

How “Religion” Came to Be Translated as *Shūkyō*: Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan

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Investigations into the modern concept of “religion” in Japan usually stress its Western origins. According to this argument, *shūkyō* was shaped following Christian, more precisely Protestant, notions of what religion was (and what not). Yet, in explaining why it was the word *shūkyō* that eventually prevailed as the standard translation term for “religion,” pointing to the West is of little help. Instead we have to turn to the earliest discussions about religion at the very beginning of the Meiji period, in texts by Buddhist authors with domestic agendas little influenced by the Western notion of religion. It was rather the religious policy of the Meiji government, up to the mid-1870s deeply colored by the interests of the Shintoist group in the Bureau of Divinity and the Ministry of Doctrine, that prompted Buddhist authors, especially of the Jōdo Shin persuasion, to theorize about religion and its relationship to the state. The most prominent of these was Shimaji Mokurai, who not only stressed the distinctness of religion from politics, but also came up with another conceptual opposition, one that would eventually yield the term *shūkyō* as expressing the realm of “religion.” It is this terminological opposition which will be traced genealogically in the second half of the article; and through this exercise it will be shown that the main motive for Buddhist authors in defining *shūkyō* in the early Meiji years was to come to terms with the role of Shinto within the modern polity, i.e. a purely domestic concern hardly affected by Western cultural dominance.

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Ever since the pioneering studies of Haga Shōji 羽賀祥二 and the definitive volume by Isomae Jun'ichi 磯前順一, there has been a broad consensus among scholars of modern Japanese religious history that the introduction of a modern concept of religion was a

crucial premise for shaping the relationship between state and religion in modern Japan.¹ The conceptual core of State Shinto as it came into being since the 1880s, i.e. the definition of Shinto as a non-religious entity, hinged upon a certain antecedent definition of religion that made possible the exclusion of Shinto from it. This enabled the pre-1945 Japanese state to demand compulsory participation of its subjects in shrine rites without infringing upon the constitutionally granted freedom of religion.

This kind of religious policy became possible because “religion” was introduced with the prototype of a belief-centered Protestant-style Christianity in mind. As Isomae explains it:

[U]nder the encroaching cultural dominance of the West [...] following the principles of Western-style enlightenment, ‘religion’ (*shūkyō*) was entrusted to the sphere of the individual’s interior freedom, while the ‘secular’ sphere of morality (*dōtoku*) was determined to be a national, and thus public, issue. With a clear differentiation between the religious and moral categories being made along the private–public dichotomy, Western modernity came to be comprehended in terms of a dual structure. From the beginning, the very notion of an individual with an interiority was for the first time made possible as a form of self-understanding only through the transplantation of Christianity and the related concept of religion.²

This argument about the dichotomy created by the introduction of the Western concept of religion is supported by the wording of key legal texts of the Meiji period such as the 1889 Meiji Constitution (and the constitutional commentary by Itō Hirobumi of the same year) and the 1899 Monbushō Instruction No. 12.³ It is less clear, however, why and how this specific understanding of religion was introduced into Japan in the first place. Even if we accept the premise of the “encroaching cultural dominance of the West,” which is hard to swallow at face value given the formal independence of Japan throughout the colonial period and the rather active stance of the political and intellectual leadership of the early Meiji period, there remains the question of which concept of religion and which Christianity were “transplanted” to Japan. Surely, the mindset of the U.S. American Protestant or the French Catholic missionaries active in 1860s and 1870s Japan can hardly be characterized by reference to “Western-style enlightenment.”

We are well advised to be wary of assumptions that Western ideas were “introduced” or “transplanted” to Japan; instead, we might rather consider the notion of “appropriation” to grasp the complex processes of cultural transfer and translation at work between the West and Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. 1870s Japanese elite representatives appropriated a certain understanding of religion, and they did so for their own purposes and with their own agendas. This insight receives short shrift even in Jason Ānanda Josephson’s recent monograph *The Invention of Religion in Japan*.⁴ While Josephson considers terminological precedents for “religion” from the Tokugawa period, when it comes to the crucial 1860s and 70s, he emphasizes Western models and Western concerns (diplomacy and the debate on freedom of religion) as having shaped Japanese understandings of religion.

1 Haga 1984; Isomae 2003.

2 Isomae 2007, p. 93.

3 On the Monbushō Instruction, see Umeda 1971, p. 456.

4 Josephson 2012.

Just how little the appropriation of “religion” hinged on Western precedents or debates shaped by European concerns becomes obvious once we turn to the understudied question of why religion came to be translated as *shūkyō* 宗教 and not by any of the other terms bandied about until the second half of the 1870s.⁵ One of the first Japanese not only to use the term *shūkyō*, but also to attempt to define religion was the Shin Buddhist priest Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911).⁶ Mokurai’s role in the process of appropriating “religion” in modern Japan has been duly noted, with a focus on his arguments about freedom of religion, the separation of state and religion, and his pioneering role in arguing that Shinto is not a religion.⁷ Equally, the important role traditional rhetorical figures such as “mutual dependence of kingly law and Buddha dharma” (*ōbō buppō sōi* 王法佛法相依) or “the two truths of transcendence and worldliness” (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦) played for Shin Buddhists such as Mokurai when they conceptualized the separation of state and religion, has received some attention in existing scholarship.⁸ In doing so, however, not enough attention has been paid to Mokurai’s terminological choices, which offer a precious insight into the history of *shūkyō* and thereby the more general story of the appropriation of religion in modern Japan.

The present article will go beyond the usual depictions of Mokurai’s arguments about state and religion to adopt a conceptual history approach that focuses on one critical term that Shimaji (and others) used to define religion negatively. The word *shūkyō* in fact emerged in opposition to that term, the prehistory of which will therefore be examined in some detail. This attention to terminological detail will serve to show that the appropriation of religion was shaped at least as much by “indigenous factors”—the premodern legacy of thought and concepts and the socio-political situation around the Meiji Revolution—as by the domination of Western modes of organizing knowledge.

“Civic Teachings” in the Meiji Period

“Civic teachings” vs. “sectarian teachings”: Shimaji Mokurai

Shimaji is best known for a short essay he wrote in December 1872, while traveling through Europe as part of a study group representing the Honganji faction of Jōdo Shinshū. Sitting in a hotel room in Paris, he reflected on the relationship between politics and religion as follows:

The difference between politics (*sei* 政) and religion (*kyō* 教) should never be obscured. Politics is a human affair and only governs outward forms. Moreover, it separates countries from each other. Religion, however, is divine action and governs the heart. [...] How is it possible that, although the form of government of each country is different, their religion is the same? Religion speaks of non-discrimination (*byōdō* 平等, skr. *sama*), and great mercy (*daihi* 大悲, skr. *mahā-karuṇā*) (Buddha), of love for

5 Some of these terms can be found in Hikaku Shisōshi Kenkyūkai 1975.

6 The state of the art biography is Murakami 2011.

7 A great number of studies has been devoted to Shimaji since the 1960s. The most important scholars in this regard have been Fukushima Hirotaka 福嶋寛隆 and Fujii Sadafumi 藤井貞文 (in the 1960s–80s), Horiguchi Ryōichi 堀口良一 (in the 1990s), and since 2000 Kawamura Kakushō 川村覚昭 and Tonami Hiroyuki 戸浪裕之.

8 See Rogers and Rogers 1990; Horiguchi 1997, pp. 94–95; Nitta 1997, p. 58; Fujii 2000; Krämer 2013, pp. 341–44.

God and love for humans (Jesus). [...] In this way, with religion one makes people good, with politics one makes people invest effort. [...] That both Japan and China have traditionally erred in [the relationship between] politics and religion seems to me to stem from their having frequently confused the two. In the old days, the Europeans had erred [here] as well, and their culture was enormously backward. In recent times, however, they have come to see this and have now reached great results. I wish this for our country as well.⁹

As the title of this text, *Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpakusho* 三条教則批判建白書, makes clear, Shimaji's abstract reflections had a rather concrete political target, namely the policy of the Meiji government directed towards shrines and temples. A few months earlier, a new ministry, the Kyōbushō 教部省, had been installed and had immediately initiated a Great Promulgation Campaign (*daikyō senpu undō* 大教宣布運動), consisting of proselytizers (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) asked to preach based on three brief articles of instruction (*sanjō kyōsoku* 三条教則).¹⁰ On the basis of his stinging critique of this new system, Shimaji has been judged by historians of religion as a pioneering advocate of the separation of politics and state on the one hand and religion on the other, a context of discussion which he shared with the early enlightenment intellectuals.¹¹ Ogawara Masamichi has already pointed out that an older strand affirming the principle of the coexistence of politics and religion still penetrates Shimaji's thinking at least until the late 1870s.¹² In addition, Shimaji shifted his dichotomous terminology conspicuously between 1872 and 1874. In the latter year, he postulated two new entities in opposition to each other, as is clear in his discussion of Shinto:



Photograph of Shimaji Mokurai, taken while he was in Europe (ca. 1872). (From *Shimaji Mokurai zenshū* 2, ed. Futaba Kenkō and Fukushima Hirotaka. Honganji Shuppanbu, 1973.)

I have not penetrated this thing called Shinto completely yet, but what I can say for sure is that it is not a so-called sectarian teaching (*shūkyō*). If one now nonetheless attempts to make it into a sectarian teaching, the harm for Japan and the shame from the outside will be enormous. In olden times, when Buddhism had not yet entered Japan, only a civic teaching (*jikyō* 治教) existed in our country. There is thus no obstacle to the coexistence of a sectarian teaching and a civic teaching, but how could one person possibly have two sectarian teachings at the same time?¹³

⁹ Shimaji 1872, pp. 235–36.

¹⁰ On this campaign, see Hardacre 1989.

¹¹ On the debates of the Meirokusha, published in their organ *Meiroku zasshi* 明六雜誌, see Howland 2001, pp. 178–81. Representative examples of the portrayal of Shimaji as advocating the separation of religion and politics or even the freedom of religion are Fukushima 1964, p. 44 and Sueki 2004, pp. 30, 38.

¹² Ogawara 2004, pp. 154–55.

¹³ Shimaji 1874a, p. 65.

In this passage, *shūkyō* could reasonably be translated into English by “religion,” but the new oppositional term *jikyō* clearly does not mean “politics.”¹⁴ Was *jikyō*, then, simply a synonym for Shinto? A look at further writings by Shimaji throws this assumption into doubt. In the same year of 1874, Shimaji discussed the decision of the Kyōbushō to allow only *kyōdōshoku* of a certain rank to make public speeches. In *Sekkyō sashitome ni tsuki* 説教差止ニツキ, he criticized this decision by pointing out that fewer than 30 percent of Buddhist clergy held this rank, which automatically barred the others from addressing the public. Rhetorically, Shimaji asked:

Does the designation *kyōdōshoku* refer to an additional office belonging to the sphere of civic teaching (*jikyō*) of the imperial court or to the main offices of the sectarian teachings (*shūkyō*)? If it is an additional office in the sphere of civic teaching, then it is my opinion that spreading one’s own sectarian teaching should certainly not be prohibited even if someone is additionally appointed a *kyōdōshoku*.¹⁵

While Shimaji’s main argument again is to clarify that Shinto has nothing to do with the sphere of “sectarian teachings,” i.e. religion, his usage of *jikyō* strongly suggests that it is not identical with Shinto but rather refers to something like political indoctrination. This impression is corroborated by yet another of Shimaji’s invectives against the Great Promulgation Campaign from 1874. In *Kyōbu shittai kanken* 教部失体管見, Shimaji attacks the Ministry of Doctrine, concluding:

Although different sectarian teachings (*shūkyō*) really exist, the Three Articles of Instruction claim that this is not the case. Are sectarian teachings supposed to be something that can be amalgamated or separated by force? Because [the Ministry of Doctrine] does not clearly distinguish between civic teachings (*jikyō*) and sectarian teachings, it treats all sectarian teachings as one, either condemning them in the name of the nation (*kokutai* 国体) or threatening them for being alien teachings. [...] Alas, sectarian teachings will continue to be harmed, and when will the day come on which we will see effective civic teaching?¹⁶

Obviously, Shimaji is concerned not only about the fate of religion under the current system of religious policy, but also about that sphere of societal activity here tentatively translated as “civic teaching.” Hence, this cannot be identical to Shinto for which Shimaji held no particular sympathy. This becomes even clearer by looking at how fellow Buddhist authors used the same term. In another contribution to the genre of essays on the Great Promulga-

14 It is unclear how 治教 was pronounced in the mid nineteenth century. *Kokusbo sōmoku* 国書総目録 consistently renders it *chikyō* for pre-nineteenth century titles, and most secondary literature follows this practice for later texts as well (see Ketelaar 1990, p. 129 and Shimazono 2005, p. 1086). The satirical author Kanagaki Robun 仮名垣魯文 (1829–1894), however, glossed the term with the reading *jikyō* in his novel *Seiyō dōchū biza kurige* 西洋道中膝栗毛, written in installments between 1870 and 1876 (Kanagaki 1870–1876, p. 103), and *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 also gives this as the main reading. In the present article, therefore, I use *chikyō* for pre-Meiji instances and *jikyō* for later ones. Contrary to Sueki Fumihiko’s assumption (2004, p. 29), *shūkyō* vs. *jikyō* is thus not simply the successor of *kyō* vs. *sei*.

15 Shimaji 1874b, p. 48.

16 Shimaji 1874c, p. 44–45.

tion Campaign, Kusunoki Senryū 楠潜龍 (1834–1896), priest of the Ōtani branch of the Jōdo Shinshū, made prominent use of the concept of “civic teachings” in his 1874 *Jūshichi rondai ryakusetsu* 十七論題略説 in order to distinguish between religion and politics:

Well, there are two ways of teachings (*kyō*). These are called civic teachings (*jikyō*) and sectarian teachings (*shūkyō*). As concerns civic teachings, it is not as if there were something like religion (*kyōhō*) as distinct from politics. Beautifying the customs of the nation by rectifying laws, improving the morals of the common people by clarifying rewards and punishments, taking care that there are no disloyal subjects in the nation and no impious children in families, correcting names and clarifying human relationships: This is called civic teachings, and if those above teach it, those below will follow. Yet while civic teachings reward and punish outward forms and past events, they neither promote nor chastise the right and wrong of the inner heart nor that which has yet to take shape. [...]

Question: If civic teachings and sectarian teachings differ in their main purpose, does this mean that sectarian teachings cannot be effective in helping politics? Answer: You must know that it will not work without sectarian teachings. This is because when a disease breaks out on the skin, it has already affected the organs. If you only attend to the cure of the outer skin, without also healing the inner organs, you will fail to strike at the root of the disease and so maintain your health. In just the same fashion, politics (*sei*) cures the disease that breaks out on the skin, and teachings (*kyō*) cut the root that connects to the organs. If an evil that lurks within the heart has already broken out on the surface leading to someone stealing things or killing others, one can punish him with penalties or chastise him with laws. But if the heart to steal and kill is latent there, yet to surface, of what use will be politics? It is sectarian teachings that make people sincere, upright, and good by chastising the evil that has yet to surface and by fostering the good in life [...]. Teachings (*kyō*) show how to invite eternal happiness into the human heart. Since the natural sciences have developed and human knowledge has made constant progress, we can ponder the movements of the stars, analyze the features of geography, measure the temperature and rainfall and investigate the weight of air and the fineness of molecules. Although this leads to the development of human knowledge, it does not help us to fathom the heart, even though we are able to measure ears and eyes. From where the soul (*reikon* 靈魂) comes and to where the heart goes is beyond the reach of analysis and invention. There is no way but to believe in that which explains the origin [of the soul] and shows the destiny [of the heart]. [...]

Question: If you say that teachings (*kyō*) refer to sectarian teachings (*shūkyō*), what then shall we do about the so-called Three Articles of Instruction? Answer: Many people today hold teachings to be identical to the Three Articles of Instruction. But it is probably not that way. [...] Do not mistakenly hold “revere the gods” for religion (*shūkyō*), do not call “love your country” a principle of religion (*kyōtai* 教体).¹⁷

Kusunoki’s text is remarkable for clearly specifying religion as an affair of the human interior. The two core concepts here are “heart” (this coincides with Shimaji; see the quote from

¹⁷ Kusunoki 1874, pp. 141–42.

his *Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpakusho* given above) and what has here been translated as “soul.” *Reikon* can be understood to mean the non-physical fundament of human existence; what is crucial here is the implicit reference to its continued existence after the end of physical life. Religion is thus centrally defined as that which deals with death—certainly a plausible definition viewed from Japanese Buddhism, with its focus on funeral practice since the early modern period.¹⁸

When Kusunoki speaks of *kyō*, he opposes it to politics (*sei*); as *shūkyō*, however, he juxtaposes it to *jikyō*. Again, *jikyō* is neither identical to politics nor to Shinto. Rather, Kusunoki’s list of ethical precepts in the first paragraph quoted above has a decidedly Confucian ring to it. Moreover, while both Kusunoki and Shimaji appear to affirm the legitimacy of the sphere of “civic teachings,” they both treat it as inferior to religion, as less central for human life. While this meaning of *jikyō* can hardly be said to have become broadly established, it is interesting to note that an affirmed enemy of Buddhism made use of “civic teachings” in a very similar sense at almost the same time. Tokoyo Nagatane 常世長胤 (1832–1886), an adherent of the Hirata 平田 branch of National Learning (*kokugaku* 国学) and an official in the Ministry of Doctrine since 1872, reminisced in his memoirs *Shinkyō soshiki monogatari* 神教組織物語 about his time as one of the protagonists of the Great Promulgation Campaign.¹⁹ Tokoyo did not write this until 1885, but his terminology seems to reflect the situation of the early 1870s, such as when he criticizes three imperial edicts issued in 1870, which attempted to formulate the first “religious policy” of the young Meiji state:

In this era, when the rule of the realm is based on the august lineage established by Jinmu Tennō, imperial edicts are drawn up in Chinese and proclaim a civic teaching (*jikyō*) outwardly, while inwardly establishing a religion (*kyōhō* 教法). This is owing to fear [of diplomatic difficulties with the West over Christianity]; the Emperor knows none of this, and it is no exaggeration to say that we are caught in this trap of impropriety because of the Emperor’s advisors.²⁰

Nor did Tokoyo shy away from naming names. At one point he specifies his fellow ministry official and adversary Ono Nobuzane 小野述信 (1824–1910), associated with the Ōkuni 大國 faction of *kokugaku*, as standing behind the hypocritical policy earlier criticized by him: “Eschewing the foreign teaching [i.e. Christianity], outwardly he pretended that [the government proposed] a civic teaching (*jikyō*), although within his heart he desired to spread a religion (*kyōhō*).”²¹

The broader context of this statement were discussions among Shintoists since the 1860s intended to establish Shinto as a religious teaching (in their words, a *shūmon* 宗門)

18 Sueki (2012, pp. 11–12) has pointed out that the idea of Tokugawa period funerary Buddhism is misleading insofar as there was a wealth of interaction between parishioners and temples outside the realm of funerary rites. According to Sueki, the limitation to funerals of common people’s everyday contacts with Buddhism was really a result of the Meiji period. Regardless of this distinction, it cannot be denied that taking care of death ritually has been and is a characteristic of Japanese Buddhism since at least the early modern period.

19 Helen Hardacre briefly treats this text in her *Shintō and the State* (Hardacre 1989, p. 44).

20 Tokoyo 1885, p. 367.

21 Tokoyo 1885, p. 373. See also Haga 1984, p. 166. On the role of Ono as official in the Jingikan and Kyōbushō, see Breen 1996, pp. 81–85.

of equal standing with Buddhism and Christianity. Ono, claims Tokoyo, was an adherent of this strategy, but, as a public official, could not ignore the force of Christianity, backed by the imperialist Western powers, and had therefore pursued a policy of spreading Shinto “only” as a non-religious teaching concerning the political and the moral, i.e. as a *jikyō*. In its negative connotation, Tokoyo might have picked up this term from Shimaji and Kusunoki, but they had certainly not invented it. Rather, it had been introduced into political discussions on religion quite prominently in 1870, precisely the year about which Tokoyo here reminisces, albeit as an eminently positive term.

“Governing and teaching” for the imperial way: Early Meiji imperial edicts

Shimaji himself named his source in the first 1874 petition cited above, namely the Imperial Edict on Spreading the Great Teaching (*Senpu daikyō mikotonori* 宣布大教詔), promulgated on the third day of the first month of the third year of Meiji (3 February 1870):

We solemnly announce: The Heavenly Deities and the Great Ancestress [Amaterasu Ōmikami] established the throne and made the succession secure. The line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession thereof and handed it on. Religious ceremonies and government were one and the same (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致) and the innumerable subjects were united. Governing and teaching (*jikyō*) were clear to those above, while below them the manners and customs of the people were beautiful. Beginning with the Middle Ages, however, there were sometimes seasons of decay alternating with seasons of progress. Sometimes the Way was plain, sometimes darkened. Now in the cycle of fate all things have become new. Governing and teaching (*jikyō*) must be made clear to the nation and the Great Way of obedience to the gods must be promulgated. Therefore we newly appoint propagandists (*senkyōshi* 宣教師) to proclaim this to the nation. Do you our subjects keep this commandment in mind.²²

Note that *jikyō* is here clearly a paratactically constructed composite (A and B) rather than, as was the case with Shimaji and Kusunoki, of attributive form (B of A; A-like B).²³ Of central importance for the short edict is a historical narrative, according to which an ideal society existed in ancient Japan, which fell into disarray in the middle ages. It was only now, the narrative continues, with “all things becoming new,” i.e. with the bakufu overthrown and imperial rule nominally restored, that the opportunity presented itself to restore the ideal circumstances of antiquity. Politically, this ideal state was marked by three characteristics: religious ceremonies and government were unified; the common people were of one mind; and the rulers were clear about their duty to govern and to teach. That the manners and the customs of the people were beautiful was the result of these efforts from above. Now, however, immediately after the Meiji Revolution, the clarification of governing and teaching is not only mentioned at the outset, it is also explicitly demanded as a means to strengthen the “Great Way of obedience to the gods” (*kan'nagara no daidō* 惟神大道), i.e. Shinto.

In a way, the Imperial Edict on Spreading the Great Teaching was the answer to an

22 The translation is based on Holtom 1963, p. 6. Holtom, however, renders *jikyō* “government and education” in the first instance and “polity and education” in the second.

23 The oldest usage of the composite term in East Asia, in the ancient Chinese *Zhouli* 周礼 (“Rites of Zhou”), is also of the paratactic type.

earlier question posed by the emperor to his advisors. In this “Imperial Inquiry on the Prospering of the Imperial Way” (*Kōdō kōryū chokumon* 皇道興隆勅問), dated Meiji 2/5/21 (30 June 1869), the narrative of decline and rise is even more explicitly spelled out:

Since the heavenly deities and the heavenly ancestors have erected the axis and opened the fundamentals of our imperial nation, the line of emperors inherited this and exercised the heavenly office in accordance with the changes of nature. With ritual and government being one, those above and those below of one heart, government and teaching (*jikyō*) clear to those above and customs and manners of those below beautiful, the imperial way has excelled with clarity among all the nations. Yet since the Middle Ages, the hearts of men have grown shallow, foreign teachings (*gekyō* 外教) took advantage of this, and the decline of the imperial way finally reached the extremity of recent times. The cycle of Heavenly fortune has today reached the time of the Restoration. However, rules and regulations have not yet spread, and government and teaching (*jikyō*) are not yet universal. We are deeply worried that this might be because the imperial way is not clear.

[Therefore] we now seek a revival of the unity of ritual and government and of the imperial way particular to our country since the heavenly ancestors, and we want to take the course of elevating among the millions of common people the principle of repaying one’s ancestors, lest they be led astray by foreign seductions, and have government and teaching (*jikyō*) be spread throughout [the realm]. I invite all of you to proffer your opinions in this matter without hesitation.²⁴

In order to understand what is meant by *jikyō* in this imperial inquiry, it is important to understand its context. June 1869, when this inquiry was put forward, marked the climax of anti-Buddhist attempts by Shintoists within the central government to establish Shinto as the one and only state religion. While Buddhism is not explicitly mentioned in the inquiry, the “foreign teaching” having entered Japan since the middle ages and having led to “the decline of the imperial way” clearly refers to Buddhism. Only three days after the imperial inquiry was issued, a union of Buddhist groups formed to lobby the new government (Shoshū Dōtoku Kaimei 諸宗同徳会盟), which had held meetings in Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo only a few months earlier, was prohibited. Two months later, the government established the office of *senkyōshi*, the predecessor of the *kyōdōshoku* as, literally, “emissaries to spread the teaching.” They were recruited exclusively amongst Shinto priests and *kokugaku* scholars.²⁵

The substance and wording of both edicts reflected the success of Shintoist circles in the central government between mid-1869 and early 1870. This in turn prompted Buddhist activists like Shimaji to intensify their search for a new role for Buddhism in the new Meiji state, which resulted in the establishment of the Ministry of Doctrine and the Great Promulgation Campaign in 1872. *Jikyō* apparently designated a central function of the state in the 1869/70 imperial edicts, one that was supposed to be fulfilled by Shinto. When and under what circumstances had *jikyō* acquired this meaning?

²⁴ Quoted in Tada and Kagawa 1906, vol. 3, p. 728.

²⁵ Haga 1984, pp. 159–63.

The Tokugawa Period Legacy of “Civic Teachings”

The early Tokugawa period

In Tokugawa period political thought, *chikyō*, although far from being a central concept, was not entirely uncommon; it was, however, hardly associated with Shinto before the nineteenth century. Instead, it meant something like the “art of governing,” as in its first prominent use during the Tokugawa period in the Kogaku 古学 Confucian Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685). In 1656, Sokō published the third volume of a series of theoretical works on different arts or techniques. This last volume was entitled *Chikyō yōroku* 治教要録, following *Bukyō yōroku* 武教要録 and *Shūkyō yōroku* 修教要録, i.e. works devoted to the martial arts and the techniques of self-cultivation, respectively. Comparing the titles of these three works, it is obvious that *chikyō* did not function as an “A and B” character compound but rather as attributive: the *kyō* (teaching in the sense of a technique or art) of *chi* (governing). The work is indeed a manual for governing, in which *chikyō* as a concept is not discussed at any length or even defined. Instead, Sokō explains that the art of governing consists of individual skills or ways of governing (*chidō* 治道) such as virtues, language, literature, rites, and music, and methods of governing (*chihō* 治法) such as building a capital city, graves for ancestors, appointments to office, schooling, or punishments.²⁶

Basically the same usage of *chikyō* may be found in *Nitei chikyō roku* 二程治教録 by the daimyo and scholar Hoshina Masayuki 保科正之 (1611–1673). In this 1668 work, Masayuki collected passages of works by the Song period brothers Cheng (Cheng Hao 程顥 [1032–1085] and Cheng Yi 程頤 [1033–1107]) related to questions of political practice. Another prominent example from the mid-Tokugawa period is *Chikyō ryakuron* 治教略論 by the daimyo Kuroda Naokuni 黒田直邦 from 1733. Although Naokuni had been magistrate of temples and shrines (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行) in the service of the bakufu since 1723, religion even in the broadest sense played no role in his musings on the model behavior of a wise ruler. Naokuni was only peripherally concerned with teaching or edifying the common people, and in discussing this topic he remained firmly within the conventional Confucian framework when he argued that the customs of the common people could be improved by attending to “rites and music” (*reigaku* 礼楽), rites leading to respect (*kei* 敬) and music to harmony (*wa* 和).²⁷ No attention, however, is paid to the union or fusion of teaching and governing.

In the early and middle Tokugawa period, the use of *chikyō* to mean “art of governing” seems to have been predominant. It is difficult, however, to link this usage to what we find in the early Meiji imperial edicts. Instead, a different line of tradition became relevant for the 1870s usage, a tradition that would find its clearest articulation in the Late Mito School, a school upon which the 1860s revolutionaries drew heavily. First hints at a different reading of *chikyō*, however, can be detected as early as the seventeenth century, especially in the Kimon school of thought (*kimongaku* 崎門学) established by Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇斎 (1619–1682), which advocated the adaptation of Confucian political thought to Japanese circumstances and which was to constitute a crucial influence upon Late Mito thought. It did so specifically by its emperor-centered advocacy of amalgamating Confucianism and Shinto, claiming that Song Confucian thought corresponded naturally and by coincidence to Shinto.²⁸

26 Yamaga 1656, pp. 354–57.

27 Kuroda 1733, p. 19.

28 See Wakabayashi 1986, p. 34.

Asami Keisai 浅見綱齋 (1652–1712), a direct student of Ansai’s, compiled extracts of Chinese writings from Mengzi up to the Song Period under the title *Chikyō shosetsu* 治教諸説 (undated). Other than the writings summarized above, these extracts not only reflect a general interest in the art of governing, but are clearly focused on the connection between *chi* and *kyō*, governing and teaching. For instance, Keisai quoted a section from the Cheng brothers’ eleventh century commentary on the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (c. fifth century B.C.):

In the “Commentary to the Classics” it is said: It is because one installs the lord for the people that he cultivates (*yang* 養) them. The way to cultivate the people lies in loving their power. If the power of the people suffices, they will attain to good life; if they attain to good life, they will be edified and the customs will be beautiful. Thus, whoever governs should value the power of the people.²⁹

Keisai emphasizes the necessity of edification as the basis for good governance; his conclusion that this will lead to “beautiful [or pure] customs” is repeated in both of the imperial edicts from 1869/70 quoted above.

The Late Mito School

The unity of governing and teaching became a central theme in the writings of the Late Mito School, an early nineteenth century school of thought based in the feudal territory of Mito and sponsored by the feudal lord, a relative of the Tokugawa family. The most prominent representative of this school, Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志齋 (1782–1863), whose 1825 work *Shinron* 新論 was read by virtually the entire elite of mid-nineteenth century Japan, lost no opportunity to emphasize the importance of the unity of governing and teaching. This is already visible in Aizawa’s preamble to *Shinron*:

If we govern and edify (*chika* 治化) well, if we make the people’s morals pure and their customs beautiful, if we induce high and low alike to embody righteousness, if we enrich the people and strengthen our arms, if we make ourselves immune to attack from even the strongest of enemies, all will be well.³⁰

And in hearkening back to idealized ancient times, Aizawa explicitly calls upon the unity of *chi* and *kyō*:

In antiquity, then, religious ritual corresponded to government (*saisei itchi*), administration was identical with edification (*chikyō dōki* 治教同歸), and the people looked to their leaders for the fulfillment of their desires.³¹

In the context of our discussion here, a crucial point is the difference between the correspondence of ritual to government (*saisei* 祭政) and that of governing and teaching (*chikyō* 治教). In other words, is religion fully covered by Aizawa’s reference to “rituals,” and what does teaching, and the unity of governing and “teaching” refer to? The wording chosen by

29 Asami 1837, p. 4.

30 English translation by Wakabayashi 1986, p. 150. Orig.: Aizawa 1825, p. 381.

31 English translation by Wakabayashi 1986, p. 270. Orig.: Aizawa 1825, p. 419.

Wakabayashi in his translation (“religious ritual” vs. “edification”) certainly seems to imply that the *kyō* discussed by Aizawa does not cover religious aspects. Kate Nakai concurs on the basis of another text by Aizawa, namely his *Doku shūkan* 読周官, by arguing that “‘the unification of governance and instruction,’ that is, conveying moral instruction through the process and mechanism of government administration” was a parallel endeavor to the better known demand for “fusion of ritual and governance” (*saisei itchi*).³² This seems to accord well with Aizawa’s statement in *Shinron*. What, then, does “teaching” here refer to that is different from “ritual”? According to Nakai, Aizawa stressed the importance of the unity of governance and instruction because it was a way to support talent in government and argue against inherited offices, while the fusion of religion and governing was a means for mobilizing and controlling the common people.³³ More broadly, Nakai argues that the widely spread image of the Later Mito School as one that positioned Shinto at its center is misleading; instead she highlights how Aizawa’s discussion of rites is rather one of Confucian rituals. Although Aizawa does call for the restoration of old ritual practices as described in the *Nihongi*, Confucian rites always seem to take precedence for him.³⁴

This view can be corroborated by a look at Aizawa’s discussion of how to counter the Christian threat in his 1828 *Gaikō ben* 豈好弁:

Question: Rites and music, as well as edification (*kyōka* 教化) are the achievements of Confucians. Yet since the three dynasties, they have not been employed in edifying (*ka* 化) the people’s hearts. Can we do without [these means] if we now want to combat the shapeless heresy [i.e. Christianity]?

Answer: In the past, governing and teaching (*chikyō*) formed a unity. In later periods, governing and teaching were divided into two. Moreover, what is called rites and music are not discussions about nothingness or death; those are all empty talk and minor matters. What is needed to fortify the people’s hearts? Heaven gave us [the ethical principles that obtain between] father and son, lord and minister, husband and wife, elder and younger as well as [among] friends.³⁵

Yet while it is true that “rituals” (*sai*) for Aizawa mainly meant Confucian rites as described in the Chinese classics but little practiced in Japan, this does not imply that religious elements were missing from his concept of “teaching” or “edification” (*kyō*). The latter was much more than just Aizawa’s way of emphasizing the need for more meritocratic elements in the elite. Rather, in Aizawa’s mind, the practice of “teaching” or “edifying” was connected to ritual, and when he stressed this connection the Shinto side of rituals came to the fore. This is quite clear in a passage in *Shinron* where Aizawa again discusses the European Christian threat and how effectively to counter it:

Amaterasu and Sage Emperors [in antiquity] established broad guiding teachings and thus maintained the realm forever; their Majesties prescribed rituals which were made

32 Nakai 2010, p. 292.

33 Nakai 2010, p. 299.

34 Nakai 2010, pp. 303–304.

35 Aizawa 1828, p. 10. The title of this work may alternatively be read *Kikōben* (compare Paramore 2009, p. 120).

manifest and dutifully followed. When viewing the vestiges of these teachings and rituals today, we can judge for ourselves just how broad and vast Imperial solicitude once was. But various heresies sprang up in later ages and the Way (*daidō* 大道) became obscured. The Court lacked men of planning and vision, Dynastic decay set in, [the Imperial House] gradually lost its hold on the people’s hearts, and government breached Amaterasu’s manifest will that Sage Emperors should rule the realm for ages eternal.

In recent years, the wily barbarians have established ethical precepts of their own that sound very much like the genuine ones prescribed [by the sages] in antiquity; armed with their “Way of Wickedness,” they eat into the people’s hearts and minds. The barbarians’ teachings (*kyō*) are not “good teachings,” but they pass these off as “teachings” just the same, and manage to “capture the people’s hearts.” In every country they go to, they raze the dwelling-places of the native deities, trying to introduce their own god and win over the inhabitants’ allegiance.³⁶

That is to say, Westerners use the teaching of Christianity to win the hearts of the people; the best way to counter this is to revive the old rituals of the Japanese imperial court, and clarify once more the “Great Way” of the imperial house bequeathed by the Heavenly Ancestress.

Aizawa’s most explicit discussion of the relationship between Confucianism and Shinto, can be found in a commentary of his on the *Kōdōkan-ki* 弘道館記. The *Kōdōkan-ki*, an extremely short and dense text, probably written by Aizawa himself and Fujita Tōko 藤田東湖 (1806–1855), but published in 1838 under the name of their lord, Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川齊昭 (1800–1860), was a kind of manifesto for the Later Mito School, and was widely read thanks to a longer commentary on it written by Fujita Tōko in 1849. The *Kōdōkan-ki* stressed a return to the way of the old Confucian sages just as it called for the veneration of certain *kami* of the indigenous tradition. Indeed, the worship of Takemikazuchi 建御雷神, a local deity in Mito who, according to the myths, subjugated the earthly deities for the heavenly deities, is mentioned side by side with that of Confucius. Both traditions are brought together when the text describes how the early emperors established and maintained the imperial line:

The successors of the divine ancestors [i.e. the emperors], however, did not permit themselves to be self-sufficient. Rather, they employed others to gladly learn doing good from them. Thus they followed the example of the governing and teaching [*chikyō*] of Yao and Shun and the Three Dynasties of the Western Lands [i.e. China] in order to support the imperial plans. By doing so, this way became ever clearer, but nothing else was added to it.³⁷

It is obvious that the way in question here is primarily conceived of as free from Chinese influence. It is the Way of the Gods, Shinto, to which Chinese elements, namely the “governing and teaching of Yao and Shun and the Three Dynasties” (and nothing else) were only later

36 English translation by Wakabayashi 1986, pp. 257–58. Orig.: Aizawa 1825, p. 416.

37 Tokugawa 1838, pp. 231–32. A German translation of the *Kōdōkan-ki* can be found in Kracht 1975, pp. IV–VIII.

added as a second step. It is this *Kōdōkan-ki* passage on which Aizawa commented at some depth in a brief work he authored in 1842, entitled *Taishoku kanwa* 退食間話:

Question: It is said [in the *Kōdōkan-ki*]: “Thus they followed the example of the governing and teaching of Yao and Shun and the Three Dynasties of the Western Lands in order to support the imperial plans.” Yet in the Western Lands one appreciates words, while in the Land of the Gods [i.e. Japan] we appreciate deeds, so that customs are not identical at the outset. It is said that by mixing the customs of the Western Lands and those of the Land of the Gods, we have lost our old ways of simplicity.³⁸ What shall we make of this argument?

Answer: There is only one Great Way between Heaven and Earth, not two. Deeds and words are like the two wheels of a cart, and it is precisely this lack of one-sidedness that we may call the Great Way. This is also why Confucius said: “Only he is a gentleman who balances words and deeds.”³⁹ This means that the words of the Western Lands come to the rescue of the deeds of the Land of the Gods, i.e. [as is stated in the *Kōdōkan-ki*] “they employed others to learn doing good from them.” Of course there are errors in words and errors in deeds, so that, even when touting “balancing words and deeds,” it may be difficult to put it into practice. Yet on the Great Way of the five ethical principles one must not depart one bit from the deeds of the Land of the Gods and the words of the Western Lands. Yet, while the effect of the five ethical principles had existed in the Land of the Gods, they had not been named. The damage from not naming them can result in losing their effect. Thus, having learned from the names given by Yao, Shun and Confucius about the effect, which had been present in the Land of Gods by nature, this is that “support the imperial plans” [mentioned in the *Kōdōkan-ki*].

Now to the expression “governing and teaching” (*chikyō*): Governing refers to the laws and institutions through which one governs a country, teaching is rites and music as well as edification. Though there be laws and institutions, but not rites and music and edification, it would be like the movement of hands and feet without the foundation of the heart. Though there be rites and music and edification, but no laws and institutions, it would be as if the foundation of the heart were there but not the movement of hands and feet. If governing and teaching are not prepared together, governing will be a merely provisional governing, and teaching will be a dead thing, so that neither can be realized. Now, in the governing and teaching of the Land of the Gods, although its essence stands, there are no tools to make it work. In the governing and teaching of the Lands of the West, in contrast, the essence of things such as the duties of lord and minister fall short of that of the Land of Gods, but the tools for its implementation are ready. Thus, if one supports the imperial plans by relying on this, the Way will be ever greater and ever clearer, and this can surely be called “balancing words and deeds.”⁴⁰

Aizawa clearly states that Chinese thought provides only the “words” and “tools” for bringing to fruition something whose essence is already present in Japan. It remains unclear,

38 Aizawa here obviously alludes to a position voiced by the school of *kokugaku*.

39 *Lunyu*, VI: 16.

40 Aizawa 1842, pp. 241–42.

however, what precisely Aizawa means by rites and music and edification, i.e. the content of “teaching.” The terms are familiar from the Confucian context, but how does one make sense of Aizawa’s claim that their essence has been present in Japan from ancient times? He seems to be referring to the imperial lineage and the worship of Shinto deities, but what role these elements should play in Aizawa’s political vision for nineteenth century Japan is not entirely obvious.

J. Victor Koschmann has shed light on this question by emphasizing the Late Mito School’s indirect indebtedness to the Chinese Song period Confucian Zhuxi 朱熹, mediated by the Yamazaki Ansai School mentioned above. In fact, Zhuxi had been the central figure in introducing the concept of the unity of governing and teaching into the Chinese discourse. While the term *chikyō* (or *zhijiao* in Chinese) played no significant role in ancient Chinese texts, for Zhuxi it was one way to summarize in one term the realm in which virtuous behavior was to take place. In an 1189 commentary on the *Daxue* 大学, Zhuxi lamented that Mengzi’s 孟子 writings were ignored since his death, although they were still accessible. This is why all sorts of devious teachings were spread by “vulgar Confucianists” (Chin. *suru* 俗儒; a term also found in the *Kōdōkan-ki* to characterize the Japanese Middle Ages as a period of decline), until things only began to improve again with the advent of the Song dynasty:

Whenever the course of Heavenly Fate (*tianyun xunhuan* 天運循環) [a term also found in the two early Meiji period imperial edicts from 1869/70] disappears, it will surely return. Now, under the Song, virtue once again flourishes, and governing and teaching (*zhijiao*) are beautiful and clear.⁴¹

Following Zhuxi, Yamazaki Ansai and his followers held the five ethical relationships to be “part of the natural endowment of all people,” and Aizawa’s colleague Fujita Tōko specified that “the essence of Confucianism, the ethic of the Five Relationships, was already practiced naturally in Japan.”⁴² In Japan during the ancient period, the Way, and the practice of the five ethical relationships, had naturally and spontaneously existed, but it had become obscure in the meantime, and so today “artificial” words, i.e. Chinese learning, had to be employed to clarify it once again. This was potentially connected to political action:

It appears that, when the Mito texts clarified the natural Way and thus dramatized its alienation from contemporary circumstance, men of high purpose were motivated to reactivate the Way through action.⁴³

Bakumatsu shrine policy in Yamaguchi

It was in this realm of political action that the links to Shinto, sketched rather subtly in the Kimon School and the Late Mito School, were drawn out more visibly. It was particularly in the movement of Restoration Shinto, whose protagonists would come to dominate the Bureau of Divinity (Jingikan 神祇官) and the Ministry of Doctrine in the early Meiji period, that the ideas of the Late Mito School were picked up and connected to concrete policy proposals. One defining debate was started in Chōshū 長州 domain (i.e. the birth-

41 Zhuxi 1189, introduction to chapter *Daxue zhangju*.

42 Koschmann 1987, p. 50.

43 Koschmann 1987, p. 55.

place of Shimaji Mokurai) in the context of the Tenpō 天保 era (1830–44) reforms, which saw the domain leadership attempting to reduce the number of religious institutions within its borders.⁴⁴ Several members of the domainal academy were asked to draft proposals for this policy, among them the Confucian Yamagata Taika 山県太華 (1781–1866) and the *kokugaku* scholar Kondō Yoshiki 近藤芳樹 (1801–1880). The former authored his *Inshi kō* 淫祀考 around 1840, the latter his *Inshi ron* 淫祀論 in 1843. Despite their different academic lineages, both authors offered legitimations for their domain's policy of reducing the number of religious institutions. Based on a seventeenth century list of shrines and temples, the Chōshū authorities judged later additions to be illegitimate, and reduced the number of religious buildings and statues by over 20,000 between 1842 and 1844.⁴⁵

The line of Yamagata and Kondō was bitterly refuted by Oka Kumaomi 岡熊臣 (1783–1851), a senior *kokugaku* scholar in neighboring Tsuwano 津和野 domain in 1844 (*Doku inshi kō* 読淫祀考) and 1845 (*Doku inshi ron* 読淫祀論). Oka, despite sharing the same *kokugaku* lineage with Kondō (the Norinaga line through their common teacher Murata Harukado 村田春門 [1756–1836]), nonetheless criticized the latter's proposals sharply, a sign that *kokugaku* in Tsuwano domain was evolving into the direction of a politicized Restoration Shinto.⁴⁶ Indeed, Fukuba Bisei 福羽美静 (1831–1907), one of the later protagonists of the Bureau of Divinity and the Ministry of Doctrine in the early Meiji period, hailed from Tsuwano domain, and was raised in the climate created by Oka, Oka's sponsor, the Tsuwano domain lord Kamei Koremi 亀井茲監 (1825–1885), and others.⁴⁷

In lambasting his fellow scholars for the support they lent to Chōshū's shrine policy, Oka turned to their reliance on Confucian norms. It was wrong, he argued, to judge the situation of shrines by Chinese standards, and in doing so he explicitly referred to *chikyō*:

It demonstrates a carelessness and an extreme lack of scrutiny to judge minor shrines, shrines that are small and confined, as illicit shrines (*inshi*), despite their being devoted to the correct imperial deities, since such judgments ignore the fact that what we in our country have always called deities (*kami*) are different from and have to be distinguished from what are called deities in the foreign country [i.e. China]. Such judgments similarly ignore the fact that what is called an illicit shrine in that country is similar, but not identical to, what we in our country call devious gods or evil gods. They ignore too that there are in our country some things that resemble what they in that foreign country today, as in the past, call illicit shrines. Not to recognize how greatly small shrines in our country differ from those worshipped in the foreign country and to declare therefore that all shrines not listed in the lord's official register are illicit is careless and lacks scrutiny. To be born in our country but not to know our country's essential teaching (*honkyō* 本教): this is folly in the extreme. Accordingly, if one takes, as this book [i.e. Yamagata Taika's *Inshi kō*] does, old precedents from China and from the time of the august era of Emperor Jun'na [r. 823–833] as examples, and attempts to apply them to today's situation, this will invite a faulty system of governing

44 For the political background in Chōshū, see Kageyama 2010, p. 60.

45 See Zhang 2002, pp. 189–90.

46 Okimoto 1978, pp. 2–3.

47 On the role of Fukuba and Kamei, who were both adherents of the Ōkuni Takamasa branch of Restoration Shinto in early Meiji politics, see Breen 1990.

and teaching (*chikyō*), which runs counter to the old system of the ancient emperors, a system that knows nothing about the principles of demons, deities, and mysterious things. Moreover, it will bring harm to human life.⁴⁸

In proposing that abstract arguments from ancient Chinese sources cannot simply be applied to Japanese reality, Oka follows a conventional *kokugaku* logic. His reference to *chikyō*, though, is certainly informed by his reading of Late Mito School texts, although he would have been critical of their still heavy reliance on Confucian thought. His use of *chikyō* seems to indicate his view that the term refers to a concept too abstract to be useful. On the other hand, the qualification “faulty” system might imply that there was also a correct way of “governing and teaching.” Either way, Oka intimates the word as an umbrella term for the thought behind religious policy, a usage not seen previously.

Towards the end of his life, Murata Seifū 村田清風 (1783–1855), the political leader in Chōshū who had initiated the debate on illegitimate shrines, became convinced that Buddhist help was needed in order to counter Christianity effectively, and sought a proximity to the Buddhist movement which identified “protection of the dharma” (*gohō* 護法) with “protection of the nation” (*gokoku* 護国).⁴⁹ In fact, he actively befriended Gesshō 月性 (1817–1858), politically the most active Shin Buddhist monk in Chōshū of the generation before Mokuurai. In an 1853 letter to Gesshō, Murata described what he expected from Buddhism in the current political crisis, and it is here that he resorted to the term *chikyō* in order to grasp that sphere in which religion could become effective politically:

Please enlighten the stupid men and stubborn women, make of the five Confucian virtues pillars of your temple hall, draw upon examples from past and present in which *kami* and Buddhas have moved people to do good and prevented them from doing evil, rescue the governing and teaching (*chikyō*) of the nation. If you succeed, kingly as well as Buddhist law should flourish. We speak of past, future, and present, but when the present is in a bad shape, the attainment of Buddhahood after death is uncertain for us stupid humans.⁵⁰

It is significant that the discussion about illicit shrines sketched here at some length took place in Chōshū and Tsuwano, i.e. the place of origin of Shimaji, who was also closely tied to Gesshō.⁵¹ His domain’s policy on shrines and temples was a substantial factor in the young Shimaji’s burgeoning awareness of the significance of politics. This is demonstrated by the fact that his first publication in 1866 was a critique of the ban on cremation issued in Chōshū in 1864.

48 Oka 1844, p. 36.

49 Kodama 1976, p. 281.

50 Quoted in: Murakami 2011, pp. 50–51.

51 See Murakami 2011, pp. 102–103.

Conclusion

In attempting to understand the coinage of “religion” in modern Japan through one of its opposite terms, one can distinguish four stages of meaning through which *chikyō/jikyō* passed chronologically. Firstly, in the earlier half of the Tokugawa period the term was, even though not in a unified sense, exclusively used in a Confucian context. Adherents of the various neo-Confucian schools of the Tokugawa period used it as an expression meaning the art of governing or as shorthand for the ideal behavior of a wise ruler. Secondly, the Late Mito School in the early nineteenth century did not deny this Confucian heritage, but, certainly mediated by *kokugaku* influences, it deemed Confucian rituals to be insufficient. The worship of indigenous deities would have to be taken as seriously as Confucian-style rites in a well governed polity. In the *Kōdōkan-ki*, the necessary unity of *chi* and *kyō* is stressed at the very end, after *chikyō* had earlier designated the deeds of Yao and Shun, the legendary sage kings of China, in concentrated form. Thirdly, informed by the Late Mito School, *jikyō* became part of the language of early Meiji imperial edicts, designating the main duty of great rulers.⁵² While the Late Mito School had conceived of the roles of the indigenous way (i.e. Shinto) and Chinese learning (i.e. Confucianism) as in principle equivalent, the 1869 and 1870 imperial edicts left no doubt that *jikyō* was to be a means of elevating the Great Way (i.e. Shinto) alone. At the same time, these texts stressed for the first time that *jikyō* was not only a concern of the rulers, but also one encompassing the subjects, i.e. the indoctrination dimension of *jikyō* was now stressed. Fourthly and lastly, Shimaji, Kusunoki, and others used the close association between *jikyō* and Shinto to reinterpret the term once again. Their opposing *jikyō* with *shūkyō* marked a decisive step in the history of the appropriation of “religion” in Japan.

This is because the term *shūkyō* clearly seems to have been not only employed, but even formed in conscious opposition to the more established term *jikyō*. Although this latter term is today obsolete in the Japanese language, it was of paramount importance for the “religious policy” of the very first years of Meiji. *Shūkyō* was an attributive character combination, picking up the older umbrella term *kyō*, but singling out one sub-sphere of it.⁵³ Indeed, Kusunoki Senryū even argued that *shūkyō* + *jikyō* = *kyō*. In other words, religion is that part of the older category of “teaching(s)” that remains when civil education, politics, and secular morals are removed from it. In this way, it is clear that “religion” was crucially appropriated by Shin Buddhists in the 1870s by drawing on older understandings of *kyō*.

More precisely, contrary to the existing secondary literature on Shimaji, *shūkyō* was formed in opposition not to politics, but to civic teaching. This distinction is important because while the difference between state/politics and religion was clearly influenced by Western thinking on the subject, the differentiation between *shūkyō* and *jikyō* was a purely Japanese affair. No contemporary European observer would have been able to make sense of this dichotomy or even to render it into his/her own language. This is because *jikyō* was intimately tied up with (what was from the Buddhist point of view) the “Shinto problem.” Had the “Shinto problem” not existed, the early 1870s Buddhist authors would not have come up with the term *shūkyō*. What this means is that there is a fundamental problem with scholarship that stresses how the introduction of the Western concept of religion, formed

52 The parallels between certain wordings in the early Meiji edicts and Late Mito texts has also been pointed out by Shimazono Susumu (2010, p. 109).

53 On the function of *kyō* as a hypernym in Japanese before the nineteenth century, see Krämer 2010.

through the prototype of Christianity, led to various problems because of its incompatibility with preexisting religious traditions of Japan.⁵⁴ It was rather the other way around: precisely because of the existence of the “Shinto problem,” historical actors deeply involved with day-to-day politics appropriated a specific kind of understanding, and thus a specific concept, of religion from the West that would allow them to situate Shinto outside the purview of religion that was understood in this way.

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Abbreviations

NKST: *Nihon kindai shisō taikai*

NST: *Nihon shisō taikai*

Aizawa 1825

Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志齋. *Shinron* 新論. In NST 53, pp. 318–422.

Aizawa 1828

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⁵⁴ This line of scholarship lives on in works stressing the peculiarities of Japanese religion (in the singular). See e.g. Ama 1996, Reader and Tanabe 1998, or Ellwood 2008, but the argument also informs more critical scholarship (see e.g. Josephson 2012, p. 2).

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