Clashing Models:
Ritual Unity vs Religious Diversity

Mark Teeuwen

This article seeks to add to our understanding of the boundary drawing between religious and secular spheres in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan in two ways. First, I argue that we must guard against overemphasizing discontinuity between pre-Meiji ways of dealing with "faith" and post-Meiji policies dealing with "religion." Only by recognizing discursive continuities can we analyze the process of negotiating new conceptual models in the light of older values and worldviews. Second, institutional realities frustrated the implementation of new religious policies. The ways temples and shrines functioned in society set limits to the ambitions of ideologues, and created contradictions that impacted on the boundary-drawing process.

Keywords: *Danka* system, *saisei itchi*, filial piety, Mito school, State Shinto, *saishi hōjin*, Shinto secular, concept of religion

A secular realm emerges when "religion" is separated out from other spheres of social life. In Japan, as elsewhere, this separation took the form of institutionalized boundaries between places and practices that were explicitly defined as "religious" and others that were not. Where this line was drawn depended on many factors, some of which were malleable, while others were more resistant to political manipulation. The concept of "religion" itself was quite pliable, although the diplomatic context imposed a Christian model on whatever Japanese leaders wanted to do with this term. Fundamental ideas about the social order and the nature of government were more resilient, because they informed the legitimacy of the regime. Hardest to change were the social and economic structures that supported temples and shrines. The realities of temple and shrine life forced idealists of all kinds to find workable compromises, often at the cost of blatant contradictions.

When "religion" first found a place in Japanese discourse and practice, mostly in the form of the calque *shūkyō* 宗教, it entered a context with long traditions of controlling people's "faith" (*shinjin* 信心; *shinkō* 信仰) and of managing temples, shrines, and a large population of priests of many kinds. Long before this concept was imported, Japanese thinkers and leaders had experimented with different ways to conceptualize the relationship between universal morals and duties on the one hand, and individual faith on the other. Yet recent studies of the Japanese "invention" of religion place great emphasis on the novelty, or even initial incomprehensibility of that concept when diplomatic negotiations first brought

it to Japan's shores. Recent book-length studies, notably those by Jason A. Josephson (2012) and Trent E. Maxey (2014), have brought about a quantum leap in our understanding of religious policy in the late nineteenth century, at least in English-language scholarship. In this article, I will argue that if anything is missing in their enlightening accounts, it is a fuller appreciation of continuities with pre-Meiji ideas and policies of managing "faith," of central ideas about the role of "teaching" (*kyō*, *oshie* 教) in governance, and of the limits placed on political experiments by the institutional realities of temples and shrines on the ground.

In discussions about the secular imposition of boundaries on religion in Japan, particular attention has been paid to Shinto and its Meiji transformation. Two scholars who have recently stressed the concept of secularity in relation to post-Meiji Shinto are Josephson (2012) and Azegami Naoki (2009). Their conclusions could not be more different. Josephson posits that Meiji Shinto was at the core of Japan's secularity, which he describes as "the Shinto secular." Azegami, on the other hand, characterizes modern (that is, post-Meiji) Shinto as a form of religious nationalism. Josephson argues that Meiji Shinto functioned as a secular "science," and therefore ended up on the secular side of what he sees as a triadic structure, with religion, science, and superstition as the three guiding categories. In contrast, Azegami introduces us to Shinto priests who resisted secularization and even had some limited success in their appeals for official recognition of Shinto as Japan's religion of nationhood. To be sure, Azegami focuses on the early twentieth century, and Josephson on the late nineteenth century. Yet their radical divergence of perspective cannot be reduced to that difference in period alone. In this article I will argue that Josephson's and Azegami's arguments illustrate not only how notions of religion and the secular changed over time, but also how older ways of conceptualizing such categories have been, and still are, interfering with new understandings.

I will attempt to contextualize both Josephson's and Azegami's findings within an overarching model of managing faith that developed organically from pre-Meiji, pre-"religion" ideas and practices. This article takes a long view of the development of Japanese models of what one might call the boundaries of religion. First, I will identify pre-Meiji models of conceptualizing and regulating "faith" and "sectarian creeds" (*shūshi* 宗旨; *shūmon* 宗門). Then, I will trace the lasting influence of these conceptualizations and strategies and the ways they have interfered with newer, Western-inspired ideas and policies, not only in the immediate transition to Meiji but also in the period covered by Azegami, and even into the postwar. I am acutely aware of the fact that by stretching my short narrative over such profoundly different historical periods, I will be reduced to simplifying the specifics of the various contexts that I will be touching upon. My aim, however, is not to give full analyses of the cases here presented, but rather to make the point that, even until recent times, early conceptualizations of the boundaries of religion are still socially meaningful to the functioning of certain institutions (notably shrines), and are therefore still a factor in negotiations about the place of religion in secular society.

The Place of "Faith" in the Edo Period

What was the Edo-period legacy on which Meiji reformers drew in their search for a sensible way to understand and handle "religion"? Much has been written about the question of whether the Edo period had a term that coincided with religion.[1] However, such philological

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1 For a discussion, see Josephson 2012, pp. 6–8, and Maxey 2014, pp. 15–17.

arguments often miss the point: even if some terms (including *shūshi* and *shūmon*, but also *kyōhō* 教法 and others) came close, they were part of a conceptual framework that differed from imported understandings of religion in crucial ways. Also, their meanings were shaped by their role in a different system of governance and regulation. First, I will therefore focus on concrete policies dealing with, on the one hand, questions of "faith," and, on the other, the management of shrines and temples (*jisha* 寺社)—two terms that featured prominently in the language of Edo-period administration.

The overriding concern of such policies, at least in theory, appeared to be the eradication of Christians. This inspired such measures as the temple certification system, the reward system for those who denounced Christians, the enforcement of *efumi* 絵踏 (trampling on Christian images), and so forth. The prohibition of the "Christian creed" (*Kirishitan shūmon* 切支丹宗門) was announced on *kōsatsu* 高札 noticeboards around the country and featured as a stock phrase in an astounding number of admonitions issued to local communities throughout the period; offenders were punishable with the most severe forms of execution. This obsession with Christianity is in itself an astonishing fact, since at least with hindsight, the danger of Christians breaking down the social order was increasingly remote. In fact, in spite of its ruthless rhetoric, the shogunate soon resorted to practicing a somewhat unpredictable blend of tolerance and suppression, indifference and moralism.

The ban on Christianity inspired draconian laws and merciless persecutions in the seventeenth century, but as the threat of Christian agitation waned the authorities became markedly more relaxed in their reinforcement of those laws.[2] When hidden Christians were discovered in Urakami in 1790, in Amakusa in 1805, and again in Urakami in 1842, the authorities settled matters without resorting to heavy-handed punishments. Even when evidence of Christian practices was unassailable (as in 1790 and 1805), the investigators decided that those practices were merely "unorthodox" (*ihō* 異法), rather than "pernicious" (*jahō* 邪法).[3] When alleged Christians were arrested in Osaka and Kyoto in 1827, the Supreme Judicial Council (Hyōjōsho 評定所) in Edo refused to accept that the accused were truly Christians and advised the senior councillors to order a re-investigation. Only the fact that the matter had already triggered a wave of rumors eventually moved the shogunate to order the accused to be executed (in 1829).[4] This incident, which exposed alleged Christians in the very center of Japan, fed into a new fear of Christianity that was already growing at a time when the Western powers appeared ever more threatening. During the last decades of the Edo shogunate, intellectuals of different backgrounds produced a "second wave" of anti-Christian writings.[5] In practice, however, there was still little enthusiasm for hunting down *actual* Christians. Since Christianity was forbidden in the realm, it was not supposed to exist, and if at all possible, the authorities preferred to ignore it or to explain it away.

The prohibition of the Christian creed had many practical purposes beyond stopping Christianity. It served as the rationale for the temple certification system, which offered an effective means of social control.[6] This system forced people to maintain good relations with

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2 See Nosco 2007.
3 Ōhashi 2013; Breen 1988.
4 Fujiwara 1986, p. 220.
5 Paramore 2009.
6 On temple certification, see Hur 2007.

a temple charged with certifying the orthodoxy of their faith. Perhaps less obviously but no less importantly, it also kept a tag on temples and their priests. In the aftermath of the 1827 arrests, the head priests of temples where the alleged Christians had been registered as patrons (*danka* 檀家) were expelled, and even temples that were members of the same mutual surveillance groups (*kumiai* 組合) received minor punishments. Beyond that, the Osaka authorities instructed the various sects' head temples to deal with the deposed priests and the temples that they had vacated, according to sect regulations.[7]

This way of dealing with priests and temples was in line with the general style of shogunal governance. While acknowledging the nominal autonomy of the sectarian institutions, the warrior regime made sure to demonstrate its determination to intervene with great force whenever necessary, not least through unpredictable acts of calculated cruelty or mercy. Temples and shrines were treated as a separate area of governance, overseen by specialized officials of particularly high rank who answered directly to the shogun (*jisha bugyō* 寺社奉行). It would be misleading, however, to conclude from this fact that "religion" was seen as a separate sphere, distinct from the "secular" realm of warrior governance. The model of control at arm's length, through non-warrior heads of social groupings, was applied not only to temples and shrines but also to villagers, city dwellers, and even to beggars and outcasts.

The policy of tasking temples with supervising and certifying the orthodoxy of people's beliefs implied an interest on the part of the authorities in controlling faith—or, at least, in imposing boundaries on what forms of faith could be tolerated. There was, however, a latent contradiction between the two main aims of the temple certification system, namely controlling people's faith and controlling temples. This contradiction was expressed in its most succinct form in Article 4 of the "regulations for temples of all sects" (*shoshū jiin hatto* 諸宗寺院法度), issued in 1665: "Patrons select their temple of registration according to their own will. Monastics may not contest each other's patrons." [8]

The rationale behind the certification system was that temples should prevent their patrons from falling into heresy by making sure that they remained faithful followers of a recognized sect. For this to work, it was essential that people should be allowed to patronize a temple that supported their faith, "according to their own will" (*sono kokoroe ni makasu* 任二其心得一). Forcing people to patronize a temple at odds with their faith would render this system nonsensical. On the other hand, offending a patron's feelings was easier than facing the wrath of a temple, especially when that temple was actively backed up by its sect. Any infringements on existing contract-based relations between temples and their patrons were strongly contested, because contracts with lay patrons defined the economic worth and social standing of temples. Requests to switch temple because of a change in faith could easily develop into legal battles between temples. In such cases, the patron's original family temple would accuse the new temple of "contesting" (*ai-arasou* 相争) its patron, with the latter's collusion. Unless the original temple was found guilty of serious misdemeanor, it

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7 Details about some of these temples are given in *Ukiyo no arisama* 浮世の有様, in Harada and Asakura 1970, pp. 58–69.
8 Monbushō Shūkyōkyoku 1925, p. 100.

tended to win the day.[9] In theory, the certification system was premised on patrons' faith, but in practice, contracts trumped faith. Temples had the upper hand over their patrons, and the interests of religious institutions were routinely prioritized over those of individual patrons.

To sum up, we may note that the regime had a mild interest in controlling people's faith, to the extent that it recognized the need to prevent the spread of "pernicious" practices and sects, notably Christianity. This interest was as a rule superseded, however, by the need to prevent conflicts in the semi-autonomous world of temples. This is a clear example of institutional structures thwarting political ideals. The hypocrisy of this arrangement was duly recognized at the time and was echoed in many critiques of temples and priests; this should be acknowledged as an important factor behind the ambiguity that many expressed about the system as a whole, and, by extension, about Buddhism itself. As I have argued elsewhere, some despised Buddhism as an "inverted way" of corruption, greed, and lust, and sought to exclude its priests from public life.[10] There were also those who went even further, and rejected all public dealings with "teachings" and "ways" as an impediment to effective military rule.[11]

What was so pernicious about the proscribed Christian faith? The original prohibition law, issued in 1614, banned Christianity as a creed that undermined the three teachings of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism.[12] In the documents relating to the Osaka case of 1827–1829, however, there was no reference to this; instead, the accused Christians were found guilty of "pernicious sorcery" (*jajutsu* 邪術), stealing money, and lack of fear of the authorities.[13] Nineteenth-century writers of anti-Christian treatises adduced yet other reasons. Among the most common concerns was that Christianity undermined loyalty, filial piety, and unity in the realm. As one Kokugaku writer noted in 1861: "Even when [a Christian] kills his lord or his father, he will be without sin if only he gives himself over to this creed (*shūshi*), abides by its doctrines (*kyōhō*), and believes exclusively in *Deus*; surely this is a Dharma for rebels and faithless sons!"[14] In this and similar statements, Christianity appears as an antithetical mirror image of the social order, despised for its alleged immorality but also feared for its magical potency.

Inculcating Loyalty, Filial Piety, and Unity

A concern with loyalty, filial piety, and unity among the populace was clearly reflected in official policy. Most striking, perhaps, were the extensive periods of public mourning for shoguns, emperors, daimyo, and selected members of their families, which routinely put life on hold for days or even weeks at a time. People of all classes were ordered to demonstrate

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9　Tamamuro (2001) presents a telling example of exactly such a case. In 1737, a high-ranking samurai in Kumamoto tried to change his affiliation from a Sōtō to a Nichiren temple after being healed by a Nichiren priest. Article 4 of *Shoshū jiin hatto* was adduced by both parties. In the end, this samurai not only lost, but was stripped of his duties and placed under house arrest.

10　Teeuwen 2013.

11　Teeuwen 2013, pp. 12–15. The texts on which I base my argument in this article are Buyō Inshi's 武陽隠士 *Seji kenbunroku* 世事見聞録 (1816) and (more briefly) Shōji Kōki's 正司考祺 *Keizai mondō hiroku* 経済問答秘録 (1833).

12　Elisonas 1991, p. 367.

13　This was stated on the official boards that announced the crimes of the condemned at the execution grounds (*sutefuda* 捨札). *Ukiyo no arisama*, in Haga and Matsumoto 1971, pp. 67–69.

14　Takeo Masatane 竹尾正胤, *Daiteikokuron* 大帝国論 (1861), in Haga and Matsumoto 1971, p. 524.

their pious respect by refraining from "music and construction" (effectively, from doing anything cheerful in public) while their leaders exhibited their filial piety through elaborate rites of mourning.[15] This strictly enforced practice was never associated with "faith," and of course, the notion that some should be exempt from the disruptions caused by mourning for reasons of personal faith was unthinkable. Yet the mourning bans stopped temple and shrine rites in their tracks, caused matsuri to be cancelled, and, at least once (in 1709), even disrupted the elaborate *shikinen sengū* 式年遷宮 rebuilding procedures of the Ise Shrines. Questions of faith were pushed aside by national, or regional, displays of collective unity based on filial piety and loyalty.

As many have pointed out, the compulsory participation of people of all classes and all faiths in collective, state-led rituals was given a new theoretical basis by Confucian scholars of the so-called Late Mito school in the early nineteenth century. Writers like Fujita Yūkoku 藤田幽谷 (1774–1826) and Aizawa Seishisai 会沢正志斎 (1782–1863) elaborated on the idea that rites and institutions are essential to the ordering of society, as expressed in Chinese classics like the *Rites of Zhou* 周礼 and the *Book of Rites* 礼記, by constructing a new discourse on ritual and its relation to faith. Concepts such as *kokutai* 国体 (national essence) and *saisei itchi* 祭政一致 (unity of ritual and government), which were central to Meiji understandings of the imperial state and the place of "religion" within that state, were first developed in the writings of these Mito thinkers.

Three aspects of Late Mito thought are of particular interest in this context. First, this school displayed an obsession with the notion of creating "unity" by establishing an all-encompassing harmony between all aspects of social life. Second, Mito authors felt that such unity was sorely lacking in Japan at a time when it was most needed, and looked to public rituals of filial piety and loyalty as a means to remedy this crisis. Finally, Fujita and Aizawa adopted Shinto history and ritual as a superior alternative to the classical Chinese court ceremonial of Confucian orthodoxy.

Kate Wildman Nakai has pointed out that "the Mito scholars had an abhorrence of divisions, of cracks in society and potential conflicts in values and norms." [16] They expressed this in a number of mottos, all advocating the unification (*itchi* 一致) of one thing with another. Most pertinent to the topic of this article are their frequent appeals to the unification of "government" (*sei* 政 or *chi* 治) with "teaching," and of "ritual" (*sai* 祭) with "government." In the most famous of Late Mito texts, *Shinron* 新論 (New Theses, 1825), Aizawa wrote that in an idealized golden past, "ritual became government, and government became teaching; teaching and government were never separate." Referring to the *Book of Rites*, Aizawa argued that only ritual allows the ruler to "relay the teaching to the people and correct their customs, extending his transforming influence (*ka* 化) without words." [17] In Aizawa's view, ritual was the prime method for rulers to extend their edifying influence across the realm, transforming the people by virtuous example. At the same time, rites were more than a matter of inner virtues. Ritual united the people not only with their ruler, but also with heaven and earth. By harmonizing the people with the cosmos, ritual

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15 Hirai 2014.
16 Nakai 2010, p. 292.
17 Imai 1973, p. 56; Wakabayashi 1986, p. 158; Koschmann 1987, p. 72. Both Wakabayashi and Koschmann use a range of different terms for the key concepts in Aizawa's discourse, rendering their translations rather loose and opaque.

allowed "original *qi*" (*genki* 元気) to flow without impediments, vitalizing not only the people but also the land itself.[18] Figure 1 is my attempt to visualize the relationship between ritual, government, and teaching in this model.
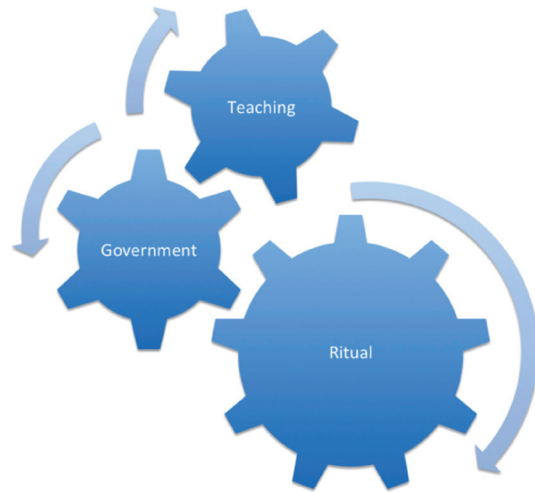
It is important to point out that this rhetoric of unity expressed a general attitude of seeking a harmonious One behind the fragmented Many of actual existence. Michael Puett argues that the *Book of Rites* displayed just such a logic and offered a concrete method of dealing with "separation" by ritual unification. The "basic goal" of ritual, Puett writes, "was to create

Figure 1. The continuous model of *saisei itchi*.

a world of continuity in which all aspects of the larger cosmos … as well as human beings would be linked through hierarchical lines defined by the living ruler."[19] Arguing for the fundamental unity or continuity between things that at first sight appear to be separate entities was among the most common rhetorical tropes of Late Mito texts. In fact, the Mito thinkers went further than their Chinese sources in their efforts to transcend all divisions by explicitly negating even the distinction between the ruler, the ruler's ancestors, and heaven. For Aizawa, the emperor was one with Amaterasu 天照, Amaterasu was one with heaven, and therefore the imperial succession was one with, and as endurable as, heaven itself.[20] In this line of thought, the ultimate goal of government was to attain perfect union between lord and minister, father and son, and finally, beyond that, man and heaven.

The principal means to achieve those utopian ideals was ritual. By performing rites that expressed his filial piety towards his ancestors, the ruler inspired loyalty in his subjects; filial piety and loyalty are, after all, one.[21] In an argument that perhaps only makes sense in a place where public mourning was the most elaborate nationwide ritual, Aizawa argued that since filial piety cannot be expressed fully to one's living parents, rituals of mourning represent the ultimate expression of human virtue.[22] It was by extending those rituals to the populace as a whole that the nation could be united in a state of virtuous harmony, not only among men but even with the gods: "Gods and men will be one, and the minds of the myriad [people] will follow [the king's example]."[23]

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18 Imai 1973, p. 55.
19 Puett 2005, p. 91.
20 Yoshida 2011 (pp. 194–203) explores the emergence of this idea in the works of Fujita Yūkoku.
21 Aizawa explains the unity of filial piety and loyalty in the lines leading up to the passage quoted above (Imai 1973, p. 56).
22 Sawai 1977, pp. 156–57. Sawai refers to Aizawa's *Kōkyō kō* 孝経考 (Thoughts on the Classic of Filial Piety) for this argument.
23 *Chūyō shakugi* 中庸釈義 (Interpreting the Doctrine of the Mean), quoted in Sawai 1977, p. 157.

A final striking innovation of the Late Mito school was its adoption of kami history and ritual. The grand project of the Mito school was the compilation of an official history of Japan, the *Dainihonshi* 大日本史. Early Mito scholars saw no reason to include the "strange events" (*kaii no koto bakari* 怪異之事計) of the Age of the Gods in their chronicle, and their historical account began with the first human emperor Jinmu.[24] This changed in 1803, when Fujita gained permission from the Mito daimyo to include Jinmu's divine lineage, starting with Amaterasu. This new policy has been described as the "introduction of Shinto" into the Mito school.[25] In the same vein, Aizawa looked beyond the rites of mourning to the imperial ritual of Great Tasting (*daijōsai* 大嘗祭) as the main instrument for uniting the realm. It was through this rite that the emperor displayed his filial piety in front of his ministers, causing them to "feel as if they were sitting to the left and right of heaven/the ancestors (*tenso* 天祖)." That overwhelming "emotion" (*jō* 情), Aizawa maintained, would then spur them to display unity and loyalty in their service to the state.[26] Aizawa held that only by extending this emotion to the people as a whole could Japan fulfill the potential of its unique *kokutai*, as a community of filial and loyal descendants of the gods, led by the emperor as the offspring and embodiment of Amaterasu/heaven.

What comes into view when we compare this late Mito conceptualization of ritual with current ideas and practices in late Edo? First of all, the Mito discourse challenged standard shogunal policy towards temples and shrines by questioning its tolerance of divergent "faiths" or "creeds" in society. Effectively, the Mito understanding of "teaching" invaded the realm of faith by positing that worship of the Japanese kami was an absolute prerequisite for participation in the national community of filial piety and loyalty.[27] Where shogunal policy allowed for a diversity of faiths (tied to approved institutions), and separated faith from questions of filial piety and loyalty, the Mito scholars spurned this attitude as dangerously lax. By leaving the populace without guidance, Fujita and Aizawa believed, the shogunal government was exposing them to the temptations of the "pernicious teaching" (*jakyō* 邪教) of Christianity, which was used by Western powers to seduce the ignorant people of foreign lands and incite them to rebellion.[28] Christianity, however, was only one of many dangerous creeds. Aizawa was deeply worried that the ritual unity he envisioned was under constant threat from "heterodoxies and pernicious theories" (*itan jasetsu* 異端邪説), including "lineages of lowly priests (*fugeki* 巫覡), the Dharma of Buddhists, narrow-minded Confucians and vulgar amateur scholars, and Christians from the Far West."[29] For the unity of ritual and government to work, all heterodoxy had to be erased so that the people's minds were concentrated fully on the orthodox worship of heaven and the ancestors.

Mito scholars sought to move the dividing line between "faith" and "teaching" to one extreme of the scale by requiring all to have faith in *the* teaching (defined as a narrow orthodoxy and a direct reflection of the way) and abandon all "heterodox" (*i* 異) creeds,

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24 *Gyoi oboegaki* 御意覚書, quoted in Yoshida 2011, p. 182.
25 Yoshida 2011, pp. 182–86.
26 Imai 1973, p. 55.
27 Hans Martin Krämer (2015, p. 82) offers a detailed discussion of the meaning of "teaching" in Aizawa's works and its relation to, in Krämer's words, "religion." He concludes that "the dimension of religious practice entered the concept [of teaching], although it retained the character of a tool of the rulers to achieve harmony with the ruled."
28 Wakabayashi 1986, p. 70.
29 *Shinron*, Imai 1973, p. 65.

including those who were officially recognized and protected by the shogunate as guarantors against pernicious faiths. This view stood in contrast to a very different understanding of the role of teaching, often identified with the school of Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠. As is well known, Sorai criticized the Neo-Confucian understanding that the way is immanent both in the universe and in human nature, and redefined it as a system of "rites, music, punishments, and [institutions of] government" (*rei gaku kei sei* 礼楽刑政) created by the sage-kings of ancient China. In *Benmei* 弁名 (Distinguishing Names, 1740), Sorai argued that the sage kings Yao and Shun first established rites, and then dedicated them to heaven. This, Sorai explained, was a stratagem to "deify their teachings" (*sono oshie o shin ni su* 神二其教一), so that they could instigate new policies under the guise of obeying the will of heaven and the ancestors, revealed to the king by means of divination.[30] This notion built on the idea that the "ignorant people" (*gumin* 愚民) cannot be taught about the way because of their limited intelligence, and therefore have to be led with the help of teachings that may not be true (that is, fully at one with the way), but that are nevertheless effective in "uniting the people's minds" and persuading them to submit to authority.[31]

Where Late Mito scholars saw "the teaching" as emanating from the way, Sorai and others who followed his line of reasoning (including some late-Edo Kokugaku authors) saw all forms of teaching as expedient means. It was this view that led even virulent anti-Buddhists to accept Buddhism as a necessary evil: while obviously not true, Buddhist teachings about paradises and hells served to inspire the ignorant to seek virtuous lives. In this discourse, sectarian creeds (*shūshi, shūmon*) functioned as expedient teachings useful to the government. Since teachings did not have to be true to be helpful, a broad array of faiths could and should be accepted, with only the limitation that no creed should undermine filial piety and loyalty. Aizawa, in fact, applied a similar logic of expediency to Christianity in Christian lands. He granted that the Christian teaching was extremely effective in uniting Christian nations, and feared that the leaders of those nations actively used the allure of this teaching to seduce the ignorant people of foreign lands. He did not, however, see the popular creeds of Japan as a useful resource in the battle to keep Christianity at bay. Aizawa agreed that common people cannot be taught about the way; but the answer was not to allow or even force them to practice expedient creeds. To the contrary, he feared that the faulty teachings of those creeds rendered the people immune to the civilizing influence of ritual. Therefore, all untrue creeds had to be vanquished and eradicated.

Into Meiji

The Mito scholars' motto of *saisei itchi* served as one of the defining slogans of the Meiji Restoration. On Keiō 4 (1868).3.14, three months after the Meiji coup, the new regime announced that the country would now "return to the system of unity of ritual and government." In practical terms, this meant that the classical Council of Kami Affairs (Jingikan 神祇官) would be resurrected and henceforth supervise all shrines and priests.[32]

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30 Yoshikawa 1973, p. 220. See Watanabe 2005, p. 381. Tucker (2005, p. 208) takes the sting out of this passage by translating the pertinent phrase as "their teachings are deemed divine."

31 *Kenroku* 鈐録 (Record of Essentials, 1727?), *Ogyū Sorai zenshū* 6, p. 443; quoted in Watanabe 2005, p. 381.

32 Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 425. Dates prior to 1873 are given in this format, according to the then current lunisolar calendar. Keiō 4 (1868).3.14 corresponds to 5 April 1868. The Meiji coup occurred on Keiō 3 (1867).12.9, which corresponds to 3 January, 1868.

Clearly, the "ritual" in *saisei itchi* was Shinto ritual, and immediate steps were taken to separate shrines from Buddhism. The new slogan was acted out the very next day, when the emperor led court nobles and warrior lords in taking an oath in front of a shrine dedicated to the deities of heaven and earth, installed in the palace especially for this purpose.[33] It was brought out of the palace in the tenth month, when Emperor Meiji proceeded to Hikawa Shrine, the First Shrine of the province containing Edo (renamed Tokyo only days earlier), and personally worshipped the kami there. The edict issued on this occasion reiterated that ritual (*saishi* 祭祀) was the "foundation of government and teaching" (*seikyō no kihon* 政教ノ基本). The emperor regretted that the "way of government" (*seidō* 政道) had decayed since medieval times; he now stated his intention to make a fresh start by personally seeing to the revival of the "way of unity of ritual and government" from his new seat in Tokyo.[34]

In this rhetoric we can easily recognize central traits of Late Mito thought. The main idea was, as before, that ritual served as the government's main tool in teaching and thus unifying the people. This unity was now thoroughly grounded in the emperor, who was to embody the unity of ritual and government by performing both "in person" (*tennō shinsai* 天皇親祭; *tennō shinsei* 天皇親政). Moreover, "teaching" had now taken on a more concrete meaning than before. With the country in an extremely precarious situation, uniting the people was felt to be even more urgent than in Aizawa's time. The detection of thousands of Christians in the Urakami area in 1867, and the subsequent struggle to find a way of dealing with them, appeared to confirm the old fear of Christianity's destructive powers. The proposed bulwark against this "crisis of conversion" was the establishment of an imperial Shinto thoroughly cleansed of Buddhist stains, and the promulgation of a Shinto teaching that would fully unite the faith of the people.[35]

How can we understand the initial acclaim given to such proposals? As noted above, Josephson describes the creation of a new imperial Shinto as the formation of what he terms the "Shinto secular." He argues that this Shinto should be understood not as a "state religion" but as a "hybrid Shinto-scientific ideology," an unassailable "regime of truth" that superseded questions of faith. Josephson points out that when religion was first conceptualized in Japan, it was in contradistinction to this Shinto secular: as a realm of private faith excluded from the "secular" truth of Shinto.[36] To illustrate Shinto's secularity, Josephson zooms in on the teachings of one of the senior advisors behind the earliest *saisei itchi* policies of the new government, Ōkuni Takamasa 大国隆正 (1792–1871). Josephson characterizes Ōkuni's Original Learning (*hongaku* 本学) as "a fusion of Shinto and science [that] reverberated through the halls of power and … could be heard in classrooms throughout the nation."[37]

This interpretation, however, would appear to project modern concepts into a setting where they did not yet exist. Josephson argues convincingly that we must "unlearn religion" in order to understand the conceptual map of pre-Meiji Japan, because religion was yet to be "invented"; but his notion of a Shinto secular is premised on the assumption that this map did already feature "science" as religion's opposite. It is difficult to argue that Shinto

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33 On the imperial oath and its performative aspects, see Breen 1996.
34 Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 429.
35 For the apt term "crisis of conversion," see Maxey 2014, ch. 1.
36 Josephson 2012, pp. 132–37.
37 Josephson 2012, p. 125.

naturally came to occupy the position of secular science without reading the "religion *versus* science" paradigm into the pre-Meiji period.[38] A less anachronistic reading of Ōkuni would place him on a scale between what one might call Aizawa's notion of "*the* teaching," as the only orthodox explanation of the way, and Sorai's notion of a broader array of expedient "teachings," as false but useful popular creeds.

While it may be true that Japanese scholars attempted to separate Western science from Christian theology, Ōkuni and other Shinto thinkers chose a very different course in their attempts to integrate Western knowledge into their learning. Rather than striving to establish a scientific-and-therefore-secular Shinto, Ōkuni pursued much the same goal as Aizawa some decades earlier: uniting all Japanese (or, in Ōkuni's case, all of humanity) by converting them to the teaching. This was, of course, no easy task, since the ignorant people lacked the intellectual capacity necessary to understand the teaching. It was therefore necessary to unite the people through praxis, rather than doctrine. Ōkuni used the most popular of all sectarian creeds, the Pure Land sect, as his model to achieve this. Pure Land Buddhists, he wrote, distinguished between the way of saintly practice and the way of easy practice, and Original Learning needed something similar:

> The way of easy practice in Buddhism is based on the doctrine that those who recite the *nenbutsu* [念仏] … will escape misfortune in this world, and that their souls will, after death, reach a good place where they will experience the highest bliss. Following this example, we should say that those who recite the words *tohokami emitame* [遠神忌為] will cleanse away all misfortune, and that after death their souls will ascend to the Plain of High Heaven.[39]

To be sure, Ōkuni admitted that Original Learning could not achieve its higher aim of correcting body and mind if this were all there was to the "easy practice." In the rest of his text, he preached about the notions of "adhering to the origin" and "helping one another," rather than elaborating on the Shinto equivalents of the *nenbutsu* and the Pure Land. His first priority was to teach people "uprightness" in their relations to their lords, parents, and so on. To inculcate these virtues, he was more than ready to use expedient teachings—to say what "we should say" to achieve maximum effect. In fact, Ōkuni expressed as much "faith" in the power of his mantra and rebirth on the Plain of High Heaven as he did in Western theories about oxygen and nitrogen. When he regarded Japan's Original Learning as superior to Western learning, it was because the former synthesized knowledge about both "the visible world and the spirit world," while the latter focused only on the visible realm.[40]

Ōkuni's discourse was based on what Puett would call a continuous model. A discontinuous "secular" model, premised on clear dividing lines between social spheres, was not part of Ōkuni's conceptual framework, nor of that of his sponsors. Original Learning balanced between the idea that there was only one teaching, which was one with the way, and the more practical notion that the ignorant people can be eased into the teaching by

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38 Josephson effectively transposes this paradigm to the Edo period on p. 136; see Josephson 2012.
39 *Shinri shōgen* 神理小言 (1861), in Matsuura 2001, p. 100. For a partial translation, see James W. Heisig 2011, pp. 524–35. This quotation is found on pp. 524–25.
40 Heisig 2011, pp. 528–59.

means of "easy practice." Rather than constructing a scientific regime of truth by distancing himself from religion, Ōkuni actively sought to use the strategies employed by sectarian creeds (the methods of Buddhists, and also the seductive teachings of Christians) to beat the priests of competing faiths at their own game.

The Teaching Unravels

The mere fact that a plan as utopian as mass conversion of the entire population appeared convincing, at least to some and for a short while, is a sure sign of the extraordinary situation that in which Japan found itself. This surreal vision was not to last, and soon more practical models of dealing with "teaching" gained the upper hand. This is not the place to attempt a full analysis of the many dramatic reversals that marked the religious policies of early Meiji, which are delineated expertly in Maxey's book (2014). As a background to what follows, however, it will be useful to sum up the main developments with a very broad brush. In the course of the first fifteen years of Meiji, the regime's management of "religion" (temples, shrines, Christianity, and the teaching) passed through three phases.

In the first phase (1868–1872), the government actively sought to recreate Shinto as a purely imperial tradition, reinvented Shinto rituals in order to propagate the teaching, and sent out state missionaries to convert the people. This phase ended in the third and fourth months of 1872, when the Shinto Missionary Office (Senkyōshi 宣教使, a much scaled-down successor of the Jingikan) was replaced by a joint Shinto-Buddhist Ministry of Teaching (Kyōbushō 教部省),[41] which launched the so-called Great Promulgation Campaign by involving Buddhist priests. It was becoming increasingly obvious to the new leadership that there were good reasons not to alienate Japanese Buddhists or Western Christians. The ideal of converting the people was now diluted by obfuscating the teaching's contents, and by outsourcing its propagation to shrines and temples by way of the semi-private Great Teaching Institute (Daikyōin 大教院). There was no compromise, however, regarding the Shinto nature of *saisei itchi* rituals either at court or within the Great Teaching Institute, which was appositely housed within a Shintoized Buddhist temple.

During phase 2 (1872–1882), Western notions of "religion" were introduced into the discussion by various opponents of the campaign as a means to denounce its many contradictions. If the teaching was to be conveyed through Shinto ritual, how could it be taught by Buddhist priests? And, more fundamentally, could "religious" faith be enforced? If not, should the sacred nature of the imperial lineage be treated as a matter of religious faith? Was not this policy excluding subjects with different faiths from the *kokutai*, as well as reducing the emperor to a figure on a par with deities that were sacred to some, but ridiculed by others? Should not Japan adopt the same approach as some Western countries and grant people freedom of faith within the privacy of their own homes, and within well-defined limits? Could Japan afford to keep alienating the Western powers by banning Christianity and prosecuting Japanese Christians?

This second phase ended on 24 January 1882, when an order from the Home Ministry effectively separated shrines from "religion" as sites solely dedicated to "ritual." Henceforth,

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41 This ministry is referred to as the Ministry of Edification in Hans Martin Krämer's article in this volume; I have used that translation myself elsewhere. In this context, however, I make a point of translating *kyō* 教 consistently as "teaching" so as to stress the connotations of that concept; hence "Ministry of Teaching."

shrine priests were no longer allowed to preach teachings, nor perform any other activities that would hereafter be branded as religious. Shrine priests were excluded from serving as campaign instructors (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職), and they could no longer perform funerals or distribute amulets.[42] Shinto shrines were officially declared "nonreligious," in contrast to the temples and the churches of Buddhist, Christian, and private Shintoist "religionists" (*shūkyōsha* 宗教者). Shrine priests performed public rituals, while religionists preached teachings and offered rites that catered to people's personal faith.

This outcome was the result of much experimentation and many compromises. Input from Western theory and practice, for example through much-studied discussions in elite journals such as *Meiroku zasshi* 明六雑誌, was an important factor in this process. Here, however, I would like to stress another aspect of the negotiations that produced this uneasy compromise: the ultimate failure of concrete political experiments to redraw institutional boundaries, and the resistance that such measures generated. Perhaps the most striking example of the influence institutional interests exerted on religious policies was the question of funerals. Early on in phase 2, the Council of State issued a national ban on cremations (18 July 1873).[43] There was no official explanation of the reasons for this ban, but the Council of the Left (Sain 左院, an advisory body within the Council of State) explicitly condemned cremation as a Buddhist practice that was profoundly unfilial. Behind the ban was the ambition to replace Buddhist cremations with Shinto burials, weakening the position of funeral temples in areas where cremations were common (mostly in the cities). The discourse that motivated this ban will be familiar by now: unfilial Buddhism was to be replaced by the Shinto teachings, which would unite the populace with the state by engaging them in rituals of filial piety.

The sudden appearance of this draconian ban created both heated protests and practical problems. The governor of Tokyo Prefecture feared that interment burials would take up too much space, and proposed to confiscate temple lands and convert them into cemeteries; but the Ministry of Finance disapproved of turning taxed properties in the city into non-taxed graveyards. The Council of State then ordered the Tokyo governor to prohibit all burials within the city boundaries, fully realizing that this would throw all funerary temples into an acute crisis.[44] Others pointed out that cremation was gaining ground in Europe, and argued that reverting to interment would be tantamount to turning one's back on civilization and enlightenment. In a joint declaration, the priests of sixty-six Tokyo temples protested that these measures prevented all city dwellers from joining their ancestors in their urban graves. Under such circumstances, they wrote, how could people retain their sense of loyalty and filial piety? If people were excluded from their own family graves, how could they be expected to appreciate the dignity of the "national mausolea" (*kokubyō* 国廟) where the ancestors of the imperial house and the heroes of the state were buried or enshrined?[45] In other words, how could *saisei itchi* possibly work under such circumstances?

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42 Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, pp. 480–81.
43 This section is based on Makihara 1990, pp. 79–117 (ch. 3, "Dosō ka kasō ka" 土葬か火葬か); Sakamoto 1994, pp. 418–49 ("Shinsōsai no fukyū to kasō kinshi mondai" 神葬祭の普及と火葬禁止問題); and Bernstein 2006, ch. 3, "The Great Cremation Debate," pp. 67–90.
44 Bernstein 2006, pp. 75–76.
45 Makihara 1990, pp. 88–89.

For well over a year, the Council of the Left held on to its original stance, arguing that the practice of Buddhist cremation was harmful because it led the people to the doctrines of the Buddha. As protests and practical difficulties piled up, however, the council slowly turned around. In February 1875, it concluded that "there is no need to overrule the feelings of the people in [minor] matters such as funerals; acknowledging the feelings of ignorant husbands and wives and leaving the matter to their individual wishes will cause no significant harm to administration."[46] In its rhetoric, the Council of the Left expressed clearly the view that its members were not enthusiastic about this outcome, but practical considerations had convinced them to be pragmatic. On 23 May 1875, the Council of State suspended the ban on cremations that it had announced less than two years earlier.

The ideological cause of converting the people from Buddhism to Shinto finally collapsed when this last-ditch attempt to change institutional structures through funerals failed. The decision to allow people the freedom to follow their "feelings" in minor matters clearly foreshadowed the Western-derived notion of freedom of faith that would eventually be incorporated in the 1889 Constitution. On the other hand, this conclusion could also be understood in more traditional terms, as a slide from a position that presses for full conversion to the teaching, to a more pragmatic stance that accepts sectarian creeds as a response to the feelings of the ignorant people.

No doubt, this overlap between old and new ideas was helpful in negotiating such a solution, and in integrating new concepts into the public discourse. More importantly, the freedom of funerals undermined what remained of the Edo-period restrictions on changing temple, or changing sect. It was in 1874 that the Ministry of Teaching officially allowed people to transfer their patronage to a different sect "as they wish," without written permission from their old sect (*ridanjō* 離檀状). In 1875, only a year later, the same ministry was confronted with the case of a Christian family who wanted an openly Christian funeral. By this time, the noticeboards banning Christianity had been removed, but the ban itself had not been explicitly revoked. After much deliberation, the regime concluded that in cases where "stern admonition" (*toku to setsuyu* 篤と説諭) did not help, tacit permission was the only feasible policy.[47] Eventually (in 1884), the municipal cemetery of Aoyama, first established as a locality for Shinto funerals, came to allow not only Buddhist but even Christian graves. Since the prevention of Christian conversions had been a major concern of both the Shinto mission in phase 1 and the campaign in phase 2, this was a major concession to reality that rendered the very existence of the Ministry of Teaching itself meaningless.

Ritual Without Teaching

Where did the compromises of phase 2 leave *saisei itchi*, and what did they mean in concrete terms for the shrines that had earlier been transformed into *saisei itchi* institutions? Phase 1 had redefined shrine priests as representatives of the emperor, charged with the task of mediating between the court and the people by involving the latter in a new body of imperial rituals, now performed at shrines throughout the land. These rituals were expected to "relay the teaching to the people and correct their customs" (as Aizawa had put it), and

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46 Makihara 1990, p. 106. Just two months later, the Council of the Left was abolished.
47 Sakamoto 1994, pp. 444–45.

thus make government possible, if not superfluous. This concept of shrines was premised on the ideal of creating a "world of continuity" where ritual, teaching, and government would be one.

The introduction of the category of "religion" shattered this ideal. One particularly outspoken and influential actor in deconstructing *saisei itchi*'s continuous model was the Pure Land priest Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷, who returned from Europe in the summer of 1872. In London, his group of Nishi

Figure 2. The discontinuous model of "religion."

Honganji 西本願寺 representatives had joined the Iwakura mission for two months; Shimaji, therefore, had enjoyed intimate access to leading figures in the Meiji regime and was familiar with their thinking.[48] Before the year 1872 was out, Shimaji had submitted two petitions in which he criticized the Great Promulgation Campaign; in 1873, he followed this up with another petition arguing that the Great Teaching Institute should be dissolved.[49] In these petitions, Shimaji introduced some new distinctions that undermined the *saisei itchi* ideal, substituting it with a model that looked more like Figure 2.

First, Shimaji argued that government and teaching are incompatible. Government, he wrote, seeks to further the desires and interests of the state; therefore, it is by nature particularistic. Teaching, on the other hand, is concerned with inner virtues, and always encourages people to put the interests of others before selfish desires—a virtue that can never be the basis for government. Being universal, teaching can never be patriotic; therefore, the first of the campaign's Three Standards of Instruction, demanding "reverence for the gods and love for the nation," is self-contradictory.[50] Secondly, Shimaji separated "teaching" from "science/learning" (*gaku* 学). In contrast to science, which is the realm of investigation (*kyūri kakubutsu* 究理格物), teaching is the domain of religion. It deals with matters that cannot be known in an objective, final manner: morality, and the mysteries of life and death.[51] The campaign, Shimaji held forth, misconstrued matters of government as matters of faith. This reduced the *kokutai* to a question of belief, rather than an unassailable fact, and it destroyed religion by forcing priests to preach a teaching that is not even a proper teaching. In 1875,
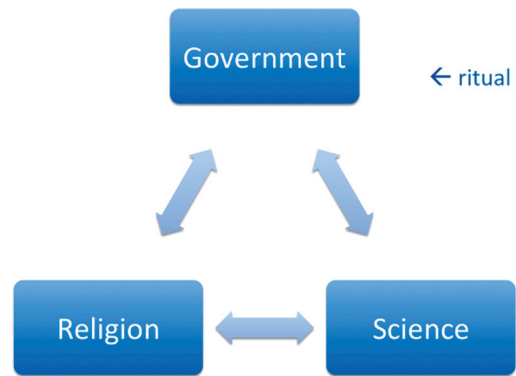
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48 In fact, the European expedition of this delegation was proposed and sponsored by Kido Takayoshi (1833–1877), one of the Meiji leaders heading the Iwakura mission. After his return to Japan, Kido went on to advocate privileged treatment for Buddhism in order to "discipline and mobilize the populace in a manner similar to the way Christianity functioned in the West" (Maxey 2014, p. 79).

49 Shimaji was also involved in a petition campaign to lift the ban on cremations. Sakamoto 1994, pp. 440–41. For a detailed analysis of Shimaji's thought and activism, see Krämer 2015, and Krämer's article in this issue.

50 *Sanjō kyōsoku hihan kenpakusho* 三条教則批判建白書 (Meiji 5 (1872)). Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, pp. 235–36. See Krämer's article in this issue for another reading of this petition. In my view, Krämer's translation of *kyō* as "religion" in this context prevents us from recognizing the tension between the continuous model based on "teaching" and the discontinuous model of "religion." In fact, Shimaji stresses in this petition that there is only one teaching that "applies in all countries and covers all human beings" (Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 235): he is certainly not thinking in terms of competing religions.

51 *Daikyōin bunri kenpakusho* 大教院分離建白書 (1873), Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 247.

four Shinshū 真宗 sects, including Shimaji's, left the campaign, and in that same year the Great Teaching Institute was indeed dissolved.

Like Shimaji, the 1882 order talked about the need to "separate government and teaching" (*seikyō bunkatsu* 政教分割) while identifying teaching with religion. Within the shrine world, this process has been described in more concrete terms as the "separation of ritual and teaching" (*saikyō bunri* 祭教分離).[52] After all, the specific focus of the 1882 order was the differentiation between shrine ritualists and campaign instructors/religionists. In order to understand the reactions of the shrine world to this reform, which marked the beginning of phase 3, it is necessary to delve a bit deeper into contemporary views on the relation between ritual and government among Shinto leaders.

One might expect that shrines would resist all attempts to separate ritual from teaching, for the simple reason that the *saisei itchi* model was based on the idea that ritual teaches the ignorant people filial piety and loyalty, and as such forms the basis of government. In 1882, "teaching" was officially redefined as "religion," and shrines were reduced to performing state rituals *without* teaching. Shrine priests were literally silenced by the ban on preaching. Without teaching, the link between ritual and government was, logically speaking, broken: it was no longer clear what ritual was supposed to mean, and at the very least, its scope was much reduced. Was not this a bad thing?

However, things were not so simple. First of all, *saisei itchi* implied that in the new order, ritual, like government, would be performed personally by the emperor. Teaching, on the other hand, would be the task of others. This understanding motivated the dismissal of all hereditary shrine priests (Meiji 4 (1871).5.14), and even inspired a plan (eventually aborted) to move the Inner Shrine of Ise to the palace in Tokyo, so as to enable the emperor to revere his divine ancestress in person. In 1872, at the onset of phase 2, teaching became the responsibility of the Ministry of Teaching, while a new Office of Rites (Shikiburyō 式部寮) within the Council of State was put in charge of ritual. This separation was purely administrative, but it took on a new meaning when "teaching" became increasingly associated with "religion." Fearful of being assimilated to sectarian religion, Shinto spokesmen sought ways to raise the status of shrines by identifying them more closely with nonsectarian, official imperial ritual. Therefore, elite priests were not necessarily unhappy with the 1882 separation of priests from instructors/religionists. What they did lament, and would vigorously campaign to correct over the following decades, was the government's failure to create a new office that would support and fund shrines as vital institutions of state ritual.

It was not, however, so easy to argue for such an office now that the continuous logic of *saisei itchi* had effectively collapsed. Talk about Shinto as "the teaching of government" (*chikyō, jikyō* 治教), in contrast to "religious teachings" (*shūkyō*), may have served to disguise the malfunctioning of that logic, but was hardly an effective way to keep up the

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52 For this term, see, for example, "*Saikyō bunri ron*" 祭教分離論 (an anonymous journalistic piece in three instalments, 1890), Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, pp. 273–80; and Saitō 2006. I here diverge somewhat from Maxey, who characterizes the 1872 founding of the Kyōbushō (Ministry of Teaching) and the Shikiburyō (Office of Rites) as a "separation of ritual and doctrine" and the 1882 differentiation between ritualists and religionists as the "separation of rule and doctrine." Shinto historiography has typically termed 1872 the "first," and 1882 the "second separation of ritual and government."

government's interest in shrines.[53] Indeed, financial support for shrines and their priests dwindled steadily in the 1870s, and this decline accelerated in the 1880s, causing even the largest to fall on hard times.[54] By the late 1880s, concrete steps were taken to abolish state support even for high-ranking state shrines, but for various reasons, this plan was never realized, and state shrines retained modest public funding until 1945. Local shrines, without imperial or national status, were reduced to a minimum of public support already in 1873, and became completely reliant on private funding by 1879.[55]

Again, we cannot ignore institutional interests and practical problems when we try to understand changes in the conceptual landscape during phase 2. Priests were trying to make a living, as well as a point. Again, funerals were an important factor. In some places, Shinto funerals had become common enough to have a real impact on the economic life of shrines. In Satsuma, especially, funerals constituted the financial foundation of many shrines, in much the same way as with temples in Tokyo. When priests were banned from serving as campaign instructors, Satsuma politicians protested and negotiated a compromise: priests of low-ranking, local shrines would be allowed, "for the time being," to continue to provide "religious" services, including funerals.[56] From 1882 onwards, then, the broad category of shrines covered two very different kinds of institutions: high-ranking state shrines that performed *saisei itchi* rituals, received public support, and refrained from religious activities; and low-ranking local shrines that lived off private contributions from their parishioners in exchange for religious services.

This difference in institutional basis caused the priests of state shrines and local shrines to take very different standpoints on the question of ritual and its relation to teaching, or, as it was now increasingly termed, religion. State shrines pressured the government to increase its sponsorship of state ritual, and to raise the status of state ritual by resurrecting a Jingikan-like body in a fashion that was "suitable to the times"—that is, without falling into the trap of demeaning Shinto as a private religion.[57] This movement continued throughout the prewar period. It finally came to fruition in 1940 (or, in the Japanese era, 2600) with the founding of the Jingiin 神祇院, a state institution that was once again to combine ritual with "the propagation of reverence for the gods"—that is, teaching. Although the Jingiin never received the financial means to make much of an impact, it symbolized a revival of *saisei itchi* ideals, though still couched in a rhetoric of freedom of faith. It carefully refrained from invoking religion, because the "political grammar of religion" (in Maxey's terminology) would limit a religious Shinto to the private sphere and undermine its public nature.

Local shrines first organized themselves in 1926, when their priests stepped out of the shadow of the state shrines by forming their own national association (Zenkoku Shashi

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53 On the term *chikyō/jikyō*, see Krämer 2013.

54 For a concrete example of the financial insolvency of even major shrines and the various attempts to deal with this structural problem, see Thal 2005, especially chapters 9 and 11. Even Ise faced severe economic problems in this period; see Teeuwen and Breen 2017, chapter 8.

55 "Local shrines" here refers to prefectural, municipal, village, and unranked shrines, often referred to collectively as "assorted shrines" (*shosha* 諸社) in contradistinction to high-ranking shrines that retained public funding (*kansha* 官社, "state shrines"): the Ise Shrines, imperial shrines, and national shrines. The number of state shrines grew gradually from less than 100 in the 1870s to well over two hundred in 1945.

56 This temporary exemption is included in the order of 24 January 1882; see Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 480. On its background, see Saitō 2006, pp. 225–26.

57 Saitō 2006, p. 229.

Shashō Kai 全国社司社掌会). In a study of local shrine activism in the 1920s and 1930s, Azegami Naoki points out that activist priests propagated a fresh take on the relationship between shrines and religion. Reacting to an emerging interest on the part of the authorities (notably the Jinjakyoku 神社局 or Shrine Bureau, established within the Home Ministry in 1900 to oversee shrine policy) in using shrines for "popular edification," priests of local shrines urged the government to abandon the definition of shrines as "nonreligious." In 1927, the national association of local shrine priests sent a petition to the prime minister, the home minister, and the education minister, arguing that shrine worship should be recognized as "the public religion of the state" (*kokka kō no shūkyō* 国家公の宗教). This new definition of shrine worship would not deny individuals' constitutional freedom to believe privately in "so-called" religions; but it should be made clear that shrines were qualitatively different, because they represented a public supra-religion to which all Japanese nationals must adhere irrespective of their individual faith.[58]

This petition reflected subtle shifts in the meaning of the concept of religion in the early Shōwa years. What local shrine priests wanted to achieve with their attempt to "take back religion" was not to establish a sectarian Shinto creed for a limited congregation of adherents. In their discourse, "religion" no longer meant a sectarian creed or denomination, but rather referred to "sincere faith" or "genuine religiosity." The shrine activists of the 1920s felt that the model of "ritual without teaching" emptied shrine reverence of all spiritual content, and they were eager to restore Shinto's potential to transform people's lives through self-cultivation and character building (*jinkakushugi* 人格主義).[59] Their position is readily understandable from an institutional perspective. Priests of local shrines offered rituals catering to people's private, "religious" needs, while being embedded in a legal and political framework that defined shrines as "nonreligious" sites of public rituals. One way out of this conundrum was to render nonreligious ritual religious again, and in that way reconnect ritual with the practice of preaching the teaching.

As Japan entered a new national crisis after the 1931 Manchurian incident, the notion of uniting the people through faith in one teaching reemerged. "Religion" became an even more confusing concept. On the one hand, it denoted a category of private creeds that needed to be contained within ever stricter boundaries. The Religious Organizations Law (*Shūkyō dantai hō* 宗教団体法) of 1939 reflected this attitude, and effectively reduced Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of faith, to a dead letter. On the other hand, some turned the old association between teaching and religion on its head, and argued that *saisei itchi* ritual should form the basis of a national religion that took precedence over all other, inferior religions. This led to intense pressure on Buddhists, Christians, and other religious movements.[60] Once again, the *saisei itchi* model of uniting ritual, teaching, and government was held high, and at times forcefully imposed. If it were not for the fact that history never returns to the same place, one might say that by a roundabout route (via "religion"), Japan had come full circle.

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58 "Kengi" 建議 (*Kōkoku* 皇国 328, June 1927), quoted in Azegami 2012, p. 81.
59 Azegami 2009, p. 286.
60 Pressure on Christians during this period is a central theme of Nakai's article in this volume. For a particularly telling example of Shinto pressure on Buddhists, see Ives 1999.

Conclusion

Reflecting discussions within religious studies in general, there has recently been a lot of soul-searching within the field of Japanese religions over biases and misunderstandings inherent in our use of the etic terms "religion/religious" to describe places, people, practices, and ideas that were never regarded as aspects of "religion" in emic terms, for the simple reason that no such concept existed before Meiji. An important outcome of these discussions is an increased awareness of the political and ideological instrumentality of the Japanese calque *shūkyō* after the introduction of the category of "religion." The works of scholars such as Isomae (2003), Josephson (2012), Maxey (2014), and Krämer (2015) offer telling accounts of the complicated negotiations that shaped understandings of *shūkyō* in modernizing Japan. They demonstrate in great detail that the Japanese adoption of "religion" was not a simple matter of translating and transferring a ready-made Western notion. Religion was not imposed on a passive Japan; it was actively reinvented by Japanese leaders from many institutional contexts, all with their own agendas. In a world of multiple modernities, there are by necessity multiple concepts of religion. *Shūkyō* is one member of that colorful family.

As pointedly argued by Josephson, the creation of *shūkyō* was a "politically charged boundary-drawing exercise" that created not only a religious realm, but also a secular realm.[61] This secular realm was to be shielded from religion, legally, discursively, and also practically, by way of the removal of religious objects and actors. What "secular" meant in different contexts was a function of contemporary definitions of religion. The results of this boundary drawing were far from obvious out of context. In Japan, for example, funerals were religious while weddings were not, and "religious" amulets were not to be handled by "nonreligious" shrine priests—but then again, this applied only to priests of state shrines, and not to those of local shrines. Only the serendipities of Meiji history could have produced such apparently random boundaries.

One aim of this article is to stress the degree to which institutional interests shaped the boundary-drawing process. Much emphasis has been given to the Japanese reception of Western theories of religion, and to attempts on the part of intellectuals and political leaders to adapt and apply these theories to a Japanese context. Often, however, the realities of existing institutional arrangements thwarted the implementation even of policies that were felt to be vital for the state. To understand how *shūkyō* developed, we need to pay at least as much attention to underlying social and economic structures as to abstract ideals and imported ideas.

The second point that this article tries to make is that *shūkyō* may be a Meiji concept, but it took the form it did in a context where pre-Meiji ideas were still a dominant presence. Following theorists such as Talal Asad, Josephson and others have stressed the radical novelty and alterity of concepts like religion and secularity whenever they were exported from "the West" to the "non-West."[62] However, such concepts did not replace older ideas about the social order; rather, they had to be fitted in with prevalent world views if they were to make sense at all. In Japan, I argue, the reception of "religion" was heavily influenced by pre-Meiji ideas about teaching and its relation to ritual and government. The original ideal of the Meiji state was *saisei itchi*, "unity of ritual and government." I maintain that

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61 Josephson 2012, back cover.
62 See the introduction to this special issue.

the continuous worldview encapsulated in this phrase retained its attraction beyond Meiji, and formed an important framework for the development of *shūkyō*. In short, "religion" was part of a discontinuous model that compartmentalized religious belief and practice by setting it apart from "secular" spheres of social life. As such, it threatened to undermine the continuous model of *saisei itchi*, in which ritual unites the nation, or even the cosmos. The interference between these coexisting continuous and discontinuous models (as crudely visualized in figures 1 and 2 above) underlies the struggles over religion and its relationship with teaching.

Finally, it is worth asking whether echoes of this interference can still be heard in postwar Japan. At least in the case of a small group of shrines closely associated with the state, this is clearly the case. In the late 1960s, when the LDP was preparing its Diet proposal to nationalize Yasukuni Shrine, it soon became obvious that the shrine would first have to shed its status as a religious corporation (*shūkyō hōjin* 宗教法人) for this to become possible. The shrine priests and representatives of the Association of Bereaved Families (Nihon Izokukai 日本遺族会), however, were adamant that the shrine should not be transformed into a secular "monument," and that its Shinto traditions should be maintained. In 1967, a committee in support of the shrine pointed out that Article 34 of the civil law code distinguished between religious and ritual corporations (*saishi hōjin* 祭祀法人).[63] The mission of Yasukuni, the committee argued, was not to spread a religion to select believers, but rather to perform rituals for all who had fallen in the service of the nation, irrespective of their personal religion.

This logic would eventually fail to convince the Diet, but the notion of organizing some shrines at least as "ritual corporations" continued to be discussed within Shinto circles until this category finally disappeared from the books in 2008. It is increasingly obvious, however, that the notion of uniting the nation through shrine ritual has not become obsolete. More recent examples, such as the public performance of the *daijōsai* in 1990 and the participation of PM Abe in Ise's *shikinen sengū* in 2013, suggest that the story of "*saisei itchi* vs religion" may not yet be over.[64] Current campaigning by the shrine organization Jinja Honchō 神社本庁 for constitutional reform, which (among other things) would allow shrine ritual to return to the public sphere as "custom," further affirms this impression.[65] The continuous model of ritual unity is more than likely to morph into new forms also in the future.

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63 *Jinja shinpō*, 5 August 1967, p. 1. The Shinto ideologue Ono Sokyō 小野祖教 further elaborated on this in *Jinja shinpō*, 16 March 1968, p. 4. In a similar vein, an article by Iwakoshi Gen'ichirō 岩越元一郎 (*Jinja shinpō*, 4 and 11 May 1970) argues that Yasukuni represents a "religion of ritual" (*saishi shūkyō* 祭祀宗教), and as such is fundamentally different from "religions of salvation" (*kyūzai shūkyō* 救罪宗教 [*sic*]). I find the concept of a "religion of ritual," combining the previously mutually exclusive terms of *saishi* and *shūkyō* in a single phrase, a particularly telling example of the resampling of old concepts within a new framework—in this case, the postwar legal status of Yasukuni as a religious corporation. Iwakoshi (1902–1978) was the author of books about the Confucian classics, Japanese ethics, and the *Kojiki* 古事記.

64 On the return of the Ise Shrines to the public stage, see Teeuwen and Breen 2017, pp. 2–7 and 241. The upcoming *daijōsai*, perhaps in 2018, could be the next large occasion for the government to further the public use of shrine ritual in order to unite the nation.

65 See the articles by Larsson, Guthmann, and Rots in this issue.

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