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Researching Shinto as a Foreign Researcher

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I would like to thank Kokugakuin University not only for the invitation to participate in today's symposium, but also for its warm support of the cooperative relationship between Kokugakuin University and the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University. This relationship was established in 2000 at the initiative of past Kokugakuin University President Abe Yoshiya, and began with Professor Miyake Hitoshi as the inaugural visiting scholar to Harvard. Since then, the two universities have maintained close ties, which have been invaluable in promoting the study of Japanese religions, especially Shinto. Over the years, we have hosted Professor Suga Kōji, Mr. Nishitakatsuji Nobuhiro, Professors Hoshino Seiji, Daitō Takaaki, Kaminishi Wataru, and most recently Takeda Sachiya. Each of them has worked tirelessly to deepen the relationship between our two universities and help Harvard students in myriad ways. I would like to thank each of them and single out Professor Hoshino for his kindness in arranging my visit today and in mentoring Harvard graduate students, including Dana Mirsalis, who is studying at Kokugakuin this year.

I am especially honored to speak at this symposium honoring Professor Inoue Nobutaka on the occasion of his retirement from Kokugakuin University. The list of his publications includes many works that swiftly became essential for researchers worldwide, including the comprehensive dictionaries of new religious movements and a separate dictionary of

Shinto, which are now the most authoritative in those fields.[1] Added to them are his early work on Japanese religions overseas, his many essays presenting statistical studies of religious belief among Japanese youth, and a unique study of the conditions of the Shinto priesthood. His powerful monograph, *The Formation of Sect Shinto in Modernizing Japan* is the first comprehensive examination of this type of Shinto organization.[2] I especially appreciate Professor Inoue's works in English, far too numerous to list here today, which have provided immense stimulation to the study of Shinto outside Japan. The English-language *Encyclopedia of Shinto* and its *Chronological Supplement*, as well as his most recent work to be translated, *Japanese New Religions in the Age of Mass Media*, have all helped to introduce non-Japanese students and researchers of Japanese religions to the highest standards of academic achievement.[3]

I first met Professor Inoue forty years ago, when he was the *joshu* at the Department of Religious Studies at Tokyo University. Professors Shimazono Susumu and Hayashi Makoto were also graduate students in the department at that time, and I was a visiting graduate student from the University of Chicago. Professor Inoue became a friend and mentor, and in the 1980s I had a chance to spend an academic year at Kokugakuin while on sabbattical leave, with Professor Inoue as mentor. Over the years we have invited each other to conferences and other events and kept in touch about many issues of mutual interest. He has tirelessly advised my students and encouraged them in their research. Most recently, he was kind enough to check several chapters of a book I published on the history of Shinto, and I am deeply grateful to him for all his kindnesses to me and my students over the years. While we are celebrating his retirement today, it is unimaginable that he means to stop research, and I am sure that in the coming years he will exceed even his own enviable record of productive research and guidance to many projects, colleagues, and students.

In Kokugakuin's 21st Century Center of Excellence Program, a project that began in 2002, "Establishment of a National Learning Institute for the Dissemination of Research on Shinto and Japanese Culture," Professor Inoue and his colleagues held several symposia that brought together numerous non-Japanese researchers to Kokugakuin to network with Japanese colleagues and each other. The discussions stemming from these meetings have done a great deal to lay the groundwork for sophisticated studies of Shinto outside Japan, and to identify issues for future research. For example, the second symposium, held in 2003, highlighted the many problems of translation that arise in writing about Shinto in any other language than Japanese. The third symposium highlighted problems in conceptualizing continuity in the history of Shinto. These issues must continually be addressed as research on Shinto in other languages becomes more common. Professor Inoue's ongoing work with the online *Encyclopedia of Shinto* is a highly effective vehicle for alerting scholars to the importance of these issues.

My assignment today is to address the question of researching Shinto as a foreign scholar. In fact, the symposia mentioned above have already described the present the state of Shinto studies outside Japan. Perhaps I can introduce a different perspective by discussing points specifically relevant to pursuing research on Shinto in an English-language environment. I would also like to discuss a new opportunity for all researchers, of whatever nationality, to promote the study of Shinto.

Researching Shinto Outside Japan

We may divide the field of research on Japanese religious history within English-language scholarship into five main categories: Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, new religious movements, and folk religion. If we compare the history of research in English on these categories, we find

that research on Japanese Buddhism is by far the most voluminous, has a longer history, and is better supported by the kind of inter-university ties that enable students working in English to study with specialists in Japan.

Research on Japanese Buddhism in the United States has been promoted since the early twentieth century by significant scholars located at major universities. Many male students have had the experience of living in Buddhist temples, and more than a few have become ordained. Moreover, popular interest in such Buddhist practices as meditation, as well as the arts of Buddhism, has a long and rich history. Japanese scholars such as Suzuki Daisetsu, Abe Masao, Tamamuro Fumio, and others have spent prolonged periods teaching abroad and have also published their research in English. Informal ties have led many students to study at Japanese universities such as Meiji, Tōdai, Kyōdai, Taishō, Risshō, Ryūkoku, and Komazawa.

One of the most influential initiatives to promote the study of Buddhism outside Japan is the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, founded by Numata Yehan. Numata programs exist at fifteen universities in the US, the UK, Holland, Austria, and Germany. They bring prominent Buddhist scholars to those countries' universities to teach, fund lecture programs, and support many other activities that promote the study of Japanese Buddhism. The BDK English Tripitika Project to translate the entirety of the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* was established in 1986 at the University of California, Berkeley, and has published translations of many important Buddhist texts.[(4)] All these factors have worked to produce channels facilitating the improvement of teaching and research on Japanese Buddhism in the US. This means that the libraries of our major research universities have significant holdings regarding Japanese Buddhism, from primary sources and reference works, to monographs, journals, and databases.

By contrast, the creation of a corresponding framework to encourage research on Shinto is just beginning. As far as I know, the exchange relation between Kokugakuin and the Reischauer Institiute may be the first ongoing relationship linking an American university to a Japanese university where Shinto is a specialty. While this exchange relation has been immensely beneficial, it will take more such ties and a longer time before the level of research on Shinto increases to that of Japanese Buddhism.

Even now, students around the US may find it difficult to find a course on Shinto, or to locate recent English-language books on Shinto accessible to non-specialists. If they only have access to works written before and shortly after the Second World War, they may be "turned off" either by an ahistorical, essentializing tone, or a lack of theoretical grounding, or a politically polemical tone that does not match the level of religious studies research in other fields. If even secondary sources are difficult to acquire, advanced students may find it difficult to acquire primary sources, training to read such sources confidently, or access to archival collections in Japan.

Recently I informally surveyed the course catalogs of major US research universities and colleges that are known for strong departments of religious studies. There are many places that offer courses on Japanese religions, in which Shinto may be treated, but I found only six universities that offer courses specifically on Shinto. Only two of them (the University of California at Santa Barbara and Harvard) offer more than one course on Shinto. As this scarcity of course offerings suggests, it is rare for American undergraduates to have an opportunity to prepare for graduate study of Shinto.

Also, with the exception of those who were born or raised in Japan, few of us grow up with any experience of shrines, the Shinto-derived new religious movements, or folk-religious observances stemming from

Shinto. Here again the comparison with Buddhism is relevant, since many cities and towns outside Japan have a Buddhist temple, an informal house-temple, or meditation groups in which one can acquire some limited experience of Buddhist practice. By contrast, it is believed that there are only ten shrines in the United States, eight of them in Hawaii.[5]

A final factor that I can mention is the fact that English-language scholarship lacks a comprehensive reappraisal of the works of Kuroda Toshio. He was a friend and mentor to me, and I have not come here to criticize his work, but I believe that even he would say that the acceptance of his theories in English-language scholarship has not been sufficiently balanced, especially where Shinto is concerned. When his work first began to appear, special issues of English-language journals were devoted to translating his most important essays, but now that some decades have passed, it is perhaps time for another look. We have learned a great deal from him, but nowadays we find exaggerated positions asserted as established knowledge that should not be questioned, for example, the idea that there is no such thing as Shinto before the Meiji Restoration, or that before Yoshida Kanetomo, Shinto was merely one facet of Buddhism. With these ideas now expressed as if they were articles of faith, research on Shinto faces a high hurdle.

In the United States today, a growing number of students come from China and Korea. Up until about a decade ago, some of them were very resistant to learning anything positive about Japan or Japanese religions. They would sometimes enter a class on Japanese religions and say on the first day that they were determined to write about the Yasukuni Shrine. Students expressed anger about the Yasukuni issue, based on the critical perspective of textbooks and newspapers in their home countries. After dealing with a number of students like this, I realized that it is quite possible to help them gain a more balanced understanding of the Yasukuni issue by raising questions about their home countries. For example, we

can ask why it was that China first expressed strong criticism of the shrine only after Prime Minister Nakasone's visit in 1985, even though previous prime ministers had regularly visited the shrine, and even though those visits had been widely reported. Once students understand that all countries involved in the Yasukuni debate, including but not only Japan, make use of it for their own domestic political purposes, students become much more able to put their emotions aside and conduct research in more sophisticated ways.

More recently, however, many Asian students studying in the US are very open to the study of Japanese religions, including Shinto. Like young people in the United States, it is often the case that their first introduction to Japan came in the form of *anime*, and they are often very attracted to Japan, wish to go to Japan, and are open to learning more. They may start with some very naive ideas, believing, for example, that *Mononoke Hime* and the other *anime* of Miyazaki Hayao are "Shinto films." Nevertheless, their interest in the religions of Japan is genuine.

But some Chinese students are critical of Japanese popular culture, even as they find it attractive. I would like to relate an incident that happened in one of my classes in November 2017, to provide a sense of the ideas that young Chinese students bring to the study of Japanese religious materials, including but not limited to Shinto. At Harvard we occasionally are asked to allow visiting groups to sit in on our classes, and in this case it was a group of Chinese high-school students. They visited a course of mine called "Animated Spirituality." It is not one of the my courses on Shinto, but it does involve an introduction to Shinto and discussion of Shinto-derived elements appearing in contemporary popular culture. This introductory level course examines religious ideas, images, and themes seen in Japanese popular culture, especially *anime*, live-action films, and on the day in question, video games. On this particular day, I was lecturing on the topic of "Depictions of Kami and Yōkai in Video Games." I was

intending to make the point that popular culture productions involving religious elements are not necessarily communicating a religious message, but instead using them in a kind of *shūkyō asobi*, a starting point in creating a fantasy experience for the game player.

I was discussing some well-known works like *Shin Megami Tensei*, *Ōkami*, *Fatal Frame*, *Hakurei Reimu*, and a recent controversy about a game called *Yashiro ni hoheto*. I pointed out that as in *anime*, a plot may be set at a shrine, or a *miko* may be shown to have magical powers. In *Yashiro ni hoheto* a *miko* character defeats enemies by using an *ōnusa* as a weapon, a technique we can see also in the video game *Hakurei Reimu* and numerous *anime*. None of the productions I discussed involves pornography or extreme violence.

After this lecture, one of the visitors from China came up to the lectern and wanted to discuss the lecture further. He spoke in perfect English and was very articulate in his questions. He could not understand, he said, why the Japanese government allows the production of such works as the games I had discussed. Does the Japanese government not see, he asked, that material like this is damaging to society? Doesn't the Japanese government care that youth will be corrupted by such games? His questions seemed utterly sincere, and it seemed to me that he was genuinely bewildered to learn that such things as these video games could be openly sold in Japan. To him these things are definitely harmful to society. When I suggested to him that it may not be the case that young people are harmed by playing these games, that the government would need proof of such a causal relationship before it could suppress production of a game, the idea was incomprehensible to the young man, though he clearly understood what I was saying. He asked again why there are not laws in Japan preventing the sale of video games like these. I suggested to him that their creation comes under the constitutionally protected freedom of expression, and that in a democratic society this

right is seen as requiring the highest protection, and likewise the idea of artistic freedom. We spoke for some time, but I do not think I got through to this young man, though I could tell that he was highly intelligent and talented. My teaching assistant was also listening to the conversation, and later he and I shared our amazement at this encounter. It seems to indicate that while Japanese popular culture is a bridge for some Asian students to a broader appreciation of Japanese religions and culture, for some elite Chinese youth its meanings are very different. This incident caused me some trepidation in thinking about how best to interact with talented young students from China, and to understand that their assumptions about Japan are very different from those of other students.

Anti-Japanese attitudes in China increased markedly after the beginning of patriotic education in the 1990s. The Patriotic Education Campaign was announced in 1991 in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Movement and aims to counter the decline of Communist ideology as a focus of national unity. In 2004 the standard history textbook was completely revised, to emphasize China's humiliation under Japan's brutal treatment of the Chinese people, and the role of the Chinese Communist Party in defeating Japan. This textbook helps keep alive the assocation between Japan and war, and the suffering of the Chinese people. The revision reflected China's rection to heightened political patronage of the Yasukuni Shrine during the Koizumi administration, among other things. The revised textbook forms part of the material for university entrace examinations and therefore can be expected to exert a strong influence among the rising generation of Chinese leaders.[6]

For most undergraduates today, however, with the exception of the Chinese students I mentioned above, the older association between Shinto and World War II is mostly absent now. As is well known, earlier generations of scholarship on Shinto, especially that associated with Daniel Holtom, drew a strong connection between Shinto and militarism.

One reason why this association is disappearing is its replacement by the positive associations of Japanese popular culture, and another is the fading memory of events like the attack on Pearl Harbor. While I was growing up, every December 7 brought front-page newspaper articles on Pearl Harbor. But checking *The New York Times* front page over the last twenty-five years, 2011 was the last year that any Pearl Harbor article appeared on the front page on December 7. It was a small article at the bottom of the page titled, "A Final Hawaii Reunion for Pearl Harbor Survivors." Prior to that, 2006 was the most recent year for such a Pearl Harbor article. As the veterans dwindle in number, the issue has receded from public consciousness, and I believe that this is one reason why the association between Shinto and war has faded to the vanishing point for youth in the United States.(7)

There are also advantages in researching Shinto outside the Japanese scholarly world. For scholars working on the modern period, it is important to have full access to English and European-language archives on the history of foreign perceptions of Shinto. For those working on the Occupation period, it is of course important to have access to US government sources or the private papers of such figures as Daniel Holtom or William P. Woodward. Access to such sources is simple to arrange, and grants are available to help with the costs.

There is one factor that might be seen as facilitating research on Shinto from outside Japan, though I hesitate to mention it for fear of possibly giving offense, but I believe that the absence of informal taboos may also be relevant. Because none of the scholars working on Shinto outside Japan are members of the priesthood, they need not take into account the social and political positions adopted by the priesthood's association and hence may be able to express their views frankly. Likewise, those who are not Japanese are not expected to refrain from research on the monarchy or politically charged issues.

A final consideration concerns fieldwork. Field research in religious studies in Japan is frequently based on collaborating teams of researchers who devise a plan for collecting data in a relatively short time. This kind of research makes it possible to bring in many different perspectives to a topic and to gain a great deal of information in a short period. Unfortunately, religious studies in the US lacks this tradition or the institutional arrangments to support it. I think it would be very beneficial for non-Japanese researchers on Shinto to have opportunities to join such research teams, especially at an early stage of their careers.

I notice that when Japanese scholars conduct fieldwork, the research is usually limited to short periods, and it is difficult for them to be away from their home universities for as long as a year, though researchers may have valuable personal experience of shrine life that may compensate for limited time in the field. By contrast, there is a widespread understanding in English-language scholarship that one year is a suitable period of time for a comprehensive study based on fieldwork, and there are examples of studies of Shinto-related topics that are based on that long a time or longer. There are also grant-giving agencies that recognize this convention, and in the course of graduate training, it is typical for students to spend at least one year in the field, if not more.

Having reviewed some of the circumstances particular to researching Shinto outside Japan, I would like to consider prospects for the future.

The Daijōsai as an Opportunity to Promote the Study of Shinto

The symposia organized by Professor Inoue and his colleagues identified many challenges to promoting the study of Shinto outside Japan. While those challenges will remain as central problems, a new opportunity is emerging. The Daijōsai is due to take place in 2019. I would like to suggest that the Daijōsai presents an unparalleled opportunity for

researchers both inside Japan and in foreign countries to work together to promote the study of Shinto.

I feel sure that popular coverage of the Daijōsai will address the characteristics of this remarkable ritual complex which are "uniquely Japanese," and this kind of treatment can be an important stimulus to a general interest in Shinto. Events that spotlight the aesthetic and cultural achievements of Japan place the country in a very positive light and, of course, are a welcome relief from the usual focus on politics and the economy. From the standpoint of religious studies, however, it is more important to highlight those aspects of the observance that connect it with religious phenomena in history and other societies. Foreign scholars have an opportunity to call attention to a spectacular ceremony and to raise questions about the ways it can be interpreted. Within religious studies, I believe that the Daijōsai could be an important stimulus to renewed research on religion and kingship.

The Daijōsai may be the oldest extant example of coronation ritual in the world. It would be desirable to determine whether that is the case, and what other countries maintain coronation ritual whose form was standardized over a millennium ago, as the Daijōsai was in *Jōgan Gishiki* 『貞観儀式』(872-877) and *Engi Shiki* 『延喜式』(927). To explicate the form and performance of the entire ceremony (as far as possible, given that some aspects of it are secret) will clarify a prominent and distinctive ritual complex belonging to Shinto. That task would be most suitable for a team of researchers that would include foreign and Japanese members working collaboratively. Undoubtedly many problems of translation would need to be tackled, to say nothing of problems gaining sufficient access to as much ceremonial as possible. The first obligation of scholars will be to observe, record, interpret, and preserve as much as possible about the Daijōsai, beginning with a thorough review of the relevant primary texts and prior scholarship. Beyond those essential steps, however, what

must we do now, to ensure that the most complete record of the upcoming Daijōsai can be created and preserved for future researchers?

On the occasion of the most recent Vicennial Renewal of the Ise Grand Shrines (*shikinen sengū*) in 2013, the re-creation of many shrine buildings facilitated the transmission and perpetuation of traditional shrine carpentry techniques. The creation of new vestments likewise helped to transmit ancient techniques of spinning, dyeing, and weaving to a new generation of artisans. The production of shrine treasures in like manner required craftsmen and artists to create new swords, sculptures, metal-work, ceramics, and many other decorative art forms, introducing a new generation of artists to ancient techniques. The performance of a host of ceremonies and rituals also continued ancient tradition and undoubtedly initiated many younger shrine priests into Ise traditions. In 2013, some 14,200,000 people visited the Ise Shrines for the Vicennial Renewal, over 10 percent of the national population, the largest number ever to visit any shrine in a single year in recorded history.[8] Likewise, the Daijōsai will certainly perform the function of transmitting artistic forms and techniques, in addition to perpetuating an ancient form of ritual, and stimulating interest in the monarchy.

Following the Daijōsai for the current emperor, significant works of scholarship were created.[9] Since the coming Daijōsai will undoubtedly take a slightly different form because it will be held in the wake of an abdication rather than than a death, the occasion presents an ideal opportunity to document the ceremonies and analyze the ways in which they innovate upon precedent.

Religion and kingship, or the study of sacred or divine kingship, has been a major topic in the history of the study of religion. At first it was closely associated with the work of Sir James George Frazer, particularly his 12-volume study, *The Golden Boug*h. He regarded such elements as the king as "dying god," sacred marriage between a deity and the monarch,

and the scapegoat function of divine kings as universally valid. While his theories were subsequently critiqued extensively, his work established divine kingship as an enduring area of research. Subsequent works by A. M. Hocart, Henri Frankfort, Georges Dumézil, and others likewise came to be regarded as classic works in the history of the study of religion.

More recent, comparative work focuses on the issue of the divinity of kings, differences in the character of kingship owing to different regions and historical eras, and the connection between divine kings and the appearance of empire.[10] I believe that the Daijōsai presents an important opportunity to connect the study of Shinto to such international trends in religious studies scholarship. To demonstrate the analytical and theoretical interest of the Daijōsai is a primary task for all researchers of Shinto, of whatever nationality, but since much analytical and theoretical work in religious studies tends to appear first in Western-language journals, foreign researchers are well placed to contribute.

The work of Sinologist Michael Puett provides a recent example of a new trajectory of research on sacred kingship. Puett points out that the deification of Chinese rulers emerged alongside the creation of empire. Prior to the Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 BC), Chinese rulers were not deified, and their rituals of sacrifice to Heaven, ancestors, and lesser spirits unambiguously defined the ruler as human. Prior to the Qin, rulership alternated among prominent lineages, but as the Zhou 周 dynasty declined, no other lineage was strong enough to overthrow it, precipitating a period of Warring States 戰國 / 战国 (476-221 BC). In that era, we find the emergence of theories of centralized statecraft, and eventually the Qin conquered the others. The Qin emperor styled himself the "August God" (C: *Huangdi* 皇帝), a new title, asserting that he was the first August God 秦始皇帝, and that his successor would be the second August God, and so forth.

The first Qin emperor moved to undermine the rival lineages, forcing

them to move to his capital, thus removing them from their power bases. His goal was to guarantee enduring Qin rule, no longer alternating among multiple lineages. The Qin ruler altered the sacrificial system as well, personally offering sacrifices to the local shrines previously controlled by the various lineages. In Puett's words, "The ruler becomes the father and mother of the people, as well as the central sacrificer to the ancestors. . . . [T]he ruler himself becomes a god, . . . with direct control over (ideally) everything." The *Book of Rites* (『礼記』) was composed in opposition to this Qin vision of centralized rule under a divine monarch, and in 206 BC the Qin system was overthown. The *Book of Rites* gained influence and came to be regarded as definitive for court ritual. In later ages, figures enacting "extreme forms of divine rulership," such as Mao Tse-tung, also claimed to initiate a new form of rulership that would last for eternity, like the first Qin emperor, but generally these political systems fell apart soon after the rulers' deaths.(11)

The study of divine kingship generally presupposes that enthronement ritual will occur after the death of the preceding monarch, but since this is not the case with the upcoming Daijōsai, the ceremony may offer elements that challenge prevailing understandings of kingship. The reigning emperor is the 125th, if we include mythical rulers whose historicity has not been established. Of the total, 59 emperors (47.6 percent) have abdicated. Seen historically, therefore, the present emperor's decision to step down is not unusual.

I should also point out the need for scholarly discussion on the correct translation in English of the term *tai-i* (退位). The word *abdication* suggests related but different practices in Western monarchies, and in Western-language scholarship on Japanese history, the word *abdication* inevitably creates associations with the cloistered emperors of the medieval period. Those associations are clearly out of place in this case; hence it would be highly desirable to consider alternative translations.

Since those consultations have not yet taken place, however, I hope you will permit me to use the term on this occasion as a kind of shorthand.

The case of Japan is unusual in one important respect, however, because of the Shōwa emperor's famous renunciation of the idea that he was divine, stating in a New Year's address on January 1, 1946, "The ties between Us and Our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine, and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world."[12] Moreover, the emperor's position in the constitution is "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people" (article 1).

The first to serve as a "symbol emperor" was the Shōwa emperor (r. 1926-1989), who was originally enthroned under the Meiji constitution, in which he was the head of state and supreme military commander. The constitution characterized the emperor as "sacred and inviolable," which in legal terms meant that he could not be charged with criminal actions. While the Shōwa emperor was technically the first symbol emperor, the current emperor is the first to have been enthroned under the postwar constitution, following the renunciation of imperial divinity. He has positively embraced the role of symbol emperor and made it his own. In 1959 while still Crown Prince, he greatly endeared the imperial institution to the public by marrying Shōda Michiko, who was a commoner, in other words not from the aristocracy that had traditionally provided imperial brides. Their wedding was the first to be televised, and the public poured out expressions of loving hopes for the beautiful young couple. The imperial wedding's visibility via broadcast media was a watershed for the symbol monarchy. Twenty years into his tenure, an NHK survey found the great majority of the Japanese people approving of the emperor's performance of the job, and more recent surveys show that there is widespread support for his wish to step down in favor of the Crown Prince.[13] As of May, 2017, polls show that the

emperor's abdication is accepted by 80 to 90 percent of the population.[14]

In the process leading up to the abdication law, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō convened a cabinet committee to make recommendations.[15] The group consisted of 4 men and 2 women with an average age of 68. These stellar individuals are each highly respected, representing the pinnacle of achievement in business, law, and scholarship. As with many such committees, the group was expected to endorse a foregone conclusion, since it is unthinkable that the Liberal Democratic Party would contravene imperial will. Sixteen "experts," 15 men and 1 woman, with an average age of 74, chosen by the government, presented testimony before the committee. After these "hearings," the committee endorsed abdication for the reigning emperor only, and that led to passage of the law permitting the abdication (passed May 19, 2017).[16]

While the reigning emperor's decision to step down was not widely contested, however, critical voices emerged in the testimony by some of the sixteen "expert witnesses." Ten of the sixteeen endorsed abdication (62.5 percent). Of this majority, only two referred to the emperor's performance of ritual. Emeritus Professor of law at Kyoto Sangyō University, Tokoro Isao (所功, b. 1941) presented ritual as equally important as the emperor's other functions, but said that if rituals exact too heavy a toll, different ways should be found to delegate them.[17] Journalist Iwai Katsumi (岩井克己, b. 1947) asserted that to emphasize ritual tends to deny the symbol emperor idea and revert toward a concept of a divine monarch.[18]

By contrast, a minority of 6 out of 16 (37.5 percent) either did not advocate abdication or opposed it, asserting that ritual is the emperor's primary duty, compared to which all other activities are secondary in importance. For example, Tokyo University Emeritus Professor of comparative culture, Hirakawa Sukehiro (平川祐弘, b. 1931) favors appointing a regent and opposes abdication, saying that it borders on a violation of the constitution. If the emperor is tired from his extra activities, he can cease them and concentrate

on his basic duty, which is to pray on behalf of the nation. As he is Shinto's principal "successor"（*kōkeisha*）, his role in praying for the country has higher priority than any other activities he may choose to undertake.[19] Emeritus Professor of English at Jōchi Univesity, Watanabe Shōichi,（渡部昇一, 1930-2017）, now deceased, expressed similar views.

Article 7 of the constitution states that *performance of ceremonial functions*（儀式を行う）is among the *matters of state*（国事）carried out by the emperor *for the people*. This suggests that imperial ceremonial would be publicly funded, similar to hosting a state banquet, but the constitution does not specify *what* ceremonial the emperor shall perform. The Imperial Household Code（皇室典範）specifies accession rites as well as funerals, but nothing beyond that. Neither document even mentions the enthronement ceremonies.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, palace ritual（宮中祭祀）derived from precedents in the Taihō Code 大宝令（645）, *Jōgan Gishiki*（872-877）, and the *Engi Shiki*（927）. It was codified in the prewar Imperial Household Code（*Kōshitsu tenpan*）, which was revised after the war to remove religious elements. Even today, however, the Tokyo palace contains a set of three shrines staffed by a corps of male and female ritualists, where daily, calendrical, and ancestral rites are performed throughout the year.[20] These rituals are supported through the private funds of the imperial house, though the Home Page of the Imperial Household Agency appears to rank them among the emperor's *public duties*（公務）, but without legal codification of that interpretation.[21] In other words, the status of imperial ritual remains unresolved, though based on more than a millennium of documented precedent, spoken of as *public*, yet funded privately. Because enthronement ritual falls into this ambiguous category, the ceremonies marking Crown Prince Naruhito's succession will, as in the case of the last Daijōsai, probably be contested if public funds are used, because of the conflict with the constitutionally stipulated separation of religion from

state（articles 20 and 89）.

Several of the six persons expressing reservations about the emperor's wish to step down referred specifically to the need to clarify the status of imperial ritual, saying that it should be publically funded. For example, Shinto specialist Professor Ōhara Yasuo（大原康男, b. 1942）, formerly of Kokugakuin University, stressed the urgent need to overcome the mistaken view that palace ritual is a private matter and does not belong to the emperor's official public duties（*kōmu*）.[22] Likewise, journalist Sakurai Yoshiko（櫻井よしこ, b. 1945）stressed the primacy of palace rites above any other imperial activity, speaking of the emperor as the country's "center" and its "great ritual master"（*Nihon no chūshin ni dai saishu* 日本の中心に大祭主）. So long as he acts as "ritual master," there is no reason for the emperor to do anything else. Furthermore, the constitution and the Imperial Household Code must be revised, in her view, to make clear that ritual is the highest duty of the emperor, coming before anything else.[23]

Needless to say, it would not have been appropriate for the emperor to communicate his reaction publicly. Nevertheless, he is said to have expressed shock and surprise, according to several press reports.[24] If we stand back from the particulars of these proceedings surrounding the abdication and consider the origins of such disparate views, we can perhaps identify some unresolved questions.

The continuing ambiguity in the legal status of imperial ritual is one obvious source of contention. Another may be found in the Shōwa emperor's declaration of humanity, which did not refer to the foregoing idea of his divine descent from the Kami. That is, while the declaration denied the idea that the emperor is a divine being, it did not deny the idea that the imperial line is divinely descended from the Kami. Perhaps some critics of the symbol monarchy interpret the statement as leaving open the possibility of asserting that the emperor's significance lies chiefly in the performance of ritual. Moreover, the logic of the Daijōsai

may be undermined, because a prevailing interpretation of enthronement ceremonies is the idea that the emperor shares a meal with his ancestral Kami in the ceremonies. One line within prior research on the Daijōsai questions the identity of the Kami to whom the Daijōsai is directed, but in the absence of some connection between the emperor and the Kami,[25] it would be difficult to establish a coherent rationale for these ceremonies. Clarification of these questions would be a primary task for religious studies research on the Daijōsai, and it would be an important contribution to ongoing religious studies research on divine kingship.

Besides the Daijōsai itself, the ceremonies present opportunities for expanded studies of shrine life. When the Crown Prince is enthroned, it seems highly likely that prominent shrines around the nation will celebrate the enthronement. No doubt they will compose *norito*, perform ritual, and use the occasion to unite their communities in a celebration. Moreover, it seems very probable that the Shinto-derived new religious movements will also join in ritual and celebration to commemorate the coming enthronement ceremonies. We should not neglect to study these observances in order to understand how shrines around the country will coordinate their activities with the palace. No doubt they will sponsor performances of the arts traditionally associated with shrines, such as shrine dance (*kagura*), archery on horseback (*yabusame*), and Noh drama. They may also commission the creation of mirrors, commemorative paintings, screens, drums, *shishi gashira*, vestments, and other things. We should be making plans now for how to observe, document, preserve, and study these activities.

No doubt celebrations will be held outside shrines as well. What will cities and towns do? What issues will civic administrations face if they join with shrines to observe the event? Are the prefectural governors and local mayors already planning how to commemorate the enthronement? It is not too early to establish connections with city offices and local

journalists to help us understand the nature and extent of national celebrations.

How will the media cover the coronation? Will the coverage this time differ from the last Daijōsai, given that the upcoming ceremonies will not take place after the death of the preceding emperor? The attitudes that print and broadcast media adopt will be very influential in society as a whole, especially for youth, who may never have given serious thought to the existence of the monarchy, the meaning of "constitutional monarchy," or the "symbol emperor." How can researchers document and preserve this media coverage? The last Daijōsai was the first to be televised, but that fact does not seem to have stimulated significant research. At the time of the last Daijōsai, the internet and social media had not yet been widely diffused. Will these media play a role in the upcoming Daijōsai, and whom can we contact now to promote documentation and preservation of media roles?

From the standpoint of religious studies, the phenomenon of the Daijōsai is inseparable from the participation and reaction of Japanese society as a whole. The media coverage it generates will shape how Japan understands the monarchy for the next generation. We can anticipate an event of "saturation coverage," viewed by millions of people around the world. What links need to be created now in foreign countries between researchers and the journalists who will write for influential newspapers or film for international broadcasts? Researchers have a responsibility to think through these issues and help journalists not to fall back on outmoded ideas about Shinto.

If the Daijōsai is inseparable from Japanese society, then we must also recognize that it is inseparable from its critics. As was the case when the current emperor was enthroned, it seems highly likely that some citizens will view these ceremonies as a violation of the principle of separation of religion from state. Most likely, citizen's groups will raise lawsuits as

was the case previously. Foreign researchers should investigate who the critics are, their motivations, how they fund their operations, and what they hope to achieve. We also need to understand the legal issues as fully as possible, not only the constitution and the Imperial Household Code, but the ambiguity around the status of palace ritual（宮中祭祀）. Foreign researchers should not take sides on such issues but realize that our job is to clarify the issues, identify the personnel, and preserve the data.

Lawsuits targeting the separation of religion from state in Japan are particularly difficult for foreign researchers to study, because most if not all lack formal legal training. Nevertheless, if we are to fulfill the mission of accurately observing, recording, and preserving society's perspectives on the Daijōsai, it is essential to try to understand these cases.

The most significant lawsuits concerning the last Daijōsai came from Osaka, Ōita, and Kagoshima prefectures. All of them were defeated, but the case from Osaka left room for continued argument. The Osaka case was presented as a "taxpayers' lawsuit"（納税者訴訟）in late 1992 by a group of around 1,700 people, including 200 attorneys. It was originally conceived by a group calling itself the National Association for Lawsuits on Separation of Religion from State（政教分離訴訟全国交流集会）. They charged that the use of public funds for the Daijōsai violated the separation principle. The first judgment（November 24, 1992）resulted in their defeat, as did an appeal judgment of March 9, 1995.

No doubt the complainants took heart from an *obiter dictum*（傍論）, a judge's opinion issued "in passing," which is not legally binding, stating that there is some doubt about the constitutionality of the Daijōsai. The *obiter dictum* held that "the Daijōsai is clearly a Shinto ritual"（大嘗祭が神道儀式としての性格を有することは明白であり）and a public observance of the imperial house supported by palace funds（公的の皇室行事として宮廷費を持って執行した）. At the very least, the judge said, it encouraged and promoted State Shinto 国家神道, and there is a doubt that it may

violate the separation of religion from state（少なくとも国家神道に対する助長,促進になるような行為として,政教分離規定に違反するのではないかとの疑義は一概には否定できない）.[26] Rather than risk losing this point in continued appeals, the complainants decided not to appeal further.[27]

The defeated complainants did not disband, however, but instead, veterans of this campaign decided to form an association called the Network of 1700 Opposed to the Emperor System（反天皇制市民1700ネットワーク）. The group was originally assembled by lawyers, and the participants came from Christian denominations, Jōdo Shinshū from both East and West Honganji, the Wadatsumi-kai, teachers opposed to the flag and the anthem in schools, postal workers, and regional civil servants, with a distribution covering the entire country.[28] Thus, the Osaka case opened up a possible avenue for future lawsuits to question whether the Daijōsai is in compliance with the constitution, though to argue from *dicta*（傍論）rather than the judgement's main text（主文）is a questionable strategy. Nevertheless, this case resulted in the formation of a group that managed to attract people from multiple religious affiliations and many different professions from across the country to challenge the ongoing existence of the monarchy.[29]

Concluding Remarks

The upcoming Daijōsai represents an unparalled opportunity to advance the study of Shinto as an aspect of Japanese religion, culture, and society, and I hope we can act effectively to seize this moment. While arrangements are still being worked out, there is a plan for a small exhibition at Harvard about the Daijōsai, but things like this should be planned for many locations and used to stimulate the study of Shinto around the world.

There is little doubt that the enthusiasm we see among researchers

outside Japan for study of Shinto owes a great deal to Professor Inoue Nobutaka. He has tirelessly brought us together with Japanese colleagues to discuss the field's challenges and future posibilities. Although the study of Shinto outside Japan continues to face high hurdles such as I have mentioned, we also have exciting possibilities before us. I am certain that we will continue to benefit immensely from Professor Inoue's guidance, and I want to close by offering him hearty congratulations on opening the next chapter of his work.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Endnotes

(1) *Shinshūkyō jiten* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1990); *Shintō jiten* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1994).

(2) *Kyōha Shintō no keisei* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1991).

(3) *An Encyclopedia of Shinto* (Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University c2001-2006); *Umi o watatta Nihon shūkyō: Imin shakai no uchi to soto* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1985); Shūkyō jōhō risāchi sentā, Jinja soshiki ni kansuru ankēto chōsa hōkokusho (Tokyo: Shūkyō jōhō risāchi sentā, 2003); *Wakamono to gendai shūkyō: ushinawareta zahyōjiku* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990); *Japanese New Religions in the Age of Mass Media* (Tokyo: Kokugakuin University, 2017).

(4) On Numata projects see this website: http://www.bdkamerica.org/activities-bdk-america.

(5) The only source I have found on this question is somewhat doubtful, though indicative: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Shinto_shrines_in_the_United_States.

(6) On patriotic education in China, see Daniel Sneider, "Textbooks and

Patriotic Education: Wartime Memory Formation in China and Japan" *Asia Pacific Review* 20/1 (2013): 35-54 and Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China" *International Studies Quarterly* 52/4 (December 2008): 783-806.

(7) I would like to thank Ms. Hannah Perry for valuable research assistance to support the information in this paragraph.

(8) See Ise-shi sangyō kankōbu kankō kikakuka, "Heisei 25-nen Ise-shi kankō tōkei," 3, http://www.city.ise.mie.jp/secure/12124/25kankoutekei.pdf.

(9) See for example Jingū Bunko, ed. *Sokui no rei to daijōsai: shiryō shū*. Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1990; Kōgakkan Daigaku Shintō Kenkyūjo, ed. *Daijōsai no kenkyū, zoku* (Ise City, Japan: Kōgakkan Daigaku shuppanbu, 1989); and Kōgakkan Daigaku Shintō Kenkyūjo, ed. *Kōgakkan Daigaku sōritsu hyaku-sanjisshūnen, saikō gojisshūnen kinen, kundoku chūshaku, gishiki, senso Daijōsaigi* (Tokyo: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2012).

(10) See for example, David Cannadine and S. Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Nicole Brisch, ed., *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

(11) Michael Puett, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, Nicole Brisch, ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 207-220; the quotation appears on p. 217.

(12) Popularly known as the "Humanity Declaration," (*ningen sengen*), this rescript is also known as *Imperial Rescript on the Construction of a New Japan* (新日本建設に関する詔書 Shin Nippon Kensetsu ni Kan

suru Shōsho）and *Imperial Rescript on National Revitalization*（年頭、国運振興の詔書 Nentō, Kokuun Shinkō no Shōsho）.

（13）Katō Motonori, Yoron chōsabu, Shakai chōsa, *Heisei no kōshitsukan: Sokui 20 nen kōshitsu ni kansuru ishiki chōsa kara*（Tokyo: NHK, 2010）; https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/yoron/social/039.html.

（14）See the poll by *Tokyo shinbun*, May 2, 2017, http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/politics/list/201705/CK2017050202000126.html.

See also the poll on the issue by *Yomiuri shinbun*, "2017 nen 6 gatsu denwa zenkoku yoron chōsa"（June 19, 2017）, which found 90 percent approving the abdication; http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/opinion/koumoku/20170619-OYT8T50039.html.

（15）The committee's title was "Council on Easing the Burdens of the Emperor's Public Duties," *Tennō no kōmu no futan keigen tō ni kansuru yūshikisha kaigi*; see this website for transcripts of each of its fourteen meetings: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/kaisai.html.

（16）The special law regarding the Emperor's abdication was passed after approval in the House of Councillors on June 9 and proclaimed on June 16. The original copy and detailed summary of the law are available on this government website: "Tennō no tai'i tō ni kansuru Kōshitsu Tenpan tokurei hō ni tsuite,"「天皇の退位等に関する皇室典範特例法について」（updated on June 16, 2017）http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/headline/taii_tokurei.html.

（17）Tokoro's testimony may be consulted in full at https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai3/shiryo6.pdf.

（18）See this site for a summary of Iwai's testimony: https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai4/shiryo2.pdf.

（19）http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai6/sankou2.pdf. This site provides a detailed summary of the views expressed

by each of the sixteen speakers. Hirakawa's full testimony may be consulted at https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai3/shiryo2.pdf.

(20) For photos and descriptions of the annual ritual calendar and the palace shrines, consult the home page of the Imperial Household Agency: http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-about/kyuchu/saishi.html.

(21) http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/about/gokomu/kyuchu/kyuchu.html.

(22) Ōhara Yasuo is perhaps best known for his book, ***Shintō shirei no kenkyū*** (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 1993). Ōhara's testimony is presented in full at https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai3/shiryo5.pdf.

(23) Sakurai's testimony may be consulted in full at https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/koumu_keigen/dai4/shiryou4.pdf.

(24) *Nikkei shinbun*,「天皇退位、特例法案を閣議決定　今国会成立へ」(May 19, 2017) http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS19H09_Z10C17A5MM0000/;

Mainichi shinbun,「陛下　退位議論に『ショック』 宮内庁幹部『生き方否定』」(May 21, 2017) https://mainichi.jp/articles/20170521/k00/00m/010/097000c.

(25) See for example Mayumi Tsunetada, "Daijōsai no saijin o meguru mondai" *Kōgakkan ronsō* 8/6 (December 1975): 28-57.

(26) Momochi Akira, "Daijōsai kanren soshō hanketsu o megutte" *Meiji seitoku kinen gakkai kiyō* 16 (December 1995): 10.

(27) Nishio Hiroki, "Seikyō bunri soshō undō ni okeru aidentiti to hō: Minō chūkonhi iken soshō, Ōsaka sokui no rei, Daijōsai iken soshō o jirei to shite" *Hō shakaigaku* 56 (2002): 234-251; English summary p. 280. Momochi Akira points out that the minority opinion was not essential to the court's verdict and contravened a widespread understanding that statements about the constitutionality of some phenomenon are to be avoided unless they pertain directly to the

judgment. He pointed out also that the court did not provide reasons or evidence for the assertion that the Daijōsai supports State Shinto, nor did it define what it meant by "State Shinto;" Momochi, "Daijōsai kanren soshō hanketsu o megutte," pp. 11-12.

(28) While the Osaka suit was in progress, members of the original complainants group participated in another "taxpayers' lawsuit" seeking compensation for the country's involvement in the Gulf War. They also charged that the payment by the government to the US troops in Okinawa called *omoiyari yosan* was unconstitutional.

(29) Nishio, "Seikyō bunri soshō undō ni okeru aidentiti to hō."