

RESPONSE TO HELEN HARDACRE'S *SHINTO: A HISTORY*

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When the advance publicity for the book came out, I read Richard Bowring's effusive blurb with mixed emotions. Dr. Bowring wrote: "Professor Hardacre manages to lead us carefully and judiciously on a long journey through what can often be recalcitrant, complex material. The notoriously difficult question 'What is Shinto?' has finally been answered."

On the one hand I was tremendously relieved that this notoriously difficult question had finally been answered; on the other hand I was somewhat disappointed that the question had finally been answered, and that this might mean that no more remained to be said about this fascinating phenomenon. But when I bought the book and began to read it, I discovered that Dr. Hardacre was more modest in her assessment; she writes "... I make no grand claims for my approach, anticipating that future researchers will supersede it with more precise analytic tools." As John Breen and Mark Teeuwen reminded us in their 2010 *New History of Shinto*, there are "many Shintos, and many histories." Certainly there is so much more concerning this multi-faceted and multi-splendored religion, if we may call it a religion, that awaits to be discovered and analyzed.

Dr. Hardacre from the outset presents her claims and her thesis forcefully and lucidly. Thus, and I quote the very first sentence, "From earliest times, the Japanese people have worshipped Kami." This forthright statement might appear to some as fighting words, since the tendency in recent discourse has been to problematize the question of origins, and particularly to challenge the notion of an indigenous reverence for the Kami. But Hardacre declares from the outset that "I

argue that although the term *Shinto* hardly appears, we can identify Shinto's institutional origins in the late seventh- and early eighth-century coordination of Kami worship, regarded as embodying indigenous tradition, by a government ministry following legal mandates."

In the opening chapters Dr. Hardacre has devoted much care to examining issues of the terminology that may legitimately be employed in writing the history of Shinto. In a long section titled "The Term Shinto" she rejects the claim of various medievalists that "Shinto thus begins not in the ancient period but was fully established for the first time in the medieval period." (p. 43, quoting Inoue Hiroshi). Here she further restates her thesis, "It seems to me that once system and centralization emerge in the late seventh century, it is reasonable to speak of Shinto in recognition of the watershed represented by the Jingikan, a structured ritual calendar, Kami Law, and the incorporation of Kami priests into the government. By comparison with this ritual, institutional, and social system, doctrinal and philosophical expositions came later and were transmitted in esoteric frameworks restricting their transmission to initiates." This latter is also a reference to Mark Teeuwen's well-known stance that Shinto developed and then emerged within the context of esoteric Buddhism. I personally would argue that doctrinal and philosophical expositions came much earlier than the medieval period, and even before the work of Kūkai and Saichō, namely in the imperial edicts of the eighth century known as the *senmyō*.

Hardacre deals definitively, and I hope, conclusively, with the matter of Kuroda Toshio's legacy, particularly as heralded in his extraordinarily influential *Journal of Japanese Studies* article from 1981:

"In convincing a generation of researchers so completely of Shinto's envelopment within Buddhism until such late dates in history, Kuroda may have succeeded too well. In place of the rhetoric of Shinto as 'the indigenous religion of Japan,' now it has become difficult to perceive

meaningful continuity from the ancient period to the present, or to discuss Shinto's early history without 'scare quotes.' This study tries to address the issue of continuity in Shinto history from a new vantage point." (p 5) To be fair, Breen and Teeuwen already in their 2000 book *Shinto in History* struck a similar note, and I quote:

"If we accept Kuroda's argument in its most extreme form, and adopt his stance that there was no distinct 'Shinto' tradition of thought during the premodern period, we render ourselves unable either to explain the process of amalgamation that dominated premodern Japanese religion, or to see the Shinto tradition that rose to prominence in the Edo and modern periods in its proper historical context."

The difference in Hardacre's approach is of course with Mark Teeuwen's claims for a medieval origin of Shinto.

Another direction in which Hardacre boldly goes is in positing a basic dichotomy between the "indigenous" and the "foreign." She somewhat qualifies this by using, at least at first, the dread scare quotes around the terms, and recognizing that "Debates about the indigenous and the foreign, and the shifting definitions of both, constitute a core issue."(p.5) Nevertheless, her section headings in Chapter One highlight this dichotomy, such as for example "Political Struggle Casts the Kami as 'Indigenous' and the Buddhas as 'Foreign'" (p.27) and the emphasis on this polarity constitutes one of her foundational arguments.

The lengthy discussion of "The Question of Syncretism" in Chapter 4 is closely reasoned. Hardacre decides not to use the term, primarily because of its original negative connotations. I would argue here that syncretism, a concept with a long history in religious studies, is still meaningful for Japanese religions. Hardacre speaks of combinations, assimilations and

rapprochements between Buddhist divinities and the kami, and also of “interpenetration of ritual systems and combinatory institutions as the norm in Japan.” While this additional vocabulary is certainly helpful and perhaps more precise, it does seem odd to me that we must ban the term “syncretism”. I would just call attention to some of Michael Pye’s helpful discussions of the term in his recent (2014) book *Strategies in the Study of Religions*, where he analyzes the term and its usefulness for Japan in the context of European theological debates.

I do have a basic problem with Dr. Hardacre’s approach of utilizing the material in the *Jingiryō* as solid evidence for Shinto in the eighth and ninth centuries. What is loosely referred to nowadays as the *Ritsuryō* is of course a very problematic text. *Shoku Nihongi* records the promulgation of the *Taihō* codes in 701 and 702, but of course these documents have been lost. The *Yōrō* Code was announced in the year 718, but for reasons still unclear was not promulgated until 757. This code is also not extant. Rather, what we have in the standard edition compiled by Inoue Mitsusada in 1976 is a cobbling together of material found in the ninth-century *Ryō no Gige* and *Ryō no Shuge*. A further difficulty is that what the tenth-century *Engi Shiki* presented as the *Jingiryō* was actually a supplemental version supplying months and days for the various rituals and adding commentary as to their contents and purpose.

The issue is primarily that what we know as the *Ritsuryō*, even if it likely does represent a Nara period recension, is that it is a prescriptive text, as is the *Engi Shiki*. These are by no means accurate descriptions of what went on in the eighth and ninth centuries. Here I refer you to the chart on page seven, which requires some explanation. The *Rikkokushi*, or the Six National Histories, inscribed in Classical Chinese with some material, such as the *senmyō* in Old Japanese, comprise a fairly detailed history of Japan from mythic beginnings down to the year 887, the end of the reign of the Emperor Kōkō. This corpus has its own textual problems, notably that parts of

the latter four chronicles were lost, and the texts as we have them are supplemented with material from *Ruijū Kokushi* and *Nihon Kiryaku*. These court chronicles were not intended to record absolutely everything that happened, and in fact the *Shoku Nihongi* compilers explained that they did not list every regular festival. Nevertheless, this ample documentation has been largely ignored, especially by Western historians. For example, my recent translation of *Shoku Nihongi* for the years 749-770 is the first complete translation into English, and only represents some 40 percent of the document.

To compile this table I utilized a digital compilation of the *Rikkokushi* in MS Excel format and the “Find” search function. (Several digital versions are available freely online, although as yet there is no standard digital edition.) In my chart the six national histories are listed on the left axis – *Nihon Shoki*, or *Nihongi*; *Shoku Nihongi*; *Nihon Kōki*; *Shoku Nihon Kōki*; *Nihon Montoku Tennō Jitsuroku*; and *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku*. Across the top are the *matsuri* listed in *Jingiryō* (see list on page 6). Note that the first page of *Jingiryō* from Inoue’s standard edition lists only the names of the rituals and approximate times of year – middle spring, end of spring, beginning of summer -etc. The only exception in *Jingiryō* was for the *Ōharae*, prescribed for the last day of the 6th and 12th months. The precise dates such as – 4th day of 4th month for the *Ōimi no Matsuri* were added in *Engi Shiki*. Hardacre’s tables in Chapter 1 for the rituals and the materials offered do cite *Engi Shiki*, but it is not made clear that the late provenance of that document means it does not describe what actually went on in the eighth and ninth centuries.

So, my chart demonstrates that there is an enormous amount of material to be analyzed concerning the *Jingikan*’s festival calendar. Note that these rituals are not all necessarily designated as “*Sai*” or “*Matsuri*” in the chronicles. For example, what we now often refer to as the *Daijōsai* was at times given the reading of “*Ōname no e*”, or even *Ōnie*. Sansom’s translation,

Hardacre's chart, Inoue's *Jingiryō*, and *Engi Shiki* also transmit a variety of pronunciations for the various rituals – thus for example the *Kannie* – *Kanname* – or *Kamunie*, or the reading of *Toshigoi* for *Kinensai*.

But what I would like to emphasize in closing is that my remarks here concern only the first few chapters of this monumental study, and only a few select topics. Dr. Hardacre's own generous assessment of her work anticipates and predicts the labor of future researchers digging away with both mighty shovels and tiny precision instruments. The elucidation of the manifold aspects of the remarkable phenomenon that is Shinto has truly only begun.

祈年祭 *Toshigoi/Kinensai*

鎮花 *Hanashizume*

神衣 *Kamumiso*

大忌 *Ōimi/Ōmi*

三枝 *Saigusa*

風神 *Kazakami/Kazakamu*

月次 *Tsukinami*

鎮火 *Hishizume*

道饗 *Michiae*

神嘗 *Kannie/Kanname/Kamunie*

相嘗 *Oinbe/Ainame/Aimube*

鎮魂 *Ōntamafuri*

大嘗 *Ōname/Ōnbe/Ōnie/Daijō*

大祓 *Ōharai/Ōharae*

Ross Bender, March 2017 (not for citation)

TEXT	MATSURI LISTED IN JINGIRY0												TOTAL		
	祈	鎮	神	大	三	風	月	鎮	道	神	相	鎮	大嘗		
年	花	衣	忌	枝	神	次	火	饗	嘗	嘗	魂	大嘗	祓		
祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭	祭		
NSK/NG --697	0	0	0	18	0	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	
SNG 697-792	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	14	15	
NKK 792-832	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	
SNKK 832-850	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	
NMTJR 850-858	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	9	13	
NSDJR 858-887	29	0	0	1	0	1	50	0	0	2	0	9	28	70	
TOTAL	35	0	0	19	0	21	55	0	1	2	1	9	67	103	313

INOUE MITSUSADA	孟夏の祭	季の春の祭	季春の祭	仲春の祭	仲の祭	凡天の祭
1976	神衣の祭	鎮花祭	鎮花祭	年祭	年祭	神祇者。

孟夏の祭
 季の春の祭
 季春の祭
 仲春の祭
 仲の祭
 凡天の祭

 神衣の祭
 鎮花祭
 鎮花祭
 年祭
 年祭
 神祇者。

神祇令 第六