

= State Shinto =

State Shinto? (国教 , Kokka Shinto) describes Imperial Japan 's ideological use of the native folk traditions of Shinto . The state strongly encouraged Shinto practices to emphasize the Emperor as a divine being . This was exercised through control of finances and training regimes for priests .

The State Shinto ideology emerged at the start of the Meiji era , as government officials defined freedom of religion within the Meiji Constitution . Scholars believed that Shinto reflected the historical fact of the Emperor 's divine origins , not religious belief , and that it should enjoy a privileged relationship with the Japanese state . For the state , Shinto was seen as a non religious moral tradition and patriotic practice .

Early Meiji era attempts to unite Shinto and state failed , but this non religious concept of ideological Shinto was incorporated into state bureaucracy . Shrines were defined as patriotic , not religious , institutions , which served state purposes such as honoring the war dead . The state also integrated local shrines into political functions , occasionally spurring local opposition and resentment . With fewer shrines financed by the state , nearly 80 ,000 closed or merged with neighbors . Many shrines and shrine organizations began to independently embrace these state directives , regardless of funding . By 1940 , Shinto priests risked persecution for performing traditionally " religious " Shinto ceremonies .

Imperial Japan did not draw a distinction between ideological Shinto and traditional Shinto . US military leaders introduced the term " State Shinto " to differentiate the state 's ideology from traditional Shinto practices in the 1945 Shinto Directive . That decree established Shinto as a religion , and banned further ideological uses of Shinto by the state . Controversy continues to surround the use of Shinto symbols in state functions .

= = Origins of the term = =

Shinto is a blend of indigenous Japanese folk practices , court manners , and spirit worship which dates back to at least 600 AD . These beliefs were first unified as " Shinto " during the Meiji era (1868 - 1912) , though the Chronicles of Japan (日本書紀 , Nihon Shoki) referenced the term in the eighth century . Shinto has no set of doctrines or founder , but draws from a set of creation myths described in books such as the Kojiki .

The 1945 " Shinto Directive " of the United States General Headquarters introduced the " State Shinto " distinction as it began governing Japan after the second world war . The Shinto Directive , (officially the " Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship , Support , Perpetuation , Control and Dissemination of State Shinto ") defined State Shinto as " that branch of Shinto (Kokka Shinto or Jinja Shinto) which , by official acts of the Japanese government , has been differentiated from the religion of Sect Shinto (Shuha Shinto or Kyoha Shinto) and has been classified a non religious national cult . "

The " State Shinto " term was thus used to categorize , and abolish , Imperial Japanese practices that relied on Shinto to support nationalistic ideology . By refusing to ban Shinto practices outright , Japan 's post war constitution was thus able to preserve full Freedom of Religion .

= = Definitions = =

The definition of State Shinto requires distinction from the term " Shinto , " which was one aspect of a set of nationalist symbols integrated into the State Shinto ideology . Though some scholars , such as Woodard and Holtom , and the Shinto Directive itself , use the terms " Shrine Shinto " and " State Shinto " interchangeably , most contemporary scholars use the term " Shrine Shinto " to refer to the majority of Shinto shrines which were outside of State Shinto influence , leaving " State Shinto " to refer to shrines and practices deliberately intended to reflect state ideology .

= = = Interpretations = = =

Most generally , State Shinto refers to any use of Shinto practices incorporated into the national ideology during the Meiji period starting in 1868 . It is often described as any state @-@ supported , Shinto @-@ inspired ideology or practice intended to inspire national integration , unity , and loyalty . State Shinto is also understood to refer to the state rituals and ideology of Emperor @-@ worship , which was not a traditional emphasis of Shinto ? of the 124 Japanese emperors , only 20 have dedicated shrines .

" State Shinto " was not an official designation for any practice or belief in Imperial Japan during this period . Instead , it was developed at the end of the war to describe the mixture of state support for non @-@ religious shrine activities and immersive ideological support for the Kokutai policy in education , including the training of all shrine priests . This permitted a form of traditional religious Shinto to reflect a State Shinto position without the direct control of the state . The extent to which Emperor worship was supported by the population is unclear , though scholars such as Ashizu Uzuhiko , Sakamoto Koremaru , and Nitta Hitoshi argue that the government 's funding and control of Shrines was never adequate enough to justify a claim to the existence of a State Shinto . The extent of popular support for the actions categorized as " State Shinto " is the subject of debate .

Some contemporary Shinto authorities reject the concept of State Shinto , and seek to restore elements of the practice , such as naming time periods after the Emperor . This view often sees " State Shinto " purely as an invention of the United States ' " Shinto Directive . "

= = Shinto as political ideology = =

" Religious " practice , in its Western sense , was unknown in Japan prior to the Meiji restoration . " Religion " was understood to encompass a series of beliefs about faith and the afterlife , but also closely associated with Western power . The Meiji restoration had re @-@ established the Emperor , a " religious " figure , as the head of the Japanese state .

Religious freedom was initially a response to demands of Western governments . Japan had allowed Christian missionaries under pressure from Western governments , but viewed Christianity as a foreign threat . The state was challenged to establish a suprareligious interpretation of Shinto that incorporated , and promoted , the Emperor 's divine lineage . By establishing Shinto as a unique form of " suprareligious " cultural practice , it would be exempted from Meiji laws protecting freedom of religion .

The " State Shinto " ideology presented Shinto as something beyond religion , " a unity of government and teaching ... not a religion . " Rather than a religious practice , Shinto was understood as a form of education , which " consists of the traditions of the imperial house , beginning in the age of gods and continuing through history . "

Scholars , such as Sakamoto Koremaru , argue that the " State Shinto " system existed only between 1900 and 1945 , corresponding to the state 's creation of the Bureau of Shrines . That bureau distinguished Shinto from religions managed by the Bureau of Shrines and Temples , which became the Bureau of Religions . Separated through this state bureaucracy , Shinto was distinguished from Buddhist temples and Christian churches , which were formulated as religious . This marked the start of the state 's official designation of Shinto shrines as " suprareligious " or " non @-@ religious " .

State Shinto was thus not recognized as a " state religion " during the Meiji era . Instead , State Shinto is considered an appropriation of traditional Shinto through state financial support for ideologically aligned shrines .

= = Implementation of Shinto ideology = =

The Empire of Japan endeavored , through education initiatives and specific financial support for new shrines , to frame Shinto practice as a patriotic moral tradition . From the early Meiji era , the divine origin of the Emperor was the official position of the state , and taught in classrooms not as myth , but as historical fact . Shinto priests were hired to teach in public schools , and cultivated this teaching , alongside reverence for the Emperor and compulsory class trips to shrines . State Shinto

practitioners also emphasized the ritual aspect as a traditional civic practice that did not explicitly call on faith to participate .

By balancing a " suprarreligious " understanding of Shinto as the source of divinity for both Japan and the Emperor , the state was able to compel participation in rituals from Japanese subjects while claiming to respect their freedom of religion . The state was thus able to enshrine its place in civic society in ways religions could not . This included teaching its ideological strand of Shinto in public schools , including ceremonial recitations to the Emperor and rites involving the Emperor 's portrait .

In 1926 , the government organized the Shōkyō Seido Chōsakai (宗教調査委員会 , Religious System Investigative Committee) and then the Jinja Seido Chōsakai (神社調査委員会 , Shrine System Investigative Committee) , which further established the suprarreligious " Shintogaku " ideology .

To protect this non @-@ religious distinction , practices which did not align with state functions were increasingly prohibited . This included preaching at shrines and conducting funerals . The use of the symbolic torii gate was restricted to government @-@ supported shrines . As religious rituals without state functions were restricted , practitioners were driven underground and frequently arrested . Alternative Shinto movements , such as Omotokyo , were hampered by the imprisonment of its priests in 1921 . The status of separation of so @-@ called " State Shinto " shrines changed in 1931 ; from that point , shrines were pressured to focus on the divinity of the Emperor Hirohito or shrine priests could face persecution .

Some intellectuals at the time , such as Yanagita Kunio , were critics of Imperial Japan 's argument at the time that Shinto was not religious . In 1936 , the Catholic Church 's Propaganda Fide agreed with the state definition , and announced that visits to shrines had " only a purely civil value " .

= = State control of shrines = =

Though the government 's ideological interest in Shinto is well @-@ known , there is debate over how much control the government had over local shrines , and for how long . Shrine finances were not purely state @-@ supported . Shinto priests , even when state @-@ supported , had tended to avoid preaching on ideological matters until the establishment of the Wartime Shrine board in 1940 .

In 1906 , the government issued a policy to limit its financial support to one shrine per village . This state supported shrines that followed its specific guidelines for funding , and encouraged unfunded shrines to become partners with the larger shrines . As a result of this initiative to consolidate Shinto beliefs into state @-@ approved practices , Japan 's 200 @, @ 000 shrines had been reduced to 120 @, @ 000 by 1914 , consolidating control to shrines favorable to the state interpretation of Shinto .

In 1910 , graduates of state @-@ run Shinto schools , such as Kokugakuin University and Kōgakuin University , were implicitly allowed to become public school teachers . A greater number of better @-@ trained priests with educations at state @-@ supported schools , combined with a rising patriotic fervor , is believed by some to have seeded an environment in which grassroots Emperor worship was possible , even without financial support for local shrines .

In 1913 , official rules for Shrine priests 神祇官規則 (Kankokuheisha ika jinja shinshoku hōmu kisoku (神祇官規則)) specifically called upon " a duty to observe festivals conforming to the rituals of the state . " Some shrines did adopt State Shinto practice independent of financial support from the government . Several Shrine Associations advocated for support of " State Shinto " directives independently , including the Shrine Administration Organization , the Shrine Priest Collaboration Organization , and the Shrine Priest Training Organization .

In 1940 , the state created the wartime shrine board , which expanded control over state shrines and expanded the state 's role . Up to that point , individual priests had been limited in their political roles , delegated to certain rituals and shrine upkeep , and rarely encouraged Emperor worship , or other aspects of state ideology , independently . No shrine priest , or member of the Wartime Shrine board , had previously sought public office , which some scholars , such as Sakamoto , suggest is evidence of the state 's use of Shinto to its own ends , rather than the Shinto priest 's attempt to achieve political power .

= = Ideological origins = =

Scholar Katsurajima Nobuhiro suggests the "suprareligious" frame on State Shinto practices drew upon the state's previous failures to consolidate religious Shinto for state purposes.

Kokugaku ("National Learning") was an early attempt to develop ideological interpretations of Shinto, many of which would later form the basis of "State Shinto" ideology. Kokugaku was an Edo @-@ period educational philosophy which sought a "pure" form of Japanese Shinto, stripped of foreign influences, particularly Buddhism.

In the Meiji era, scholar Hirata Atsutane advocated for a return to "National Learning" as a way to eliminate the influence of Buddhism and distill a nativist form of Shinto. From 1870 to 1884, Atsutane, along with priests and scholars, led a "Great Promulgation Campaign" advocating a fusion of nationalism and Shinto through worship of the Emperor. There had been no previous tradition of absolute obedience to the Emperor in Shinto. This initiative failed to attract public support, and intellectuals dismissed the idea. Author Fukuzawa Yukichi dismissed the campaign at the time as an "insignificant movement."

Despite its failure, Atsutane's nativist interpretation of Shinto would encourage a later scholar, Okuni Takamasa. Takamasa advocated control and standardization of Shinto practice through a governmental "Department of Divinity." These activists urged leaders to consolidate diverse, localized Shinto practices into a standardized national practice, which they argued would unify Japan in support of the Emperor.

The state responded by establishing the Department of Divinity ("jingikan") in 1869. This government bureaucracy encouraged the segregation of Kami spirits from Buddhist ones, and emphasized the divine lineage of the Emperor from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. This action sought to reverse what had been a blending of Buddhist and Shinto practices in Japan. That department was unsuccessful, and demoted to a Ministry. In 1872, policy for Shrines and other religions was taken over by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry intended to standardize rituals across shrines, and saw some small success, but fell short of its original intent.

= = = National Teaching = = =

In calling for the return of the Department of Divinity in 1874, a group of Shinto priests issued a collective statement calling Shinto a "National Teaching." That statement advocated for understanding Shinto as distinct from religions. Shinto, they argued, was a preservation of the traditions of the Imperial house and therefore represented the purest form of Japanese state rites. These scholars wrote,

National Teaching is teaching the codes of national government to the people without error. Japan is called the divine land because it is ruled by the heavenly deities' descendants, who consolidate the work of the deities. The Way of such consolidation and rule by divine descendants is called Shinto.

Signatories of the statement included Shinto leaders, practitioners and scholars such as Tanaka Yoritsune, chief priest of Ise shrine; Motoori Toyokai, head of Kanda shrine; and Hirayama Seisai, head of a major tutelary shrine in Tokyo. Nonetheless, this concept of Shinto as a "National Learning" failed to take hold in most popular conceptions of Shinto.

= = = Great Promulgation Campaign = = =

The Bureau of Shinto Affairs attempted to standardize the training of priests in 1875. This created a division between state actors and local priests, who disagreed over the content of that standardized training. This debate concerned which kami, or spirits, to include in rituals, particularly, whether state kami should be included. This debate marked the rise of the Ise sect, which was open to a stronger state presence in Shinto, and the Izumo sect, which was not. The Izumo sect advocated for recognition of the god ?kuninushi as an equal to Amaterasu, which had

theological consequences for emperor @-@ worship . This debate , the " enshrinement debate " , posed a serious ideological threat to the Meiji era government .

A result of the enshrinement debate was that the Ministry of the Interior concentrated on distinctions of " religion " and " doctrine " , stating that " Shinto rituals (shinsai) are performed by the state whereas religious doctrines (ky?h?) are to be followed by individuals and families . " Through this logic , Shinto rituals were a civic responsibility which all Japanese subjects were expected to participate in , whereas " religious " Shinto was a matter of personal faith and subject to freedom of religion . This debate marked an early failure in crafting of a unified national Shinto practice , and led to a sharp decline in both state grants to Shinto shrines and to the appointment of Shinto priests to government positions . The Ministry of Home Affairs took responsibility for shrines in 1877 , and began to separate Shinto religious practices from indoctrination . In 1887 , the Ministry stopped financial support for most shrines , aside from select Imperial shrines tied to state functions .

= = Yasukuni Shrine = =

In 1879 , Yasukuni Shrine was built to enshrine the war dead . The emperor visited and performed rites for the war dead at Yasukuni , the highest possible honor in Shinto . Around this time , the state began to assign shrines with meanings rooted in patriotic nationalism ; including a network of shrines dedicated to soldiers killed in battle . These assignments had no connection to the history of these local shrines , which led to resentment .

In contemporary times , the shrine has become a controversial symbol for Japanese nationalists . While many citizens of various political persuasions visit the site to honor relatives killed in battle , whose kami (spirit) are said to be enshrined there , so too are the kami of several class @-@ A war criminals . These criminals were enshrined in a secret ceremony in 1978 , which has raised the ire of Japanese pacifists and the international community .

No Emperor has visited the shrine since , and visits by prime ministers and government officials to the shrine have been the subject of lawsuits and media controversy .

= = In occupied territories = =

As the Japanese extended their territorial holdings , shrines were constructed with the purpose of hosting Japanese kami in occupied lands . This practice began with a shrine in Taiwan in 1900 . Major shrines built across Asia included Karafuto Shrine in Sakhalin in 1910 and Chosen Shrine , Korea , in 1919 ; these shrines were designated just under Ise Shrine in national importance . Other shrines included Shonan Shrine in Singapore , San 'a Shrine in Hainan Island (China) , Akatsuki Shrine in Saigon , and Hokoku Shrine in Java .

The Japanese built almost 400 shrines in occupied Korea , and worship was mandatory for Koreans . A statement from the head of the Home Office in Korea wrote about the shrines in a directive : " ... they have an existence totally distinct from religion , and worship at the shrines is an act of patriotism and loyalty , the basic moral virtues of our nation . "

= = Post @-@ war = =

On 1 January 1946 , Emperor Sh?wa issued a statement , sometimes referred to as the Humanity Declaration , in which he quoted the Five Charter Oath of Emperor Meiji , announced that he was not an Akitsumikami (a divinity in human form) and that Japan was not built on myths . The U.S. General Headquarters quickly defined and banned practices it identified as " State Shinto " , but because the U.S. saw freedom of religion as a crucial aspect of post @-@ war Japan it did not place a full ban on Japanese religious ceremonies involving the Emperor . General Douglas MacArthur and the State Department sought to maintain the authority of the Emperor to avoid " lasting resentment " among the Japanese people during the occupation and reconstruction of Japan .

The Shinto Directive stated it was established to " free the Japanese people from direct or indirect compulsion to believe or profess to believe in a religion or cult officially designated by the state " and

" prevent a recurrence of the perversion of Shinto theory and beliefs into militaristic and ultranationalistic propaganda " .

Today , while the Imperial House continues to perform Shinto rituals as " private ceremonies " , participation and belief are no longer compelled from Japanese citizens , nor funded by the state .

Other aspects of the government 's " suprareligious " enforcement of Shinto practices , such as school trips to Shinto shrines , were forbidden . Many innovations of Meiji @-@ era Shinto are present in contemporary Shinto , such as a belief among priests that Shinto is a non @-@ religious cultural practice that encourages national unity .

= = = Controversies = = =

Controversy has emerged during the funerals and weddings of members of the Japanese Imperial Family , as they present a merging of Shinto and state functions . The Japanese treasury does not pay for these events , which preserves the distinction between state and shrine functions .

The Association of Shinto Shrines is politically active in encouraging support for the Emperor , including campaigns such as distributing amulets from Ise Shrine . Ise shrine was one of the most important shrines in State Shinto , symbolizing Amaterasu 's presence and connection to the Emperor . In contrast , the Meiji @-@ era Yasakuni shrine is frequently the target of State Shinto controversies , likely owing to its enshrinement of Japanese soldiers killed in warfare .

Conservative politicians and nationalist interest groups continue to advocate for returning the Emperor to a central political and religious position , which they believe will restore a national sense of unity .