CHAPTER NINE: SHINTO

Chapter Outline and Unit Summaries

I. Introduction

A. A Loosely Organized Native Japanese Religion with Wide Variety of Beliefs and Practices

1. Term “Shinto” Coined Sixth Century C.E. from Chinese shen and tao (literally: the way of the Gods)

2. Preferred Japanese Term: kami-no-michi

B. Shinto as Expression of Japanese Nationalism

C. Shinto as Expression of Animism and Nature Veneration

II. Japanese Mythology

A. Pre-Sixth Century C.E. Japan Religion Focused on Kami

1. Kami Defined as Mana, Occult-Animistic Forces

2. Kami Defined as Deities of Heaven and Earth and Spirits of Humans, Animals, Trees, Plants, Seas, Mountains, etc.

B. Japanese Mythic Text: Kojiki, “Chronicles of Ancient Events”

1. Composed in Seventh - Eighth Centuries C.E. as Response to Influx of Chinese Culture into Japan

2. Section of Kojiki Entitled “The Age of the Gods” Gives Mythological Background of Japanese Culture

3. Japanese Islands Created by Two Kami: Izanagi and His Consort Izanami

4. Izanagi and Izanami Parent Other Kami of Japanese Mythology

5. Amaterasu is Sun God, from whom all Japanese Emperors Descend
III. The History of Shinto

A. Shinto Prior to 300 C.E.

1. Legend: First Japanese Emperor Enthroned in Seventh Century B.C.E.

2. Most Scholars Believe First Emperor Enthroned in Third Century C.E., Making Japan One of Youngest Cultures in Asia

3. Coming of Buddhism in Sixth Century C.E. Motivates Collection of Myths as *kami-no-michi* to Distinguish Native Japanese Culture from Chinese and Korean.
   a. Myths of *kami-no-michi* Allowed for Limitless Number of Gods, Goddesses, Spirits, Ancestor Worship, Animism
   b. Shrines to Various Kami Proliferate
   c. Amaterasu and Susa-No-O Most Popular Gods

B. Chinese Influence on Shinto

1. Chinese and Korean Merchants and Missionaries Enter Japan

2. Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism Present After Fourth Century C.E.


4. Chinese Buddhism Deeply Influences Japan
   a. Initially Emperor Feared Foreign God (Buddha) Would Anger the Native Kami
   b. Eventually Mahayana Buddhism is Widespread by Sixth Century C.E.
   c. Four Japanese Reactions to Chinese Buddhism
      (1) Development of Shinto (*kami-no-michi*) as Native Alternative to Foreign Religion
      (2) Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* Reinterpreted as Revelations of Kami to Indians and Chinese
      (3) Ryobu (Two Aspect Shinto) Seeks Syncretistic Mix of Shinto and Buddhism; Division of Labor Develops for Ten
Centuries with Shinto for Day-to-Day Affairs and Buddhism for the Afterlife

(4) Development of Distinctively Japanese Forms of Buddhism, Particularly Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren; These Forms so Popular they Nearly Eclipse Shinto for Average Person

C. The Revival of Shinto

1. Reformers in Fourteenth Century C.E. Seek to Move Shinto Out from Its Syncretistic Eclipse by Buddhism

   a. Japan Unified by Isolationist Military Leaders
   b. Repress Buddhism and Christianity, Support Shinto as the Native Religion of Japan
   c. Confucianism Allowed Because Supported Militaristic Ethos of Tokugawa Regime

3. The Rise of the Samurai (Knight) Code of Conduct During Tokugawa Regime
   a. The Chu Shi (Shushi) School of Confucianism
   b. Yamaga Soko (1622-1685 C.E.) Leads Chu Shi School, Combine Confucianism and Shinto into Warrior Code, *Bushido* (“the way of the fighting knight”)
   c. The *Bushido* Code
      (1) The Samurai is Bound to be Loyal to His Master in the Hierarchy of the Feudal System
      (2) The Samurai Must Have Great Courage in Life, in Battle, and in His Willingness to Lay Down His Life for His Master
      (3) Above All, the Samurai is a Man of Honor
      (4) Like a True Confucian, the Samurai is Expected to be Polite to His Master and to All in Authority
      (5) Despite His Attitude toward Peasants the Samurai is Expected to be a Gentleman in Every Sense of the Word
d. The Seppaku Tradition of Ritual Suicide

(1) The Samurai Must Prefer Suicide to Dishonor; Means Must be Slow and Painful Disembowelment (seppuku, as in hari-kiri, belly-slitting)

(2) Japan is Unique in World Culture in its Positive Acceptance of Suicide as a Religious Act

(3) Women and Peasants not Allowed to Practice seppuku, Must Commit Suicide in Quicker Manner

D. The Modern Era

1. Epoch of Tokugawa Isolation Ends in 1853 C.E. When American Admiral Perry Forced Japan to Open Its Ports to Trade

2. Constitution of 1889 C.E. Decrees that Japan Will Follow Pattern of Freedom of Religion

3. State Support for Patriotic Shinto Rituals and Shrines Maintained, and Domestic Shinto Encouraged

IV. Three Forms of Shinto

A. State (Jinja, Shrine) Shinto

1. *Jinja* (Shrine) Shinto Emerges when 1889 Constitution Places 110,000 Shrines and 16,000 Shinto Priests Under Government Support

2. Each Shrine Dedicated to Local Deity or Event

3. Grand Imperial Shrine to Amaterasu Covered by Distinctive Archway (*torii*), Which has Become Worldwide Symbol of Shinto

4. Shrines Have Inner and Outer Buildings, and Must be Torn Down and Rebuilt Every Twenty Years

   a. Inner Shrine Reserved for Priests and Government Officials
   b. Inner Shrine Contains Objects of Importance to the Deity or the Event it Commemorates
   c. All Loyal Japanese Expected to Visit Shrine at Ise at Least Once in a Lifetime
5. Goal of State Shinto: Engender Patriotism and Loyalty

a. No Other Religious Function of Shinto Envisioned in 1889 Constitution
b. Emperor Made Supreme Sacred / Religious Figure in 1889 Constitution
c. Tool of Support for Japanese Military, Which Answered to Emperor not Parliament
d. American Occupation Forces Abolish State Shinto as Inseparable from Japanese Militarism (1945), Require Emperor to Publicly Deny His Divinity
e. Formerly State Shrines Now Funded Privately

B. Sectarian Shinto

1. Develops as Reaction to State Shinto During Meiji Era

2. Thirteen Major Sects of Shinto Divided into Three Categories

   a. Sects Emphasizing Mountain Worship Combine Nature Worship and Asceticism
   b. Fail Healing / Shamanistic Sects (example: Tenrikyo)
   c. Sects Focused on Traditional Japanese Mythology and Rituals

C. Domestic Shinto

1. Most Basic and Common Form of Shinto

2. The _kami-dana_, God-shelf Contains Symbols Important to the Family

   a. Such as Ancestor’s Names
   b. Statues of Patron Gods
   c. Objects Bought at Great Shrines (such as Ise)

3. Daily Offerings of Food, Drink, Lanterns, Flowers, or Incense Placed at _kami-dana_

4. Simple Rituals and Important Ceremonies Held at _kami-dana_ (But not Ceremonies Concerning Death; Buddhism is for matters concerning the afterlife)
V. Japanese Festivals

A. New Year (Shogatsu)
   1. Most Widely Celebrated Holiday: January 1st – 6th
   2. Special Foods Eaten, Offerings Made to Ancestors

B. Buddha’s Birthday
   1. April 8th
      2. Priests Pour Flowers, Sweet Tea On Statues of Buddha
      3. December 8th Commemorates Day of Buddha’s Enlightenment

C. All Soul’s Day (Ullambana)
   1. Mid-July
      2. Welcome Spirits of the Dead into the Home, Decorate Graves

D. Autumn Festival (Niiname-sai)
   1. November 23rd - 24th
      2. Combines Agricultural and Shinto Holidays
      3. Emperor Offers First Fruit of Harvest to Amaterasu and Other Kami at Ise

VI. Shinto Today

A. Post WWII Threats to Shinto Survival
   1. Removal of State Support for Shinto
   2. Industrialization Seems to Render Shinto Anachronistic
   3. Renewed Interest in Buddhism

B. Shinto as Strong as Ever in Japan
   1. Shrines Function on Private Donations
   2. New Shinto Sects Emphasizing Faith Healing, Positive Thinking, and Chanting Popular with Millions
   3. Popular in Urban Areas because Helps Cope with Stress
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