

WALTER A. SKYA

# Japan's Holy War



THE IDEOLOGY OF RADICAL SHINTŌ

ULTRANATIONALISM

Japan's Holy War

ASIA-PACIFIC: CULTURE, POLITICS,  
AND SOCIETY

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and Masao Miyoshi*





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DEDICATED TO  
MY WIFE, MARIKO,  
DAUGHTER, AMY, AND  
SON, MARK





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## Introduction

To understand Japan and the inner forces that shape her and the problems with which she wrestles within her own borders it is essential to know something of the ramifications of Shinto in the thought and practices of the people. Support for such a statement can be found in the fact that from childhood the Japanese are taught that attitudes and usages connected with the shrines of Shinto are vitally related to good citizenship. To be a worthy subject of the realm requires loyalty to certain great interests for which the shrines are made to stand. These attitudes are deliberately fostered on a large scale by the government. The shrines and their ceremonies are magnified in the state educational system as foremost among recognized agencies for the promotion of what is commonly designated *kokumin dōtoku*, or national morality. They are thus accorded a place of chief distinction among the approved means for representing to the people the values of good citizenship and for firmly uniting the nation about the Imperial Throne.— DANIEL C. HOLTOM,  
*The National Faith of Japan*, 3–4

“To understand Japan and the inner forces that shape her . . . it is essential to know something of the ramifications of Shintō in the thought and practices of the people.”<sup>1</sup> In his classic *The National Faith of Japan* (1938), Daniel Holtom identified the Shintō religion as the defining characteristic of a distinctly Japanese civilization. Shintō literally means the “Way of the *Kami*,” or the “Way of the Gods.” The *kami* were the objects of worship of the Japanese people prior to the introduction of divinities derived from foreign religions originating on the Eurasian continent. At the center of this *kami* worship were the divine beings that created the universe and their descendants, the divine ancestors of the Japanese people.

Holtom held the view that Shintō was inherently political and linked to particular notions of state and society that gave the Japanese a *Weltanschauung*, a comprehensive philosophy of the world and human life. It was this indigenous Japanese religion that provided the ideological foundations underpinning the modern Japanese nation-state and the Japanese empire from the late Meiji period until 1945.

Today, few scholars of prewar Japan would take issue with Holtom's claim that the Shintō religion was central to the prewar Japanese state. Nevertheless, despite the importance of Shintō in modern Japanese political history, the study of the ideology of State Shintō in the prewar period has received almost no attention from American scholars. The reason for this is unclear. Perhaps a liberal scholarly bias in the United States has stymied the study of Japan's prewar and wartime ideology. Maybe it has to do more with postwar politics.<sup>2</sup> Or, perhaps it seems incomprehensible or unbelievable to us. In the introduction to *The Crisis of German Ideology: The Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, George L. Mosse notes that historians have not given much serious attention to the study of Nazi ideology, "for they have regarded this ideology as a species of subintellectual rather than intellectual history."<sup>3</sup> He elaborates on this point, stating,

The history of Germany in the past century has been discussed at great length by historians and laymen alike. All have wondered whether men of intelligence and education could really have believed the ideas put forward during the Nazi period. To many, the ideological bases of National Socialism were the product of a handful of unbalanced minds. To others, the Nazi ideology was a mere propaganda tactic, designed to win support of the masses but by no means the world view of the leaders themselves. Still others have found these ideas so nebulous and incomprehensible that they have dismissed them as unimportant.<sup>4</sup>

Similar things have often been said about Japan's prewar ideology of State Shintō.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, a number of books have appeared identifying new sources of global conflict. One is Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).<sup>5</sup> Huntington predicted that the end of the ideological rivalry in the latter part of the twentieth century between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, would in the twenty-first century give way to a clash among world civilizations. He

tried to demonstrate where and how clashes and confrontations among civilizations might emerge as the greatest threat to world peace in the future. The book has caused much controversy and much criticism, especially since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. Thinking in terms of the conflicts among civilizations, moreover, now suddenly seems to be frighteningly very real and dangerous. We are constantly reminded that this is Osama bin Laden's type of thinking, as Yossef Bodansky pointed out in *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (2001): "Ultimately, . . . bin Laden, his colleagues, and the states sponsoring them are all key components of the dominant megatrend in the Muslim world—the rise and spread of radical militant Islamism. They are all theologically motivated and driven, killing and dying in pursuit of an Islamist jihad against the rest of the world. To comprehend Islamist terrorism, one must address its theological-ideological roots."<sup>6</sup>

Huntington, however, went further with this analysis and insisted that the problem was not just radical militant Islamism or Islamic fundamentalism. "Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise,"<sup>7</sup> he said. Further, he argued,

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, Huntington's clash-of-civilizations thesis does fit quite well the ideology and worldview of Japanese radical Shintō ultranationalists of the 1920s and 1930s. They, too, viewed major conflicts in the world as conflicts among civilizations, the main clash being between the Western world and Japanese Shintō civilization.

An alternative approach to understanding the primary source of political upheaval in the post-Cold War world is given by the sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer.<sup>9</sup> He paints a provocative picture of a future world conflict between ethnic-religious nationalisms and Western-style secularized nationalisms:

The longing for an indigenous form of religious politics free from the taint of Western culture has been expressed by many in countries that have become independent in this century: not only by Egyptians, but by Central Asians and other Muslims from Algeria to Indonesia, and by Ukrainians, Sri Lankans, Indians, Israelis, Mongolians, and intensely religious persons of a variety of faiths throughout the globe. In fact, what happened to be an anomaly when the Islamic revolution in Iran challenged the supremacy of Western culture and its secular politics in 1979 has become a major theme in international politics in the 1990s. The new world order that is replacing the bipolar powers of the Cold War is characterized not only by the rise of new economic forces, a crumbling of old empires, and the discrediting of communism, but also by the resurgence of parochial identities based on ethnic and religious allegiances. Although Francis Fukuyama, among others, has asserted that the ending of the old Cold War has led to an “end of history” and a world-wide ideological consensus in favor of secular liberal democracy, the rise of new religious and ethnic nationalism belies that assertion.<sup>10</sup>

Juergensmeyer’s idea that the source of future world conflict is fundamentally a conflict between religious nationalisms and secular nationalisms is another very useful conceptualization in understanding the origins of the conflict between Japan and the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century. He could very well have added Japan to the list of countries that had had a “longing for an indigenous form of religious politics free from the taint of Western culture . . . in this century.” Japan was the first non-Western nation to challenge the Western world for global power in modern times. And as the reader will discover in this study, Shintō ultranationalist ideologues theorized that secularized Western civilization was Japan’s mortal enemy. The only way for Japan to free itself spiritually and physically from the clutches of Western civilization was to destroy the Western secular democratic international world order and replace it with an emperor-centered hierarchical world order ruled by Japan’s divine emperor. This work analyzes why radical Shintō ultranationalists were convinced of the necessity of waging, to borrow the words of Benjamin R. Barber, an “ethnic and religious jihad” against secularized Western civilization much like that proclaimed by many radical Islamic fundamentalists today.<sup>11</sup> The sources of conflict that Huntington and Juergensmeyer identified for understanding wars of the twenty-first century—civilizations versus civilizations, religious nationalisms versus secular nationalisms, and religious extremism versus

mainstream religious moderation—were also at the heart of a conflict between Japan and the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century.

In addition to the fact that there has been no systematic and comprehensive analysis of the development of the ideology of State Shintō in prewar Japan, Western scholars of modern Japanese history have subscribed to the erroneous view that there had been no significant change in the ideology of State Shintō between the late Meiji period and the end of the Second World War, a viewpoint first popularized by the renowned Japanese political theorist Maruyama Masao, whose writings in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics* (1969) have played a powerful role in molding American scholars' perceptions of Japan's prewar ideology of extreme nationalism. In his essay "The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism," Maruyama, discussing the distinctive characteristics of the ideology of State Shintō, noted that "the basic characteristic of the Japanese state structure is that it is always considered as an extension of the family,"<sup>12</sup> as Meiji ideologues such as Hozumi Yatsuka and Inoue Tetsujirō had theorized. Maruyama went on to say that this notion "is maintained [by fascists], not as an abstract idea but as an actual historical fact, that the Japanese nation preserves unaltered its ancient social structure based on blood relationship."<sup>13</sup> He further noted that this emphasis on the idea of the family was so important that it defined the social context of Japanese fascism, and he concluded his statement on this particular point by saying, "The insistence on the family system therefore may be termed a distinctive characteristic of the Japanese fascist ideology; and it is connected with the failure of Japanese fascism as a mass movement."<sup>14</sup>

Ishida Takeshi, another well-known early postwar scholar, took up the issue of the ideology of State Shintō in *Meiji Seiji Shisō Shi Kenkyū* (A Study of the History of Meiji Political Thought).<sup>15</sup> He sought to explain the intellectual structure of State Shintō by linking German organic state theory and Confucian family ideology. Although Ishida's formulation of State Shintō differed from Maruyama's, a point in common was that both saw the family-state concept as fundamental to the ideology of State Shintō. More recently, Irokawa Daikichi challenged both Maruyama's and Ishida's analysis of the intellectual structure of State Shintō. While Irokawa, too, considered the family-state concept essential to State Shintō, his chief concern was the validity of the ideological mechanism connecting the family and the emperor in the intellectual structure of State Shintō constructed by both Maruyama and Ishida.

Although for Irokawa, as well as for Maruyama and Ishida, the family-state concept was a core component of State Shintō ideology, Irokawa raised the following objection to Maruyama's and Ishida's theory:<sup>16</sup>

What . . . was the link that allowed two such disparate elements [the family and the emperor] to be joined? Ishida proposes imported organic theory as the bonding agent, whereas his teacher, Maruyama, invoked the whole indigenous tradition since the Jomon period to account for it. Neither approach, it seems to me, satisfactorily explains the connection established between the family and the state under the emperor system.<sup>17</sup>

For Irokawa, neither Maruyama's nor Ishida's explanation of the mechanism linking the family and the emperor satisfactorily accounts for the reason the Japanese people would be so willing to risk their lives for the emperor in the same way that they would for their families. Irokawa insisted that there must be something else that allows the powerful emotional attachment the individual naturally has for his family to be transferred to the emperor. In short, Irokawa proposed four ideological intermediaries to join the family or the household to the state in the Meiji period: the imperial myth, the religious tradition of ancestor worship, the social structure of the family system, and the heritage of a *völkisch* morality. But again, what Maruyama, Ishida, and Irokawa all had in common was that they assumed the family-state concept to be an essential component of the intellectual structure of State Shintō throughout the prewar period. American scholars seem to have followed their Japanese counterparts and, for the most part, accepted their arguments at face value.

This work challenges the accuracy of this interpretation of Shintō nationalist ideology of the prewar Japanese state, raising a number of important questions that have not been adequately addressed by scholars of prewar Japanese political thought. First, how could a premodern theory of absolute monarchy constructed by Hozumi Yatsuka (whom Maruyama cited as the chief architect of the family-state concept) in the late Meiji period have served as an effective ideological force in mobilizing the Japanese masses for total war in Asia and the Pacific in the 1930s and the 1940s? Oddly, neither Maruyama nor Irokawa referred in depth to the ideological formulations of any of the Shintō ultranationalist state theorists in the Taishō or Shōwa periods. Second, how did State Shintō ideologues initially respond to the challenges posed by the popularity of Minobe Tatsukichi's emperor-as-organ theory of the state in support of political-party government and by the increasing politicization of the

Japanese masses in the first decades of the twentieth century? In other words, how did State Shintō ideology develop in ideological contestation with liberal democracy and socialism in the 1920s and re-create its own theoretical and practical relevance to meet the concerns of Japanese already involved with the affairs of state, as well as to encourage support for Japan's empire building in Asia and the Pacific War in the 1930s and the 1940s?

Third, I felt strongly that the traditional patriarchal family-state concept of State Shintō ideology could not account for the powerful element of fanatical behavior spectacularly displayed by Japanese Shintō ultranationalists in the 1930s and 1940s. And what about the suicidal behavior of the Japanese fighting man during the Pacific war? I had always been fascinated by the kamikaze, the pilots of the Tokkōtai, the Special Attack Force, who crashed their planes into enemy ships, and by the suicide charges of Japanese soldiers on the battleground. What motivated the Japanese soldier to seek death on the battlefield rather than surrender, even when the battle clearly had already been lost? Such behavior on the battlefield was a stark contrast to that of the American forces, who did everything they could possibly do to minimize the loss of human life among their own forces. Was this behavior sponsored and perpetrated by mentally deranged or obsessed people who were utterly indifferent to the sanctity of life? Or were they seeking martyrdom? I knew very well that such behavior had deep roots in Japanese tradition. I had studied for almost ten years in Japan, a number of those years in the late 1970s in the Ethics Department at the University of Tokyo with Professor Sagara Tōru, a scholar of Tokugawa intellectual history whose favorite book was *Hagakure*, the eighteenth-century treatise on the way of the *bushi*, Japan's traditional military aristocracy. Nearly every Japanese person at that time knew the famous first lines of this work: "The Way of the Warrior is to seek death."<sup>18</sup> I also was well aware of the fact that the spirit of the *Senjinkun* (Field Service Code) issued by Minister of War General Tōjō Hideki in January 1941 was close to that of *Hagakure*. However, suicidal behavior was not confined to the Japanese military. What motivated a Japanese mother to throw her infant son or daughter off a cliff and then plunge to her death rather than be captured by the Allied army? Could it be possible that this type of behavior had some connection to a radicalized form of State Shintō ideology? Were there extremist offshoots of mainstream State Shintō ideology of the Meiji period that encouraged such behavior?

Spectacular acts of terrorism and widespread public sympathy toward

terrorists and political assassins were also conspicuous characteristics of political behavior in Japan of the 1930s. Take, for example, the “May 15 [1932] Incident,” the terrorist plot by militant ultranationalists to assassinate top political, bureaucratic, and business leaders in Japan to force a military takeover of the government, which they believed would then lead to direct imperial rule at home and unlimited expansionism overseas. Navy Lieutenant Mikami Taku, one member of the group of military officers who killed Prime Minister Inukai, later testified in court: “Our revolution is intended to bring about direct Imperial rule and harmony between ruler and ruled.”<sup>19</sup> Another participant in the plot, Lieutenant Itō Kameshiro, explained to the court a similar notion: “My life’s desire will be fulfilled if a state is established on the principle that the Emperor and his subjects are one.”<sup>20</sup> Still another terrorist told the court: “The Imperial Way should be spread through the world, the Asiatic nations being first consolidated into a unit and thereafter the rest of the world. . . . We demand direct rule by the Emperor.”<sup>21</sup> Could acts of terrorism to bring about a political revolution and usher in a worldwide holy war possibly be justified or even encouraged by radical Shintō ultranationalist thought? Had religious political activism entered into a new phase? Or was this a perversion of Meiji State Shintō ideology? Still more, in view of the positive public response to the perpetrators of such acts of terrorism, I wondered whether political assassination had become an acceptable form of political behavior in the minds of the Japanese people. The fact that the counsel for the terrorists presented over one hundred thousand letters appealing for clemency and that “thirty thousand holders of the Golden Kite, the highest military decoration, signed a petition” says something very significant about the mood of the Japanese masses at the time.<sup>22</sup> Where was the public outrage over the killing of a prime minister? Extremists usually represent a tiny minority of the society in which they live, but the statistics revolving around the May 15 Incident seem, at least on the surface, to indicate mass public sympathy for them. Were there, by the 1930s, widely accepted doctrinal developments in Shintō ultranationalist ideology that would have condoned the overthrow of the government? I did not know the answers to these questions at the time, but I wanted to try to make sense out of things that did not make sense to me from what I had already learned about modern Japanese history and modern Japanese political thought. However, in my quest for answers, I was quite certain about one thing: these kinds of issues could neither be satisfactorily explained nor condoned by the traditional authoritarian, patriarchal family-state Shintō ideology con-

structed in the Meiji period. In short, I began this study out of a sense of frustration with the conventional wisdom among leading American scholars that the prewar Japanese state was fundamentally a traditional, conservative, authoritarian state to the bitter end.

My initial goal in this project was to examine the writings of Shintō nationalists from the 1910s to the 1940s to find out whether they, too, had followed their Meiji predecessors in conceptualizing the Japanese state in terms of a traditional patriarchal family-state. It did not take me long after I had begun my research to find out that this was certainly not the case. Although hardly any research had been done on this important topic, I discovered that a wealth of information on it existed if one was willing to try to pry it out of obscurity from Japanese libraries. In fact, when I really got deep into this research, I felt as if I had stumbled on an intellectual gold mine, a wealth of information and documents about a very important part of prewar Japanese intellectual history—a history almost totally untouched by, and virtually unknown to, Western scholars of modern Japanese history and political thought.

This book, then, focuses on a much neglected area of scholarly study by Western scholars. But it is not only among Western scholars that this topic had been neglected. The serious study of radical Shintō ultranationalist ideology in the Taishō and Shōwa periods has, for the most part, been shunned by Japanese scholars, as well. It is still somewhat of a taboo subject in Japan, for the story of the ideology of radical Shintō ultranationalism is connected with a prewar past that most Japanese would rather forget. Many Japanese still have difficulty coming to terms with their prewar and wartime history and do not seem to be comfortable investigating the radical Shintō ultranationalist ideology that once glorified Japanese imperialism and mobilized the Japanese masses to wage total war in Asia and the Pacific in the 1930s and the 1940s. In other words, today's Japan is still very much in the business of trying to keep a tight lid on the ideology of its wartime past.

Since the death of Emperor Hirohito, a number of studies have been done on his life and his role in the wartime period. Herbert Bix's *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000) immediately comes to mind.<sup>23</sup> The question of Emperor Hirohito's personal decision-making role in the war is no doubt an important one. But even deeper and more fundamental issues need to be addressed and examined, for the crucial issue is not the question of the guilt of just one man, however important that one man may have been, but the ideology behind the man, the ideology that made the emperor the divine man that he was in the hearts

and minds of millions of Japanese, the ideology that made for the fanatical loyalty of the Japanese people to their emperor, unshaken even after the dropping of two atomic bombs and the destruction of the Meiji state. Few men in history have commanded such total loyalty and devotion from the masses as did the Japanese emperor in prewar Japan. How else can one explain why on August 15, 1945, Japanese subjects prostrated themselves before the imperial palace to apologize to their sovereign for their inability to win the war? This work hopes to shed some light on the origins and the development of the powerful and pervasive emperor-centered ideology of radical Shintō ultranationalism in prewar Japan that, from the findings of this study, had achieved a “virtually totalitarian ‘spiritual’ control over the Japanese psyche” and led to the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>24</sup>

This work is a study of the ideology of State Shintō from the promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan on February 11, 1889, to the publication of *Kokutai no Hongi* (Fundamentals of Our National Polity) and Japan’s full-scale invasion of China in 1937. One of the significant discoveries of this study is that a transformation of the internal structure of the ideology of State Shintō did occur from a theory of constitutional monarchy inspired by Imperial Germany, established by Itō Hirobumi and his colleagues,<sup>25</sup> to a theory of absolute monarchy in the political thought of Hozumi Yatsuka in the late 1890s, and then to mass-based totalitarian ideologies in the constitutional theories of Uesugi Shinkichi and Kakehi Katsuhiko in the Taishō period. Further, it explains how this transformation of State Shintō ideology came about in contestation with liberal democracy and socialism and in response to the politicization of the masses in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Still more, for those who are interested in the relationship between religion and the political order, or in the global rise of political movements that base their claim to political legitimacy on religious orthodoxies, this study reveals another important transformation: the movement from a quasi-religious or quasi-secular state constructed by the Meiji oligarchs to Hozumi Yatsuka’s traditional conservative theocratic state in the 1890s and, finally, to radicalized and militant forms of extreme religious nationalisms in the state theories of Uesugi Shinkichi and Kakehi Katsuhiko in the 1920s. This religious approach to understanding the evolution of State Shintō ideology is probably more relevant to understanding the conflict between ethnic-religious nationalisms and Western-style secular nationalisms that Juergensmeyer predicted would be the main source of global confrontation in the twenty-first

century. From a religious perspective, we can raise our analysis to still another level by identifying two distinctive forms of radical religious nationalism. The theology of Kakehi Katsuhiko best represents one form of radical religious nationalism, and the ideology of Uesugi Shinkichi represents another. Kakehi's radical religious nationalism emerged in the 1910s in response to the growing politicization of the Japanese masses. However, radical religious nationalism in Japan began to take on an even more extreme form by the early 1920s and gave rise to terrorism. If one can define the term "terrorism" to describe the use of violence, or the threat of violence, to achieve certain political or religious ends, Uesugi's radical Shintō ultranationalism supplied a rationale for terrorism and a prism through which the perpetrators of terrorism could judge and condemn the actions of other people. The move to terrorism in the 1930s was not only due to the failure to achieve political goals by nonviolent methods. It was theologically motivated. Accordingly, this study gives an in-depth analysis of Uesugi's militant strand of radical Shintō ultranationalism that justified acts of terrorism and inspired one to seek death.

My analysis of this ideological transformation of the ideology of State Shintō in contestation with liberal democracy and socialism strongly suggests that creeping democracy and the secularization of the political order in Japan in the early twentieth century were the principal factors responsible for breeding terrorism and radicalism, a political trajectory from secularism to religious fundamentalism similar to that we have seen in the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and in the broader radicalization of much of the Islamic world.<sup>26</sup> Still more, it suggests that, with this rise of radical Shintō ultranationalist thought in the Taishō period and its subsequent diffusion in the early Shōwa period among the Japanese masses, who were increasingly susceptible to radical ideas, the preservation of a political environment in Japan free of extremism and violent threats to the domestic order proved virtually impossible—at least until the nation embarked on total war in Asia and the Pacific. Finally, this study gives a systematic analysis of the worldview of radical Shintō ultranationalists for whom the main source of conflict in the world was a civilizational and religious conflict between a divinely governed theocratic Japanese empire and a secular global order created and controlled by Western nations.

In short, this book offers a reinterpretation of the Japanese state from 1889 to 1945. In the epilogue of *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (1985), Carol Gluck wrote:

In the three decades between the end of Meiji and the end of the Second World War, ideological effort did not flag. For from the viewpoint of later generations of ideologues, the task of influencing (*kyōka*) the people remained ever incomplete. And during the years of militarism and increasing state control of the 1930s the content and apparatus of ideology reached an intensity that required police enforcement and culminated in the “spiritual mobilization” for war. Thus the ideological process that had begun in the Meiji period continued. Yet it is also true that in the course of the prewar years few wholly new elements appeared.<sup>27</sup>

In a way, this work picks up the story of Japan’s prewar ideology precisely from where Gluck left off at the end of the Meiji period. However, Gluck underestimated the nature and impact of ideological transformation that was about to take place in the immediate post-Meiji period when she stated, “Yet it is also true that in the course of the prewar years few wholly new elements appeared.” The doctrinal developments transforming the nature of State Shintō ideology between the Meiji period and the Taishō period were fundamental because the difference between a traditional theory of absolute monarchy and totalitarian ideology is fundamental. Further, it is no exaggeration to say that the birth and spread of radical and militant strands of Shintō ultranationalist thought in the Taishō and Shōwa periods constituted a megatrend in State Shintō ideology, a mega-trend that has gone totally unnoticed by Western scholars. While the fundamental structures of the Meiji state remained largely intact, a hidden revolution in the realm of religious thought and state ideology had taken place. This study demonstrates that by the end of the 1930s, extreme nationalists had taken over the state by employing radical religious fundamentalist ideas to crush or sublimate the advocates of all competing ideologies.

This study examines in depth the state theories of several preeminent constitutional-law scholars and leading theoreticians of State Shintō ideology in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. It is divided into three parts, which are organized in chronological order, and consists of a total of nine chapters, plus a concluding chapter. Part one, “Emperor Ideology and the Debate over State and Sovereignty in the Late Meiji Period,” consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 discusses why the theory of absolute monarchy emerged to become a central state ideology in the late Meiji period. It suggests that political gridlock in government throughout the 1890s prompted the state theorists Hozumi Yatsuka and Minobe Tatsukichi to formulate and defend new visions of the Japanese

state to serve as ideological foundations for a more stable and secure political system. Chapter 2 presents a detailed analysis of the family-state ideology of the constitutional-law scholar Hozumi Yatsuka and illustrates how his construction of the patriarchal state is structurally akin to European theories of absolute monarchy articulated by the French philosopher Jean Bodin and the English political writer Sir Robert Filmer. It also argues that Hozumi's State Shintō family-state ideology was a traditional authoritarian ideology that was out of touch with the prevailing political dynamics of the late Meiji period and that it was already being superseded by the beginning of the Taishō period by the new radical and revolutionary strands of Shintō ultranationalist thought. Chapter 3 is titled "Minobe Tatsukichi: The Secularization of Politics." It takes a fresh look at Minobe Tatsukichi's German-derived state-as-a-sovereign-person theory, or what is better known in literature on Japanese thought as the emperor-as-organ theory of the state, as a viable ideology in support of constitutional government and responsible political party government. It argues that Minobe's organ theory of the state represented a secular theory of the Japanese state and was accordingly vehemently attacked both by conservative and radical Shintō ultranationalists. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of Kita Ikki's Meiji work *Kokutairon oyobi Junsei Shakai shugi* (On the Kokutai and Pure Socialism), a massive critique of Hozumi Yatsuka's patriarchal family-state. It shows how Kita sought to redefine the Meiji Restoration as a social democratic revolution. It also reveals how he argued that the doctrines of loyalty and filial piety actually worked against fostering allegiance to the emperor in the feudal period; that the emperor constructed by State Shintōists was neither the real emperor in Japan's history nor the emperor of the modern Japanese state. Further, it outlines Kita's theory that the Japanese state constructed by Shintō fundamentalists, who excluded ethnically and racially non-Japanese people, was against the wishes of the emperor and prevented the full development of the Japanese empire. Still more, it shows how Kita reasoned that black people as well as whites and other Asian peoples such as the Chinese should be welcomed as full-fledged members of the Japanese state. But most importantly, it argues that Kita, who is portrayed in Western writings on Japan as the most influential intellectual of radical ultranationalism, represented only one type of Japanese ultranationalism in the 1930s, a type of radical ultranationalism that was at odds with mainstream radical Shintō ultranationalist movements at the time.

Part two of this study, "Emperor Ideology and the Debate over State

and Sovereignty in the Taishō Period,” has three chapters. Chapter 5 briefly discusses the origins of political consciousness among the Japanese masses and the political milieu in which revolutionary mass-based ideologies of extreme nationalism emerged. It also deals with the theoretical issues regarding Japanese ideologies of extreme nationalism or ultranationalism in comparative context and the issue of Japanese fascism in terms of the wider global discourse on fascism, employing theories on fascism by recent scholars such as Stanley G. Payne, Roger Griffin, and Robert O. Paxton. Chapter 6 documents the ideological transformation of State Shintō between the late Meiji period and the Taishō period. It illustrates how, in *A New Thesis on the State* (1921), the constitutional-law scholar Uesugi Shinkichi formulated a theory of state based on very different sorts of human relationships from that of patriarchy.<sup>28</sup> In his metaphysical theory of the Japanese state based on the concept *hito no sōkan to renzoku* (human relationships in space and time), he linked people with one another in a horizontal social structure, not in a vertical, patriarchal structure, thus displacing the traditional patriarchal bonds of society that had been central to the concept of Hozumi Yatsuka’s theory of absolute monarchy. It shows how Uesugi had worked out a totalitarian theory of the state that eliminated the authoritarian relationships between the emperor and the masses. It also claims that Uesugi’s thought represented the most radical form of extreme religious nationalism in prewar Japan, a form of radical Shintō ultranationalist thought that both inspired and justified acts of political and religious terrorism that swept the country in the 1930s.

Chapter 7 introduces to the Western reader for the first time the state theory of Kakehi Katsuhiko, an intellectual leader among Japanese constitutional-law scholars and State Shintō theorists of the 1920s and the 1930s. Kakehi’s thought had such influence among naval and army officers, as well as among civilian leaders and Shintō ultranationalists, that he was selected by the Japanese government to serve in Manchuria to tutor China’s last emperor, Xuāntōng (PūYi), who had become the ruling figurehead of Japan’s prewar state of Manchukuo, on the ideology and theology of State Shintō. This book examines how Kakehi articulated still another major reformulation of the concept of the patriarchal family-state established in the Meiji period. He constructed neither a traditional, patriarchal family state, as Hozumi Yatsuka had done in the Meiji period, nor a structureless state devoid of all institutions linking the masses to the emperor, as Uesugi had done in the Taishō period, but an emperor-centered theocratic state. Still more, I also show how Kakehi

envisioned an orderly Japanese theocratic state situated at the center of a Shintō cosmology and a hierarchical world order. It was, I argue, Kakehi's theory of radical Shintō ultranationalism that most accurately represented the type of thinking of those who crushed the militant radical Shintōists involved in the February 26, 1936, Incident and who subsequently led Japan into a full-scale war with China in 1937 and with the Western world in the 1940s.

Part three, "Radical Shintō Ultranationalism and Its Triumph in the Early Showa Period," consists of two chapters. Chapter 8, "Terrorism in the Land of the Gods," discusses the ideological roots and movements behind a wave of ultranationalist terrorism that struck the Japanese state between 1930 and 1936, drawing on analyses of terrorism by noted contemporary Western writers on this subject, such as Walter Laqueur, Mark Juergensmeyer, Walter Reich, Bruce Hoffman, Ariel Merari, and Yossef Bodansky, as well as a Japanese analyst of right-wing terrorism who writes under the pseudonym Tendō Tadashi. It illustrates how ultranationalist terrorism evolved from the Meiji period to the Taishō and Shōwa periods. Ultranationalist terrorism under the rule of the authoritarian Meiji oligarchs, for instance, evolved into something distinctively different in the increasingly secular and more democratic Taishō period, which, in turn, evolved still more dramatically in the early Shōwa period.

Chapter 9 reexamines the famous prewar Japanese document *Fundamentals of Our National Polity* (*Kokutai no Hongi*), showing that it condemned the emperor-as-organ theory of the state, resulting in the establishment of an official ideological-religious orthodoxy. The chapter also re-situates the importance of this work in the general context of the great discourse over state and sovereignty as an ideological and religious blueprint for a holy war to destroy modern Western civilization—the roots of which go back to the European Enlightenment—as well as its ideological influences in the non-Western world. Still more, it contains a section on commentaries on *Fundamentals of Our National Polity* by some of its authors, such as Ijima Tadaō, Kōno Seizō, Yamada Yoshio, Ōgushi Toyō, and Hisamatsu Senichi.

The book ends with a lengthy conclusion.

Something should be said about methodology, the method of analysis used in this study. This book is concerned primarily with ideology and those who formulate state ideology. It is about the thinkers who articulated the ideologies that made political movements possible. As John Breuilly stated in *Nationalism and the State* (1993), "Ideology must, first and foremost, be understood as an intellectual phenomenon."<sup>29</sup> Only a

set of ideas—an ideology—can bring people together to cooperate to achieve a common political purpose. The theories of each individual state theorist dealt with in this study are organized and analyzed around a central theme: the debate over state and sovereignty that began in the early Meiji period and continued throughout the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. This debate was arguably the most important political discourse in modern Japanese history. This work treats the ideas of individual state theorists not only on their own terms but, most important, on the basis of their function in the changing structure of the ideology of State Shintō. In each chapter, I analyze in detail at least one important work of a major constitutional-law scholar or state theorist and compare and contrast it with the writings of state theorists before and after that. Furthermore, whenever possible I situate the ideas or the works of each thinker in the context of the political and social milieu of the time. In other words, the formulations of ideologies by the intellectuals examined in this study are rooted in concrete concerns of the state and are analyzed in relation to the practical problems of managing government or organizing political movements in opposition to the government.

This approach differs from the approaches used by previous scholars and writers on this subject. First, works in the English language on Japanese ultranationalist state theorists and rightist Japanese ideology deal almost exclusively with the Meiji period. Gluck's *Japan's Modern Myths* is probably the most important book on this subject. In addition to Gluck's study, there is Richard Minear's biography of Hozumi Yatsuka, *Japanese Tradition and Western Law: Emperor, State, and the Law in the Thought of Hozumi Yatsuka* (1970). The only other study on a major nationalist state theorist of the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods is George Wilson's biography of Kita Ikki, *Radical Nationalist in Japan: Kita Ikki 1883–1937* (1969).

Second, Minear and Wilson organized the state theories of these thinkers around the life of the individual. They did not connect the ideas of their individual thinkers extensively to the broader discourse over state and sovereignty throughout the prewar period. Moreover, their biographies tend to exaggerate the significance of the individual theorist in this debate over state and sovereignty. For example, Minear analyzed Hozumi's state theory within the framework of Hozumi's life history and intellectual development, but he said very little about Uesugi Shinkichi, Hozumi's disciple, who totally transformed Hozumi's theory.

Third, I use a highly comparative approach, discussing how the state

theories of each Japanese state theorist are structurally related, or intellectually indebted, to the writings of Western political theorists. For instance, this study identifies Hozumi Yatsuka's theory of absolute monarchy with those of the sixteenth-century French political philosopher Jean Bodin and the seventeenth-century English defender of the theory of absolute monarchy Sir Robert Filmer. It also illustrates how Uesugi Shinkichi adapted to his reformulation of the ideology of State Shintō central concepts of the German state theorist G. W. F. Hegel.

In addition to the works on individual political theorists mentioned earlier and Gluck's study of Meiji ideology, there is one study of the relationship between the Japanese state and the Shintō religion written in the postwar period: Helen Hardacre's *Shinto and the State, 1868–1988*.<sup>30</sup> However, Hardacre's short work focuses on the problems involved in the establishment of a state religion during the so-called Great Promulgation Campaign between 1870 and 1884, the Shintō priesthood, Shintō shrines, shrine rites, and religious freedom under State Shintō. She deals with neither Shintō theology nor state theory.

The most important, and the only comprehensive, study in the English language on the ideology of State Shintō and Shintō nationalism thus far was actually done during the wartime period by Daniel C. Holtom. Holtom was an outstanding scholar who wrote two classic books on this topic: *The National Faith of Japan: A Study in Modern Shintō* (1938) and *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism: A Study of Present-Day Trends in Japanese Religions* (1947). *The National Faith of Japan* is a history of Shintō from the earliest times to the modern period. But nearly half of the book is devoted to an analysis of Sectarian Shintō, as opposed to State Shintō. As for State Shintō, through the meticulous analysis of the Shintō myth and the official interpretations of the Shintō creation story by Japanese state authorities and by leading Japanese scholars of the time, Holtom shows how the Shintō myths were utilized and carefully manipulated to “surround a doctrine of political absolutism with the final sanctions of religious belief.”<sup>31</sup> He charged that Japanese state ideologues entrusted with the moral education of Japanese youth had distorted the original cosmological myth by assigning unwarranted importance to the deity Amaterasu Ōmikami, the Sun Goddess, while minimizing the importance of the deities Izanagi and Izanami, who were actually the primary deities of the myth, and by teaching that Amaterasu Ōmikami was an actual flesh-and-blood historical person or genuine ancestor of the reigning emperor instead of a solar deity.

Although *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism* was published in 1947,

it was actually a revised edition of a work written in 1943 in the midst of the Pacific war. The content of the first six chapters appeared as originally published in 1943 and two chapters on Shintō in the postwar period were added, plus two important appendixes: the Directive for the Disestablishment of State Shintō and the Imperial Rescript on the Reconstruction of New Japan. In *Modern Japan and Shintō Nationalism*, Holtom argued that a state religion centering on Amaterasu Ōmikami and the emperor was reestablished in the Meiji period, and “from that time onward its influence has augmented with the passing years until it has become the strongest force in contemporary Japan and the chief inspiration of her purpose as she extends her cultural and political domination throughout the Far East.”<sup>32</sup> He also dealt with the issues of “nationalism and universalism,” “Japanese Christianity and Shintō Nationalism,” “Buddhism and Japanese Nationalism,” and “The Overseas Expansion of State Shintō.”

My study of the development of radical Shintō ultranationalism differs from Holtom’s in that Holtom never made an in-depth examination of any of the ideologies of the great state theorists; nor did he interpret their works in a comparative and developmental way. He also did not see the interactive way in which internal politics was driving ideological change, on the one hand, and how ideological change itself was driving political behavior, on the other. This study differs fundamentally from the works cited earlier and offers a radically new way to look at the nature of the prewar Japanese state.

Finally, there is an important work in the German language on Shintō and the Japanese state: Klaus Antoni’s *Shintō und die Konzeption des japanischen Nationalwesens (kokutai): Der religiöse Traditionalismus in Neuzeit und Moderne Japans* (1998). In it, Antoni discusses the historical development of Shintō and national thought in premodern and modern Japan. He also investigates the function of Shintō as a religious system to legitimize political power and explores how this culminates in the concept of the *kokutai*. And, of interest to scholars writing in the English language, Antoni’s work includes some very interesting sections on the prewar German–Japanese relationship, including a short discussion of fascism in Japan and Germany and “German admirers of the Japanese *kokutai* (*Deutsche Bewunderer des japanischen kokutai*).”<sup>33</sup>

Something, too, must be clarified with regard to definitions, classifications, and the terminology used in this study. It is important to mention here that there is still no commonly agreed-on name for the ideology of extreme nationalism that, in the opinion of this study, inspired the

elite and mobilized the masses to wage war in East Asia and the Pacific. In this introduction, I have already used several terms in reference to this ideology, such as “State Shintō,” “Japanese fascism,” “Shintō ultranationalism,” “emperor ideology,” and “radical Shintō ultranationalism.” Other words commonly used by writers discussing this movement of extreme nationalism in prewar Japan include “emperor-system fascism,” “Japanism,” “Shintōism,” or just plain “militarism.” None of them, it seems to me, will be satisfactory to everyone. Nevertheless, this study refers to the revolutionary, mass-based form of ethnic nationalism that had at the center of its ideology the Shintō creation story of the Japanese islands by Izanami and Izanagi, the divine origins of the imperial line, the divinity of the emperor, the ethnic divinity and superiority of the Japanese people, the belief in a divine world mission for the Japanese state, global imperial rule under the emperor, and so on, as “radical Shintō ultranationalism.”

I use the word “ultranationalism,” or “extreme nationalism,” to distinguish this political phenomenon from another form of nationalism that one might identify with the rise of the nation-state and liberal nationalism. In further clarification of the use of this term, however, I have found the British historian John Breuilly’s historical analysis of nationalism extremely useful. In his acclaimed *Nationalism and the State*,<sup>34</sup> a comprehensive and systematic historical comparison of nationalistic politics, Breuilly provided a definition of nationalism that focused on nationalism’s political character and developed an elaborate typology of nationalism. He treats “nationalism primarily as a form of politics.”<sup>35</sup> He further emphasized that “nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is principally about the control of the state. The central task is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power.”<sup>36</sup> He used the term “nationalism” to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments built on the three following assertions:

- (1) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
- (2) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- (3) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.<sup>37</sup>

With this broad definition, he went on to develop his theory of nationalism as principally a form of politics in opposition to the state. He cate-

gorized nationalist movements first on the basis of whether or not they were in opposition to “non-nation states” or “nation-states.” Under opposition to “non-nation states,”<sup>38</sup> he constructed three subcategories of nationalist movements based on the relationship between the nationalist movement and the state, which are as follows: a nationalist opposition can seek to break away from the present state (separation), to reform it in a nationalist direction (reform), or to unite it with other states (unification).

Breuilly described the origins of Japanese nationalism as a type of “reformist nationalism.”<sup>39</sup> This was a type of nationalism that emerged in states that, “although profoundly affected by contacts with the Western world, were never subjected to formal political control by western powers.”<sup>40</sup> He explained that nationalist movements in such states had a “desire to reform indigenous society along modern lines; to reject various economic controls and Western pretensions to cultural superiority; and to link both a reformed and independent state and society to a sense of national identity.”<sup>41</sup> He also noted that “the reform impulse usually originated within rather than outside the state itself. It tended to begin with a narrow focus on military reform which was seen as necessary in order to combat direct threats from Western powers. The obstacles to such narrow reforms soon became apparent and pushed reformers into the development of ever more radical objectives which could eventually envisage total transformation.”<sup>42</sup> This was certainly true of the Japanese Meiji Restoration movement. Members of the lower-ranking samurai elite who led the revolt against the Tokugawa regime and the feudal system sought to take over the state to push through a national revolution from above. They wanted to transform state institutions to make the state effective in resisting demands from the West.

However, the important consequence of pushing through this nationalist revolution from above was that the Meiji Restoration movement itself was an elitist revolution in that it was carried out by members of the traditional elite ruling class. Breuilly noted this, too, saying that “continuity was as marked and as important as discontinuity.”<sup>43</sup> One could well argue that the almost bloodless revolution was largely due to the powerful form of cultural nationalism that had emerged in Japan in the Tokugawa period through the Kokugaku (National Learning) Movement.<sup>44</sup> This Shintō revival provided for an ideological and institutional alternative within Japanese tradition. This opposition ideology, in tandem with other ideological currents of thought, had functioned to grad-

ually undercut the legitimacy of the Tokugawa regime throughout the eighteenth century and nineteenth century. By the time Commodore Matthew C. Perry appeared in 1853, the regime was rapidly decaying from internal problems, and dissatisfied bushi (samurai) rallied behind the Shintō movement to restore the emperor to political power.

It was also an elite-controlled revolution in the sense that the Meiji reformers within the military aristocracy believed that they could, and should, control and restrict change from above. The elite themselves were united only in a very broad sense, agreeing only that the Tokugawa regime must be destroyed and that the emperor should be at the political center of the new state. Breuilly noted this, too:

Very diverse elites ranging from reactionary samurai in the domains to enthusiastic Westernizers in the imperial court co-operated, at least for a time, in a common opposition to the Shōgunate. There was a clear institutional alternative for this opposition to form around within the state itself. Continuity, the confinement of political activity to elites, the diversity of elites involved, and existing institutional alternatives—all were reflected in the artificial, syncretic ideology of emperor loyalty and the restoration of Shintō religion which were used to justify the Meiji Restoration and the subsequent actions of the new regime.<sup>45</sup>

The key point to keep in mind was that the semi-Westernized military elite holding political power wanted to preserve control over the state, eventually opting for the Prussian-inspired Constitution of the Empire of Japan, which they thought would allow them to have the legal authority to do this as well as to permit some sort of political representation to organize mass support for their political purposes. Breuilly concluded his chapter “Reformist Nationalism Outside Europe” by stating, “Only the Japanese [he considered the cases of Turkey, China, and Japan in comparative context] can be regarded as a case of successful reform nationalism.”<sup>46</sup> The only other noteworthy point in his analysis of Japanese nationalism in terms of this study was that, in chapter 13 (“Nation-Building and Nationalism in the New States”) he mentioned that, “after some time, however, such nationalism, authoritarian from the outset, became increasingly conservative.”<sup>47</sup> Breuilly ended his analysis of Japanese nationalism by concluding that the Japanese nationalism of the leaders who made the Meiji Restoration was constructed on the basis of a traditional authoritarian nationalist ideology, a conclusion offered by American and European scholars in the field of Japanese studies.

However, this study shows that the Meiji state was not a politically and ideologically static entity. It had a dynamic political system and was in a constant state of flux. It rapidly evolved in response to complex ideological pressures from within and to foreign pressures from without. One could well argue that the promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, the supreme law of the land, by Emperor Meiji in 1889 did little to stabilize the regime. Political gridlock ensued year after year as the opposition in the parliament, using their legal powers to withhold approval of laws and the annual budget, sought to wrestle control of the government from the oligarchs. As chapter one in part one of this study suggests, it was in response to continued political instability in the last decade of the nineteenth century that alternative articulations of the Japanese nation-state and nationalism emerged.

The term “ultranationalism” as used in this study differs from the type of nationalism that Breuille described and from popular notions of liberal nationalism in modern, secular democratic states such as the United States. Most important, ultranationalism here includes a powerful religious component. It is something close to what Juergensmeyer refers to as a “religious nationalism,”<sup>48</sup> a form of nationalism that merges fanatical religious faith and the nation-state. According to Juergensmeyer, religious nationalism shares the following characteristics: (1) it rejects secular nationalism; (2) it regards secular nationalism as Western and neocolonial; (3) its rejection is fundamental and hostile and violent; (4) it wages the struggle with religious rhetoric, ideology, and leadership; and (5) it offers a religious alternative to the secular nation-state.<sup>49</sup> He also warned that the “merger of the absolutism of nationalism with the absolutism of religion might create a rule so vaunted and potent that it could destroy itself and its neighbors as well.”<sup>50</sup> Juergensmeyer further distinguished between types of religious nationalism: religious nationalism that we can live with and religious nationalism that we cannot live with. (Actually, he had a third category: one that we cannot live with easily but that we might have to coexist with.) Included among the characteristics of religious nationalism that we cannot live with are “the potential for demagoguery and dictatorship, the tendency to satanize the United States and to loathe Western civilization, and the potential to become violent and intolerant.”<sup>51</sup> It might be further noted here that Juergensmeyer said, on the ideological level, that “there can ultimately be no true convergence between religious and secular political ideologies.”<sup>52</sup> On the level of ideology, conflict between religious nationalism

and secular nationalism would persist. Thus, this work uses the term “ultranationalism” mainly in conjunction with the Shintō religion—thus, Shintō ultranationalism.

This study shows that Shintō ultranationalism as an ideology emerged at the center of political discourse in the late Meiji period with Hozumi Yatsuka. However, Hozumi’s brand of Shintō ultranationalism was married to a traditional authoritarian *völkisch* family-state ideology and thus differed fundamentally both from the ideology of the framers of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan as well as from the radical forms of Shintō ultranationalism what were to follow in the Taishō period. This study further makes a distinction among categories of Shintō ultranationalism as follows: “conservative Shintō ultranationalism” and “reactionary Shintō ultranationalism,” or, perhaps, “counterrevolutionary ultranationalism,” on the one hand, and “radical Shintō ultranationalism,” on the other hand. Alarmed by the degree to which the new Meiji government was modeled after Western political institutions and the gradual evolution to political-party government in the first decade of politics under the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, Hozumi advocated a return to an absolute monarchy governed by the divine monarch. He was a religious ultranationalist who could not tolerate a semi-religious, semi-secular authoritarian constitutional regime giving way to a fully secularized democratic government consonant with the secularized Western world that had inspired democratic governments around the world. He was one of those religious nationalists who, as Juergensmeyer said, “loathed” Western civilization. His form of nationalism was religious and extremist, a type of nationalism not present among those such as Itō Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo who created the Meiji state.

However, Hozumi was not what this study refers to as a “radical Shintō ultranationalist.” To further clarify this distinction, I have found again Breuilly’s analysis particularly useful. He states, “It is essential to distinguish radical right nationalism (henceforth referred to as fascism) . . . from nationalist movements which might variously be described as traditional, conservative, reactionary or authoritarian.”<sup>53</sup> Relying on the definition of fascism from Ian Kershaw’s *The Nazi Dictatorship*, Breuilly defined radical right nationalism as “a radical, anti-bourgeois, anti-liberal, anti-Marxist movement of national-imperialist integration.”<sup>54</sup> He then went on to expand on these key terms, noting, for example, that “unlike traditional right-wing movements, which may take a nationalist form, fascism does not work primarily as informal elite politics dependent

upon the absence of popular participation. Rather, fascism comes into its own at times of intense popular involvement in politics and the breakdown of established political parties.”<sup>55</sup> Radical-right nationalists are openly hostile to large-scale capitalism, in opposition to political pluralism and parliamentary government, and deny Marxist views of class conflict and materialism. In short, he states,

In place of traditional conservatism, parliamentary politics or working-class victory fascists offer the vision of a strong and united nation whose heroic leaders pursue a glorious and expansive foreign policy. . . . The rejection of class, party and elite politics leads to the idea of the nation as a classless, partyless, permanently mobilized organism bound together by blood or language or intuition or some such entity whose values, in some mysterious and direct way, are made known to and expressed through extraordinary leaders.<sup>56</sup>

In this story of the rise of radical Shintō ultranationalism, Hozumi was a traditionalist in that he was adamantly opposed to the masses’ participating in the political affairs of the state. Therefore, I have classified him as a “conservative Shintō ultranationalist” or “reactionary Shintō ultranationalist,” as opposed to what Breuille called “radical right nationalism” or what this study defined as “radical Shintō ultranationalism.”

Radical Shintō ultranationalists in Japan began to emerge in the early twentieth century in response to a continued sense of crisis in government operating under the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, which, in their minds, was tantamount to a breakdown of the Meiji political system. But at the same time, they were also reacting to Hozumi’s conservative or reactionary Shintō authoritarianism, correctly perceiving that the politicization of the masses was making his theory of state largely irrelevant.

Although this study relies in part on Breuille’s analysis to clarify radical Shintō ultranationalism, or what he called “radical-right nationalism”—his words for fascism—Breuille’s emphasis on the negative character of fascism does not give us much help in trying to understand its powerful appeal. He stated,

Fascism, then, came to power in circumstances in which its negative response to class, parliamentary and elitist politics corresponded with a situation in which none of the three forms of politics could cope with a crisis facing a political system with a new, politically mobilized population. Much of this population was scared of threats from the left, unattached to

or subsequently detached from parliamentary parties and beyond the control of conservative elites. In a crisis fascism, the negation of those three forms of politics, could seem to be the only remaining solution.<sup>57</sup>

While it is absolutely true that the conditions for a powerful fascist movement existed in places where the leftist threat appeared dangerous to the political order and in places where parliamentary governments failed to govern effectively, it did have a very powerful ideology and a powerful ideological appeal. It was not only the vision of a strong and united nation pursuing an expansionist foreign policy that attracted people to fascism. Fascism had deep philosophical roots. In *Communism, Fascism and Democracy: The Theoretical Foundations* (1967), Carl Cohen explained that fascism drew on the long traditions of absolutism, organicism, and irrationalism in Western thought. He reasoned that a powerful leader was necessary to maintain and expand the state; that the organic theory of state had a powerful appeal for political unity of the nation; and that the popular attraction of a “deliberate irrationalism” can be seen in the use of the myths of “eternal Rome” and the “Aryan master race.”<sup>58</sup>

The Japanese radical Shintō ultranationalists also drew on the powerful traditions of absolutism, organicism, and irrationalism in Japanese history, as well as in Western history. The Shintō doctrines of the “unbroken line of emperors from ages eternal,” “eight corners under one roof,” and “dying to the self and returning to the one” were all used to mobilize the nation. It was precisely this “deliberate irrationalism” that Cohen talked about as a key to understanding the appeals of European fascism and radical Shintō ultranationalism. This is something that George Mosse also strongly emphasized in *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. In the concluding chapter, Mosse wrote, “Fascists everywhere spurned existing social and economic systems in favor of an irrational world view. . . . This irrational world view was itself objectified in the form of a new religion with its own mysticism and its own liturgical rites.”<sup>59</sup> He further commented that “all these western fascisms exhibited a flight from reality into the realm of an emotional and mystical ideology.”<sup>60</sup> To Breuille, it may seem to be a crazy and an “absurd view of politics,”<sup>61</sup> but fascism’s appeal is probably the oldest and the most powerful force known to man: religion. Politicized religion was something he totally overlooked in his analysis of fascism. In respect to the importance of myths, Roger Griffin’s analysis of European fascism is insightful. In *The Nature of Fascism* (1993), Griffin established a conceptual framework for a “fascist minimum,” a core or nucleus that all

fascist states had in common. He argued that all fascist states had in common what he referred to as “palingenetic myth” and “populist ultranationalism,” or just “palingenetic ultra-nationalism,” although he did not equate this myth with genuine religion.

This study shows that radical Shintō ultranationalism was a revolutionary, mass-based religion of ethnic or *völkisch* nationalism that centered on the emperor nation-state and included the following characteristics: (1) deliberate irrationalism; (2) unlimited expansionism; (3) a tendency to pursue total destruction or global rule; (4) internal repression; and (5) total absorption of the individual into the collectivity. In summary, this work is the story of how the *völkisch* religion of radical Shintō ultranationalism emerged, how it ideologically came to dominate the Japanese state in the early Shōwa period, and how it was articulated to mobilize the masses for consolidating state power and enable radical Shintō ultranationalists to pursue their global ambitions.

It is also worth noting here that another reason no single ideological label readily comes to mind for many people who discuss the ideology of extreme nationalism in prewar Japan probably has much to do with the fact that, unlike in the case of the Nazi Party in Germany or the Fascist Party in Italy, no single extreme nationalist movement seized state power in Japan. Hundreds of Shintō ultranationalist groups sprouted up in the post-Meiji era that often engaged in violent struggle with one another and did not specifically refer to themselves in any obvious way as being Shintōists. They commonly referred to themselves as this or that society or this or that association. However, names like the Jimmu Association or the National Foundation Society are code names for radical Shintō ultranationalist groups. The nature of Japanese radical Shintō nationalism is extremely complex and its essence, I believe, is more difficult to comprehend than German Nazism or Italian Fascism.

In any case, if these definitions and classifications do not satisfy everyone, I do not think that this in itself should pose a particular problem for those of us trying to study the phenomenon of Japanese radical nationalism. As students of European fascism know all too well, despite the hundreds of books and thousands of writings on the theory of fascism, there seems to be still no agreement among scholars on any single definition. I would, in this case, therefore take refuge in the words of Walter Laqueur, author of *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (1996): “There is the widespread misconception that one cannot begin to study a subject if it does not have an exact definition and a good theory. Unfortunately, however, the real world is very complicated and one usually must do

research and describe events without the benefit of a theory, which, in any case, should come at the end rather than the beginning.”<sup>62</sup> It is my hope, however, that the reader will have a good understanding of the essence of the ideology of extreme nationalism in prewar Japan after reading this book.

Still more, my study inevitably involves itself in the long-standing debate over whether Japan’s behavior between 1931 and 1945 represented an aberration in the nation’s modern development. In terms of the development of the radical Shintō ultranationalist ideology that gave the Japanese elite the vision and justification to seek the establishment of a new world order and that mobilized the Japanese masses to fight and die to achieve this aim, I lend support to the view that the Japanese wartime period from 1931 to 1945 was the logical outcome of the triumph of a long, slowly developing but deeply rooted Shintō ideology that goes back to the late Meiji period and, ultimately, back to the revival of *kokugaku* thought in the Tokugawa period. This is not to say or imply that this was simply a straight path from the Meiji period to the Second World War. Intense ideological struggles took place along the way. Indeed, this study documents the ongoing ideological struggle among the competing strains of Shintō thought, showing how radical Shintō ultranationalism emerged as the dominant national ideology in contestation with liberalism and, to some extent, socialism, and how it spread to the masses by the early 1930s.

Finally, the findings of this study present a direct challenge to those who would argue that State Shintō had no systematic ideology and to those who would argue that Japan’s prewar leaders lacked ideas and ideological principles on which to base their prewar foreign policy. This was an issue that frustrated even Holtom when he wrote *The National Faith of Japan* in the late 1930s. On this topic, he quoted an article by Yamashita Yoshitarō, a former counselor in the Imperial Japanese Consulate in London, titled “The Influence of Shintō and Buddhism in Japan” that appeared in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society of London*: “Students of this religion [Shintō] have been struck with the simplicity of its doctrine. It enforces no special moral code, embraces no philosophical ideas, and, moreover, it has no authoritative books to guide believers.”<sup>63</sup> Holtom responded to this argument by remarking, “All of the statements in the above quotation require careful examination and it is to such a study that the following pages are dedicated.”<sup>64</sup> At the end of his book, Holtom returned to the statement by Yamashita Yoshitarō, stating, “It is to overlook the most important aspects of official Shintō

to say that it has no doctrinal beliefs and no ethical teachings and that it is without sacred scriptures.”<sup>65</sup> It seems that Holtom was motivated by trying to expose what Ivan P. Hall referred to as the “manipulated dialogue,”<sup>66</sup> the way in which many Japanese intellectuals and spokesmen for Japan manipulate their dialogue with the outside world to “deflect scrutiny, put down criticism, and raise false hopes of intellectual decartelization.”<sup>67</sup>

My study also leads to the conclusion that Japan’s decision to go to war was as much motivated by internal ideological and religious factors as it was the result of external factors, something that has been given surprising scant attention by writers on Japanese history. Those who do focus on the internal factors that led Japan to war in Asia tend to concentrate on economic factors or the idea of some kind of quest for economic security. Almost totally neglected are the origins, development, and diffusion of the radical, religious ultranationalism that came to grip the Japanese nation in the 1930s and early 1940s. So little has been written about the relationship between the Shintō religion and Japanese ultranationalism in postwar scholarship on Japan that one is tempted to seriously question whether there has been a concerted effort or campaign to de-link them. This has not gone unnoticed by scholars outside Japanese studies. Again, Juergensmeyer, who has done such significant work on religious nationalism around the world, lamented the lack of data on this topic in the case of prewar Japan: “Germany’s ally, Japan, also engaged in the war with a religious zeal. Among the neglected aspects of the war were Japanese religious concerns related to the honor of the emperor, who was regarded as both a political and a spiritual leader.”<sup>68</sup> Juergensmeyer’s observation that the religious dimension to Japan’s war in Asia and its neglect in analyses of Japanese nationalism is certainly astute.

The overall orientation and focus of my analysis of Japanese radical Shintō ultranationalism is conceptually very close to Mosse’s analysis of German National Socialism. Mosse, who saw National Socialism as a *völkisch* religious movement that went back to the German Romantic movement of the nineteenth century, stated:

The Volkish movement triumphed in Germany because it had penetrated deeply into the national fabric. Rather than trying to explain away this fact, it would seem more profitable to ask how this could have been accomplished. This book will argue that the triumph grew out of a historical development, helped along by concrete causes, which resulted in an