably in the public realm, even though the actual amounts were mostly tokens of recognition, insufficient to maintain shrines or provide the priests a livelihood.

Many new shrines were built with popular support, some for imperial loyalists from history, the Yasukuni Shrine for the war dead of the Restoration, and numerous shrines in Hokkaidō, which was being settled on a large scale by Japanese pioneers from the main islands. The post-Restoration creation of these shrines initiated new relations among shrines, government, and the people, depending heavily on local fundraising, burnishing the image of local boosters, and producing significant business opportunities. These new relationships, as well as government administration of shrines, went considerably beyond the parameters of "state management,"

involving the people much more, and extending further into the realm of ideology than that bland phrase suggests.

Chapter 13 treats Shinto from the early twentieth century until the end of World War II, the heyday of the Japanese empire, when shrines were built in overseas colonies to assimilate colonial subjects, and Shinto observances were often given a compulsory character. I examine ideological campaigns mediated by shrines and explain how the term “State Shinto” can be employed to understand them. The Shrine Bureau within the Home Ministry oversaw shrine affairs until the Shrine Institute (Jingiin) superseded it in 1940. While the state shaped Shinto in numerous ways in this period, however, Shinto scholars freely disputed the government position that Shinto is not a religion. Tanaka Yoshitō and Katō Genchi articulated a distinctive concept of Kami and of Shinto as a religion, which embodies the essence of Japan’s “national polity” (*kokutai*) and epitomizes Japan’s indigenous tradition. Their ideas aimed, in part, to expand the foregoing understanding of Shinto to include the colonies, albeit in draconian ways. Mammoth new shrines were built during this era, both in the inner territories and the colonies. Those in the inner territories were created through partnerships between the Shrine Bureau and local-level promoters, who often represented business interests. Successful high-ranking shrines came to be managed more like corporations, while the priests of smaller low-ranking shrines pleaded for resources to fulfill the national project of uniting the people through shrine worship.

Local government campaigns succeeded in normalizing daily worship at home altars (*kamidana*). School administrators, who often held office in shrine associations, enforced compliance with school ceremonies, required pupils to participate in visits to local shrines where they performed volunteer labor, and from the 1930s orchestrated school trips to the Ise Shrines. School ceremonial became a focus for stigmatizing—sometimes violently—anyone who dissented from the required observances, especially Christians. The war dead were memorialized at the Yasukuni Shrine and its provincial outposts, divinized as Kami whom the emperor himself honored personally. Survivors traveled to Yasukuni to mourn and honor the fallen. The combination of these and other compulsory or semi-compulsory ceremonies resulted in the permeation of daily life with Shinto ritual. Shrines became potent symbols of home, duty, ethnic identity, the nation, and self-sacrifice.

Public funding of shrines doubled between 1931 and 1945, though Japan was continually at war. Shrine construction projects reached a peak in 1940, when Japan celebrated the 2600th anniversary of its legendary founding by Emperor Jinmu. Massive new shrine construction projects continued into the last year of the war, even when food and building materials were being rationed. These huge investments show that the hope of uniting the empire through common Shinto worship had become an essential element of imperial rule.

Chapter 14 examines Shinto from 1945 to 1989. The Allied Occupation of Japan ended government administration of shrines and had them classified as religious

corporations (*shūkyō hōjin*). This policy squelched Shinto's claim to any role in governance and abruptly aligned it with religion. The Shinto Directive of December 1945 decreed a total separation of religion from state, ending all public funding and formal connections with government at any level. In its ignorance of similar enthusiasm for empire and war in virtually all sectors of Japanese religions, the Occupation singled out Shinto as responsible for the militarism and ultranationalism that it credited for leading Japan to war. Shinto figures were embittered when Occupation censorship (an ironic policy for an ostensibly democratizing force) prevented them from responding to this humiliating charge.

A national organization was formed, the Association of Shinto Shrines, to coordinate the shrines and to negotiate with the Occupation. It successfully persuaded the Occupation to allow most shrines to keep the land they had customarily held. This effective lobbying convinced the great majority of shrines to join the association. After censorship ended in 1952, the association entered the public sphere in a new way, using its newspaper to critique the Occupation as a vengeful conqueror bent on destroying "the Japanese spirit." The newspaper bitterly deplored the emperor's forced renunciation of divinity, Shinto's severance from public status under the postwar constitution (which the association believed had been wrongfully imposed on the Japanese people), the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, the loss of Yasukuni Shrine's status as the national war memorial, and much more.

The association became involved in politics, successfully lobbying for the creation of a national holiday renaming the pre-surrender ceremony commemorating the first emperor Jinmu's coronation as National Foundation Day. In the process, the association became a prominent patron of the Liberal Democratic Party's most right-leaning factions, forming a League of Shinto Politicians. The association campaigned long and hard for a bill returning Yasukuni Shrine to public status, only to find that politicians could not be trusted. Thereafter, the association modified its strategies, continuing to act as a political lobby for conservative causes. Among them are campaigns to promote respect for the monarchy, to ensure that school textbooks present a positive view of the imperial period, and for treatment of the war dead as national heroes, countering what it calls the "Tokyo War Crimes Trials view of history." It encourages prime ministers and their cabinets to patronize the Yasukuni Shrine, bemoans the cessation of imperial visits to Yasukuni, and criticizes Japan's former colonies for their objections to politicians' patronage of Yasukuni. The association likewise denounces government statements apologizing to other Asian nations for Japan's treatment of them during colonial rule. It continues to mourn Shinto's loss of public status and to call for legislative changes to elevate popular regard for Japan's "indigenous tradition." The politicization of Shinto through its national association set it on a new course as a rightist interest group.

Chapter 15 investigates postwar shrine festivals, engaging contemporary Shinto's affective, aesthetic, and social dimensions. Since 1945, shrines must negotiate with local government for use of public space and compete with civic pageants for a

community's attention. No longer universally recognized as having preeminent claim to community resources, shrine festivals can suffer if they do not exert popular appeal. In order to prosper, shrines must respond to their communities' changing concerns and demographics. Civic pageants unconnected to temples and shrines are generally more adroit at including a wide range of participants, including women. By contrast, historic taboos have generally made it much harder for women to assume visible roles in shrine festivals, other than preparing food or costumes.

In my study of the Darkness Festival of the Ōkunitama Shrine (Fuchū City, Tokyo Prefecture), I found that the festival's dance, drama, music, and contests of strength have been added rather recently, to attract newcomers to the town, as urban sprawl turned Fuchū into a suburb of Tokyo. The ritual rationale of the Darkness Festival is that the Kami are reborn through returning to the spot where they originally manifested, paraded in gorgeous palanquins borne by young men inspired with the spirit of the Kami, who whirl the palanquins in a colorful procession. The motif of a return to primeval chaos is unmistakable. However, postwar Japanese society is focused on work and school, and has only limited patience for disturbance to the social order, especially on a school night. After a death at the festival in 1969, the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) put its collective foot down and forced the festival to adopt a daytime schedule, playing havoc with the underlying religious rationale.

Since 1999, however, a new Head Priest rose to prominence, even becoming head of the PTA. He overcame the community's anxiety and reinstated the nighttime format, emphasizing ceremonies that symbolically promote an image of the shrine's "public" nature. In his view, shadow, mystery, and darkness, combined with beautiful rituals and elaborate offerings, are essential to the Kami's annual rebirth and the community's regeneration. City officials and civic groups are satisfied with the change, and the city now advertises the Darkness Festival as its official "face," a new kind of public presence.

Chapter 16 examines Shinto since the 1989 death of Hirohito. His successor, Emperor Akihito, has set a new tone in the palace, one which gives no encouragement to the Association of Shinto Shrines's backward-looking perspective, though the association continues to exert significant political influence. Following the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system by a religious group called Aum Shinrikyō, Japanese society severely criticized religion, across the board. Moves to tax religious corporations arose, intimidating all of them. Society demanded that religious organizations explain what they contribute to the public good (*kōeki*). In response, a new line of Shinto scholarship arose, asserting that Shinto's greatest contribution lies in shrine rituals and festivals, which enhance communal solidarity. This argument is a contemporary expression of the venerable claim that communities are unified through shared worship of the Kami.

After the triple disaster of March 11, 2011, when an earthquake, tidal wave, and nuclear meltdown devastated northeastern Japan, religions of all kinds, including Shinto, began sustained relief campaigns in the region. It seems now that the

combination of scholarship and recovery projects has restored some measure of trust in religions' contributions to the public good. We find Shinto leaders now calling on the priesthood to embrace the idea of Shinto as a religion, to renounce nostalgic longing for prewar mores, and recognize that Shinto priests live in a pluralistic society in which they cannot hope to monopolize the worldview.

If we judge Shinto's strength based only on statistical data concerning numbers of adherents and expressions of belief, we find the picture of decline common to all branches of religion in Japan. It is apparent that many smaller shrines in depopulating areas face an uncertain future. We also find, however, that shrines attract huge numbers of people each New Year's, and that the 2013 Vicennial Renewal of the Ise Shrines drew more than fourteen million visitors.

Surveys reveal that shrine priests perceive a growing gap between shrines' economic situations and the professional association's rigid traditionalism. Many have decided to strike out in new directions in order to guarantee the economic viability of their shrines and to appeal more persuasively to a changing clientele. The rising number of women priests contributes to diversifying relations between shrines and their community supporters. While recent legal verdicts suggest ongoing judicial ambivalence about connections between shrines and local government, increasing scope has opened for Shinto ceremonies in public settings. Popular culture shows a fascination with images drawn from Shinto, seen in youth culture, best-selling novels, manga, live action film, and anime. All this suggests that while it faces significant challenges, Shinto today is a vital force in Japanese society and culture.

Shinto in the Ancient Period



Introduction

By the end of the Yayoi period (400 BCE–300 CE), the Japanese archipelago was populated by a variety of ethnic groups originating in the East Asian continent and island Southeast Asia. Small “states” (C: *guo*; J: *kuni*) emerged and entered into trading and tributary relations with China and the three Korean kingdoms of Silla, Paekche, and Koguryō. The Korean kingdoms also maintained relations with China.

In Japan, a ruler styling himself “Great King” (*daiō*) emerged as a hegemon and began to extend his influence in a system of hierarchical relations called “Yamato kingship” (*Yamato ōken*). In the course of its diplomatic relations and military alliances with other East Asian states, the Yamato adopted Chinese models of governance. These models were introduced alongside older patterns in which rulers’ authority was expressed through agricultural rites and the worship of ancestral deities. In part because all the major political entities in East Asia had accepted Buddhist rites, the Japanese did likewise in the sixth century. This decision proved highly controversial with groups that had developed specialized roles in performing Kami worship. A coup resulted in the defeat of the opponents of Buddhism and the intensification of broad Chinese influence in culture, society, and politics. Significant influence from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Chinese lore regarding astrology, a cult of immortality, and yin and yang (which in later ages would be called Daoism) flowed into the archipelago and colored concepts of rulership and the conduct of state ritual. Meanwhile, Japanese sovereigns struggled to subdue tribal peoples, who had settled earlier in the islands. Wars against these indigenes continued into the eighth century and after.¹

In the mid-seventh century, a legal code called Ritsuryō was adopted to establish a Chinese-style centralized government. The Council of Divinities (Jingikan) was established as part of the new system. The Jingikan was charged with conducting rites of state and coordinating the provinces’ ritual practices with those in the capital

and the palace, based on a code of Kami Law (*Jingiryō*). An annual calendar of state ritual was created, based on an ideal of uniting the realm through Kami worship, with the sovereign at its head, aligning his earthly rule with that of his divine ancestors in heaven. The instantiation of this ideal within government gave Kami affairs an eminently public character, and its differentiation from a parallel apparatus to administer Buddhist matters cast the Council of Divinities as the keeper of the “indigenous” tradition.

I will argue that the Ritsuryō system represents the institutional origin of Shinto, based on the concept of *jingi*, the instantiation through Kami Law (*Jingiryō*) of an annual calendar of state ritual, and the establishment of the Council of Divinities (*Jingikan*) to administer the rites. This position is consonant with recent studies by Inoue Nobutaka, Mitsuhashi Tadashi, Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun, and Mori Mizue² while departing to some extent from the views of Kuroda Toshio, Inoue Hiroshi, Mark Teeuwen, Fabio Rambelli, and others. There are strong counterarguments to be considered, however, based on the almost complete absence of the term *Shinto* from the vernacular language and from documents of the ancient period. For Teeuwen and Rambelli, the absence of the term is decisive, whereas for me, structured institutions aiming to coordinate Kami affairs from the center weigh more heavily.

This study’s thesis arguing for the coalescence of Shinto’s institutional basis by the eighth century will be laid out in this and the following two chapters. Chapter 1 traces the development of Kami worship from prehistory through the early eighth century, emphasizing the gradual emergence of the *ideal* of a realm united in coordinated rites for the Kami. Chapter 2 examines the eighth-century texts *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, in which enduring charters of ritual and rulership are set out in mythic form. Chapter 3 returns to the *Jingikan*’s coordination of rites at provincial shrines across the realm to examine how the ideal of uniting the realm through the worship of the Kami was realized.

The Yayoi Period (400 BCE–300 CE)

The Yayoi period is the first to leave artifacts that can reasonably be linked to the later development of Shinto. Named for the area of Tokyo where the pottery of this age was first discovered, Yayoi society practiced rice agriculture and metalworking in bronze and iron. Ritual utilized bronze bells (*dōtaku*) and mirrors, as well as comma-shaped, pierced jasper and jade jewels called *magatama*. Burial customs differed regionally. Especially in southwestern Honshū and Kyūshū, there was much contact with China and Korea.³

Archaeological evidence suggests that religious life developed in connection with rice cultivation. One type of Yayoi ritual site centers on large rocks or boulders, some with food containers, wooden fetishes, and such precious objects as jewels.

Many such sites were located near springs, waterfalls, and riverbanks or hills and mountains, suggesting a focus on water and its importance to agriculture. It is believed that boundaries were created around ritual sites, and that spirits called Kami were invited to descend into some object, such as a tree, pillar, animal, waterfall, island, or mountain. Once the Kami had entered a tangible object (generically called *yorishiro*), ritual was performed for them, relating to the fertility of crops. The discovery of large numbers of *dōtaku* at ritual sites, along with bronze weapons and polished metal mirrors, suggests that these objects had a central role in ritual. It may be that their shiny surfaces or the sounds made by striking them were believed to be capable of calling the Kami to the site.⁴

The Kami were strongly identified with natural forces governing the crops. Kami were not originally imagined as having anthropomorphic form or as dwelling permanently in a single place. Instead, they were believed to respond to human invitations to manifest. Otherwise, they remained formless and invisible. The Kami's association with natural forces gave them an unpredictable quality. Just as nature can produce floods, drought, and epidemic disease, the Kami were not necessarily always beneficent to humanity. They could make erratic appearances, conceptualized as anger or wrath. For this reason, worship mainly took the form of beseeching and placating them, or seeking to avoid their anger. It was only much later that they came to be seen as having compassion for humanity.⁵

Hierarchically structured villages led by chiefs evolved. The chief performed ritual for the spirits of rice either at his dwelling or at the rice storehouse, where rice and the seeds for the next year's crop were stored, ensuring the continuity of the seasons and the success of agriculture. Chiefs and others associated with ritual were considered to be closely connected with the Kami or Kami-like themselves. Great caches of swords and other weapons too large to have actually been used functionally are found at some sites, such as Kōjindani in the Izumo area.⁶ These finds suggest that symbols of political or military rule, such as swords, merged with religious symbols of power like jewels and mirrors in a concept of leadership that fused religious and secular elements.

By around 200 BCE Japanese rulers were seeking investiture (*sakuhō*) from Chinese monarchs to elevate their status and enable them to enter into international trade along the sea routes linking China, Korea, and Japan, as did Korean rulers (see Map 1.1). Japanese chieftains traded along the Inland Sea from the Asian continent to Kyūshū and eastward into Honshū. Trade in iron ingots was critical to Japanese society at this time, making possible the manufacture of metal weapons and tools that transformed warfare and agriculture. Iron axes and daggers were imported to Japan, and some Kyūshū sites have remains of small-scale ironworking, but Japan was almost entirely dependent on imported sources of iron ore.⁷

The Han dynasty fell in the third century, destabilizing the Korean Peninsula and apparently throwing the Yayoi chiefdoms into turmoil as well. Remains from this period show signs of warfare, with new defensive fortifications, including



Map 1.1 The East China Sea Interaction Area. Source: Joan R. Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

watchtowers and moats. Commoner burials include skeletons shot through by arrows or with the skull detached, suggesting violent death in battle.

The late third-century Chinese work *Records of Wei* (*Weizhi*, 297) is one of our earliest written records about Japan, which the Chinese called “Wa.”

The country formerly had a man as ruler. For some seventy or eighty years after that there were disturbances and warfare. Thereupon the people agreed upon a woman for their ruler. Her name was Pimiko. She occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people. Though mature in age, she remained unmarried. She had a younger brother who assisted

her in ruling the country. After she became the ruler, there were few who saw her. She had one thousand women as attendants, but only one man. He served her food and drink and acted as a medium of communication. She resided in a palace surrounded by towers and stockades, with armed guards in a state of constant vigilance.⁸

This text's statement that Pimiko, or Himiko, was chosen after a period of warfare, and that previously a man had been chieftain, broadly accords with instability that followed the fall of the Han. The text states further that soon after being made queen, Himiko sent a mission with gifts to the Chinese Wei emperor, who responded by bestowing on her the title "Queen of Wa." He also sent her one hundred polished bronze mirrors, writing that she should "exhibit them to your countrymen in order to demonstrate that our country thinks so much of you as to bestow exquisite gifts upon you." This imprimatur sealed Himiko's rule as both approved by her own people and confirmed by the ruler of the most advanced civilization.⁹

Himiko ruled over a land in Wa called Yamatai, composed of twenty-two chiefdoms. Although the exact location of Himiko's chiefdom has not yet been conclusively identified, if she was attended by a retinue of one thousand female servants, she must have resided in a large ceremonial center and ruled over an impressive territory. It would appear that Himiko's rule was largely peaceful, and that the constituent *kuni* formed an exchange network based on trading in iron and solidified by the distribution of ceremonial goods like the mirrors received from China.

The Kyūshū archaeological site called Yoshinogari, active from the first century BCE to the fourth century CE, gives us some idea of the ceremonial centers in Himiko's age. Yoshinogari was the pinnacle of a chiefdom that engaged in diplomacy, trade, metallurgy, and weaving. Its buildings were surrounded by a double moat and further protected by watchtowers. Yoshinogari monopolized the *kuni*'s metallurgy, and the subordinate hamlets did not have metalworking of their own. Yoshinogari's grain storehouses were significantly larger than those in the surrounding area, enabling the ruler to store the rice collected as tribute from the smaller settlements. Burials differed in size and grave goods, according to the social hierarchy, and commoner and elite burial grounds were separated from each other. The largest grave, reserved for the leader, was a great, mounded tomb. The tomb contained precious jewels, bronze daggers resembling those found in Korea, and glass beads imported from south China.¹⁰

The *Records of Wei* state that Himiko practiced a "spirit way" (*kidō*), and although we have too little evidence to determine exactly what that meant, we can turn for suggestive hints to comparative sources regarding Korean chiefdoms. A section of *Records of Wei* regarding Korea in the same period portrays chieftains holding communal rites for planting and harvesting crops and worshipping in ritual sites,

where they erected pillars on which they hung bells and drums to commune with spirits. They performed rites for bygone heroes, the sun, moon, stars, and the directions. Divination using animal bones and tortoise shells was practiced, as was purification with water. Women often delivered oracles in divination rites. Other rites for healing, lifting, or imposing curses and taboos or to expel evil spirits also existed. From these records, we know that rulers were believed to control natural forces based on an ability to know the will of deities. Ancient rule was closely connected with shamanism, a religious practice in which a person in a state of spirit possession becomes a mouthpiece for a deity and communicates the spirit's will to a community of people. The *Records of Wei* states that after she became Queen, Himiko remained concealed from the people and occupied with ritual. Her invisibility to the people no doubt contributed to the aura of the supernatural that she cultivated. Himiko probably practiced some method of communicating with spirits. The man's role was to interpret Himiko's utterances and communicate the will of the Kami to the people.¹¹

Religious beliefs evolved within a shared sphere of trade, diplomacy, and culture that encompassed parts of China, Korea, and the Japanese islands. In investiture, a Chinese sovereign confirmed lesser rulers by permitting trade relations and exchanging gifts, while the lesser rulers accepted the Chinese figure's dominant status. Distribution of gift mirrors was a means of incorporating regional chieftains. Although they cannot be definitively linked to Himiko, some 329 mirrors of a similar type have been found from the far West to Eastern Japan. These mirrors have rims decorated with triangles and images of gods and animals. The deities are in pairs: the Great King Father of the East and the Great Queen Mother of the West, associated with the contemporary Chinese cult of immortality.¹² Ideas of yin and yang, astrological lore, a cult of immortality, and Chinese divinities began to be absorbed into concepts of Kami and rulership.¹³

When Himiko died, according to *Records of Wei*, a great tomb was built, and more than one hundred attendants were buried with her. There is no archaeological evidence for human sacrifice in Japan, and thus this part of the text is not credible, but the report that Himiko's tomb was more than a hundred paces in diameter is quite compatible with others of the period, such as the largest, Nishitani Sangō in Yayoi Izumo, at forty-seven meters on a side.¹⁴ After Himiko's death, war again erupted and was quelled only when Himiko's niece was installed as the new chieftain.¹⁵

Early references to the Yamato are linked to Mount Miwa and its Kami Ōmononushi, its divine ancestor and protector, who, as a "spirit of the land" (*kunitama*), was worshipped to secure good harvests and predictable weather. Ōmononushi was believed to appear in snake form, and later myths describe the Kami's ability to appear also in human form. As Yamato hegemony allied with other peoples, shrines dedicated to Ōmononushi were built in the allies' territories. Ōmononushi began to take on martial characteristics in addition to the earlier association with agriculture and ancestral or protective features. The characteristics

of the Kami were augmented through this historical evolution, adding layers of meaning, but since structure and coordination were absent, it is not appropriate to label Kami worship at this time “Shinto.” The Yamato rulers were closely linked to the Mononobe, who were located to the north of Mt. Miwa, at Isonokami. Following the Yamato consolidation of power, the Mononobe assumed important roles in court ritual.

The Kofun Period (300–700)

This era is named for the large tumuli or tomb mounds (*kofun*, literally, “old tomb”) that characterize the era. *Kofun* from the late third century, such as Makimuku Ishizuka in Miwa, evidently served as the tomb for the leader of a local confederacy of chiefdoms. Makimuku contained pottery and grave goods from many other places, especially the rising Kibi center of power in present-day Okayama Prefecture, suggesting a wide network of trade and influence. The early fourth-century Hashihaka *kofun* is 275 meters long, more than three times the size of Makimuku, suggesting a much more powerful leader. The placement of the corpse in a stone chamber enclosed by earth follows Chinese practice, with the head facing north, suggesting that burial practices were absorbing Chinese influence. Clusters of tombs of the same shape but smaller size around the Hashihaka *kofun* suggest that subordinates’ loyalty to the leader buried at Hashihaka was expressed by the building of tombs of the same shape but smaller scale. A variety of tomb shapes prevailed in different regions.¹⁶

In the late fourth century, eastern regions came under Yamato influence and adopted the keyhole tomb, forsaking earlier regional styles. We see a growing uniformity of grave goods: bronze mirrors, swords, halberds, stone bracelets, beads, flint, and iron tools. The separate regions were bound to the center at Miwa by gift-giving, trading, and marital exchange. In contrast, Izumo, an area on the Sea of Japan that did not immediately come under Yamato hegemony, continued to build tombs in a distinctive square shape.¹⁷

A Division Emerges between “the Indigenous” and “the Foreign” as Buddhism Enters Japan

In the mid-fourth century, the three Korean kingdoms went to war with each other. Wa allied with Paekche, against Koguryō, to ensure continuation of trade in iron ingots. War persisted into the fifth century, and emigrants fleeing the wars in Korea poured into Japan, bringing with them valuable metallurgic skills, hydraulic skills needed to open new irrigated fields, literacy, and their own patterns of religious life, including Buddhism. The immigrants included Confucian scholars, scribes (*fuhito*),

interpreters, and administrators. They were called *kikajin*, or “naturalized subjects,” and they formed distinct clans, such as the Hata, the Aya, and the Soga. Their foreign origins and foreign religion disinclined them to accord great status and deference to the “indigenous” clans, who prided themselves on genealogies going back to the mythical Age of the Kami.¹⁸

Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Shakyamuni, who lived between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE in India, had founded Buddhism around a thousand years before it reached Japan, the religion having traveled from India to China, and into the Korean peninsula, acquiring many elements from those places. The advent of Buddhism initiated profound changes in all aspects of Japanese life and greatly impacted the cults of the Kami. Buddhism was inseparable from continental culture, and it was closely associated with literacy, medicine, the arts, and many technical skills. Buddhism’s acceptance by the court created a rivalry between the champions of the Kami and Buddhism’s advocates. It also helped to define Kami cults as “indigenous,” though they were diverse and specific to particular clans, some of which comprised recent immigrants. They came to be connected only through coordination from the center, which was bent on extending the Yamato court’s territorial control.

Uji, often translated “clan,” were the main units of the Yamato court from the late fifth century to the early seventh century. *Uji* leaders received titles (*kabane*) from the Great King that specified their relation to him and recognized them as his retainers. *Uji* were composed of a head or chiefly lineage, linked to subordinate groups, called *be* or *tomo*, who owed the chief specific duties. The whole corporate group was known by the same surname, though not all the members were actually related by kinship. *Uji* chiefs presided over ritual for their ancestral Kami, called *ujigami*, described in myth as having had some relation to the ancestral Kami of the Great King. *Uji* ritual presupposed that the entire corporate group of head lineage plus all the subordinate service groups shared a common descent from the *ujigami*.¹⁹

The tide of immigrants produced a division within Japan between clans with chieftains whose spiritual authority rested upon continental (including Buddhist) rites, and “native” groups whose leadership rested on the performance of rites for the Kami. Immigrants were associated with advanced Chinese techniques of construction, the technology for making iron tools and weapons, and the bureaucratic skills necessary to manage large estates and governmental affairs. These groups took the lead in introducing and supporting Buddhism, which provided the religious basis for their own authority. By contrast, the “native” clans were associated with agriculture and drew their religious legitimation from the performance of agriculturally based rites for the Kami. The immigrant clans increasingly built Buddhist temples and sponsored Buddhist rites there, while the native clans worshipped the Kami in shrines, built in imitation of Buddhism’s permanent structures. This division of society, combined with the determination of

the Yamato rulers to remain in control of the whole, lay in the background of the late sixth-century struggle over the official adoption of Buddhist ritual into the court, to be discussed later.

The “Great King” (*daiō* or *ōkimi*) as the late fifth-century Yamato ruler Yūryaku called himself, ruled over the Nara-Osaka area by military force, and outside that sphere made alliances with lesser rulers, who were by no means completely subdued. In forming alliances, the Great King married their daughters and began to extend his influence over the conduct of ritual in their territories. The Great King formed many marriage alliances, as allied groups vied to place their women in the court in the hope that an heir born to one of them would be chosen as the next king. Gift exchange cemented ongoing relations of specialized services, and clan laborers provided the workforce to clear new rice fields and build monumental *kofun* or cast iron tools, weapons, and ceremonial goods in bronze.²⁰

The titles bestowed by the Great King upon allies, local generals, and military deputies were inherited by succeeding generations, giving them status in the Yamato retinue based on their clan ancestor’s service to the Great King. The famed Inariyama sword, found in a round keyhole tomb in Musashi, bears a genealogy in Chinese characters cut into both sides of the blade and inlaid with gold as testament to the owner’s entitlement to rank. The growing use of weaponry among grave goods attests to the increasingly martial character of *uji*. For example, in the case of the 250 objects found with the Inariyama sword, there was a quantity of other swords, armor, halberds, daggers, knives, and many iron arrowheads, as well as *magatama* jewels and a mirror.²¹

A number of ritual sites along the trade routes emerged at Naniwazu (contemporary Osaka) and on the small island Okinoshima in the narrow straits between Japan and the Korean peninsula. A sea god or protector of seafarers called Sumiyoshi was worshipped at Naniwazu. Between the fourth and tenth centuries, the Yamato offered thousands of ritual objects at Okinoshima to protect its trading vessels.²²

By Yūryaku’s day, kings increasingly delegated ritual functions to allies who specialized in ceremonial affairs. Besides the Mononobe, the Nakatomi (some of whom later took the name Fujiwara) specialized in the recitation of prayers to the Kami and were said to be the descendants of the Kami Ame no Koyane no Mikoto. The Sarume claimed descent from the female Kami Ame no Uzume no Mikoto. It is believed that the Sarume women, who took important roles in Enthronement Rites and in later eras performed ritual dances (*kagura*) as a part of court ritual, were originally seers and healers practicing spirit possession. The Inbe (or Imibe) claimed descent from the Kami Ame no Futodama no Mikoto. They were charged with procuring many of the materials used in the Great King’s rituals, as well as the performance of abstinence rites. The Urabe were diviners who used tortoise shells and deer scapulae to predict the future, heating these objects over a fire until cracks appeared and then uttering prophecies based on the pattern of cracks.

Later, they claimed descent from Ame no Koyane (also, Amenokoyane) and took the surname Yoshida.²³

Mt. Miwa had been the original Yamato ritual site, but for reasons that remain unclear, they disengaged from the Miwa deity in favor of a cult of a solar deity at Ise. The shift created a sacred site in the direction of the sun's rising; thereafter the sun deity was treated as a "universal" Kami who illuminates everything under Heaven, and whose worship was the exclusive prerogative of the Yamato. Although the timing and the reasons for the choice of Ise remain a tantalizing, much-debated puzzle, the shrine built at Ise was styled the "original" place of worship for the Yamato ancestor Kami, Amaterasu Ōmikami, while a shrine within the palace provided a place for the ruler's diurnal worship. But Ise was also home to a food deity named Toyouke no Ōkami. With the Yamato cult setting up nearby, Ise came to have a dual character, later described as the Inner and Outer Shrines, with the Inner Shrine, or Naikū, dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami, and the Outer Shrine, or Gekū, dedicated to Toyouke no Ōkami, called a servant of the sun deity.²⁴

Yamato claims to rule "all under Heaven" (*tenka*) matched the choice of the sun as the clan's ancestral deity. The term *tenka*, "all under Heaven," which we can gloss as "the realm," conveys a distinctive Chinese concept of the polity and the world. The concept was known in Japan from at least the late fifth century and is found in the inscription on the Inariyama sword, which bears the date for 471, and on another sword of the late fifth century found at the Eta Funayama *kofun* in Kumamoto Prefecture. The term casts the realm as an area of 3,000 square *ri* (equivalent to 1,540,000 square kilometers) that was entrusted by Heaven to the ruler, who was styled the "Great King." The realm came to be regarded as a unified cultural sphere encompassing the civilized world, which was surrounded by barbarian lands and oceans. The Great King ruled over the realm and the people. The people were deemed incapable of ruling themselves, but they were equal in their relation to the ruler, regardless of wealth or status. The beneficent ruler maintained a stable social order that gave them peace and order. The realm was divided into "nine states" (*kyūshū*). The ruler established an administrative center called the *kinai*, where the palace was located, and which contained a shrine (*sōbyō*) for the worship of his ancestors.²⁵

After the death of a Great King, his or her body was interred in a temporary burial on the palace grounds based on Chinese patterns seen in the *Book of Rites*. Rites were performed there to pacify the King's spirit, presided over by an elder prince, including the recitation of a eulogy, the deceased's genealogy, and posthumous title, with oaths of continuing allegiance. Later the body would be permanently interred in a *kofun*. Some larger *kofun* were surrounded by moats, defining them as sacred spaces. Each level of the mound under which the body was interred was carved into multiple levels, each of which might be decorated with large clay figurines called *haniwa*. These figurines had hollow cylindrical bases, fitted over wooden pillars that had been sunk into the mound to keep it from falling

down. *Haniwa* were shaped into animals, warriors, female shamans called *miko*, or as buildings like a mansion or grain storehouse, arranged so that the human shapes formed a spirit army to protect the deceased. Sometimes there were clay tables and chairs placed outside the mansion to simulate ritual feasts offered to the dead. The burial chamber was lined with stone, and it was here that the grave goods were placed, including shield and quiver figurines at the corners, and a clay model of a mansion at the center.²⁶

Succession rites began with the choice of a site by divination, construction of an enthronement platform, and carrying out of accession ceremonies there. Since the Great King took many wives, there could be many candidates to succeed him, and succession disputes frequently erupted. Integration of the country, which had grown under Yūryaku, fell apart after his death in 479, and the end of the Kofun period was characterized by warfare.

The Yamato began to influence provincial Kami worship beginning in the sixth century. Great King Keitai initiated a custom of sending offerings and priestly ritualists to distant shrines to coordinate their rites with palace ritual. A group called the Hiokibe, associated with worship of solar deities, was sent out from Yamato to coordinate regional Kami rites with those of the court, spreading the Yamato clan's style of ritual far from the center of the country. The Hiokibe were also engaged in irrigation works and iron production.²⁷

By the middle of the sixth century, the Yamato purported to rule from Kyūshū through the Kantō Plain, based on their headship of an alliance stretching to those boundaries. Their “conquest” of this territory is recounted in myths compiled in the eighth-century *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (see chapter 2). Ninigi's descendant Jinmu leaves Kyūshū and travels eastward, conquering the peoples who had not yet yielded, eventually settling in the Yamato area. In later myths, the hero Yamato Takeru, an imperial prince, conquers Kyūshū, Izumo, and the Kantō. These stories relate how other powerful groups supposedly submitted to Yamato rule and were appointed provincial chieftains. Local leaders were gradually incorporated into an expanding bureaucracy for ruling the land. They collected taxes, sent special products to the court, and led armies in expeditions against tribal peoples.²⁸

Political Struggle Casts the Kami as “Indigenous” and the Buddhas as “Foreign”

According to the *Nihon shoki*, in 552 a gold and copper image of Shakyamuni and some scriptures were presented to the court by the King of Paekche, who sought Japanese military assistance against his neighboring states. The powerful groups around the throne quarreled about whether these gifts should be accepted. While the *Nihon shoki* account is undoubtedly stylized and considerably altered by editing, we can discern that the debate posed the question of which kind of Kami—the

“indigenous” or the “foreign”—would bring the greatest material benefit to the ruler and his people.²⁹

The Soga clan argued that Buddhism should be accepted because all the neighboring countries had accepted it, and Japan should not be left behind. The Mononobe and Nakatomi violently opposed the Soga position, predicting that the Kami would react violently if a “foreign” god was accepted. These two represented the view that kingship should continue to be based on the ruler’s performance of rites for ancestral and agricultural spirits.

The sovereign decided in favor of the Soga position and commissioned the Soga to commence appropriate ritual for the statue. The Soga converted a dwelling into a kind of chapel and set up worship for the statue there. Soon afterward, however, an epidemic broke out, whereupon the Mononobe and the Nakatomi blamed the acceptance of Buddhism and demanded that the temple be burned and the statue thrown into the Naniwa canal. This indicates that they understood the Kami as being fully endowed with the power to affect events in the human world directly and immediately.

In 584, Soga Umako (551?–626), a powerful court minister under the monarch Bidatsu, built a Buddhist chapel, installed a statue of Maitreya, Buddha of the Future, and had two women “ordained” as nuns.³⁰ That the first people to take Buddhist ordination in Japan were women probably reflects an understanding that the statue required women to serve it by leading a life of purity, much like the pattern of service to the Kami at Ise that was developing at the same time.

However, as before, an epidemic broke out and was attributed to the wrath of the Kami. This time, the Nakatomi and Mononobe alliance persuaded the court that it had to stop, and again the chapel was burned and the statue thrown in the canal, and the nuns were publicly flogged. A new twist occurred when a third epidemic broke out, interpreted as the wrath of the Buddhas. Soga Umako was directed to resume worship of the Buddhist statue and reinstate the nuns.

The Court’s Adoption of Buddhism

According to the *Nihon shoki*, in 587 Great King Yōmei (r. 585–587) converted to Buddhism, with Soga encouragement, and a priest was installed in the palace. It appears that the Soga then began a campaign of war and assassination against the Nakatomi and Mononobe, eventually prevailing. Thereafter, there was no serious opposition to state sponsorship of Buddhism, which spread rapidly, due to the belief that Buddhist rites were highly effective in producing this-worldly benefits. The Soga put Suiko (r. 592–628) on the throne, a woman of both Yamato and Soga descent. In 593, her nephew Shōtoku Taishi (whose actual historicity is debated) was made regent. Shōtoku is credited with taking many measures to unify the court and to raise the level of culture.³¹ In addition to building important temples, he

imported the Chinese calendar and was said to have composed the Seventeen Article Constitution, protocols for courtiers. While Tsuda Sōkichi and numerous other scholars have disputed the attribution of this document to Shōtoku,³² the so-called constitution's cultural influence is not in doubt. Article 2 of this document reads:

Sincerely revere the Three Treasures of Buddhism. In all four types of life and in all countries they are the ultimate truth. Any person of any age should revere Buddhist law.

Although the court advocated Buddhist teachings, however, it was not opposed to rites for the Kami. Under Suiko and Shōtoku, a new Chinese-style of government was introduced. The court was reorganized in 603 into a ranking system based on the Confucian virtues of benevolence, propriety, loyalty, justice, and knowledge.

Legal codes issued during Tenmu's reign (673–686) defined the sovereign as being above the law, and not subject to it. Tenmu portrayed himself as a descendant of the Kami Takamimusubi (see chapter 2) and Amaterasu, and he was referred to as a living god (*akitsumikami*) and an Immortal (*senjin*). The sovereign was portrayed as having the power to communicate or intercede with deities. He or she issued the annual calendar, though of course yin-yang masters made the necessary mathematical calculations and astronomical observations. He or she regulated the social hierarchy of prestige by assigning the ranks of officials. Either Tenmu or his widow and successor Jitō was the first sovereign to be called *tennō*. In modern times, this term is translated as “emperor,” but the question of whether this is correct for early Japan is hotly debated. Although the change in terminology from Great King to *tennō* is significant, Japanese sovereigns of the ancient period were hardly on a par with Chinese monarchs, nor did Japanese monarchs preside over an empire before the late nineteenth century. After Kanmu (r. 781–806) and up to Meiji (r. 1868–1912), they “reigned” through a regent or a shogun, the position of the actual political power, but did not rule directly.³³

The Ritsuryō Jingikan

The Ritsuryō system was built on penal codes (*ritsu*) and administrative law (*ryō*) adopted from China. The “Ritsuryō era” refers to the period when a system of governance based on these laws was dominant, particularly from the seventh through the ninth centuries, and thus differs from periodization based on the location of the capital (such as the Nara period, 710–794) or imperial reign names stipulating the time when a particular sovereign occupied the throne.³⁴ See Map 1.2 for the ancient provinces.

The Jingikan, the Council of Divinities, was one of two councils created by the Ritsuryō codes, the other being the Council of State (Dajōkan, Daijōkan). Although



Map 1.2 The Provinces of Ancient Japan. Source: Created by C. Scott Walker of the Harvard Map Collection.

the Jingikan was theoretically superior, in fact it operated according to royal orders transmitted by the Council of State, instead of acting autonomously. Although many elements of the Ritsuryō system were directly borrowed from China, the Jingikan had no Chinese precedent but was a new creation originating in Japan. It was charged with making sure that official Kami rites were performed in accordance with the Kami Law (*Jingiryō*).³⁵

The term *Jingikan* is composed of 官—*kan*, “Council,” and 神祇—*jingi*, originally a shortened form of *tenjin chigi*, “deities of heaven and earth.” The “heavenly deities” (*tenjin*, *amatsukami*) meant the Kami in Takamagahara (heaven), from whom the imperial line supposedly descended, while “earthly deities” (*chigi*, *kunitsukami*) was a collective term for all other Kami, especially those like the Izumo Kami, who had not immediately submitted to Yamato rule. The term *jingi* also came to refer to ritual performed for the gods of heaven and earth, as well as to the deities themselves.³⁶

Early uses of *jingi* did not refer to rites stipulated in law, nor did it necessarily imply elaborate state ritual. During Tenmu’s reign (673–686), according to *Nihon shoki*, *jingi* applied to Tenmu’s rites to stop or start rain, with the apparent intent to portray the monarch as having magical powers. In preparation for worshipping the Kami of heaven and earth, Tenmu is said, in *Nihon shoki*, to have decreed purifications throughout the land and to have had an “abstinence palace” erected.³⁷ While there were performances of the Daijō, Niiname, and Ōharae rites in Tenmu’s day, his involvement was largely a matter of sending tribute to the relevant shrines, on the same level as his patronage of Buddhism.³⁸

Jingiryō mandated that twenty annual rites be performed for the peace and prosperity of the realm. These rites were the content of Kami Law. The appearance of Kami Law represented a break from former sporadic attempts by the court to consolidate and control provincial ritual for the Kami. Kami Law demonstrated a new determination to assert the court’s authority, analogous to its will to bring the provinces under its political control.³⁹

These rites were stipulated in the Yōrō Code (718) and then considerably expanded in the *Jōgan gishiki* (ca. 872) and in the *Engi shiki* of 927. The Yōrō Code enumerated legally mandated rites, while later texts specified the procedures and the offerings for each ceremony, as well as for others that had been added by the mid-tenth century.⁴⁰ The Yōrō Code includes some thirty sections, each comprising laws governing different aspects of government and society. Two sections govern religious affairs. One of these is called *Jingiryō* and sets out rites for the Kami, to be administered by the Jingikan.⁴¹ The other (the Laws for Monks and Nuns, or *Sōniryō*), governed Buddhist monks and nuns and was administered by a different branch of government, called the Genbaryō. The *Jingiryō* were clearly modeled on the Chinese ritual classic *The Book of Rites*, but *Jingiryō* did not include a number of rites that were central to the Chinese system, such as the worship of Confucius, or cattle sacrifice.⁴²

Jingiryō consists of twenty articles, beginning with the prescription that the worship of the gods of heaven and earth is to be performed by the Jingikan. This stipulation accords the Jingikan the specific and apparently exclusive prerogative of worshipping the Kami on behalf of the emperor and his court. Other sections of the Yōrō Code allocate about one hundred official positions to the Jingikan.⁴³ The rites themselves are set out in articles 2 through 9 and article 18, producing the annual calendar shown in Table 1.1. The sovereign is absent from most of these rites, but he shares a meal with the Kami (*jinkonjiki*) in Tsukinamisai, Niinamesai, and Ainamesai.

Table 1.1 *Jingi Rites Mandated by the Yōrō Code*

<i>Ritual</i>	
1	Toshigoi no Matsuri (also pronounced Kinensai, in early spring), prayers for a good harvest.
2	Hanashizume no Matsuri (end of the 3rd month), prayers for freedom from illness.
3	Kamu miso no Matsuri (middle of 4th month), offerings of summer vestments at Ise.
4	Saigusa no Matsuri (4th month), the festival of the Isakawa Shrine in Yamato, a subshrine of the Miwa Shrine.
5	Ōmi no Matsuri (4th day of 4th month), the festival of the Hirose Shrine, for the Kami of rain.
6	Kaze no Kami no Matsuri (4th day of 4th month), the festival of the Tatsuta Shrine, for the Kami of wind.
7	Tsukinami no Matsuri (also, Tsukinamisai, 11th day of the 6th month), prayers for a good harvest.*
8	Michiae no Matsuri (last day of the 6th month), performed at a crossroads outside the capital, to prevent evil spirits from entering.
9	Hoshi shizume no Matsuri (follows Michiae no Matsuri on the last day of the 6th month), prayers to prevent fires at the palace.
10	Great Purification (Ōharai), purifies the emperor and the people of the transgressions and defilements of the first half of the year.
11	Ōmi no Matsuri (7th month, 4th day), repeating the spring festival of the same name.
12	Kaze no Kami no Matsuri (7th month, 4th day), repeating the spring festival of the same name.
13	Kamu miso no Matsuri (autumn repetition of the spring festival of the same name).
14	Tsukinami no Matsuri (autumn repetition of the spring festival of the same name).
15	Michiae no Matsuri (winter repetition of the summer festival of the same name).

(continued)

Table 1.1 Continued

<i>Ritual</i>	
16	Hoshi shizume no Matsuri (winter repetition of the summer festival of the same name).
17	Kanname-sai (9th and 10th months), special offerings at the Ise Shrines of the wine and food made from the new rice crop.
18	Ainame-sai (11th month), emperor shares a meal made from the first fruits of the new crop with the Kami of select shrines.
19	Niiname-sai (11th month), emperor shares a meal made from the first fruits of the new crop with the Kami, extending the sharing to a larger group of Kami than in Ainame-sai.
20	Great Purification (<i>Ōharai</i> , last day of the 12th month), purifies the emperor and the people of the transgressions and defilements of the second half of the year.

*It appears that this observance began as a monthly thanksgiving to the Kami, but by the early eighth century, had become a twice-yearly rite resembling the Toshigoi rite.

Source: Adapted from Felicia Bock, trans. *Engi-Shiki, Procedures of the Engi Era*. 2 vols. A Monumenta Nipponica Monograph. Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970, 1972.

One very striking feature of this annual ritual calendar is its bifurcation at mid-year, so that most of the rites are performed not once but twice annually, once in spring or summer and again in autumn or winter. We can also see that a significant number of these rites are closely linked to agriculture and either express prayers for a good harvest or thanksgiving for the harvest (numbers 1, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19). Apotropaic rites (to ward off or prevent some misfortune) form another category (2, 8, 9, 15, 16). Purification rites at the end of each half-year are another distinctive component (10, 20). In addition, there are rites directed to the Ise Shrines (3, 13, 17) that can overlap with agricultural ritual. Finally, the Saigusa rite (4) at the Isakawa Shrine, a subshrine of the Miwa Shrine, consists of offering lilies arranged in a large barrel for sake brewing. The origins and significance of this rite are not well understood.⁴⁴

The Jingikan was located within the palace precincts, and it also had provincial branches (see Figure 1.1).⁴⁵

The Jingikan's overall coordination of shrine rites consisted of several main functions. First, it provided a corps of ritualists who assisted the sovereign and his court in the performance of palace ceremonies. Second, in a shrine within its compound, called the Hall of the Eight Deities (*Hasshinden*), it enshrined eight Kami who protected the imperial house.⁴⁶ Third, when misfortune struck or to determine the cause of ominous events, it performed divination to determine the identity of the responsible Kami. Fourth, the Jingikan conducted the distribution of tribute offerings (*heihaku*) to shrines for four annual rituals: Kinensai (*Toshigoi no Matsuri*), the spring and autumn *Tsukinamisai*, and *Niinamesai*.

The Jingikan maintained a register of shrines (*jimmyōchō*), shrine households (*kanbe*),⁴⁷ and shrine priests. The court designated some shrines as Official Shrines

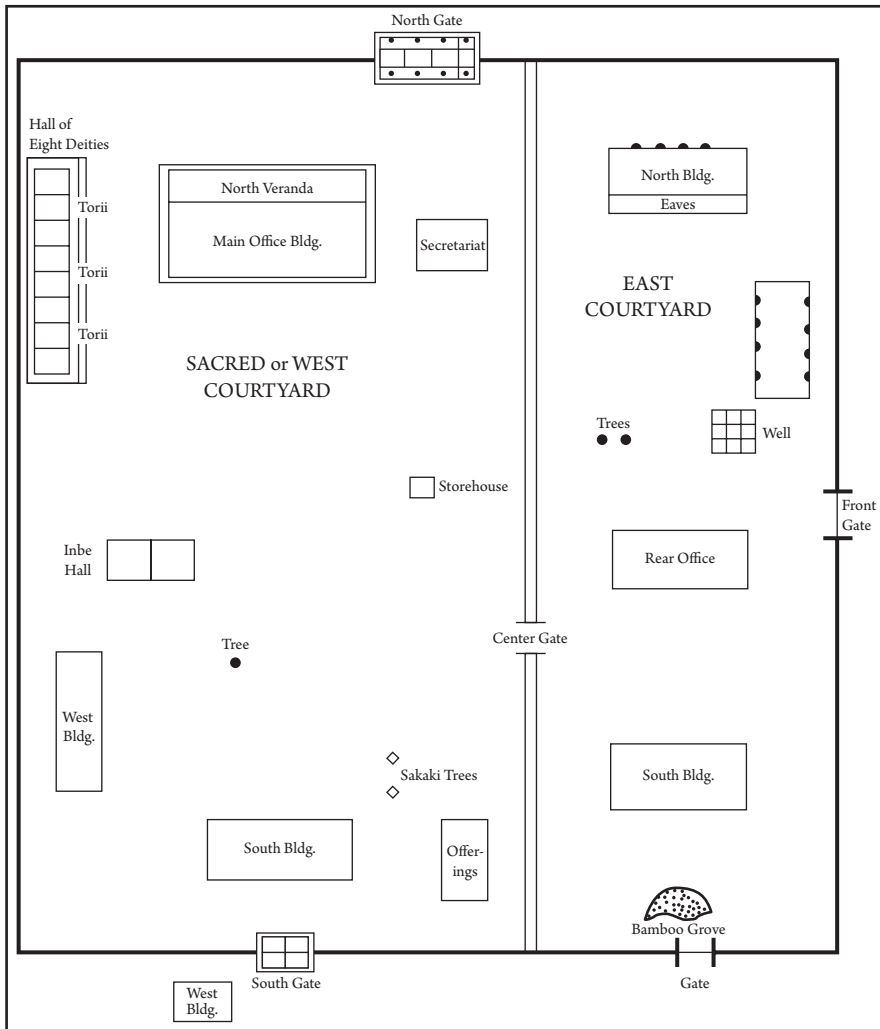


Figure 1.1 Ground Plan of the Jingikan. Source: Bock, *Engi-Shiki*, 1:23.

(*kansha*), meaning that they would receive tribute offerings from the emperor, through the Jingikan. In return, the Kami of those shrines would, it was hoped, guarantee abundant crops and cause the realm to flourish. In accepting the honor of being designated an Official Shrine, each one began to perform annual rituals for the protection of the state, orchestrated by the Jingikan.

The Official Shrines were further subdivided, in the late eighth century, into Imperial Shrines (*kanpeisha*) and National Shrines (*kokuheisha*). Each of these categories was further divided into Major and Minor categories. Ranking shrines paralleled the ranking of the Kami themselves. The emperor bestowed court ranks and high titles on Kami, and designated some Kami “Renowned Kami”

Table 1.2 The Official Shrines, circa 927

<i>Official Shrines (Kansha)</i>	<i>Shrines</i>	<i>Kami</i>	<i>Myōjin Shrines</i>
	2,861	3,132	306
Overseen by Jingikan	198	737	
Overseen by Provincial Governors	2,395	2,395	
Imperial Shrines (Kanpeisha)	573	737	
Major Imperial Shrines (Kanpei Taisha)	198	304	127
Minor Imperial Shrines (Kanpei Shōsha)	375	433	
National Shrines (Kokuheisha)	2,288	2,395	
Major National Shrines (Kokuhei Taisha)	155	188	179
Minor National Shrines (Kokuhei Shōsha)	2,133	2,207	

Source: Umeda Yoshihiko, "Kanpeisha," SSDJ, 264.

(*myōjin*). These honors were frequently bestowed on Kami who were believed to have brought about military victories. The fact that ranks for both shrines and Kami were bestowed in the sovereign's name positioned him as the highest Kami and entailed the implication that the highest authority over Kami affairs rested with him.⁴⁸

Engi shiki (927), a compilation of *jingi* rites, enumerates 3,132 Kami in 2,861 shrines. All those shrines were considered Official Shrines (*kansha*), and all of their Kami received official tribute offerings. While the Jingikan was originally responsible for all these shrines, as of 798 it began delegating responsibility for the National Shrines to provincial governors. Thereafter the Jingikan took charge of 737 Kami, while the provincial governors were responsible for the rites for 2,395 of them. Table 1.2 sets out the system of shrine ranks as reflected in *Engi shiki*.

The Jingikan was staffed by a group of *jingi* families, based on the mythic deeds of their Kami ancestors. Chapter 2 examines these in detail. In brief, the Nakatomi specialized in the recitation of prayers (*norito*)⁴⁹ and monopolized the head position, called Jingihaku.⁵⁰ This sounded very grand; however, the post carried the fourth rank minor, just above the rank of a provincial governor. Still, the relatively small size of the staff (about one hundred in total, smaller by far than in some other ministries) showed that the Jingikan was subordinate to the Dajōkan.⁵¹ Within the Jingikan, the Inbe family conducted the distribution of tribute offerings. Women of the Sarume family performed sacred dance. The Tamatsukuri manufactured jewels, while the Kagamitsukuri made bronze mirrors used in shrine rites. The Urabe, a relatively low-ranking group, performed divination.

Under the Jingihaku were two assistant heads, two scribes or recorders, and two clerks. The Minister could also call on the services of thirty families of priests

(*hafuri* or *hafuri be*), twenty diviners, thirty attendants, and two servants. In addition, there were musicians who played the flute and *koto* during ritual, shrine maidens (*mikannagi*), dancers, and diviners' assistants. The thirty families of priests developed specializations.

The Jingikan played an important role in structuring the shrine priesthood in the Ritsuryō era. It recruited priests and maintained a register of them. There were many different, overlapping terms for shrine priests during this time, but those recruited and supervised by the Jingikan to serve at Official Shrines were called *hafuri*. (Confusingly, low-ranking priests at nonofficial shrines could also be called *hafuri*.) The priests with Jingikan appointments were allowed to dress as court officials and to carry a wooden staff of office called a *shaku*. Female priests were banned from these honors.

Although their tasks are not minutely specified, women ritualists of the Jingikan, called *mikanko* or *mikannagi*, worked in several capacities. Thought to date from before the emergence of anthropomorphic Kami, the rites in which they appear are closely related to the sovereign. While there is a tendency to assume that they must have been shamanic mediums, the *Engi shiki* depicts them as a regular component of Jingikan's ritualists. They conducted rites for twenty-three Kami who protect the emperor's person and the realm in general, including the Eight Deities of the Hasshinden. In the eighth and ninth centuries, they conducted purifications of the emperor's body.⁵²

Engi shiki specifies that "all officials" (*hyakkan*) should be present at the Jingikan for eight of the twenty rites set out in Kami Law.⁵³ The Official Shrines should each send a representative to receive official tribute offerings four times a year: for use in the Kinensai, the two Tsukinamisai, and Niinamesai rites. These ceremonies followed the Kinensai pattern⁵⁴ as follows: prior to the ceremony itself, the Jingikan ritualists and attending officials practiced abstinence for four days, to ensure their purity and that of the ritual site. They were required to avoid all filth, the sick, and funerals. Officials were prohibited from signing orders for executions and from proclaiming criminal verdicts. The offerings were assembled, inspected by the Inbe, and placed in the Jingikan's West Courtyard.⁵⁵ Ceremonial headdresses of bark cloth were prepared for the ritualists, and seats of leaf matting were set out.

The distribution was conducted in the West Courtyard of the Jingikan. The participating ritualists formed a procession with the males in the lead, followed by the *mikannagi* and lesser officials, entering from the Center Gate and lining up in front of the West Building, facing east. The eight Imperial Advisors (*sangi*) then entered and awaited the arrival of the other participants. A group of high officials of the Council of State and the Jingikan processed into the West Courtyard through the South Gate and were seated according to rank in the South Building. The participating shrine priests who had come to receive offerings followed them and stood to the south of the West Building. The Imperial Advisors then took their seats.⁵⁶

When all were in their assigned places, the Nakatomi officials recited a *norito*. The *norito* offered praise to the Kami and prayers that they would grant a bounteous harvest. If these prayers were answered, all manner of abundant tribute would be offered up. The prayers beg also,

May this age of the divine descendant of heaven be an everlasting age, as firm as solid rock, ... that it may flourish and be a happy reign. ... [W]e humbly bow our necks way down like the cormorant in obeisance to the mighty ancestral gods and goddesses, and offer up the choice offerings from the divine descendant as we raise our words of praise.⁵⁷

Each stanza of the *norito* specifies that the sovereign is the source of the offerings. After each stanza, the assembled shrine priests responded in assent, saying, "Ooh!" Then the Inbe, their sleeves tied back with magical sleeve-ties to enhance the potency of the offerings, distributed the offerings. That concluded the ceremony.⁵⁸

Conducting distributions of offerings from the sovereign to the Kami and shrines of the realm through the Jingikan provided four annual occasions to assert symbolically that the ultimate authority over Kami affairs rested with the monarch, and that all other Kami were subordinate to his divine ancestors. Conveyed as it was in ritual form, this assertion was not open for debate. Presentation of this claim through ritual placed it above the discursive mode and made it immune to argument. In fact, remaining aloof from discussion came to be regarded as a virtue of the so-called indigenous tradition. *Man'yōshū* (an eighth-century poetry collection) put it this way, "The 'Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains and of the Fresh Rice-ears'⁵⁹ has been created by the Kami as a country which does not dispute with words" (*kamunagara kotoage o senu kuni*). The sovereign's realm receives the divine will just as it is and does not require explanation or justification. Rather, it is a country that refrains from debate.

One implication of this claim is that deeds are to be more highly respected than words. Another is the idea that a magical potency (*kotodama*) resides in words; hence they are not to be lightly bandied about.⁶⁰ Privileging ritual symbolism above discourse and argumentation, the Jingikan devoted itself to perpetuating ritual of the great solemnity and complexity seen in Kinensai and the other rites specified by Kami Law.

Table 1.3 compares the offerings at Kinensai (Toshigoi) to those at Tsukinamisai and Niinamesai. In addition to the offerings seen here, a further twenty-eight white horses, one white boar, and one white cock were required for special presentation to the Ise Shrines and other select shrines, and were to be conveyed to them separately by an Imperial Emissary.⁶¹ As the table shows, the offerings consisted of different kinds of cloth, weaponry, antlers, tools, sake, salt, meat and sea products, and leaf matting. The number of shrines given tribute at Tsukinamisai and Niinamesai was

*Table 1.3 Kinensai, Tsukinamisai, and Niinamesai Offerings Compared
(Measurements Approximate)*

	<i>Kinensai (Toshigo)</i>		<i>Tsukinamisai</i>	<i>Niinamesai</i>
	<i>Jingikan Offerings for 737 Kami</i>	<i>Provincial Governments' Offerings to 2,395 Kami</i>	<i>Jingikan Offerings for 304 Kami</i>	<i>Jingikan Offerings for 304 Kami</i>
Cloth, in yards				
Pongee	1,167	0	629	410
Thin pongee	632	0	632	410
Hemp cloth	82	0	126	82
Tax cloth	3,321	0	1,148	1,148
Cloth and thread, by weight, in pounds				
Bark-cloth	122	0	50	33
Hemp	304	0	126	82
Silk thread	0	411	0	0
Floss silk	0	380	0	0
Weapons and tools				
Shields	737	0	304	198
Sword cases	912	0	594	0
Spearheads	737	0	304	198
Mattocks	291	0	198	0
Bows	198	0	198	0
Quivers	266	0	198	0
Food and liquor				
Sake, in gallons	317	0	792	0
Sake, in wine jars	198	0	0	0
Abalone and bonito, in pounds	163	0	163	0
Dried meat, in pounds	158	0	158	0
Seaweed, in pounds	196	0	196	0
Salt, in gallons	79	0	79	0

(continued)

Table 1.3 Continued

	Kinensai (Toshigoi)		Tsukinamisai	Niinamesai
	Jingikan Offerings for 737 Kami	Provincial Governments' Offerings to 2,395 Kami	Jingikan Offerings for 304 Kami	Jingikan Offerings for 304 Kami
Miscellaneous				
Offering tables	1,474	0	608	396
Leaf matting, in yards	1,167	0	629	410
Deer antlers	198	0	198	0

Source: Bock, trans. *Engi-Shiki, Procedures of the Engi Era*, vol. 1, 59–65, 80–81, 97.

one-tenth of the number at Kinensai, showing that Kinensai was the most important of these rites.⁶²

The annual requirements of these four ceremonies (Tsukinami was performed twice annually), fulfilled through levies on the provinces, were staggering. The cloth products alone consumed over ten thousand yards of fabric, in an age when hand weaving represented one of the highest technologies. Brewing sake subtracted great quantities of rice from the food supply. Salt had to be made through a laborious process of condensing seawater. Hundreds of pounds of seaweed had to be gathered, dried, wrapped, and conveyed to the Jingikan, to say nothing of the antlers from almost six hundred deer. One cannot help wondering whether it was permissible to “recycle” the offerings rather than assemble a new set four times a year, but the *norito* disallows that, specifying twice that anything left over should go to the sovereign.

Struck by the huge investment in Kami ritual these offerings represent, scholars have queried whether these ceremonies were actually carried out as specified in *Engi shiki*. For example, Mitsuhashi Tadashi emphasizes the importance of recognizing that Kami Law represents an *ideal* and should not be assumed to reflect historical reality. Historical investigation is required to establish whether and how the ideal became reality.⁶³ Okada Seishi holds that the shrines receiving offerings at Tsukinamisai or Niinamesai must actually have been limited to the great shrines in Kinai, Ise, and Kii, or to shrines connected with the Nakatomi, Inbe, or Urabe.⁶⁴ In a separate work, he interpreted Ritsuryō ritual as ancient politics, asserting that in the ancient period all forms of coercion were expressed as divine will, whether control of persons or appropriation of economic resources. Political submission was expressed as subordination to the protective gods of the overlord; that was also true for taxes, which were represented as the subordinated

people's offerings to the deities of the overlord.⁶⁵ Morita Tei questioned whether the Jingikan really was big enough to accommodate all those who were supposed to attend the main ceremonies, suggesting that they might have been conducted in a larger palace area.⁶⁶ A recent history of Shinto holds that while provincial priests actually used the tribute received from the Jingikan at their own shrines' performances of Kinensai, the tribute played only a secondary role there, since they had their own agricultural ceremonies unrelated to imperial myths.⁶⁷ Ogura Shigeji partially endorses the view that the effectiveness of the Jingikan declined over time, but stresses the importance of petitions from ninth-century shrines and their affiliates hoping to join the tribute system and gain recognition as Official Shrines.⁶⁸

Summarizing the wide-ranging research on the Jingikan, Nishinomiya Hideki writes that while the system was challenged by natural disasters and epidemic disease in 733 and 737, and though there were cases of provincial governors substituting for shrine priests from the 730s, the Jingikan seems to have functioned effectively in the first half of the eighth century.⁶⁹ In the latter half of the eighth century, however, problems arose. In 775 the *hafuri* failed to appear for the Kinensai distribution, and many were removed from their posts as a result. Commuting four times a year to the Jingikan presented a hardship for more distant priests, because of bad roads and the dangers of travel. Fighting with aboriginal peoples continued, making travel unsafe and exposing shrines and priests to wartime damage and injury. There were reports of several shrines burning down in the fighting. With the 798 designation of National Shrine (*kokuheisha*), responsibility for the upkeep and offerings for those shrines shifted to provincial government. About two-thirds of the Official Shrines came to receive their offerings from provincial governors rather than the Jingikan directly, meaning that Jingikan's control over them became indirect, mediated by the governors. Between 810 and 824, there were repeated complaints that the *hafuribe* were refusing to assemble as directed. New measures to strengthen the system took effect in 821 and 822, and in those same years there were numerous appeals from shrines outside the ranks of the Official ones seeking entry to the system. As of 875, new provisions allowed for sending tribute to those shrines unable to send a representative to the Jingikan to receive offerings, showing a determination to maintain the system in spite of difficulties. From around 850, there were instances of emperors missing ceremonies they were supposed to conduct; but in all cases a substitute was appointed, and the rites were performed. In the later ninth century, petitions from provincial shrines for recognition as Official Shrines or Myōjin Shrines increased again. Nishinomiya concludes that while the Jingikan's tribute distributions became attenuated and formalistic, they were never abolished, and new petitions to join the system created a countervailing pressure to maintain the system.⁷⁰

The Term *Shinto*

Does the creation of system and structure linking the ceremonial center in the palace with the ritual performance of shrines in the provinces allow us to speak of *Shinto* as the name for a unified framework of Kami worship from the late seventh century? Certainly, the *ideal* of structure and unity is made clear in the early eighth-century Jingiryō, but code and reality are rarely identical. While the establishment of the Jingikan as a government office charged with performing these rites represents an ideal of unity and coordination, the Jingikan was a minor unit, with limited geographical reach. Some provincial shrines and priests resisted its attempts to make them conform to a national system. Provincial shrines and the people they represented had their own traditions and interests. They would not have willingly ceded any more autonomous control of their own *jingi* affairs than was necessary to secure the benefits of ceremonial connections to the court.⁷¹

Beyond these considerations, if Shinto had become a distinctive element of classical life, we would expect that the term would assume a clear definition, and that it would appear with some frequency. The word *jingi* had come to be used to refer to the Kami and rites for them, but was the word *Shinto* used synonymously with *jingi*?

In fact, the term *Shinto* was not consistently used to designate Kami worship in early texts. It is not used at all in *Kojiki*, the *Man'yōshū*, *Kogoshūi* (807; see chapter 2), or the *fudoki* (chapter 3). *Shinto* appears only four times in the *Nihon shoki*.⁷² The first occurrence is seen in the chapter on Great King Yōmei (r. 585–587), where it is stated that he “believed in (*shin*) the teachings [or Law, Dharma] of the Buddha (*buppō*) and revered (*son*) the Way of the Kami (*Shinto*).” As used here, the term distinguishes a “way” of the Kami from the “teachings” or Law of Buddhism, which sets out the inexorable, universal law of karma. In later eras the concept of a “way” came to be theorized in analytic and aesthetic terms, but we do not see such elaborations in this text or at this time.⁷³

At the beginning of the chapter on Kōtoku’s reign (645–654), we find the second occurrence: “He [the sovereign] honored the teachings of Buddha but scorned the Way of the Kami [*Shinto*]. He cut down the trees at Ikukunitama Shrine.” The sovereign’s preference for Buddhism is presented as motivating his disrespect for Shinto. This passage forms the opening of the chapter on Kōtoku’s reign and is offered without context, so it is impossible to derive much content for the word *Shinto* as it appears here.

The third and fourth occurrences are linked to an edict of 647, also in Kōtoku’s reign, in which the related term *kamunagara* “as a Kami would” or “while as a deity,” is explained: “The expression “as a Kami would” (*kamunagara*) means to conform to Shinto. It also means in essence to possess oneself of Shinto.” According to Edo-period scholars, this passage was inserted sometime after a later retranscription of

the *Nihon shoki*; in other words, we cannot be certain that it reflects the period of *Nihon shoki*'s compilation.⁷⁴

The compilers of the *Nihon shoki* were doubtless familiar with Chinese usage of the term *Shinto* (*shendao*), meaning miscellaneous folk practices, occasionally Buddhism, and even religious life generally. Thus the word as used in *Nihon shoki* probably means popular beliefs about Kami in general, as contrasted with the more structured *teachings* of Buddhism. The term refers to the activities of unspecified spirits, who are distinguished from Buddhist divinities, but not explicitly defined as indigenous to Japan. In none of these cases does *Shinto* refer to an organized institution.⁷⁵

One influential interpretation of the term *Shinto* in *Nihon shoki* holds that it should be understood as meaning Daoism, itself a highly problematic term. This is the position of Fukunaga Mitsuji and Shimode Gyōseki, and also held by Kuroda Toshio.⁷⁶

On the basis of these considerations, several tentative conclusions emerge: (1) the term *Shinto* was not always a synonym for *jingi* rites; (2) *Shinto* was an uncommon term associated with miscellaneous popular beliefs originating in China; and (3) it could be used to distinguish Kami-related phenomena from Buddhism. Beyond that, *Shintō* seems to have had little defined content in the period of the establishment of the Jingikan. Furthermore, one searches the official histories and classical Japanese literature in vain for uses of the term *Shintō*. Tsuda Sōkichi scoured texts dating through the end of the eleventh century and discovered only eleven instances of the term *Shinto*.⁷⁷ The term did not become common until the fifteenth century, stimulated by Yoshida Kanetomo, as subsequent chapters will show, and as Mark Teeuwen has cogently argued.⁷⁸

Teeuwen argues that *Nihon shoki*'s use of the term *Shintō*—more properly *jindō*—the probable pronunciation of the term in the eighth century, reflects the hand of a Buddhist monk involved in the compilation.⁷⁹ If that is so, however, it seems odd that the monk's influence would be seen only in the accounts of the thirty-first and thirty-fifth sovereigns, out of a total of forty-one covered in *Nihon shoki*. Citing later Buddhist texts, Teeuwen claims that *jindō* occurs "relatively frequently" in discussions of Buddhism's "domestication of local Japanese deities" after *Nihon shoki*. On that basis, he concludes that *Shinto* should be understood as "Buddhist jargon," and that "*Shintō* plays second fiddle in what is basically an account of the establishment of Japanese Buddhism."⁸⁰ Hirai Atsuko takes issue with Teeuwen's assessment, however, writing of *Nihon shoki* that "the chronicle never used words that suggested denigration of the native *kami*."⁸¹ Indeed, Teeuwen's idea that *Nihon shoki* is basically an account of Buddhism goes in quite a different direction than prior understandings of this text.

Teeuwen's stance is broadly congruent with a view of Shinto history that is favored among specialists of Japanese medieval religious history. Inoue Hiroshi's *Japan's Shrines and Shinto* (*Nihon no jinja to Shintō*) expounds this perspective in

detail. Inoue begins by disassociating himself from recent publications portraying Shinto as Japan's primordial, indigenous religion, noting that such works often turn out to be nationalist screed masquerading as religious history. He notes that this characterization of Shinto has its roots in the views of Motoori Norinaga and other nativist scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the twentieth century, it has been championed by Tsuda Sōkichi, Asoya Masahiko, and Mitsuhashi Tadashi, but without an underlying nationalist agenda.⁸²

Inoue emphasizes changes in the meanings attributed to the term *Shintō* introduced by Yoshida Kanetomo. Kanetomo no longer used the word vaguely, as a foil to Buddhism, or to refer to religious life in general. Instead, in Inoue's opinion,

[Shinto] functioned as a term and concept that encompassed an extremely ideological and political assertion upholding the secular order of Japan's nationhood and royal authority (*kokka ya ōken no arikata*)....Precisely this is the independently established concept that we must recognize as incorporating the meaning of something indigenous to Japan but also with new historical content... Shinto thus begins not in the ancient period but was fully established for the first time in the medieval period.⁸³

To define Shinto history solely in terms of its doctrinal or philosophical dimension is understandably appealing to medievalists, since it is that aspect of the tradition that comes into focus so conspicuously in that era. It is a reasoned position, and its proponents have contributed immensely to our understanding of Shinto's history. It seems to me, however, that it privileges the doctrinal and conceptual aspects of Shinto at the expense of the institutional, and that it ignores more enduring continuities in institutional, ritual, and social history that are arguably as important and definitely more influential in society than medieval doctrines and philosophy.

It is undoubtedly true that Kanetomo used *Shintō* with much greater clarity and precision than we see before the fifteenth century. He provided the intellectual and conceptual basis for Shinto's subsequent history. But it would be a mistake to portray his achievements in this domain as appearing suddenly and *de novo*. As chapters 5 through 7 will show, he built on the work of numerous forebears. His intellectual authority rested in no small part on his position as *de facto* leader of the Jingikan. Moreover, Kanetomo's treatment of his doctrines as secrets to be disclosed only in esoteric initiations, and their dependence on the intellectual paradigm of esoteric Buddhism were decisively rejected (though not yet completely eliminated) in the early modern period. The same is true of other medieval Shinto theories arising within the Ise shrines and Buddhist monastic circles, and of the esoteric initiations to which they gave rise. When the Meiji government forcibly separated shrines from temples in 1868, the model it took for its new creation of an independent Shinto was the Ritsuryō Jingikan.

That being said, however, it remains extremely difficult to discuss Shinto in the ages before the term itself is widely used, that is, from the fifteenth century on. Up to that point, *Shinto* is a collective designation for *jingi*, state-sponsored Kami rites, and miscellaneous Kami cults. This usage is inevitably imprecise and unsatisfactory in various ways. To uphold the significance of institutional, social, and ritual continuities forces one to struggle for clarity where little is to be found, but others have also accepted this challenge.

Numerous historians of Shinto see its origins as stemming from the ancient court, Jingiryō, and the Jingikan, and that is the position of this study. Two recent examples of this perspective may be seen in Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun, Matsuo Kōichi, and Mori Mizue, *Shintō*⁸⁴ as well as in *Shinto: A Short History*, edited by Inoue Nobutaka, who writes in the book's introduction,

The classical system of kami worship clearly possessed all the elements of a fully fledged religious system. Its origin is difficult to date, but it was completed as a system after the establishment of a central imperial state governed by an adapted version of Chinese law (J. *ritsuryō*). Shrines all over the country were included in a system of "official shrines" (*kansha*). This network of official shrines formed the *network* of kami worship's religious system. Also, the *constituents* [the people who maintain the system] of kami rituals were clearly identified, and their message (the system's *substance*) was transmitted... through ritual prayers (*norito*) and imperial decrees (*senmyō*). It is not possible to identify a religious system that might be described as "Shinto" before the systematization of kami worship by the new imperial state during the classical period, because the constituents, network, and substance of kami cults... were too ill-defined.⁸⁵

In a chapter of this work edited by Inoue, titled "Ancient and Classical Japan: The Dawn of Shinto," Mori Mizue further clarifies the point of origin. Referring to the late seventh century, she writes, "It is at this point that, for the first time, we can speak of 'Shinto' as a religious system that is linked directly (if remotely) to the Shinto of today."⁸⁶ It seems to me also that once system and centralization emerge in the late seventh century, it is reasonable to speak of *Shinto* in recognition of the watershed represented by the Jingikan, a structured ritual calendar, Kami Law, and the incorporation of Kami priests into the government. By comparison with this ritual, institutional, and social system, doctrinal and philosophical expositions came later and were transmitted in esoteric frameworks restricting their transmission to initiates.

Moreover, the appearance of more consistent usage of terminology from the medieval period did not mean that Shinto suddenly became independent of Buddhism, a process that was not launched in earnest until the late nineteenth century. The precedent to which the late nineteenth-century bureaucrats looked as they sought

to create an independent Shinto was the Ritsuryō-era Jingikan. If we want to understand Shinto's history from the ancient period until the present, the Jingikan in its early form provides an essential point of origin.

But what of the warning implicit in Inoue Hiroshi's specification of Kanetomo as the origins of Shinto? He implies that to place Shinto's origins earlier than the fifteenth century is to promote a crypto-nationalist view to the effect that Shinto is the essence of Japanese ethnicity or culture, that it is timeless and quintessentially indigenous. By contrast, I have tried to show that while the court's promotion of Kami rites as part of its drive to extend its territorial control involved a *rhetoric* of indigeneity as a means to distinguish Kami ritual from its parallel promotion of Buddhism, the ingredients of its Kami rites were drawn from a variety of continental sources. I reject the idea that Shinto is the basis of an essentialized notion of Japanese ethnicity.

Conclusions

This chapter has traced the beginnings of Shinto through the development of Kami worship down to the early eighth century, beginning with unsystematic, clan-based cults that were greatly influenced by religious beliefs and customs from the Asian continent. Daoist ideas permeated virtually all expressions of religious ideas, and Buddhism began to combine with Kami worship intellectually and institutionally. Religious conceptions of rulership were pervasively colored by all the traditions concerned. After a period of fluidity and mutual influence, in the late seventh and early eighth centuries a concept of *jingi* emerged as a name for the Kami of Heaven and Earth and rituals particular to them. Under the influence of the court's adoption of Buddhism, a corpus of rites understood as "indigenous" was separately embodied in the Jingiryō. It mandated the performance of Kami rites, while separate provisions structured Buddhist and yin-yang rites. The Jingikan, a new branch of government not taken from Chinese models, was established to manage the performance of Kami ritual. Court sponsorship of *jingi*, Kami Law, and the Jingikan lent a "public," official character to Kami worship and a further association with the indigenous. With the creation of the Jingikan and Jingiryō, we have the institutional beginnings of Shinto. Yet the Yamato court's claims to represent an indigenous tradition through Jingikan rites was precisely that: a *claim*, not a fact. We shall see in the next chapter that other clans maintained their own accounts of genealogy and tales that contested the Yamato account.

The Kami in Myth



Introduction

This chapter examines myths of the Kami in *Kojiki* (712), *Nihon shoki* (720), and the provincial gazetteers called *fudoki*. It seeks to place these tales in the historical context laid out in the previous chapter, addressing the ways they express ancient understandings of the Kami, the indigenous and the foreign, and the public versus the private.

Compilation of the *Kojiki*

According to the preface of *Kojiki*, a no-longer-extant genealogy of the imperial line called the *Teiki* had been drawn up in the late sixth century. It combined tales of the divine descent of the imperial clan with the myths of the origins of its allied clans. By the late seventh century, however, multiple discrepant versions had come into being, leading to conflicting claims to rank and title that could not be decisively adjudicated.

Emperor Tenmu (r. 673–686) commissioned a compilation of the genealogies and legends of the clans, resulting in the *Kojiki* (712). Having come to power through the Jinshin War (672), Tenmu required validation of his qualifications as well as accurate genealogies of allied clans, since court rank was partly based on genealogical connection to the throne. According to the work's preface, Tenmu commissioned a courtier named Hieda no Are to memorize the genealogies and legends of the major clans.¹ That material was committed to writing by Ō no Yasumaro and eventually presented after Tenmu's death to Empress Genmei, in 712, as *The Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*).² The compilation in writing "fixed" these tales that had previously circulated orally.³

Given the circumstances and motivations of its compilation, *Kojiki* cannot be taken as reflecting the beliefs and worldview of all the peoples of ancient Japan in

any straightforward way. First, *Kojiki* consists in large part of the genealogies and narratives of the powerful clans around the court, while peripheral groups and their deities are dismissed as barbarians to be conquered. Even from the perspective of the allied clans, some were dissatisfied because *Kojiki* did not give sufficient emphasis to their particular traditions. In response, they compiled their own competing works. For example, the Inbe clan composed the *Kogoshūi*, and the remnant of the Mononobe compiled the *Sendai kuji hongi* to promote their own ancestors and traditions; these texts will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Second, it is important to be aware that although modern scholarship regards the content of *Kojiki*, particularly Book I: “The Age of the Gods” as myth, it was commissioned as a work of history.

Third, Confucian influence evident in *Kojiki*’s depictions of the Kami suggests that popular understandings of the sacred would have differed considerably.⁴ Fourth, as will be explained, *Kojiki* constitutes—in part—an elaborate legitimation of the ruling dynasty, treating their hegemony as a *fait accompli*, even though various clans and tribes continued to rebel for centuries.⁵ *Kojiki*’s (and *Nihon shoki*’s) portrait of an untroubled, unified cosmos produces an artificial image of unity where precious little existed. In these circumstances we cannot assume that all the concepts, phenomena, and deities glossed as *Kami* shared a common essence.

Although by the time of *Kojiki*’s compilation, the Great Kings were deeply involved in Buddhist rites, philosophy, and scholarship, the work entirely omits any reference to Buddhism. Buddhism was sufficiently established in Japan by the time of *Kojiki*’s compilation that the omission of any reference to it must represent the compilers’ decision. The absence of references to Buddhism cannot, however, be taken to mean that *Kojiki* is a “Shinto” text, since the word *Shinto* does not occur in it. The first use of the word *Shinto* occurs in *Nihon shoki* (720).

Book I of *Kojiki*, “The Age of the Gods,” contains the most significant mythic material.⁶ It can be divided into several sequences or cycles of related tales. Let us examine each sequence and then place this work in the context of other writings vying to be recognized as “official” and “indigenous.”⁷

Cosmogony Sequence, Chapters 1–2

The original coming into existence of the universe is the *cosmogony*. The first chapter of *Kojiki* opens when heaven and earth divided,⁸ and three invisible deities came into existence in heaven: Takamimusubi no kami, Amenominakanushi no kami, and Kamimusubi no kami. The land was unformed and resembled floating oil. Reed shoots appeared, and more invisible deities were born, including the male deity Izanagi no kami and the female deity Izanami no kami.

Until recently, research on *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* has tended to assume that they reflect a broadly shared worldview, but in fact they adopt different positions on important questions.⁹ *Nihon shoki* contains several accounts of the cosmogony,

all of which differ significantly from that of *Kojiki*. *Nihon shoki* opens with a version asserting that originally heaven and earth were not separated, nor had the principles of yin and yang yet come to exist. Heaven and earth together formed an undifferentiated mass resembling an egg. The pure, clear elements formed heaven. Subsequently the turbid, heavy elements formed earth. Heaven and earth joined (copulated), producing a reed-shoot that became the primal Kami Kunitokotachi no Mikoto.¹⁰

Nihon shoki's cosmogonies accord preeminence to Kunitokotachi rather than the triumvirate of *Kojiki*. Does this difference indicate an early theological debate on the nature of Kami? Both works clearly relied on earlier written records that are no longer extant. If we had access to them, perhaps we could attempt to answer this question. Moreover, *Nihon shoki*'s cosmogonies are couched in imagery seen in such Chinese texts as the "Youshi" chapter of the *Lushi chunqiu* (ca. 240 BCE): "Heaven and Earth had a beginning. Heaven was subtle so as to complete, and Earth blocked so as to give form. Heaven and Earth combining and harmonizing is the great alignment of generation."¹¹ In this text, heaven and earth emerge spontaneously, and "their mating gives birth to the myriad things." Or again, from the "Jingshen" chapter of the *Huainanzi* (ca. 139 BCE): "Long ago, in the time before there existed Heaven and Earth, there was only figure without form.... There were two spirits (*shen*; J: *Kami*) born together; they aligned Heaven, they oriented Earth."¹² According to Sinologist Michael J. Puett, the appearance of spirits who "align" the cosmos conceals a claim: human ability to become a spirit and thus gain control over the cosmos.¹³ As we saw in chapter 1, Tenmu is believed to have undertaken austerities in a quest for immortality. In China there was a long history of cosmological debate, from as early as the fourth century BCE. Was *Nihon shoki* part of this debate? Was comparable debate in early eighth-century Japan the reason for different accounts of the cosmogony? Although there is no definitive answer to this question, it arises naturally when the accounts are viewed side by side. I believe that such questions help us escape from outdated assumptions of a unitary, seamless worldview of ancient Japan.

Izanagi and Izanami Sequence, Chapters 3–13

The heavenly deities commanded Izanagi and Izanami to make the land solid.¹⁴ The pair then stood on the Heavenly Floating Bridge, lowered a jeweled spear into the brine beneath them, and stirred. The drops that fell from the spear's tip coagulated and formed an island called Onogoro. The pair then descended from the bridge to the island, where they set to work to "give birth to the land," by engaging in sexual intercourse. To seal their union, they agreed to walk separately around a pillar that joined heaven and earth, one going clockwise and the other counterclockwise. Meeting each other, Izanami spoke words of praise to Izanagi, and he responded in kind. He also admonished her, however: "It is not proper that the woman speak

first.” Nevertheless, they were united, but their first offspring was a “leech child,” which they abandoned in a reed boat.

Seeking the reason for this failure to produce viable offspring, they went back up to heaven, called Takamagahara, literally, the “high fields of heaven,” and took counsel with the other heavenly deities. The problem lay, they determined, in the female Izanami having spoken first. The two Kami went back down to earth and repeated the walk around the heavenly pillar, and this time Izanagi spoke first. They succeeded, and many islands were born. After this, Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to many pairs of male and female deities, who ruled the rivers, seas, winds, and fire. But Izanami was mortally burned when she gave birth to the fire deity. As she lay dying, other deities were born from her vomit, urine, and feces.

Izanagi grieved deeply for Izanami, regretting that in exchange for his beloved he had nothing but the child whose birth had killed her. Another deity was born from his tears. Izanagi buried Izanami. In anger at the fire deity, Izanagi hacked him to pieces with his sword. The blood dripping from Izanagi’s sword brought numerous deities into existence as it spilled onto rocks, and other deities were born from the fire child’s head, chest, belly, genitals, hands, and feet.

Determined to bring Izanami back from the dead, Izanagi traveled to the land of Yomi, the world of the dead, which he reached by crossing a “pass” and moving aside a great boulder. Izanagi met Izanami there and begged her to return with him so that they could continue with their creation of the land. Izanami wished to accompany him, but feared that she could not, because she had “eaten at the hearth of Yomi.” She left Izanagi to wait while she took counsel with the gods of Yomi to see what could be done, telling Izanagi that he must not look at her. It was dark there, and after waiting a long time, Izanagi lit a fire with the comb he wore in his hair. To his horror, the light shone on Izanami’s corpse, where “maggots were squirming and roaring.” Many kinds of thunder deities were in the different parts of her body. He turned and ran.

Izanami was angry that he had seen her shame, and her love turned to fury. She sent the “hags of Yomi” to kill Izanagi. Izanagi could only escape by throwing down the vine that bound up his hair, which turned into grapes. The hags stopped to eat them, as well as the bamboo shoots that sprouted from his comb, but they pursued Izanagi all the way to the pass, where Izanami caught up with him. Izanagi rolled a boulder into the pass to block Izanami, and there they spoke an oath of divorce. Izanami promised that she would strangle one thousand people every day, to which Izanagi replied that he would build 1,500 parturition huts a day. The pass where they broke their troth is said to be in Izumo. Izanami drops out of the story at this point.

Let us pause in the narrative to notice several important aspects of the myths concerning Izanagi and Izanami. These tales portray a *vertical cosmology*, an image of the universe organized in vertical planes. This world is described as coming into existence by the separation of heaven from earth, as if they had once been joined

and inseparable. As heaven and the earth separate, invisible deities come into existence and remain in the High Fields of Heaven. These deities call upon the seventh generation of deities, a visible male-female pair, Izanagi and Izanami, to solidify the earth, which is like floating oil. Heaven and earth are connected by the floating bridge on which they stand holding a spear. Drops falling from the spear create islands, and the pair descends to the earth, which is now sufficiently solid to support them. They circumambulate a “heavenly pillar” connecting heaven and earth, a second connector, in addition to the Heavenly Floating Bridge. Izanagi and Izanami can ascend to heaven and return to earth, showing that movement between the two planes is possible. Later we learn that a third territory exists, Yomi the world of the dead. It is dark and shadowy, and Izanagi reaches it by following a pass. Izanami had gone there in death, and so cannot come back to earth, but Izanagi, who has not died, can go there and return. Izanami’s fate is sealed, because she had eaten food in Yomi and thus became a part of it. After Izanagi returns to the earth, he rolls a boulder into the pass, making it impossible for anyone who has gone to Yomi to return. This story can be taken as a myth of the origin of death.

Heaven is spoken of as the High Fields of Heaven, a place above the earth covered in fields, presumably of rice. The earth is named the Central Land of the Reed Plains, a place that does not yet know rice agriculture. Later chapters give us a fuller picture of heaven and earth. *Kojiki*’s main description of Yomi appears in these chapters. Yomi is rocky, dark, and a place of putrefaction. Although it is the realm of death, some kind of life goes on there, in shadow. Izanami originally appears as she had been in life, suggesting a view of death as a kind of shadowy semblance of life on earth. But the element of rottenness also makes it a place of horror and revulsion. It has maggots and ugly, horrible females called the “hags of Yomi.” It seems at once to be a stone-lined chamber resembling the construction of the burial room within a *kofun* and to open onto a broader expanse, the area through which the hags pursue Izanagi.

Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), the eighteenth-century scholar of the *Kojiki* who revived this work after centuries of its being virtually ignored and overshadowed by the *Nihon shoki*, took the view that Yomi is a third vertical plane beneath the Central Land of Reed Plains. In fact, however, the text does not specify exactly where Yomi lies in relation to the human world. As we have seen, it is reached by a pass, but the text does not actually depict anyone going up or going down. This has led some scholars, such as Kōno Takamitsu, to hold that Yomi is at the far edges of the plane of human life, not below it.¹⁵ Let us note also that while the dead are said to live in Yomi, the text does not suggest that humans ascend to Takamagahara after death.

This sequence is notable for specifying that in many cases deities were created in male-female pairs, and of course, Izanagi and Izanami are the prototype. Some of the paired deities are further distinguished as one being a “heavenly Kami”

(*amatsu kami*) and the other being an “earthly Kami” (*kunitsu kami*). We note that whereas the deities mentioned first in the text are invisible, Izanagi and Izanami have human form, and they are subject to death. Sexual intercourse is portrayed in neutral language, and both sexes engage in it straightforwardly. The body of the male is said to be “formed to excess,” while the female body has a place that is “insufficiently formed.” When Izanagi suggests joining these two “places,” Izanami assents willingly, saying, “That would be good.” The joining of their bodies thus makes a complete whole, in the sense that the female is completed by the male, continuing the sense of the female as being lacking or insufficient on her own. The myths portray the couple working in tandem to create deities, islands, and other things, but the narrative of their circumambulation of the heavenly pillar shows that their union is only productive when the male takes the lead. In other words, within a relation in which the two sexes complement or complete each other, which we can call a relation of *gender complementarity*, the male should take initiative, and the female should yield and assent. When those conditions are met, their union is successful, but when the female usurps male prerogatives, deformities or incomplete creations are the result. This construction assumes that the female is incomplete without the male, and that female initiative lacking male guidance is doomed to failure.¹⁶

Izanagi and Izanami are spoken of as Kami, but as we have seen, they closely resemble humans. They are not omniscient, omnipresent, or eternal, nor are they identified with wisdom or any special virtue. The original pair came into existence in the process of the separation of heaven and earth, but many of their progeny are born as a result of sexual intercourse. They express great grief in the face of death, and when Izanami dies, Izanagi “crawled around her head and around her feet, weeping.” Izanagi feels rage so great that he kills the fire child whose birth had killed Izanami. Izanagi begs Izanami to return to him, and she responds lovingly, but her love changes to hatred when she is shamed by Izanagi’s revulsion at the sight of her rotting corpse. Thus the Kami are portrayed as experiencing emotions and acting emotionally. There is no implication in the text that they are moral exemplars or symbols of ethical principles.

These chapters emphasize the idea of creation or generation (*musubi*), and the sheer numbers of deities, islands, and natural forms that Izanagi and Izanami create is staggering. Fertility comes from every imaginable source. Besides the process of separation of heaven and earth and sexual intercourse, new beings arise from reeds sprouting out of liquid, from liquid coagulating as it fell from the spear, and deities are born from vomit, urine, and feces. Blood dripping from a sword portrays the sword as an instrument of creation and destruction, while other deities are born from dismembered or rotting body parts. Plants sprout from a comb, and maggots become thunder deities. Although these Kami are the “parents” of all they create, however, they are not depicted in nurturing attitudes toward their offspring.

Sequence in Heaven, Takamagahara, Chapters 14–17

Izanagi was polluted by contact with death, so he purified himself by diving into a river.¹⁷ As he threw down his bag and stick, and as he removed his clothing, new deities were born. As he washed himself, three deities were born: washing his left eye, the deity Amaterasu Ōmikami was born; washing his right eye, the deity Tsukiyomi no Mikoto was born; washing his nose, the deity Susanoo no Mikoto was born. Izanagi gave important missions to these three: Amaterasu was to rule Takamagahara; Tsukiyomi was to rule the night (this deity disappears thereafter); Susanoo was to rule the sea. Susanoo, however, refused this mission, leading Izanagi to expel him.

Claiming that he wished to bid farewell to Amaterasu, Susanoo ascended to Takamagahara, bearing a sword ten-hands-width long. Sensing danger, Amaterasu attired herself in male battle dress and wrapped her arms in long strings of *magatama* beads. Susanoo protested that he meant her no harm, and he proposed that they exchange oaths to prove the purity of their motives toward each other. Each chewed up the other's emblem—Amaterasu chewed up Susanoo's sword, and Susanoo chewed up Amaterasu's *magatama* beads—and spewed out a misty spray from which deities were born. The deities produced in this way by Amaterasu were all male, while those produced by Susanoo were all female. Susanoo claimed that he had won the contest.¹⁸

Proclaiming his triumph, Susanoo “raged with victory,” defiling heaven by defecating in Amaterasu's sacred hall. This ritual hall was the place where on the following day Amaterasu was to have celebrated the harvest festival, Niinamesai. Susanoo broke down the barriers between the heavenly rice fields. When he threw a dead pony that had been skinned backward into the weaving hall, one of Amaterasu's heavenly weaving maidens was so frightened that she struck her genitals with the shuttle and died.¹⁹ Seeing these outrages, Amaterasu was frightened and hid herself away in the Heavenly Rock Cave. Her seclusion plunged heaven and earth into complete darkness: “constant night reigned, and the cries of the myriad deities were everywhere abundant, like summer flies, and all manner of calamities arose.”

Historian of religions Gary Ebersole views the cave myth as depicting the double burial system of the ancient court. This practice included a period of temporary interment before a final burial. It included practices attempting to “recall” the soul to the body, as well as elaborate mourning rites and the recitation of elegies for the deceased. These practices indicate the beliefs that the soul could leave the body but perhaps be recalled, and that death is the result of the permanent separation of the two.²⁰

The heavenly deities led by Ame no koyane no Mikoto (ancestral deity of the Nakatomi clan, later called Fujiwara) took counsel about how to restore Amaterasu. They caused birds to cry. They brought iron to a smith and had him make a mirror. They had *magatama* beads made. They performed a divination with the shoulder

bone of a deer. They uprooted a great *sakaki* tree and hung the beads and mirror in its branches, along with blue and white cloth. They made offerings, and Ame no koyane intoned a liturgy to soften Amaterasu's heart. Finally, a female deity named Ame no Uzume (ancestral deity of the Sarume clan) bound up her sleeves and headband with vine, took bunches of bamboo leaves in her hands, overturned a bucket and stood upon it, stomping. She became possessed and in that state exposed her breasts and genitals to the assembled deities, who all broke out laughing.²¹ Amaterasu's curiosity was aroused. She opened a crack in the cave entrance, whereupon the other deities claimed that they were rejoicing that there was a deity superior to her. They showed her the mirror to prove their point, and when she ventured part way out to look, they pulled her out of the cave altogether. Then the deities imposed a fine on Susanoo for disrupting the heavenly peace. Cutting his hair, nails, and beard, they expelled him from heaven.²²

The scene in which the Kami prepare a pure space for the performance of Ame no Uzume's dance became a template for Kami ritual. The preparation of a pure space and the needed items (mirror, jewels), divination, a *sakaki* tree decorated with streamers, intoning a prayer or liturgy, and the performance of dance are central elements in rites for the Kami. Further, the Kami who figure here become the ancestors of clans granted special privileges in the performance of imperial ritual: the Nakatomi, the Sarume, and others, such as jewel- and mirror-makers.

These chapters concerning Amaterasu and Susanoo contain very significant ideas, images, and motifs. Let us note first, however, that Izanagi disappears from the narrative once he creates the pair Amaterasu and Susanoo. Amaterasu accepts her assignment to rule over the heavens, but Susanoo rejects his task of ruling over the sea, which brings on his first expulsion. He wept and howled incessantly, which caused the mountains to wither and the rivers and seas to dry up, precipitating chaos comparable to what happened when Amaterasu hid in the cave. Malevolent deities proliferated, and many "calamities" arose. He complained to Izanagi that he wanted to go and visit his "mother," though Izanagi was his only parent. This detail reinforces the portrayal of Susanoo as willful and obstreperous. Susanoo is portrayed in later chapters as the ancestor of the Izumo clan, one of the last to accept the "sun line's" rule; thus, this story seeks to establish Izumo's disobedient and unruly nature.

This mythic sequence portrays heaven as presided over by Amaterasu, and Amaterasu as its rightful ruler. This is one conclusion that the compilers of *Kojiki* were most concerned to assert forcefully, since later sections claim the imperial clan's descent from the sun goddess. When the sun goddess's rule is unchallenged, heaven flourishes with effective ritual, rice, weaving, and metallurgy. Without her, heaven is dark and chaotic. This tale probably had a separate existence as a story explaining that eclipses happen when the sun is hidden in a cave. As when Susanoo refused to rule the seas, when Amaterasu temporarily abandoned the mission of ruling over heaven, malevolent deities threatened, and calamities arose.

Izumo Sequence, Chapters 18–31

Once Susanoo is expelled from heaven, he travels to Izumo, and chapters 18 to 31 relate myths about him and his descendant Ōkuninushi.²³ These chapters collect the myths of this important rival to the ruling dynasty and include them in the *Kojiki* narrative, though their content is so different from the preceding and subsequent chapters that the political intent to include but subordinate is very clear. Susanoo and Ōkuninushi are culture heroes of this area, which has its own account of the creation of the land, by Ōkuninushi and a small, “stranger god” Sukunabiko, who disappeared after helping Ōkuninushi.

Susanoo finds an old couple weeping by a stream, because every year a voracious dragon comes and demands one of their daughters to eat. The dragon had eaten seven daughters, and they had only one remaining. They promised this maiden to Susanoo if he would slay the dragon, whose fearsome appearance was described like this:

His eyes are like red ground cherries; his one body has eight heads and eight tails. On his body grow moss and cypress and cryptomeria trees. His length is such that he spans eight valleys and eight mountain peaks. If you look at his belly, you see that blood is oozing out all over it.²⁴

Susanoo then had the couple brew strong drink, which the dragon came and drank, promptly falling asleep. Susanoo then slew it, cutting it to pieces. In one of the tails, he discovered the great sword of Kusanagi, which he subsequently presented to Amaterasu, symbolizing the peaceful relations between his land and hers.

Several stories recount the struggles of Ōkuninushi against his eighty elder brothers, who force him to carry their bags wherever they go. On one such journey, he encountered a weeping rabbit, who had been skinned by crocodiles. Knowing full well how much it would hurt, Ōkuninushi’s brothers had told the rabbit to bathe in salt water and let the wind blow on his cracked skin. Writhing in agony, the rabbit recounted his pitiful tale to Ōkuninushi, who healed the rabbit with pollen, in a demonstration of his magical healing powers. The grateful rabbit predicted that Ōkuninushi would prevail over his cruel siblings, and that a supremely desirable woman would choose him over them. Eventually, the prophecy came true, and the rabbit was called the White Rabbit of Inaba, one of the areas eventually incorporated into Izumo.

Ōkuninushi journeyed to Ne no Katasu Kuni, where Susanoo ruled. This seems not to be another name for the underworld, Yomi, though the two share an entrance. We recall that the pass through which Izanagi had entered the underworld was also in Izumo. Ne no Katasu Kuni is unlike the tomb-like Yomi in that it has fields and is light, not dark. Ōkuninushi had fallen in love with Susanoo’s daughter, Suserihime, and the two were soon married. Susanoo then made numerous attempts on his

son's life, having him sleep in a chamber of snakes, centipedes, and bees. Each time, Suserihime gave Ōkuninushi a magical scarf to repel them, and he was saved. When Susanoo tried to trap Ōkuninushi by surrounding him with a ring of fire, Ōkuninushi was saved by a mouse, who showed him how to hide in a hole while the fire passed over.

These chapters contain beautiful poetry in which Ōkuninushi and his consorts express their love for each other, as in these lines spoken by Suserihime:

My breast, alive with youth
Soft as the light snow
You will embrace
With your arms
White as a rope of taku fibers.
We shall embrace and entwine our bodies;
Your jewel-like hands
Will entwine with mine.
With your legs outstretched,
O come, my lord, and sleep!

These myths establish a connection between Izumo and Kamimusubi no kami, one of the first invisible deities to be created. Before we encounter him in Ne no Katasu Kuni, Susanoo murders a grain goddess, Ōgetsuhime, when he discovers that the food she had offered him was actually taken from her nose, mouth, and rectum; from her corpse grew silkworms, rice seeds, millet, red beans, wheat, and soybeans. Kamimusubi had these taken and used as seeds. In other words, the murder of this grain goddess produces the original stock of seeds for the cultivation of these grains and also silkworms. This tale must have been a freestanding myth about the origins of grain and sericulture. Perhaps it was incorporated here to stress Susanoo's violent nature.²⁵ Kamimusubi appears again in the Izumo cycle of myth when Ōkuninushi's mother ascends to heaven to revive him after his eighty evil brothers have slain him. Kamimusubi sends two female deities to save him. Finally, Sukunabiko, who joins Ōkuninushi in solidifying the land, is revealed to be Kamimusubi's child.

The Land-Ceding Sequence, Chapters 32–37

These chapters recount how the offspring of the heavenly deities takes command of the Central Land of the Reed Plains, that is, the human world.²⁶ Amaterasu decrees that the land is to be ruled by her progeny. She sent two emissaries to negotiate with the earthly deities, but they failed to return. On the third attempt, Amaterasu sent two deities to confront Ōkuninushi about yielding control to her. Ōkuninushi deferred to his son, Kotoshironushi. Later known as the deity of oracles (*takusen*),