
Restorative and Innovative Elements in Early Meiji Religious and Educational Politics

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The events around 1868 that marked the end of 250 years of Tokugawa shogunal rule in Japan and the beginning of Emperor Meiji's reign are commonly labeled 'Meiji-Restoration' (*Meiji ishin*). The social, political, and economic changes that took place in the following years however were so profound that some scholars in recent years have preferred the term 'revolution' to characterize these events.¹ 'Meiji' as the reign title of the new era was chosen by court scholars in Keiō 4/9/8 (23 October 1868) from classical Chinese sources. Likewise, the term '*ishin* 維新' originates from the Confucian classics, connoting 'to promote the new'. The use in combination however was only formalized in 1870 by the issuance of an imperial proclamation. In that document the phrase was merged with Shintō connotations to produce a maximal sense of venerable politico-religious authority [Tanaka Akira, *Meiji ishin* (Tōkyō: Shōgakusan, 1976), pp. 80f. (Nihon no rekishi. 24)]. Although in practice it was not the emperor, whose titles *mikado* or *tennō* signify more of a religious than a political role, but those who spoke for him who actually ruled the country, his pure existence and nominal sovereignty was the ultimate source of legitimization for the new government. Therefore, the notion of a 'renewal' (*isshin* 一新) or, in a more formal term, a 'restoration' (*fukko*) of imperial rule was the officially dominating message of the early Meiji years. Already the very first pronouncement, issued on 3 January 1868, had the title 'Grand Order for the Restoration of Imperial Rule' (*Ōsei-fukko no taigōrei*). Likewise, the proper spiritual superstructure for the new era was deemed to be the revival of an allegedly indigenous ancient belief-system in the form of Restoration Shintō (*fukko shintō*). This term was first used officially in April 1868 in a document of the Office of Divinity Jingi-jimukyoku stating that "*the religion [shūmon] of our Imperial country is to be declared as fukko Shintō*" [Kokugakuin daigaku Nihon bunka kenkyūjo (ed.): *Shintō jiten* (Tōkyō: Kōbundō, 1999), p. 442 (first edn, 1994)].

The form of Shintō prevalent and promoted in early Meiji was strongly based on Hirata school national learning (*kokugaku*)², not least due to prominent members of this line of thought such as Yano Harumichi (1823—1887) since 1862 being academic instructor of the Shirakawa family who since the Heian period held the hereditary position of chief officials of divine affairs. In 1867, he in addition became academic head of the Yoshida Shintō-school. Yano thus was supervisor of the two most traditional and, due to being entrusted with licensing priests, most influential Shintō schools. Hirata Atsutane had understood his scholarship as 'original teachings' (*honkyō*; *mototsu oshie*). The earliest notion of *honkyō* appears 712 in the preface to *Kojiki*, where the term is used to explain the basis of its content. Most commentators see this so-called fundamental teaching to indicate the original tradition of Japanese antiquity. The term and concept of *honkyō* in early modern times was usually

perceived in close relation to the various Shintô traditions. It therefore is no coincidence that it was Atsutane, one of the most Shintô inclined among his contemporaries, who emphasized *honkyô* for his form of scholarship. Though the most vivid in its purpose-driven utilization, he was not the only one to recognize this ancient term anew and at the end of the Edo period, the concept of *honkyô* came into general use among *kokugaku* scholars.

Simultaneously, a second related concept re-emerged onto the public stage. Based on a new awareness towards Japan being a land of the gods (*shinkoku; kami no kuni*) and combined with an ever-growing activism among retainers that advocated reverence for the Emperor and the expulsion of barbarian foreigners, Hirata school thoughts became a driving force in the restoration movement. Coupled with the feudal society's rapidly progressing decline and the growing tension in foreign relations since the Kaei era (1848—1854), Atsutane's school expanded into a bonding with practical, political activism. This most prominent form of *kokugaku* by now had almost completely turned into a contemporary oriented, practically applied '*kannagara no michi*' — a rather complex concept, which may be best described as Japan's pure and characteristic way handed down since the age of gods according to divine will. This was a form quite different from previous philological national learning. Beginning with regional Shintô-priests and wealthy farmers, its spread and profound permeation of the broader population was partly due to a new theological superstructure. Its notion of the countryside as Japan's 'spiritual home' that saw rural lifestyle and customs being in harmony with nature and the divine *kami*, as well as having best preserved Japan's pure and indigenous traditions, created for many people a tangible alternative to the menacing uncertainties in a time of rapid and radical changes. Hence, national learning as *honkyô* and *kannagara no michi* at the dawn of Meiji was one part of the spiritual mainspring of the restoration's upheaval. In the Meiji period itself, then, this emperor-centered spirit of acting according to divine will based on the original teachings of antiquity was systematically universalized. The attempted revival of Japan's allegedly pure and characteristic ancient way initially gave a spiritual foundation to the new government's edification policy and rose to be the guiding principle in the efforts to construct a unifying 'national' identity.

However, with its strong Western influx, the Meiji period was also a time that required to modernize and reorganize in order to survive. Certainly not everyone could withstand this prerequisite. For many of the more temperamental and erratic loyal retainers and of the more religiously inclined Hirata school followers, the 'restoration' stopped short at fulfilling their dream. They once risked their lives and made every effort in realizing that dream, but soon they saw an irreconcilable gap between the aspired ideal and the apparent reality. Especially the second part of their slogan *sonnô jôi* — reverence for the Emperor and expulsion of foreign barbarians — obviously could not be realized. Many of them ultimately turned away from active politics in anger and disappointment and ended for instance as priests at small rural shrines. Perhaps the best-known example of such disillusionment is Aoyama Hanzô, the protagonist of Shimazaki Tôson's (1872—1943) famous historical novel *Yoake mae*. Aoyama is no other than the author's own father Shimazaki Masaki (1831—1886). An ardent admirer

of the Hirata school, in 1863 he started to study under Atsutane's son-in-law and successor Hirata Kanetane (1799—1880). At that time Masaki was head of the officially appointed inn for high-ranking travelers along the Nakasendô highway at Magome, a post station in the Kiso valley of today's Nagano prefecture. After the restoration of imperial rule was realized, Masaki like many of his fellow Hirata disciples and *kokugaku* friends throughout the country came to work as a Shintô priest. Some years later, disillusioned and frustrated, Shimazaki returned to his beloved Magome, but never found 'home' again. He finally died in madness while harboring thoughts of despair in view of the overwhelming waves of uncertainties of this modern period. When looking at the fate of people like Shimazaki Masaki or Sakakibara Yoshino (1832—1881), who also died in madness, the early Meiji situation resonates French revolutionist Pierre Vergniaud's (1753—1793) famous sentence formulated on his way to the guillotine: The revolution, like Saturn, is devouring its own children.

What kind of Imperial Rule to Restore?

The mentioned 'Grand Order for the Restoration of Imperial Rule' explicitly stated for the foundation of this restoration that '*everything is based on Jinmu's establishment [of the empire]*' [Meiji Jingû (ed.), *Meiji-tennô no mikotonori: Nihon no inochi o tsuranuku mono* (Tôkyô: Meiji Jingû, 1991), p. 13 (first edn, 1975)]. In the worldview of *kannagara no michi*, Jinmu is a vital component symbolizing, as the alleged first human emperor, an important transition phase and continuing ancestral link to the Age of Gods. With the revival of Jinmu-tennô as the fundamental measure on which everything should be based, the first step in putting this worldview into applied practice was realized to a high degree in concrete political measures. Some historians suggest that from the outset the new Meiji leadership merely used figures such as Hirata Kanetane and the popularity of his 'restoration' Shintô to legitimate the creation of an imperial ideology that would support their program of institutional change for a new nation-state [Yasumaru Yoshio / Miyachi Masato (eds), *Shûkyô to kokka* (Tôkyô: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), pp. 501f. (Nihon kindai shisô taikai. 5)]. However, while the involvement of large numbers of national learning scholars in the central government indeed lasted only a few years, their conception of the imperial system as a unity of 'worship and rule' or 'ritual and politics' (*saisei ichi*)³ remained the framework of the Imperial state until 1945. Shortly after the 'Grand Order', the so-called 'Five-Article Imperial Oath' (*Gokajô no goseimon*)⁴ was proclaimed in a religious ceremony on 6 April 1868. In the presence of officials, court nobles, and princes directly lead by the Emperor, it was pledged by Senior Councilor of State Sanjô Sanetomi (1837—1891) before the divine seat for the deities of heaven and earth within the imperial palace. The several high officials and politicians attending this Shintô ceremony of announcing the government's basic principles to the deities clearly indicated the religious foundation of the state and the unity of ritual and politics.

Like the two sides of a coin, the new government's two major policies — the restoration of Jinmu's imperial rule as envisioned in the 'Grand Order' and the opening to foreign

relations promoted in the ‘5-Article-Oath’ that also meant to deal with Christianity — were the fundamental principles for its task of creation. The first was a principle for a new *internal* organization pertaining to the spirit of medieval mysticism that signified the deity’s revival, whereas the other was a policy for an adoption of an *external* culture on the spirit of modern pragmatism. The question of how to deal with both policies was the most important and difficult task confronting the Meiji government in its early days. The latent contradiction between these two principles cannot be neglected, but in the eyes of the government, they were synchronized by Japan’s *kokutai*, its allegedly ‘eternal’ and unchangeable fundamental character. The worldview of *kannagara no michi* in early Meiji expressed itself in several retrospect reforms as the ideal of radical intellectuals and their impassioned fervor of a new national morality based on the original teachings or *honkyō*. In particular, attention must be paid to the two principles of *saisei itchi*, the unity of ritual and politics mentioned above, as well as *seikyō itchi*, the unity of politics and religious or doctrinal teaching. Especially those of Hirata school background such as Yano Harumichi in his manifest *Kenkin sengo* (Humble Petition of a Fool) envisioned an ideal state put into practice through proselytization and edification of the people. As one of Iwakura Tomomi’s brain trust in the years before the restoration, he had the chance to present his opinion voiced in *Kenkin sengo* via Iwakura directly to the court and the highest ranks of government only a few days after the restoration of imperial rule was proclaimed. In thirty-three articles Yano basically deals with the three fundamental items with which the *honkyō* of the ancient days in his eyes is concerned: religious rites (*saishi*); benevolent politics (*jinsen*); and forceful authority (*bui*) through the Emperor’s divinely granted august virtue (*mitsu*). He emphasizes that conducting religious rites was the prime form of government in antiquity. The successive dynasties since antiquity mercifully loved their subjects and reared the people with affection as the country’s wealth. Through such benevolent politics due to the heavenly imperial ancestor-deity’s teachings transferred by *kannagara no michi*, the people’s hearts are at ease in peaceful living. By granting harmony to those with earnest obedience and punishing those in opposition, as seen already in the example of Jinmu-tennō’s reign, forceful authority is exercised due to the Emperor’s virtue. Yet, there is a clear hierarchy among these three elements: Most important for proper imperial rule are religious rites and the other characteristics following suit. Hence, if the emperor returns to the ancient original teaching by conducting such rites, the realm will be at peace and disobedient subjects have no option but to yield to his forceful authority granted through divine will. To deal with the present turbulent times, Yano thus fundamentally advocated Jinmu-tennō’s model rule over the realm that in his eyes had been a government of unity of ritual and politics that solely followed *kannagara no michi* [Yano Harumichi, ‘Kenkin sengo’, in: Haga Noboru / Matsumoto Sannosuke (eds), *Kokugaku undō no shisō* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), pp. 548, 556, 572 (Nihon shisō taikēi. 51)].⁵ Likewise, he sees the present return to this ancient form of benevolent imperial reign as manifestation of such special divine providence.⁶

Revival of the Bureau of Divinity, Jingikan

The impelling power for establishing a new unifying state doctrine was seen in a revival of the Jingikan, the ancient Bureau of Divinity that institutionalized the rites for and worship of the deities and originally had been created after the Taika reform of 645.⁷ With leading *kokugaku*-scholars as pivot, the movement for the revival of the ancient way steadily advanced, resulting in a government proclamation of 5 April 1868 that ‘concerning the present restoration of imperial rule (*ôsei fukko*), the reformation of various matters by turning back to [the fundamental principle of] *Jinmu*’s establishment, and the restoration of the system of unity of ritual and politics (*saisei itchi*), recently the imperial words have been received that the foremost priority is the revival of the *Jingikan*’ [Ernst Lokowandt, *Die rechtliche Entwicklung des Staats-Shintô in der ersten Hälfte der Meiji-Zeit (1868—1890)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1978), p. 248, doc. 4 (Studies in Oriental Religion. 3)]. Within its area of competence, the finally re-established Bureau of Divinity had overall supervisory responsibility for all matters related to the deities of heaven and earth, the Imperial mausolea, the administration of religious ceremonies and rites, the religious mission, as well as the religious personnel and parishioners (Lokowandt 1978, pp. 105; 262-264, doc. 19). Compared to its responsibilities under the ancient Ritsuryô system it is noteworthy that in modern times the two functions of the administration of Imperial tombs as well as of proselytization or popular Shintô education were newly added.

Two amendments: Imperial Mausolea and Shintô mission

Amid a spirit of reverence for the emperor, respect also had to be shown to the successive ancestral generations whose graves however for a long time had been neglected. As part of the *Jinmu-tennô* revival movement, many adherents of an imperial restoration based on antiquity saw the matter of *Jinmu*’s *Unebi* tomb and in extension of the various Imperial mausolea as an urgent business. On 21 October 1869, the Bureau of Imperial Mausolea *Shoryôryô* was established within the *Jingikan* to generally promote Shintô funeral rites, investigate the imperial pedigree, classify tombs as belonging to a particular emperor, and even confirm formerly missing rulers.⁸ More important however was the new Bureau for the Religious Mission of Shintô Education *Senkyôshi*. Contrasting with the retrospection of uncovering the ancient ancestors via the Bureau of Imperial Mausolea, this second amendment to the *Jingikan* rather indicated the equally present proactive attitude towards the needs of a new era. Hence, the Meiji period’s two sides of revival and progress can also be clearly seen in the workings of the *Jingikan*.

Despite radical destruction of Buddhist elements due to the so-called *shinbutsu bunri* order of a forced distinction between *kami* and Buddhas of April 1868, on a common level faith in Buddhism — after centuries of general leadership in the popular Shintô-Buddhist amalgamation and Shogunal support — by far outdid knowledge and belief in Shintô deities,

rites, and ceremonies. In order to further elevate this purified form of Shintô to its intended state level, the government needed to embark on a civil cultivation. Thus, in May 1869, an Office for the Investigation of Education was established within the Great Council of State in order to analyze effective methods for a national edification and Shintô proselytization. In August, this preceptorial office was discarded and instead people started to be appointed to a new Bureau for the Religious Mission of Shintô Education that on 2 November was transferred to Jingikan [Kunaichô (ed.): *Meiji-tennô ki* [MTK], vol. 2 (Tôkyô: Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 1977), pp. 91, 202]. Hence the government now entered into the stage of unifying national edification with the proselytization of its anticipated state religion. It appointed personnel for the central as well as the various provincial ‘mission bureaus’ with nativist scholars and Shinto priests naturally being their main ‘missionaries’ and thus tried to build a systematic network of proselytizers to accomplish and coordinate its intended unities of ritual and politics and of politics and religious doctrine.

By then the general society readily adopted modern Western institutions and technologies, which however also held in their own way a long background of history and thought. Slowly but inevitably, the accompanying backdrop of Christianity, democracy, natural sciences or enlightened rationality noticeably influenced people’s minds and livelihood and menaced the anticipated unities — thus necessitating an own missionary system and campaign to promote among the populace ‘*kannagara no michi*’ ideas in the form of an indigenous great teaching (*taikyô*). The 3 February 1870 Imperial Edict on the Promulgation of the Great Teaching reads as follows [Yamazumi Masami (ed.), *Kyôiku no taiki* (Tôkyô: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), p. 19 (Nihon kindai shisô taiki. 6); Lokowandt 1978: 266, doc. 24].

When We [the Emperor] reverentially reflect upon it, the heavenly deities and the heavenly ancestors established the primordial principle and showed the path to follow. The successive Emperors obeyed, followed it, and handed it down. With ritual and politics in unity (*saisei itchi*) and the masses of one will, the political doctrines (*jikyô*) above were bright and clear, and the manners below were unspoiled. However, since the Middle Ages, there were times of decay and flourish were the right path was manifest or concealed. Now that the cycle of destiny has renewed all order, the political doctrines are to be made clear, and by this, the way of divine will (*kannagara no michi*) to be enhanced. Thus, new missionaries are appointed and ordered to disseminate the teachings throughout the realm.

To further establish its broad policy and expound the edification project, the Great Council of State on 19 August 1871 sent a pronouncement on the great teaching’s dissemination, its significance, and the missionary’s general role to the Bureau of Shintô Education. It amplified upon the above edict on the great teaching’s promulgation by elucidating some of its core concepts:

The great teaching's significance is to serve the Imperial court by respecting the deities, clarifying morality, rectifying the hearts of the masses, and fulfilling ones duties. If [the people] are not guided by [religious] teaching (*kyô, oshie*) it is impossible for them to rectify their hearts. If they are not governed by administrative politics (*sei, matsurigoto*) it is impossible that they fulfill their duties. Therefore, politics and religion are conducted in unity. Since the great teaching at present however — at this time of restoration based on the great deeds of Jinmu-tennô, who deigned to establish, and of Sujin-tennô⁹, who deigned to evolve the realm — [...] is still not yet common knowledge, the folk is not of a unified mind and staggers in its goals. Therefore, missionary work is an urgent matter.

This pronouncement continues that although there have been changes of government with fluctuations over the ages, since Ninigi no mikoto descended to earth the successive emperors have all adopted Amaterasu's divine will to rule and foster the country — i.e., acted in accordance to *kannagara no michi*. Those proselytizing, should be deeply aware of this fact, correspondingly promote national morality, and fill the people with enthusiasm. Hence, through their work they should 'open the understanding for the divine knowledge, clarify the grand way of morality, respect the deities, induce the people to gratefully accept the court's benevolence, and thus lead them towards the restoration's prosperous rule. This is the meaning of the unity of politics and religious teaching (*seikyô itchi*)' [Lokowandt 1978, pp. 279f., doc. 33]. Sanjô Sanetomi, while as Great-Chancellor being the highest 'secular' official in the Meiji administration's Dajôkan system and equivalent to a prime minister, on 13 August took up the additional posts of chief 'spiritual' official of divine affairs (*jingi-haku*) as well as of chief of the Shintô mission [MTK, vol. 1, p. 648; vol. 2, pp. 484, 511]. Thus, the entire system of the principle of Shintô as state religion with the Jingikan at its center was now established. At this stage in early Meiji, the unity of ritual, politics, and religious doctrine (*sai-sei-kyô itchi*) as anticipated and fostered by many national learning scholars was finally completely formed. However, this ideal state of ternary unity was only short-lived.

Success and conflict at early Meiji academic institutions

For the moment let us turn to educational aspects. Consistent with for instance article five of the above mentioned Imperial Oath, the new Meiji government from the very beginning emphasized new forms of national education within and the pursuit of knowledge abroad. Already Yano Harumichi in his treatise *Kenkin-sengo* advocated the establishment of an educational institute, called Daigakkô [Yano 1971, p. 551]. This proposed College was to mainly instruct the great principles of the deities and sovereigns, or rather of the 'divine sovereigns' (*jinnô no daidô*).

Thus, Iwakura Tomomi on 14 March 1868 commissioned Yano Harumichi along with Hirata Kanetane and Tamamatsu Misao to be the officers to investigate the educational system. On 5 April, the three national learning scholars turned in a draft called *Gakusha-*

sei, the System of Academic Institutions [MTK, vol. 1, p. 675; Ôkubo 1987: 70-76]. Their proposed educational system was based on the organization of the original Institute for Higher Learning, the Daigakuryô. This ancient Imperial University for education and training of government officials was first established during the reign of Emperor Tenji (626—671) and then reorganized into its final form under the Taihō Code of 701. Attached to the Ministry of Rites and Ceremonies Shikibushō, this original Institute for Higher Learning was modeled after Chinese institutions that aimed to teach politics and morality. At first, it only lectured a ‘regular course’ (*honka*) on Confucianism and a special course on arithmetic (*sanka*). After further expansion however, this early University by the ninth century comprised four branches or ways: Chinese classics (*myōgyō-dō*); arithmetic (*san-dō*); law (*myōbō-dō*); and writing (*monjō-dō*) that soon was replaced by history (*kiden-dō*). For the anticipated new purpose of education after the Meiji Restoration however, Yano, Tamamatsu, and Hirata proposed significant alterations in the educational system’s subjects of study. Namely they opted for the following five courses [Ôkubo Toshiaki, *Meiji-ishin to kyōiku* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1987), pp. 70-76 (Ôkubo Toshiaki rekishi chosaku shū. 4); Ochi Michitoshi, *Yano Harumichi no honkyōgaku: Sono shōgai no shisō* (Tōkyō: Kinseisha, 1971), p. 98]: study of the original teachings (*honkyō-gaku*); study of national administration (*keisei-gaku*); study of poetry and prose (*jishō-gaku*); study of [traditional] skills (*hōgi-gaku*)¹⁰; and study of external relations (*gaiban-gaku*).

When contrasting the four ways at the original Daigakuryô with these newly proposed five subjects of study, the way of elucidating the Confucian classics roughly relates to the study of the original teachings; the way of elucidating the laws to national administration; the way of writing to the study of poetry and prose; and the way of arithmetic was included in the study of traditional skills. Corresponding to the new Meiji reality, only the study of external relations was a completely new subject to be divided into topics concerned with China, Russia, Britain, France, Holland, India, and Korea including Ryūkyū.

Already on 4 April 1868, the Office of Internal Affairs ordered the revival of the former Gakushūin, the Peers’ School originally established in 1847 in Kyōto for the edification of court nobles, which was scheduled to start with its lectures on 11 April. However only three days later on 7 April, probably based on the three national learning scholar’s draft that had been submitted in between, Gakushūin renamed into Daigakuryō-dai or substitute Daigakuryō — the ancient Institute for the education and training of government administrators (MTK 1: 675). Its joint existence however only lasted for a few months. On 31 October 1868, the government announced the separate establishment of an Institute for Imperial Studies Kōgakujo as well as an Institute for Chinese Confucian Studies Kangakujo instead of continuing as a single institution. This new regulation stated that “*Imperial studies and Chinese studies together are to mutually dispute right and wrong, and there shall be no obstinate, selfish bigotry*” [Ôkubo 1987, p. 88; MTK, vol. 1, p. 836]. The state therefore tried to regulate the antagonism between the *kokugaku* faction pressing for the ideals of the *Gakusha-sei* and the *kangaku* faction supporting the former Gakushūin. What is important at this early

stage is the distinction between Imperial and Chinese Studies. Although a separate Institute of Chinese Confucian Studies was set up, it is clear that the new establishment and expansion of the Institute for Imperial Studies was emphasized just around the time the anti-Buddhist movement caused by the Jingikan was carried out. Corresponding to the advocacy of Shintô as state religion, the principle of imperial studies was the basic policy in the educational field as well. The preeminence of emperor-centered national scholarship despite this seemingly equal institutional split-up is also clearly expressed in the first two items of regulations on this subject, issued with the government's announcement in late October. It said that *'the national polity (kokutai) should be discerned and moral duties (meibun) rectified'* and *"the scholarships of China and the West both should assist the imperial way (kôdô)'* [MTK, vol. 1, p. 836; Ôkubo 1987, p. 88]. Besides stipulating the primacy of Japanese and imperial studies, the need was recognized to also penetrate the policy and skills of foreign countries. This stance simultaneously wanted to promote and recreate traditional, indigenous scholarship as well as pursue new practical knowledge in the outside world in view of the reality of modernism. Here at the early educational institutions in Kyôto, again the two sides of early Meiji policy can be noted. This dichotomous general posture was the Meiji government's pivot for a new cultural construction. A crucial historical significance lies in the primacy of imperial studies as an integral part for the unification of scholarship in early Meiji. From the beginning, religious-moral edification as well as scholarly education of all sections of the populace, two parts of the same parcel for the government, were the pillars of its fundamental project of national construction. These and later regulations show that the government also intended to put it into practice regarding its edification project. After all, 'proper' education was the door to enter into a new cultural discourse.

Institute for Imperial Studies

Although it cannot be said with certainty who was responsible for the Institute's regulations, most evidence indicates Yano Harumichi being the author [Ôkubo 1987, pp. 104f.]. The very first item of these regulations dealt with the Institute's Shintô shrine, the Kôso-tenjin ômiya, where the deities of heaven and earth, the spirits of the successive generations of Imperial ancestors, as well as those of famous ancient families should be venerated to express its scholarly intention. Already on 7 January 1869, the Shintôist ground-breaking ceremony was performed in the presence of Jingikan's superior Otagi Michimasu (1799—1875) and others of its personnel — often the same persons as the Institute's teaching staff. On 24 January, the divine seat was constructed and the following day the actual enshrinement ceremony was held in presence of Jingikan's prefect Konoë Tadafusa (1838—1878) [Ôkubo 1987, pp. 96f.]. The close combination at this governmental institution of actual education, Shintô based religious rituals, and the veneration of various deities as well as ancient families of *literati* and statesmen defending the court and emperor again can be seen as part of the contemporary official objective to implement an emperor centered unity of ritual, politics, and doctrine in

early Meiji Japan.

However, with the capital's transfer in 1869, the center of education also moved to the former center of the Shogunate. There, the late Edo period's 'three seats of learning' had been revived soon after the Meiji restoration. The Igakujo was restored as Medical College I-gakkô on 14 August 1868, the former Shôheikô as Shôhei College on 17 August, and the Kaiseijo was revived as College for Western Sciences Kaisei-gakkô on 27 October. The Shôhei-gakkô on 23 July 1869 then was reorganized and renamed into Daigakkô, an umbrella institution for its sub-branches Kaisei-gakkô, I-gakkô, and additionally the Naval and Military Academy Hei-gakkô [MTK, vol. 2, p. 139]. In light of university transformations in Tôkyô due to the government's relocation, soon the need was felt to thoroughly change earlier plans. On 6 October the imperial government that stayed in Tôkyô castle at the time thus informed that due to the foundation of a unified College in the new capital, the Kôgakujo and Kangakujo are being abolished [Ôkubo 1987, p. 149]. The two rivaling schools in Kyôto had to close their gates less than a year after their establishment.

Nevertheless, this new College in Tôkyô inherited and systematized the spirit visible already in the regulations of the closed down Institute for Imperial Studies in Kyôto. The government's objective at that time of ongoing nation building, in which the principle of an imperial centeredness becomes increasingly obvious in academic education as well, can be sensed from the new Daigakkô's regulations. Its very first item stated that '*discerning national polity (kokutai) based on the sacred scriptures [of Shintô] and national classics, while simultaneously elucidating the Chinese classics, is pivotal to accomplish practical learning and utility*' [Ôkubo 1987, pp. 204, 213]. Significantly, now Chinese studies at least seem to stand side by side with Imperial studies in the task of carving and bringing about the national essence. While adding the more practically applicable western scholarships taught at the College's three sub-branches, it is yet very questionable to what degree this combination of diverse scholarships at one institution — rather following their old path under a new name — already can be called a modern ideal. One intention for the new College seemed to be the overcoming of the antagonistic scholarly traditions of 'Imperial' Kyôto and 'Confucian' Edo by combining them in a single institution, a true *universitas*. However, the anticipated harmony between the two educational systems and their respective strive for modernization turned out to be only short-lived. Quite noteworthy, in the course of this educational consolidation and Shôhei-gakkô's transformation into the Daigakkô, its Confucian sanctuary had been closed as well, thus stirring already existing and precluding later intensified animosity. Headed by restoration *kokugaku* or Imperial studies, seconded by formerly state supported *kangaku* or Confucian studies, and appended with future prospects in the form of *yôgaku* or practical Western studies, this unified three-legged College of higher learning represented a rather explosive mixture of traditional and modern ideas and ideologies.

Shift to pure Western education

At a time when the revived Bureau of Divinity was positioned outside and above the Great Council of State and the Imperial Edict on the Great Teaching's Promulgation had been issued on 3 February 1870, the long-awaited important position for *kokugaku* scholars and Shintôists in the academic and educational world seemed to be secured. Seeing however no way of solving all fundamentally antagonistic conflicts, the authorities decided to finally abolish the renamed University on 8 August 1870, a little more than a year after its establishment as College. Thus, while the targeted state system of unity of ritual, politics and religious doctrine had been set on its way with the national Shintô edification of promoting *kannagara no michi*, the supporting pillar of this ternary unity in academic education was suddenly lost again.

It is said that when two people argue, someone else benefits. Due to the heated conflict between Imperial and Chinese studies, the growing power of Europeanization at the time finally gave rise to adopting an internal western style educational system. In spite of the University's abolishment, the main school's two sub-branches for Western learning were continued as independent entities. Official academic education thus from then on was pursued in a strict 'Western style' and things were studied without any overtly obvious emphasis on *kokugaku*, imperial learning, or Shintôist footing as before. From rhetoric up to philosophy, the content now was completely western. The last item of the Five-Article-Oath of 6 April 1868 already avowed to seek knowledge throughout the world and invigorate the foundations of the imperial nation. It was perhaps not immediately clear and comprehensible to the people how the therewith evoked pursuit of international knowledge and the encouragement of the Emperors' great deeds should be combined in concrete terms. However, the trend of the times with a more or less complete Western focus in education now even enabled members of the imperial family to study abroad.

Further developments in religious politics

On 22 September 1871, the Bureau of Divinity quite significantly was transformed from its exalted position into a normal Ministry of Divinity, now placed below the Dajōkan's jurisdiction on equal footing with other ministries [Lokowandt 1978, p. 282, doc. 37]. Its lower status is worth noting, but the most fundamental transformation came about half a year later. In early December, the House of the Left proposed to also establish a separate Ministry of Buddhist Temples Jiinshō, but soon the need was felt to better cope with the recent considerable imbuing by Christianity and Western ideas. Resonating the opposition of the combined Japanese and Chinese versus the Western learning factions at the early-Meiji educational institutions, it was deemed that this situation could be better dealt with by a more comprehensive national edification project that appoints Buddhists together with the existing Shintô missionaries. Thus, on 21 April 1872, Jingishō was completely abolished and instead the Ministry of Public Instructions Kyōbushō newly established. The post of Shintô proselytizer therefore also was

replaced by the broader post of public instructor or evangelist (*kyōdōshoku*). The general purpose remained the same, but this time the circle for mobilization was extended to include Shintōists, Buddhists and Confucianists alike. By broadly turning to all three belief-systems for its edification policy, the government clearly indicated a rather practical view of present needs. Four years after the edict on the separation of *kami* and Buddhas, the state's missionary project became an even further reaching movement through this changed political awareness. Especially Buddhism had a long tradition of great influence among the common populace. In consequence, the mission's scale was expanded and all religious groups supervised in one organization in order to easier obtain a unified public mind. Not only Shintō priests, but also Buddhist monks as well as provincial leaders, sooth-sayers, actors, professional storytellers, and other volunteers generally used to preaching and engaging public speaking were now jointly appointed as public instructors. Hence, Kyōbushō no longer was exclusively concerned with Shintō affairs, priests, and shrines, but with doctrinal teaching and public morals in general. Other than the Jingikan, Kyōbushō now administratively controlled business concerning every creed and aimed at a joint public mission when the edification movement centered on Shintoists and national-learning scholars alone had reached a dead end. The educational policy of concentrating on imperial studies at this time also crumbled and the various 'traditional' subjects were abandoned for about five years until the establishment of Tōkyō University in 1877. Moreover, partial dissociation of Shintō's religious doctrine from the ideal of a ternary unity was a necessary step to secure and foster the unity of ritual and politics within the imperial office amidst a strong pro-Western surrounding.

It was strongly felt that creating and applying a modern political system as well as finding a place in the international arena was impossible while continuing to rigorously reject religious freedom. In order for Japan to continue with its modernization project in view of an eventual revision of the unequal treaties with Western powers, Christianity thus had to ultimately be tolerated and its ban finally lifted in 1873. More and more it was also recognized as the fundamental power behind Western civilization for which an own national counterpart as the core of an indigenous Japanese culture had to be found and developed. This acknowledgment definitely helped to push forward the establishment of the broader based Kyōbushō and the expansion of proper personnel taking part in its national edification. In a way, the pressure of Westernization thus urged the various systems of thought into a joint 'self-defense'. The least common denominator among the various factions of conservative and progressive national learning scholars and Shintoists indeed was reverence for the Emperor. Therefore, to raise the Imperial household's sanctity in the people's minds, the broader credo of an 'Imperial way' based on an amalgamation of various ideas and ethics was thenceforth hoisted as substitution for an outright principle of 'restoring' an alleged pure and ancient Shintō as state religion or sole basis for national edification.

In 1889, article twenty-eight of the new Imperial constitution finally approved religious liberty to the Japanese — within limits not prejudicial to peace and order and not antagonistic to their duties as subject as it explicitly states. Hence, with the constitution, the government's

endeavor since the restoration days for a standardized state religion officially found its end as well. Instead, latest with the publication on 30 October 1890 of the highly important Imperial Rescript on Education *Kyōiku chokugo* that had to be bowed to and revered as a sacred script symbolic of the spiritual unification of the Japanese people, this endeavor had fully evolved into a promotion of public morality and wholly emperor-centered state ideology. For this state ideology, the Imperial Rescript on Education thus can be seen as culmination of two parallel yet often-intertwined trends: ‘restorative’ religious proselytization and ‘innovative’ popular education finally joined in the Shintō-based Imperial way.

- 1 For examples of recent scholarship that uses the term ‘revolution’ in connection with the events of 1868, see: Sven Saaler, ‘Die Bedeutung der Epochenmarke 1868 in der Japanischen Geschichte: Restauration, Revolution, Reform’, in: *Saeculum* 56:1 (2005), p. 70.
- 2 For a thorough treatment of *kokugaku* in the Meiji period, including a much more detailed description of the various events alluded to in this paper, see: Michael Wachutka, *National Learning (kokugaku) in Meiji-period Japan: Transformation, Proliferation, and Scholarly Societies*. Ph.D.-Thesis, University of Tübingen, 2007.
- 3 In the system of *saisei itchi*, the Emperor as highest Shintō priest performs state ritual (*sai*) while simultaneously overseeing the government (*sei*) as political sovereign. The imperial office is thus defined by the unity (*itchi*) of these two functions.
- 4 It said: 1) We shall determine all state matters by public discussion, after assemblies have been convoked far and wide; 2) We shall unite all people’s hearts and minds, the better to pursue with vigor the rule of the realm; 3) We are duty bound to ensure that all people, nobility, military, and commoners too, may fulfill their aspirations and not yield to despair; 4) We shall break through the shackles of former evil practice and base our actions on the principles of international law; 5) We shall seek knowledge throughout the world and thus invigorate the foundations of this imperial nation [Kunaichō (ed.): *Meiji-tennō ki* [MTK], vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1968-1977), p. 654. John Breen, ‘The Imperial Oath of April 1868: Ritual, Power and Politics in Restoration Japan’, in: *Monumenta Nipponica* 51:4 (1996), p. 410].
- 5 Much indeed seems “justified and necessitated for Yano entirely by the fact of their existence in the utopian Ritsuryō age” [John Breen, ‘Shintoists in Restoration Japan (1868-1872): Towards a reassessment’, in: Peter Kornicki (ed.), *Meiji Japan: Political, Economic and Social History 1868–1912*, vol. 1: The emergence of the Meiji state (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 130] without considering their real relevance for the present. However, other parts of his manifest do touch upon political and social questions of the new era. Together with strengthening the coastal defense as external policy, some of Yano’s surprisingly social proposals include the establishment of poorhouses for helpless people such as widows and widowers as well as orphans and childless elders, of institutions for infants to raise abandoned children, of teaching institutes to educate rogue youngsters, and of infirmaries for the disabled and sick [Yano 1971, pp. 551, 555].
- 6 Ueno Akira [‘Meiji-zenpanki ni okeru kokugaku no tenkai: Hirata-gakuha no katsudō wo chūshin ni shite’, in: *Kokugo to kokubungaku; tokushūgo: Kokugaku kenkyū* 16:10 (1939), p. 374] in passing calls this *kokugaku* thought of ‘eternal divine will’ an eastern form of *yotei chōwa*. This actually is a translation of G. W. Leibniz’s concept of a ‘pre-established harmony’ (*prästabiliertere Harmonie; harmonie préétablie*), a harmony established eternally between all monads — spiritual substances or souls in his philosophy that are indivisible, indestructible, impenetrable, and a center of force from which all the physical properties of matter are derived. This harmony is the synchronous operation of

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- all monads since their simultaneous creation, in accordance with the preexisting plan of God.
- 7 Jingikan is first mentioned in *Nihonshoki* during the reign of Empress Jitô on 3/8/2 (22 August 689).
 - 8 Since 1871 for instance prince Ôtomo (648—672) is counted as 39th emperor of Japan under the posthumous name Kôbun.
 - 9 The tenth Emperor Sujin is said to have ruled 97—30 B.C. His reign, the first about which the ancient chronicles give any extended details, was a period of organizing the realm in which taxes were fixed, lakes and canals dug, and a census taken.
 - 10 Besides the six subjects specifically indicated here — astronomy (*tenmon*), calendar making (*ritsureki*), arithmetic (*sansû*), music (*ongaku*), divination (*bokuzei*), and the art of healing (*ijutsu*) — the term *hōgi* commonly also includes sorcery and other esoteric arts practiced by hermits and mountain wizards (*shinzen*).