

“Modernization” (*gendaika*) and the Formation of Religious Nationalism in Pre-War Japanese Society

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Introduction

Research on the so-called ultranationalistic, repressive political conditions of prewar Japan has recently moved away from explaining the phenomenon as a suppression of “logic” by “illogicality”. Recent scholarship has rather suggested that the logical emphasis behind the construction of a system of total war bears a repressive quality which may itself mobilize illogical assertions. However, questions regarding the general meaning of this binding framework, such as for example why do logical assertions have to eventually lead to illogical ones, have yet to be explored.¹

In this paper which will address the above points, I will particularly focus on what has come to be termed religious nationalism. For example, the religious studies scholar Shimazono Susumu criticizes perspectives of modernity and nationalism that tend to take for granted that the marginalization and privatization of religion following its loss of regulating powers on society consist of the essence of the modern era. Shimazono on the contrary observes that, during the modernization process, religion has played an important role in the public sphere, and its connection to nationalism consists of such an instance. Indeed, according to the author, the modernization of Japan was achieved as nationalism came to be closely related to religion: the key concept most suitable to explain this phenomenon being the broadly defined term “State Shinto” rather than some kind of imperialistic ideology. Hence, from that perspective, the ultranationalism of the war years could be conceived as follows: following a top-down advocacy of religious nationalism, which from the Meiji period onwards, invaded and was consumed by all social strata, a reverse, bottom-up current of popular religious nationalism emerged among the various roads towards democracy that announced the “modernization” (*gendaika*) process, and dragged Japanese from all backgrounds along an ultranationalist path.²

The above theory opens new perspectives in the study of Japan’s modern and contemporary history. However, for historians who want to engage with such theories, several points need to be considered.

First, it is necessary, as previously noted, that we avoid considering religious nationalism as an issue related to the essential characteristics of Japan’s modernization process. In fact, we should consider the issue as a regionalization of the nationalism that appeared with the modernization of Japanese society from the turn of the twentieth century to the war years.

Secondly, we should not consider the theory of religious nationalism only from the perspective

¹ Minagawa Masaki, *Konoeshintaisei no shisō to seiji (Ideology and Politics of Konoe’s New order)*, Yūshisa, 2009.

² Shimazono Susumu, *Kokka shintō to nihonjin (State Shinto and the Japanese)*, Iwanami shoten, 2010.

For the following description, please also consult my preparatory paper in *Nihonshi kenkyū (Journal of Japanese History)* vol.577, 2010.

of religious history. Shimazono seems to be aware of the relevancy of this theory for other fields of study, and in his work, he expands his argument from the field of religious studies to aspects of cultural and social history. Yet, in the field of historical research, we have not sufficiently become aware of the relevancy of religious nationalism. This paper addresses this particular issue from the view point of the history of regional communities.

In this work, I examine the issue of religious nationalism in prewar Japan. I focus in particular on a movement involving shrines that allows us to clearly peer into the problem of religion and national territory. This movement was related to the national hierarchy system (the shrine ranking system) that was based on the special attention paid from the beginning of the Meiji era to shrines as “stages of the public rituals of the state (*kokka no sōshi*)”. I want to analyze this problem by looking at the shrines’ debate on where³ they should be positioned.

I . Shrines and the social development of secular policies

1. Secular reasoning and shrines

Under the Meiji constitutional system, the government eliminated, though imperfectly, what was seen as “religion” from the public domain and promoted a secularism limited to the private domain. For example, the Minister of Education Ichiki Kitokurō announced in 1915 that “we should not take religion into account in education”, showing thus a firm adherence to the policy for the separation of religion and education which was summarized in the 12th directive of the Ministry of Education (August 1899).⁴ Such secularism expressed by the government at the turn of the century and particularly after the Russo-Japanese war, was pushed to the front of Japanese society within the development of socially intervening, national edification policies that were called the Regional Reform Movement.

In a 1913 training course on regional reform (*chihō kairyō jigyō kōshūkai*), the Councilor of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Yamada Junjirō drew attention to one point of caution in regard to the administration of shrines: “shrines are not religion”. He further specified that shrines are affairs of the state, namely, for example, that Shinto priests are government officials or should be treated like such, and that the shrines’ accounting should abide by rules fixed by the nation. Hence, “the government does not consider shrines as religion”.⁵ This is called the “non-religiosity of shrines”, but what I need to note here is that this type of reasoning is based on a secularism that conceives of “religion” in the private sphere as something that does not belong to the public sphere.

Of course, the existence of this secularist logic regarding shrines does not necessarily mean that the government guaranteed the citizens an unconditional freedom of religion. In the same lecture, Yamada also says that “Japanese citizens must revere shrines without questioning their religious faith”. But, here, again we need to be careful and note that these words are justified by a logic that

³ Yamaguchi Teruomi, *Meiji kokka to shūkyō (Religion and the Meiji State)*, University of Tokyo Press, 1999. Also, by the same author: “‘Jinja no iru kindaiishi’ no kokoromi (Considering shrines and contemporary history)”, *Meiji seitoku kinen gakkai kiyō* (the *Bulletin of the Meiji Seitoku Kinen Gakkai*, n.43 (reissued), 2006.

⁴ “Kyōiku to shinnen kanyō (Education and the fostering of faith)”, *Tokyo Asahi Newspaper*, 4 July 1915. This is believed to be the response of the Minister of Education to the criticism proffered by the Concordia Association in regard to the policy for the separation of religion and education (see section 2).

⁵ Yamada, “Jinja ni kansuru chūi jikō (Cautions related to shrines)”, *Dai nana kai chihō kairyō kōen-shū (The 7th Training Course for Regional Reform)*, Regional Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 1914.

does not oppose secularism. Comparing the shrines under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs’ Bureau of Shinto Shrines and Sect Shinto under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education’s Religion Bureau, we realize that it would have been impossible to transfer “religion” from the private sphere in which it was defined under Sect Shinto to the public sphere by enforcing it on all citizens; because that would have “restrained the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution”. However, Shrine Shinto is a public and non-religious matter, and therefore, Yamada “explains” in conclusion, “shrines are absolutely not related to the freedom of religion”.⁶

After the Russo-Japanese war and in the midst of developments of national edification policies enforced on Japanese society, the mobilization of shrines and the emphasis on their non-religiosity, which was necessary to avoid the conflicting character of the constitution, contributed to a full-scale expansion into the deepest corners of society of secularism as the official state position. For shrines, of course, this process simultaneously re-confirmed the basic rule that, since the beginning of the Meiji era, had turned all shrines into “stages of the public rituals of the state”; and it also made systematically clear that the national character of shrines had political significance.⁷ However, no matter how much public reverence may have been justified by emphasizing the national character of shrines, such as in the lecture of Yamada where he forbid to look at shrines as religion so that “there would be no conflict with any religious tradition”⁸, we should note that from a purely secularist logic, shrines, by manifesting themselves as institutions that impose external regulations on the private individual, restrict significantly the degree to which they can appeal to one’s inner world. This function of the Japanese government’s policies regarding shrines is intimately related to the process that I discuss hereafter.

2. Secularist framework and Shrine Scenic Theory

We can understand the development of the shrine policies that greatly influenced Japanese society after the Russo-Japanese war and which highlighted the government’s secularist position, by looking at their impact on a micro-level, such as the maintenance of the landscape of shrine grounds. For example, shrine policies even specified tree planting individually for the grounds of the unranked shrines (*mukakusha*), namely the shrines that occupied the lowest position in the nationally established hierarchy of “stages of the public rituals of the state”⁹ These concrete guidelines, these must-apply standards formed the shrine scenic theory. In the previously mentioned training course for regional reform that took place in 1913, the Councilor of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Yamada Junjirō suggested that to carry out the appropriate actions “in order to maintain the shrine’s majesty and scenery, it is absolutely necessary to plant evergreen trees in shrine grounds and extremely important that the precincts are frequently cleaned”. Yamada also specified that “leaving fallen leaves

⁶ Yamada, “Jinja ni kansuru chūi jikō (Cautions related to shrines)”, *Dai nana kai chihō kairyō kōen-shū (The 7th Training Course for Regional Reform)*, Regional Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 1914.

⁷ Akazawa Shirō, *Kindai nihon no shisōdōin to shūkyōtōsei (Ideology Mobilization and Control of Religion in Modern Japan)*, Azekurashobō, 1985; Azegami Naoki, “*Mura no chinju*” to *senzen nihon* (“*Village Tutelary Gods*” and *Pre-War Japan*), Yūshisha, 2009.

⁸ Yamada (as above), “Jinja ni kansuru chūi jikō (Cautions related to shrines)”.

⁹ Azegami Naoki, “Senzen nihon no jinja fūchiron to Meiji tennō no yuisho (Shrine scenic theory in pre-war Japan and the “lineage” of Emperor Meiji)”, *Rekishigaku kenkyūkai* (the Historical Science Society of Japan) ed., *Yuisho no hikakushi (Comparative History of Pedigrees)*, Aokishoten, 2010.

on the ground harms the majesty of the shrine and that would be very unfortunate ... it is very important that the shrine is kept perfectly clean and that trees and shrubs look always dense.” As for the specificities of tree planting, Yamada asked the audience to refer to the book that had been handed out.¹⁰ The book described even the type of greenery that was to be raised in shrine grounds.

What was that type of evergreen tree recommended by Yamada? The shrine scenic theory promoted by the government at the time had an academic basis: the landscape architecture theories that had derived from the discipline of modern forestry studies. Let us look at a related discussion led between June and October 1912 by Honda Seiroku (1866-1952), a Professor at the Faculty of Agriculture of the Imperial University of Tokyo, who established the fundamentals of the discipline of landscape architecture and whose say had tremendous influence on society.

Honda argues that:

1 “Only when surrounded by a magnificent conifer forest will the shrine’s solemnity be amply displayed. Broad-leaved trees are no equal to needle-leaved trees”.

2 “Choose evergreen trees that become very tall and use the lumber wood to build the shrine buildings or, if mixed with common wood, to build anything of value. Japanese cedars and cypresses are the best choices of conifer trees”.

3 “Most of the Japanese archipelago’s natural forests are made of evergreen broad-leaved trees. But the Japanese cedar and cypress, which are ideal for the shrine’s landscape, are different. Therefore, from a technical point of view, it is not necessary to forbid logging in the majority of scenic forests. Lumbering should be practiced before the quality of the wood is lost and younger trees should be planted in all of the space left empty”.¹¹

Here, it is ultimately impossible to see the difference between the ideal shrine forest and the common, man-made forests. The original value of natural, primeval forestry does not seem to be related to the above ideals regarding shrine forests. Of course, this is in conflict with the policy regarding forbidden lumbering of sacred forests, which meant that such areas should be left to nature. We can therefore infer that at the time shrine grounds were fundamentally thought of as a type of artificially made spaces.

Honda Seiroku’s disciple, landscape scholar Hongō Takanori (1877-1949) reflected in 1940 that “for shrines, palatial buildings suffice. Trees and forestry are of secondary importance.” Let us say that this probably consisted of the once common opinion among specialists.¹² Here, even if emphasis is given to evergreen trees, we do not find the image of a shrine landscape composed of primeval trees that are to be of the broad-leaved type.

How is the shrine scenic theory related to secularism? According to Hongō Takanori’s sayings from 1942, it seems that there was formerly confusion among specialists between shrines and parks.¹³ From a secularist perspective, shrines were a public, non-religious space and therefore

¹⁰ Yamada (as above), “Jinja ni kansuru chūi jikō (Cautions related to shrines)”.

¹¹ Honda, “Meiji jingū no ichi (The positioning of Meiji Jingu)”, *Zenkoku shinshokukai kaihō (The Annals of National Association of Shrine Priests)* 168, October 1912; Honda, “Shaji no fūchirin ni tsuite (On the scenic forestry of shrines)”, *Zenkoku shinshokukai kaihō (The Annals of National Association of Shrine Priests)* 164, June 1912.

¹² Hongō, “Rin’en keikaku to jinja no mori (Landscape planning and shrine forests)”, *Teien to fūkō (Gardens and Scenery)* 22-7, 1940.

¹³ Hongō, “Dai tōa kyōei ken to jinja (The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and shrines)”, *Teien (Gardens)* 24-2, 1942.

shrine grounds probably came to be mixed up with the Western-imported concept of “park” (*kōen*). In other words, for secularists, both shrine grounds and parks are public space of non-religious character and it would therefore be difficult to make a conceptual distinction based on the essence of the one or the other. Hence the fact that the shrine scenic theory, which attempted to guarantee the solemnity of shrine forests as a kind of national ideal (supporting thus the micro-expansion of shrine policies in society), established artificiality as the fundamental feature of shrine grounds, clearly reflects the secularism of the shrine policies of the time.

II. Nationalistic religionalization and Shinto shrines in the process of de-secularization

1. Ideological trends invalidating secularism and those who instigated them in Japanese society at the time

“Life”, as a particular issue that universally bears more value than anything else, started to arise as a significant component of the ideological trends that were developing in Japan after the turn of the century. The human being and its individual relations with the world, the universe or mankind were seriously pondered on at the time. For example, every person was considered both organically and holistically in the universality of large and small living beings, and therefore as a life-dwelling being, all actions to establish a “personality” that perfected life through “self-cultivation” (*shūyō*) were highly regarded. Such thoughts were both contrary to and critical of existing worldviews and senses of value. For example, as I will discuss later, the new ideological trends led to a conceptualization of “nature” as pervaded with a “life” that possessed values which were antithetical to “civilization” and “artificiality”.¹⁴ The foundations of such ideas had already existed in pre-modern times, but, after the turn of the century and through the intermediary of western-imported theoretical movements, their development exploded amid the temporary sense of accomplishment in regard to the rapid modernization of the country and the distorted actualization of this modernization which was progressing in the background.

Of course the individual claims and assertions that brewed from such ideological basis varied significantly. For example, Naruse Jinzō (1858-1919), protestant priest and educator involved in the instruction of women, writes in a text believed to date from 1914, about what he calls “the Second Restoration of Taishō”: this restoration is said to have been accomplished by the “realization of a personified spirituality that, with self-cultivation as the starting point, prioritizes the betterment of education”. Naruse continues: “we, human beings, are part of the personified life, called the life of the universe; we are individual, divine bodies born under heaven and earth; the affairs of the state do not exist independently of every citizen; the power of the country is not separated from everyone’s personal power”. By nurturing our individual character, by filling it with “life”, and by acting towards the betterment of our livelihoods and condition, we make our nation into a perfect personified life system, and achieve the best of our humanity: a state of complete perfection of the universal life.¹⁵ Naruse, thus, adds individual self-realization to the organically and holistically

¹⁴ Maekawa Michiko, “Kindai no seimeishugi (Vitalism in the modern era)”, *Iwanami kōza shūkyō 7 Seimei (Iwanami Textbook on Religion n.7 “Life”)*, Iwanami Shoten, 2004; Suzuki Sadami, *Nihon no bunka nashonarizumu (Cultural Nationalism in Japan)*, Heibonsha, 2005.

¹⁵ “Jijodan, shushi, shugi, hōshin oyobi kiyaku sōan (Self-help groups, goals, doctrines, draft guidelines and rules)”, Nakajima Kuni “Kiitsu kyōkai shōkō (ni) (Thoughts on the Concordia Association [2])” *Kiyō (Bulletin) 37*, Department of Literature, Japan Women’s University, 1987, quoted from pp.62-63.

conceived omnipresent flow of vital energy, and proposes the term “Taishō Restoration” as the ideal collective image to express the first step towards a complete perfection: an imperial state.

On the other hand, for landscape architect Uehara Keiji (1889-1981) the idea supporting his professional knowledge (as he expressed it in 1919) was that “living things evolve, differentiate, grow, reproduce and leave offspring . . . we cannot possibly stop the impetus of life by human means”. And, Uehara argues, “because in garden landscaping we dare to ‘cheat’ this unstoppable impetus out for a harmony strongly conforming to the environment, we oppose life's impulse and, hence, we have to be constantly intervening.”¹⁶

Here I would like to point out that, although Naruse and Uehara focus on completely different subjects, they share a by far new worldview that was widely common at the time and which was centered on the concept of “life”. Such ideological movement had, in fact, a decisive influence on the younger generation which, from the turn of the century onwards, self-identified itself with the various systems of modernization. This new generation of young Japanese was in a state of confusion in terms of the values that were dissipating through the social attention directed at them, at times calling them the “troubled youth” (*hanmon seinen*) and at other times naming them the “successful youth” (*seikō seinen*). Japanese society, which had embraced a new aspect of modernization, one that meant the achievement of uniform, national objectives and the accompanying actualization of a social distortion, encountered for the first time a situation in which the meaning of life stopped being necessarily self-evident. The new ideological trends of society were thus absorbed by the youth and went on to significantly regulate social sentiment from that period onwards.¹⁷

Here I would like to introduce two examples from around the year 1920 when such development reached regional communities. In Okayama, in 1920, “concerns about self-cultivation have recently become significantly prevalent among young students who have thrown themselves into the subject of self-cultivation by reading the life stories of self-cultivation leaders and by listening to the sermons of such guides who zealously conduct cultivation seminars”. Self-cultivation was defined as “the pursuit by individually chosen means of the most valuable effort a human can make: building one's lifetime in consistency and in compatibility with the whole world.” We could probably describe such social movement as the popularization of personalism.¹⁸ Another example of such ideological environment can be found in a 1921 edition of “SESERAGI”, a magazine circulating among members of the Tamagawa-kai, the literary circle of the students of the Tokyo Metropolitan School of Horticulture, located in the outskirts of the capital. In a section of that magazine, strong sympathy towards the opinions expressed by the young bestselling author Shimada Seijirō (1899-1930) can be discerned in statements of love towards the wholeness of the universe; in this instance the arts were considered as a human expression of such wish to possibly even undertake a celebration of “life” by one's true, meaningful life-spending self.¹⁹

¹⁶ Uehara, “Jinja fūchirin no zōsei ni tsuite (On the creation of shrine scenic forests)”, *Jinja kyōkai zasshi (The Journal of the Association of Shrines)*, 18-7, 1919.

¹⁷ This was argued in the context of ultranationalism. See Tsutsui Kiyotada, “‘Taishō demokurashii’ kara ‘Shōwa fashizumu’ e (From Taishō democracy to Shōwa fascism)”, *Kindai nihon bunka ron I Kindai nihon e no shikaku (Modern Japanese Culture Theory I: A perspective on Modern Japan)*, Iwanami shoten, 1999.

¹⁸ Yoshida Kōbaisei, “Shūyō no mokuteki (The Aim of self-cultivation)”, *San'yō shinpō*, 28 September 1920.

¹⁹ Kyōkasei, “Kiregure no kansou (Fragmentary Feelings)” *Taishō jūnen gogatsu sōkangō seseragi (First Issue, Taishō 10,*

Such cases reveal that the ideological movement which centered on these new values had taken deep hold of regional communities at the time. We can also observe certain social circumstances that reflect new processes of modernization: in this instance, the growth of popular groups of self-cultivation that attempt to respond to the above "ideals", and the process of formation (such as, here, the Shimada Seijirō boom) of a delivery system of popular literature (for example, Kurata Hyakuzō) that corresponded to a commercialization of these "ideals" in the form of a publishing business.²⁰

In addition, I want to discuss an aspect of the new ideological movement that arose in Japanese society at the turn of the century and which has drawn much attention recently, namely the strong exacerbation of religious sentiment that resulted from such developments.²¹ Such aspect is undoubtedly due to the society's feeling of discomfort towards the government's secularist stance. In 1912, Naruse Jinzō, who I have mentioned earlier in this paper, formed with businessman Shibusawa Eiichi, religious studies scholar Anesaki Masaharu and others, the Association Concordia (*kiitsu kyōkai*), an International Scholarly Group of Cultural Exchange whose membership was composed of elite businessmen, scholars and religious figures and whose purpose was to look into the possibilities of achieving a spiritual unity between humanity and the universe.²² The Association Concordia, after holding several discussions on the subject of religion and education, sent in 1915 to the Minister of Education and to every quarter of interest, a resolution accompanied by an explanatory statement that demanded that “spontaneous expressions hinting at feelings of piety in school students” are not be to ignored or made fun of by educators, and that “their growth of faith” is not to be obstructed.²³ “The overriding principles that our country has tenaciously been holding to and which strive to separate religion from education and keep the two apart, have led to a situation in which educators place importance mainly on materialistic knowledge and acknowledge neither the existence of metaphysical objects of devotion nor any relationship of value beyond that between human beings.” This is, to a large extent, the reason for which the youth finds itself in a confusing state: (“when seeking only one's profit without considering the pros and cons for the nation, it will be easy to be misled by dangerous ideologies”). “It is our urgent duty to make of faith and religiosity the basis of our ideology before our human nature is broken to a point of no return.” Naruse's concept of “Taishō's Second Restoration” could be said to represent a theory for the reconstruction of an imperial state supported by the religious fervor of its citizens and in response to the sense of impending destruction of “the future of a nation” because the secularist modern education had produced individuals who wandered aimlessly instead of taking charge of a social order that would have supported the nation.

May Issue of *SESERAGI*, 1912, circular magazine, unregistered data from the Tomioka Kyūzō Collection at Meguro's History Museum.

²⁰ Tsutsui Kiyotada, *Nihongata “kyōyō” no unmei (The fate of Japanese-style “self-cultivation”)*, Iwanami shoten, 1995; Yamamoto Yoshiaki, “Shimada Seijirō “Chijō” no dokusharon (A study on the readers of Seijirō Shimada's 'Chijo')”, *The Annual Collection of Essays and Studies*, Faculty of Letters, Gakushūin University 48, 2001.

²¹ see footnote 13.

²² Takahashi Hara, “Kiitsu kyōkai no rinen to sono yukue (The Concordia Association's ideology and its development)”, *Tōkyō daigaku shūkyōgaku nenpō (Annual Review of Religious Studies of Tokyo University)* 20, 2003.

²³ Shibusawa Seien Memorial Foundation, Ryūmonsha, *Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō (Shibusawa Eiichi Biographical Collection)* 46, Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō kankōkai (Publication Society of Shibusawa Eiichi's Biographical Collection), 1962, pp. 592-3.

The logic behind Concordia’s resolution is of particular importance: the statement only stipulates that “the separation of religion and education means that living religions (*genzon shūkyō*) are not instructed in schools; it does not mean that religion as a concept is considered unconditionally useless”. “What we here call religiosity does not refer to the numerous religions that exist today around the world, but to the feeling of piety that rises when one believes in something great, something which transcends the self”; in other words, the resolution does not tend to regard as “religion” the total of living religions that existed at the time, each with their own specific format. On the contrary, the Concordia Association considered that these “living religions” and “what is called religion in general” are just individual representations of “religion” as “the essence of life”, something that every human’s inner world is fundamentally endowed with. The connotation of the word “religion” is therefore enlarged and becomes subject to segmentation at a lower level. Here we see the construction of a logic that, by changing the connotation of the word “religion”, which secularism had made an implicit prerequisite of, laid the religious foundations of a nation and society that “do not oppose the overriding principle of the separation between religion and education”.

A situation is visible here in which the expansion of the meaning of “religion” rose in the midst of a new movement of social values. The secularist policies born thereafter spread through society and launched a movement that invalidated secularism by “re-interpreting” the secularist logic for the sake of society. This phenomenon in religious studies has been understood as an example of the religious de-privatization that occurs in the modern era, but in the Japanese case, as I will discuss later, it becomes necessary to consider a situation in which the border between the two understandings, namely “non-religion=public” and “religion=private”, can be transgressed from both sides. In this paper, I want to interpret this as a general process of de-secularization.

2. The process of formation of a religious nationalistic way of looking at shrines

It is worth noting that the Association of Shrines, which had been considered as “public” and therefore “non-religious”, showed a fairly sensitive response to the previously discussed de-secularization movement that was seeking the public reinstatement of “religion” (until then limited to the private domain). In August 1915, immediately after the announcement of the Concordia Association’s statement, the editorial of the journal of the National Association of Shrines wrote the following: “An organization for research on spirituality named the Concordia Association distributed to educational institutions of the country a manifesto about the necessity to nurture sentiments of faith within the normal national education programs, the need of which has been recently emphasized by scholars”. And the editorial evaluates this statement as follows: “if every sect and school of the living religions unites in the future, or if we discover faith to something greater than those religions, then we could make of these the basis of education, but we can’t possible have anything to gain from actively pursuing such plans.” In that case: “what is that for which we should be looking to base the nurturing of piety in today’s or the future’s national education?” That would be neither the “living religions”, nor “a unified religion”, not even some “foreign religions”. “In this situation, what holds the most authority and is mostly relevant, is our Shinto (*jingidō*).”²⁴

In the above, we see that the association of shrines is sensitive to the Association Concordia’s

²⁴ Yamada Shin’ichiro, “Jinja chūshinshugi no jisshi (The implementation of shrine-centrism)”, *Zenkoku shinshoku kai kaihō* (Report of the National Association of Shinto Priests) 202, 1915.

logic promoting a de-secularized concept of "religion" and thus problematizing the status of shrines as public, non-religious institutions. However, what is particularly important in this editorial, transpires from the use of the term "the living religions" (*kisei shūkyō*): indeed, the Association of Shrines seems to have also been expanding the concept of religion, "discovering" thus a de-secularization logic that allows it to make of the issue of the shrines being called "stages of the public rituals of the state " a problem limited to the private sphere. In 1927, The Association of Shrines makes this clear in a public statement about its social status: “the reason for calling them stages of the public rituals of the state was because the shrines are not to be judged on the basis of the existing religions which make of individual faith their purpose of existence and which attribute freedom of belief to the private sphere; the activity by individual citizens of expressing their religious devotion at shrines is nothing else than national public religion.”²⁵ In 1936, Tokyo’s Association of Shinto Priests employed the same concept of “national public religion”: “considering shrines as a religion which is specific and most appropriately conforming to citizenship is ultimately the proper thing to do. It would be impossible to include the citizen’s faith in shrines under the freedom of religion clause. Any person from any faith has to select a religion to believe in, on top of accepting faith in shrines”. However, “if we impose Shinto (Shinto shrines) as religion, then even more legal problems will occur.” Hence, “we won’t be able to reach the end of the debate and to systematically turn Shinto into religion. That is why we have to rule out the religiosity of Shinto shrines.” It transpires from this discussion that the “shrines as non-religious”-theory which the government was pushing onto society following the secularization logic, came to be reinterpreted in de-secularized terms and was shaped into a new and qualitatively different “shrines as non-religious”-theory that negated secularism.²⁶

This de-secularized view of shrines by the National Association of Shrines, like that of the Association Concordia, was primarily based on social developments of the time.²⁷ One of the local young shrine priests in Okayama prefecture where self-cultivation (*jinkaku shugi*) had become popular, wrote in the bulletin of the prefectural Association of Shrines that “to fix these troubling times, we need to establish universal suffrage, achieve good results from our national diplomacy, and reform living religion ideologically”. This, in practice, translated into “rejecting the old formalistic and conceptual religion and considering the ‘stages of the public rituals of the state’/shrines as the future’s new type of religion that is founded on every individual’s pure spirit; a completely true religion.” The author adds that “shrine priests must play the role of society’s leading spirits, involving themselves in the establishment of personal character (‘the re-construction of the body and soul’) and by such means become the religious practitioners who will rebuilt the social order (‘purify society’). In addition, at the basis of such assertive social intentions, clung the shout of a local youth who worried at the time about spending his life without having achieved self-perfection: "It's like I have lost my humanness (...) I have really come to hate myself. I feel left by society and lonely (...) This feeling of grief for the growing distance between myself and the laurels of a bright future (...) it is my

²⁵ "Kengi (Motion)", *Kōkoku* 342, 1927.

²⁶ *Jinja mondai no kenkyū (Research on Shrine Problems)*, edited and published by Tokyofu shinshokukai jinjaseido kakuritsu kiseikai (the Association for the Establishment of a Shrine System, the Tokyo Association of Shinto Priests), 1930.

²⁷ *ibid.*, “*Mura no chinju*” to *senzen nihon*” (“*Village Tutelary Gods*” and *Pre-War Japan*).

fault. It is my fault because I lack strength.”²⁸

The social attention drawn to the de-secularization of shrines was supported by such desires for inner self-perfection, and developed as an actualization of these desires. There was at the time a fundamental incentive for the young local Shinto priests to actively function as the on-site implementers of policies that promoted the edification of citizens. These policies that circulated around shrines had not just been imposed from the top. They were reinterpreted in terms of the local Shinto priests' wishes for a de-secularized religious experience that would contribute to the cultivation of personality, and would undergo an explosive development thereafter, freighted with the mechanics of a social movement rising from the depths of regional communities.

Hence, The Association of Shinto Shrines' de-secularized view of shrines did not arise from within the Association, but was rather shaped by these local Shinto priests who actively functioned as on-site agents for the edification of citizens. This will eventually become no less than a movement for the construction of a democratic circuit that would break the old bureaucratic administration of the Association of Shinto Shrines and change the association from within according to the wishes of these young priests. As a result, an institutional reform of the National Association of Shrine Priests (*zenkoku shinshokukai*) was implemented in 1926. The previously mentioned consolidation of the National Association of Shinto shrines' strategy for the implementation of a "national public religion" was achieved on top of the above institutional reform. Finally, Sagami Shin'ichi, who was heading the Bureau of Shrine Affairs in the Home Ministry from 1924 to 1925, developed a shrine administration that bore an, until then unheard of and decisive character for reform, by proposing the setting up of a system of edification of citizens which would involve the originators of this movement: the regional priests. All these actions led to the stabilization of the new century's system of edification of citizens, and to the construction, for the first time in the mid-1920s, of a functional operation of shrine administration. The problems with shrines during the war developed based on these existing structures. And it is among these conditions that the theory of non-religiosity of shrines, which was founded on the government's secularism progressed together with the de-secularist tendencies of the Association of Shinto Shrines into the war period. Then, a situation emerged in which the religious control implemented in the entire empire transformed the de-secularist understanding of shrines as "national religion" into a weapon.²⁹

To sum up the above, de-secularization did not just transgress the border from "private religion" to "public religion", but also advanced in the opposite direction too, from the public sphere of religion to the private sphere of religion, and as a whole moved towards a reinstatement of religion's public/social function. Of importance in this process of de-secularization of shrines is the emphasis of a national regulation that identified shrines as "stages of the public rituals of the state". This de-secularization of shrines will later be particularly combined with nationalism. In other words, in the period following the turn of the century, the de-secularization process itself consisted of a significant aspect of the formation of the religious nationalism that was simultaneously taking place in pre-war Japan.

²⁸ Suda Gakushi "Jiseiroku (ni) (Records of self-examination [2])", *Okayama-ken shinshokukai kaihō (Report of Okayama Prefecture's Association of Shinto Priests)* 19, 1922.

²⁹ Komagome Takeshi, "1930nendai Taiwan, Chōsen, naichi ni okeru jinja sanpai mondai (Issues related to the worship at shrines of Japan, Korea and Taiwan during the 1930s)", *Rikkyō Gakuinshi kenkyū (Rikkyō Gakuin Historical Research)* 3, 2005.

3. The change of the shrine scenic theory

In the process of formation of the religious nationalism that appeared within the de-secularization of Japan, the national ideology related to the domain of shrine scenic theory produced also fundamental changes. In this respect, I want to draw attention to the subject of the environmental deterioration which was provoked by the sudden modernization-related stress imposed on the big cities at the turn of the century. Industrial smoke came to be considered as a threat to the livelihoods of the residents of cities like Tokyo and Osaka, and the progressive withering of coniferous thickets of trees around shrines, temples and other parts of the big cities, attracted social attention on the negative impact of smoke.³⁰

In these circumstances, the national ideology of the shrine scenic theory inevitably appeared to be incompatible with reality. In 1912, on the death of Emperor Meiji, plans for the building of memorial structures took place at the imperial city of Tokyo and were led by businessman Shibusawa Eiichi and Mayor Sakatani Yoshirō surrounded by the city government. These plans will eventually become the shrine Meiji Jingū, which, at the center of Tokyo, presented a novel spatial structure divided between what are called "inner precinct" (*naien*) and "outer precinct" (*gaien*) [*naien* was built in Yoyogi from national funds and *gaien* was built in Aoyama through private contributions].

In this paper I want to focus on the confusion that arose in relation to the shrine's location. Forestry and landscape architecture scholars such as Honda Seiroku and Hongō Takanori, who had argued that a human made coniferous forest was ideal for a shrine forest, were, at first, against an urban location for the building of a shrine, claiming that it would be technologically impossible to maintain the ideal coniferous shrine forest. Honda's counter argument based on his authority as a specialist of shrine forestry provoked a social reaction and the head of the Association of Shinto Shrines expressed towards the mayor immediate concerns over whether or not the construction of an ideal shrine forest is possible in urban areas. Landscape architecture, which, as a discipline, was at its stage of creation, was already facing strong public demand to overcome its technological limitations.

Landscape architecture scholars turned then their focus onto the "ever green broadleaved trees" which were said to "be resistant to damage from smoke". However, contrary to the coniferous Japanese cedar, the problem was that such trees would therefore not sufficiently raise the public's awareness regarding the value of the "shrine scenic" ideal. (Even the Prime Minister, Ōkuma Shigenobu, is said to have questioned whether this was a forest or "a bush"). That is where landscape architecture scholars mobilized an argument regarding forest zones that involved the ecologically stable natural (climax) vegetation of which they knew from their Western-based professional training. They brought in the idea that the ever-green broad-leaved forest corresponds perfectly to the primeval/natural climax forest, which is “characteristic of Tokyo’s natural warm-temperate forestry”, seeking thus to suggest the evergreen broad-leaved trees as only a substitute to the coniferous trees. As a result, they added to the debate an entirely new objective that differed in character from the previous “doctrine” because it called for the “restoration of the primeval forests that are peculiar to the regions concerned”.³¹ Even Honda Seiroku, at the completion of “*naien*” in 1920, emphasized

³⁰ *ibid* (unless otherwise noted), “Senzen nihon no jinja fūchiron to Meiji tennō no yuisho (Shrine scenic theory in pre-war Japan and the “pedigree” of Emperor Meiji)”

³¹ Hongō Takanori, "Meiji jingū go-keidai rin'en keikaku “Plans of Meiji Jingū's inner forest area)", 20 December 1921, Meiji Jingū ed. *Meiji Jingū sōsho dai 13 kan Zōeihen (ni)* (*Meiji Jingū Collections vol. 13 Construction of the Shrine*)

the rule that shrine forests must express Nature’s authority”.³²

In the context of society’s new ideological trends that had appeared at the time, the above situation needs to be seen as the actualization of the move of the shrine scenic theory “towards nature”, a move that corresponded also to a similar change in the wider public sense of values. And in this case, I want to consider the young scholar of landscape architecture, Uehara Keiji (born in 1889), who I mentioned in the previous section. Uehara participated from the beginning, as a student of Honda, in the construction of Meiji Jingū, and, based on this direct involvement, he was the one to execute the systematic generalization of the shrine scenic theory. Contrary to Honda and Hongō, it is probably correct to see Uehara, who established his specialization while being involved in the construction of Meiji Jingū, as *the* key player in the change of the shrine scenic theory. It is Uehara who, as noted above, accepted the new value system of the era. And based on this sense of value, it becomes for the first time possible for the final, stable form of a natural forest (the climax forest) to come into shape; a natural form that stands at the opposite of “artificiality” or “civilization”, and which is essentially filled with nature’s energy, devoid of human involvement. This primordial character will thereafter become the “ideal” shrine forest.

Of course, the shrine scenic - environmental - theory was thought out with Meiji Jingu in mind. However, after Uehara put together around 1920 a theory for all shrine forests, this new type of shrine scenic theory replaced the basic understanding among landscape architecture scholars of the day, and through the warring period shaped an image of shrines as “forests from the age of gods (*kannagara*)”, an image of national polity that seems extremely reactionary. Hongō Takanori had already established by the mid-1930s, that a shrine forest composed of trees that grow naturally and are specific to the local region is to be generally considered as the ideal format, which he called “the so-called forest of gods.”³³ At the same time, the civic administration of shrines was planning the reconstruction of shrines forests in which “the true sacred trees”, namely the coniferous trees that were perishing due to the advance of urbanization, would be substituted by “the forests from the age of gods”.³⁴

In 1942, the war had already started and Hongō wrote in a text entitled “Shinto Shrines and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”, that “the forests of shrines would ideally be natural forests dating from the age of gods (...) ancient forests that represent the pure and prime nature of the local region are the most appropriate to enshrine the gods”.³⁵

The above development of ideas led to the argument that there should be rules for “no trespassing areas” where cleaning and grass mowing had been interrupted. In contrast, the man-made coniferous groves were just seen as countering Nature’s great principle.³⁶ Here, for the first time, it becomes possible to think of the management of shrine forests as a peculiar problem of a “moral

[2], Meiji Jingū Office, 2004.

³² Honda Seiroku, "Jingū no jinjarin ni tsuite (On shrine forests)", Teien Kyōkai (Association of Parks) ed. *Meiji Jingū, Sūzanbō*, 1920.

³³ Hongō Takanori, "Jinjakeidai no fūchimonдай (Problems regarding the scenery of shrine grounds)", *Teien to Fūkei (Parks and Landscape)* 17-11, 1935.

³⁴ Ōgawara Masakatsu, "Chinju no mori (Groves of village shrines)", *Kōen ryokuchi (Parks and Green Areas)* 1-5, 1937.

³⁵ Hongō (as above), "Dai tōa kyōei ken to jinja (The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and shrines)".

³⁶ Uehara Keiji, "Jinja no keidai to sono shinrin (Shrine grounds and their forests)", *Kokugakuinzasshi (Journal of Kokugakuin University)* 28-11, 1922.

forestry”, which was rigorously distinguished from the general forestry that targeted public use.³⁷ The image of shrines surrounded by broad-leaved trees having a primitive look, was something by far modern, and which was not part of the modernization process of the Meiji era. That is why Uehara emphasized that “naturalism”, “a policy of laissez-faire based on certain norms” is the “road we should be taking”; this would be “an endeavor appropriate for our times (...) that would increase even more than before the resistance of shrine forests, absorb eternity’s life force and hasten the advance of civilization”.³⁸

This new image of shrines will slowly become common sense and will bring about a fundamental rift between the two mutually exclusive concepts of “natural” versus “artificial”. Uehara says, on the one hand, that “shrine grounds are neither a park, nor a garden; they are neither a playground nor an amusement park; they are certainly not ground for festivals”. On the other hand, he claims that “what is a shrine, and what are its grounds for?, should we consider them sacred or vulgar?: the answers to these questions should be self-evident.”³⁹ This debate is related to the fact that the focus of the image of shrines had shifted from its buildings to the shrine forests (“without forest there is no shrine; only with a forest is a shrines complete”⁴⁰). And this was because an ultimate foundation for the division of space according to the “sacred-natural”/“vulgar-artificial” dichotomy was sought in the primordial naturalness of shrine forests in which no human hand had intervened. Hence was born an exceptionally critical opinion regarding situations that “vulgarize the shrine grounds too much”, or “debase the sacred grounds by turning them to amusement parks”.⁴¹

In this process of distinction between sacred and vulgar spaces, it is particularly necessary to pay attention to the fact that the “sacred-natural” space was made into a problem of public territory. Uehara Keiji writes: “from the viewpoint of the nature of the shrine itself, it is the shrine forest that is set free for all citizens. The shrine forest belongs to no one single person, but to everyone leaving in the world (...) it is national, public, open and perpetual (...) The act of planting trees, which leaves traces of human technology, counters nature and opposes the emergence of natural forestry”.⁴² In other words, Uehara here combines “naturalness” with the shrine’s public character. At the core of this sacred-vulgar distinction lies no other than the relation with public territory. That is the reason why the distinction between shrine grounds and parks was problematized at the time.

In the 1930s, Hongō proposed that “shrines and parks cannot possibly be mixed together” and urged that “we maintain forever the respectable scenery of shrines and temples and stop confusing shrine grounds with parks.”⁴³ The popularization of such ideas progressed through society well into

³⁷ Uehara, “Jinja no shinrin (ni) (Shrine forests [2])”, *Jinja kyōkai zasshi (The Journal of the Association of Shinto Shrines)* 16-2, 1917; Uehara (as above), “Jinja no keidai to sono shinrin (Shrine grounds and their forests)”; *ibid.*, “Jinja no shinrin (san) (Shrine forests [3])”, *Jinja kyōkai zasshi (The Journal of the Association of Shinto Shrines)* 16-5, 1917.

³⁸ Uehara (as above), “Jinja no shinrin (ni) (Shrine forests [2])”; *ibid.*, “Jinja fūchirin no zōsei ni tsuite (On the creation of shrine scenic forests)”.

³⁹ Uehara (as above), “Jinja fūchirin no zōsei ni tsuite (On the creation of shrine scenic forests)”.

⁴⁰ Hongō (as above), “Dai tōa kyōei ken to jinja (The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and shrines)”; “Rin'en keikaku to jinja no mori (Landscape planning and shrine forests)”.

⁴¹ Uehara (as above), “Jinja fūchirin no zōsei ni tsuite (On the creation of shrine scenic forests)”.

⁴² Uehara (as above), “Jinja fūchirin no zōsei ni tsuite (On the creation of shrine scenic forests)”.

⁴³ Hongō (as above), “Jinjakeidai no fūchimon dai (Problems regarding the scenery of shrine grounds)”, Hongō, “Toshi to shaji keidaichi (Cities and shrine/temple grounds)”, *Toshikōron* 14-8, 1931.

the war years, as they were mentioned again in 1942.⁴⁴ In addition, based on this distinction, the idea of zoning was put forward in statements such as the following: “build appropriate gardens (*enchi*) at specific areas far from shrine buildings (...) provide spaces where people can rest without hesitance (...) and instead, because there will be such places, we will be able to protect the shrine forests”; “identify clearly the areas where the trees belong to the solemn shrine forests (...) and distinctively separate those areas from the rest”; “distinguish a part of the area outside of the shrine grounds, far from the shrine forests (...) and build a free space, part of which can be used by the public like a park”⁴⁵.

Meiji Jingū which presents the distinction *naien* - *gaien* (inner and outer precinct) like no other shrine and in which a solemn forest area is clearly distinguished within the *naien*, is the only shrine to perfectly embody this hierarchy with shrine areas occupying the top position and the rest of public space being submitted to zoning. The social popularization of this image of shrines progressed thus with Meiji Jingū as a model area. The structure of *naien* – *gaien* was established as a model space representing in a simple manner the sacred and the profane of public space, a superiority of the center over the periphery. Hence, there were attempts to adapt this model in every locality. Tokyo’s Association of Shrine Priests (*Tokyo-fu shinshokukai*) sent the following petition to the prefectural governor in regards to the parks that were to be created according to the urban planning that had been sped up due to the Tokyo recovery project following the Great Kantō Earthquake: “we could serve two ends by connecting parks to the shrine grounds, within the structure of *naien* – *gaien*, and thus gain more usable space for those parks while still guarding the solemnity of the scenery and sacred location of the shrine grounds.”⁴⁶ The formation and popularization of this new image of shrines led to shrines bearing for the first time a new meaning as being able to shape space on a new level within the development of urbanization of regional communities.

This new process meant the appearance of a situation that could not be envisaged in a frame of mind that sees public space from a secularized point of view. It is necessary to think of the birth of a new shrine scenic theory as the problem of formation of an ideal space in response to the rise of religious nationalism in pre-war Japan. In this respect, the problematization of the vulgarization of shrine grounds by the Bureau of Shrine Affairs (where Sagami Shin'ichi was the chief, in the mid-1920s), and of the movement towards the segregation of shrine grounds from the parks with which they had been mixed within the capital, bear a particularly important meaning.⁴⁷ The urbanization of Tokyo at the time, had reached, as I will show later, a new level, and while the regularization of administration of parks was underway (with the establishment of a Tokyo City Park Division in 1921), the “liberalization of shrines” started becoming an issue in 1925. The Tokyo Association of Shinto Priests reacted sensitively and opposed the plan of Tokyo City’s Department of Social Affairs to increase the public use of shrines as parks. The Association of Shrines considered

⁴⁴ Hongō (as above), “Dai tōa kyōei ken to jinja (The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and shrines)”.

⁴⁵ See footnote 41.

⁴⁶ “Petition” from the President of Tokyo’s Association of Shinto Priests, Miyanishi Koresuke to the Governor of Tokyo Prefecture, Usami Katsuo (14 October 1923, “Enjō jinja shinshoku kyōgikai (Convention of Priests of Shrines Destroyed by Fire)”, *Tōkyōfu shinshokukai kōhō* (Official Bulletin of the Tokyo Association of Shinto Priests) 136, 1924.

⁴⁷ Akazawa (as above); Aoi Akihito, *Shokuminchi jinja to teikoku nihon* (Shrines of the Colonies and the Japanese Empire), Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2005; Fujimoto Yorio, *Shinto to shakai jigyō no kindaiishi* (A Modern History of Shinto and Social Work), Kōbundō, 2009.

the vulgarization of shrine grounds as a problem and agreed therefore with the Association of Shinto Priests. This debate shows concretely the process by which the conceptual distinction between shrine grounds and parks (although mutually contradictory) was recognized and shared with the rest of society.⁴⁸ The new image of shrines that was established through such processes, developed through the war period, as I noted previously, into a theory of “forests from the age of gods”. On the other hand, this new image of shrines turned the theory of regional specificity (which was an ecological recognition of forest zones) into a weapon attached to the building and reconstruction of shrines that accompanied the sudden foreign expansion of the Japanese empire during the warring period. Hence, this image will spread throughout the empire despite the heterogenous regionalities of the lands occupied by the Japanese army.⁴⁹

III. The “discovery” of shrines and religious nationalism in regional communities in the 1920s and 1930s

1. The formative years of the “Greater Tokyo” and the transformation of farm villages in the vicinity of Tokyo

Nationalism in prewar Japan underwent great qualitative changes in the period between the turn of the century and the 1920s, and eventually was regionalized (forming a religious nationalism), leading the country to the warring period. How did the position of shrines-“the stages of the public rituals of the state”- change within society during this process?

In this section, I explore in concrete terms this question in the context of the regional communities which were submitted to a new level of urbanization, namely a sudden suburbanization as they became peripheral areas following the expansion of Japanese cities during the 1920s and 1930s. I take as a case-study, Hibusuma village in the Ebara district of Tokyo during the formative years of “Greater Tokyo” (the Hibusuma village was the result of the incorporation of the Fusuma hamlet with the Himon'ya hamlet; in 1929 it became Hibusuma town and in 1932 it was incorporated into Tokyo city (Meguro ward)). Until the 1920s, this village was characteristic of the farming villages neighboring Japanese towns, but from the 1920s onwards it experienced a radical urbanization. The population increased ten times due to the influx of city dwellers from the center of Tokyo and the composition of the workforce decreased dramatically with the percentage of those involved in agriculture dropping from 70 percent to less than 10 percent. Finally, the housing areas also expanded. The population of farmers which used to make up most of the village dwellers became a minority and the traditional social order of the community was thus difficult to preserve. These sudden changes originated in the overlapping of the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923) with the construction of private railways (the Mekama line in 1923 and the Tōyoko line in 1927) that connected the city center to the suburbs during the formative years of “Greater Tokyo”. Following these events, the increase of the constant number of Diet members due to the change of Hibusuma's status from "village" to "town", and the ensuing city council elections that were held for the first time based on the newly established universal suffrage law (which extended suffrage to all males aged 25

⁴⁸ Akazawa (as above); Aoi Akihito, *Shokuminchi jinja to teikoku nihon (Shrines of the Colonies and the Japanese Empire)*, Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2005; Fujimoto Yorio, *Shinto to shakai jigyo no kindaiishi (A Modern History of Shinto and Social Work)*, Kōbundō, 2009.

⁴⁹ Aoi (as above).

and over), led to the fact that newly arriving citizens held most of the city council posts. In addition, the new mayor was successively elected from among the newly arriving citizens; one of them was a rear admiral and the next one was living outside Hibusuma. The incorporation into Tokyo city had been completed by 1932.⁵⁰

Two issues arose in the local governing body of Hibusuma town at the beginning of the 1930s. One had to do with the problem of revision of town names. The other was related to the question of whether or not to keep the historical name of Himon'ya to refer to the corresponding neighborhood association of the district, after the incorporation of the town into Tokyo city. This was not just an issue of place name. It is because such town and place names are symbols of the traditional social order and of the traditional values that their change is problematized. This issue is also a clear expression of the policy confrontations within regional communities, which accompanied the restructuring of Hibusuma's social order.

The local government at the time prioritized the wishes of the newly settled “learned class” of citizens who had come from the urban areas, and implemented their request to change the town's name in order to respond to their sense of discomfort (the name was thought to be “of ill augur”) towards the traditional order and values. The town's administrative authorities and local newspapers opened a media event in order to elect the town's new name, one “that sounds cheerful”. And the same administrative authorities did not seem to intend on leaving the old name of Himon'ya to the neighborhood associations under the administration of the district system. In fact, the original name of “Himon'ya” does not originally appear in the name plan of the neighborhood association of Meguro district.⁵¹

An opposition movement mainly composed of the old residents thus appeared and centered on a influential old resident from Himon'ya's hamlet, whom I discuss in the next section: Tomioka Kyūzō. The opposition movement of Tomioka developed as a movement critical of the town administration, and mobilized everyone of the village who held feelings of dissatisfaction. However, it was decided that the new name would be Asahi-chō and henceforth the movement for keeping the old name of Himon'ya never reached a substantial majority. In other words, the town administration's opinion remained predominant during the formulation of this problem. This, nevertheless, did not mean that eventually the town administration was successful in passing the new name. The proposal to change the town's name was shelved and ultimately was never adopted due to the incorporation of the town into Tokyo-city. And the appellation Himon'ya was kept to identify some of the neighborhood associations while a municipal park was named Himon'ya Park after the incorporation of the Mitani

⁵⁰ Tokyo-fu Ebara-gun Hibusuma-machi yakuba (Hibusuma Town Hall, Ebara District, Tokyo) ed. And published, *Shigun gappei kinen Hibusuma chōshi* (*Magazine for the Commemoration of Hibusuma Town's Merging*), 1932; Tokyo toritsu daigaku gakujutsu kenkyū kai (Academic Research Committee of Tokyo Metropolitan University) ed., *Meguro kushi* (*History of Meguro District*), Meguro district, Tokyo, 1961; *ibid.* ed., *Meguro kushi shiryōhen* (*History of Meguro District-Data Edition*), 1962. For the last two references, I have consulted later editions dating from 1970.

⁵¹ See related comments in Tomioka Kyūzō's *Musashino no yashikirin* (*Musashino's Residential Groves*), Sūzanbō, 1936, and *Shigun gappei kinen Hibusuma chōshi* (*Magazine for the Commemoration of Hibusuma Town's Merging*) as above. Also, see related section in unregistered material from the *Tomioka Kyūzō Collection* (Hibusuma chōmei kaishō hantai kakaku rengō iinkai “kiroku” tsuzuri [Records of the General Committee of Districts Against the Change of Name of Hibusuma Town], 1930). The first half of the citation comes from *Musashino no yashikirin* (*Musashino's Residential Groves*), p. 121. The second half of the citation comes from *Shigun gappei kinen Hibusuma chōshi* (*Magazine for the Commemoration of Hibusuma Town's Merging*), p.185.

pond which was Himon'ya's communal land. Thus, it is fair to say that eventually it was the minority's opinion which pervaded. This problem shook the existing social order, but its power of determination survived and it seems that it was rather the town administration that had to show its compromising side. Hence, it becomes important to look at the name change opposition movement and at the ideas that supported it. In the next section, I will focus on the relation between this supporting ideas and the formation of religious nationalism, which I have discussed so far in this paper. The emphasis will therefore be put on the central figure of the movement, Tomioka.

2. The man named Tomioka Kyūzō

The leader of the movement opposing the town's name change, Tomioka Kyūzō (1902-1981) was born the eldest son to Tomioka Kinzō a fifth generation village merchant called "Aburaya". At the beginning of the Meiji era, his grandfather had been member of the village assembly and chairman, and his father had been deputy head of Hibusuma and had also worked as village treasurer during the Taishō period. The Tomioka family held thus an influential position in the village.⁵² As for Tomioka Kyūzō who was born in 1902, he belonged to a generation defined by the modernization process and was thus one of the youth of the 1920s who played a key role in the Taishō democracy movement.

After graduating from the previously mentioned Tokyo Metropolitan School of Horticulture in March 1920, Tomioka, as part of the village intelligentsia, became an assistant at the local agricultural association (in 1921) and then secretary of the village credit purchase union (in 1922). He was thus destined to play a key role in Hibusuma's future, but he soon faced the previously mentioned sudden changes that hit Hibusuma and the neighboring areas. Tomioka, who was also a local historian, describes his experiences of these changes in the self-authored “Journal of Suburban Himon'ya” of 1929 as follows. “Regardless of whether they were good or bad, the land, the customs, the oral traditions, everything which I grew up looking at and listening to has in the last few years dramatically changed, or just disappeared. Communal and individual customs, and the manners of socialization, which we used to follow because we thought of them as convenient, have mostly now become troubling encumbrances. We cannot suddenly adopt an urban lifestyle, but we cannot allow ourselves to live in the past either. Just like the residential areas and the commercial districts are now being jumbled together with rice fields and thickets of trees, the hearts of the local folks are also being shaken by these recent changes”.⁵³

Looking at Tomioka's educational background, we see that he transferred from the Sōtō Zen Junior High School to the Tokyo Metropolitan School of Horticulture in the middle of his junior high years. There, he became a member of the previously mentioned literary circle, Tamagawa-kai. In the opening text of the circle's journal, SESERAGI, Tomioka wrote that he hoped that the journal would become an arts journal in the literal sense, a host of frightening exchanges of arguments and a

⁵² Ishizaki Naoto, "Senzenki Tokyo no 'kyōdo no midori' ('Local greenery' in pre-war Tokyo)", "Kyōdo kenkyūkai (Society for Research on Localities) ed., *Kyōdo (The Local)*, Saganoshoin, 2003; Akasaka Makoto, "1930nendai no nihon ni okeru 'kyōdo fūkei' hozonron (Theories for the preservation of 'local sceneries' in Japan, in the 1930s)", *Randosukeipu kenyū (Landscape Research)* 69:1, 2005; Tomioka Kyūzō, "Nōson jidai no Himon'ya nenchū gyōji (Annual events in Himon'ya: in the days when it was a farm village)", *Kyōdo Meguro (Local Meguro)* 15, Meguro-ku kyōdo kenkyū-kai (Society for Research on the Meguro District), 1971 and *Kyōdo Meguro (Local Meguro)* 25 (1981); Tomioka Kyūzō, *Kyōdo zuihitsu Meguro kaiwai (Meguro neighborhood's local essays) Sūzanbō*, 1961.

⁵³ Tomioka, *Kōgai Himon'ya-shi (Journal of Suburban Himon'ya)*, Sūzanbō, 1929, pp.7-8.

specialized publication for research on horticulture”. He even commented that for the Tamagawa-kai, the journal was like “a cute child”. He explained this affection by writing that, after graduating from primary school and “losing his way for a bit”, he entered the above school and there, during his adolescence, “a period when one experiences the most sadness and most happiness in life”, he made unforgettable friends “of almost the same background, age and circumstances”, and was able to form a union with junior members that “was close to being really ideal”.⁵⁴

What we see here is that Tomioka was again worrying about self-realization and reacted in a typical manner by keeping exploring for a solution to his worries. As previously mentioned the appearance in regional communities of village intelligentsia such as Tomioka, was an important aspect of the influential power that this social class will hold during the generational shift in regional communities. And Tomioka’s concerns about self-realization did not stop there. He will continue his education at Tokyo High-School of Landscape Architecture, a professional institution which specialized in this discipline and which had just opened its doors. In fact, this school was established in 1924 as an environment where the up-and-coming discipline of landscape architecture would be socially established. The school’s founder and principal was Uehara, who, as I discussed earlier, systematized landscape architecture out of forestry studies when he had the opportunity to oversee the construction of Meiji Jingū’s gardens and devise his new methods thereupon. After graduating in 1926 and staying at the school as teaching assistant and instructor while also being involved in research, he entered in 1927 the aforementioned newly established Tokyo City Park Division of the City Hall as public engineer and expert. He kept being involved in the administration of Tokyo’s public parks after the war. Tomioka was an expert in landscape architecture, had been directly influenced by Uehara Keiji and had become his right-arm, inheriting thus Uehara’s disciplinary premises and conducting research and education under his supervision. Tomioka was thus one of the first generation’s field experts of landscape architecture.

From the above, we can see that Tomioka’s case is the perfect material to include in the argument that I explore in this paper. In addition, the fact that he kept commuting to Tokyo’s City Hall from his hometown, Himon'ya, which was undergoing abrupt changes at the time, became the reason for him to turn into a local historian who had the chance to acquire a unique double perspective on the historical developments of the area.⁵⁵ Tomioka wrote his thoughts about his home town and behaved according to this particular perspective. In the following section, I want therefore to study what truly mobilized the opposition movement through the clues left in Tomioka’s writings.

3. Shrines and the search for a reconstruction of the social order of regional communities in Tomioka’s writings, during the process of urbanization

In 1929, when his hometown Himon'ya, at the “mercy” of Tokyo’s sudden expansion, had reached the definite state of being forced to reorganize its social order under the pressure of the increasing population of new residents, Tomioka wrote the following in regard to the attitude that his fellow townspeople ought to adopt in the future. “Urban and regional planning of large cities unfolds by preparing the surrounding lands for future urban development, namely by allotting them a special role as residential areas, commercial areas or touristic areas”. In this respect, Himon'ya “should not

⁵⁴ Tomioka, “‘Seseragi’ no sōkan ni taishite (On the inaugural issue of ‘SESERAGI’)”, *ibid.*, SESERAGI.

⁵⁵ see Ishizaki, *ibid.*

be thought of as just one section of Tokyo”. Himon'ya should rather develop as an individual organism created with a certain plan based on the regional community”. In other words, regional communities should not consider Greater Tokyo’s urban planning passively but proactively; it is because they will become a part of Tokyo that regional communities must form an organized body. “The center of our town, our community, must be firmly defined.”⁵⁶ In order to achieve that goal, the cohesive power of the once weakened regional community must be rebuilt by drawing on its individuality, which depends on all of the townspeople, both the former residents who had supported the town’s traditional order, and the newcomers who suddenly immigrated and compose now the majority of the town’s population. Tomioka, after promoting such ideas, turned to the role of a familiar presence in the regional communities: the shrine.

In an essay titled “The behavior of shrine parishioners (*ubuko*) in regards to the tutelary gods”, Tomioka emphasizes that “we should never forget the important role played by the village’s tutelary shrine, Hachiman shrine, in the development of our hometown”, and adds that “even now that parts of our land have been incorporated into Tokyo’s zone of authority, parishioners have not forgotten their faith (*sangyō*) to their local god and keep visiting Hachiman shrine.” Tomioka’s emphasis clearly appeals to the former residents’ common historical roots and aims at stimulating their sense of belonging to the local community by reconfirming and reminding them the link that they share as parishioners of the same tutelary god.

What is however important is Tomioka’s next argument. Tomioka says: “At the same time, as modern citizens, parishioners need to take into account the following serious demands in regards to shrines: 1 the protection of the shrine grounds’ sacredness and environment, 2 shrine grounds are for public use, 3 the regulation of donations and offerings, 4 the policies that promote the everlasting of the sacred shrines trees even in urban environments.” 1 refers to the control of entry into the shrine grounds. 2 refers to the problem of the shrine gardens that are on the verge of the sacred grounds of the shrine, and the *gaien* where small parks, playgrounds or official residences are located. 3 corresponds to the policies preventing the vulgarization of shrine grounds. 4 based on observations about the condition of Hachiman shrine’s trees, which were found to be decaying “due to the smoky and polluted air”, the shrine grove, which was composed of coniferous trees, was judged “absolutely incapable to subsist” in an urban environment, hence it was proposed to replace the trees; in other words it was suggested that “a permanent sacred forest was to be planted with evergreen broad leaved trees that were the characteristic type of local greenery”.⁵⁷

Here it becomes clear that Tomioka’s argument is intimately related to the new image of shrines that made its appearance for the first time at the beginning of the twentieth century in the process of formation of a religious nationalism. As an expert in landscape architecture and direct disciple of Uehara, Tomioka “discovered” the shrine’s particular use for molding the local order of the regional communities that were undergoing rapid urbanization in the 1920s and 1930s. The reason for such “discovery” lays in Tomioka’s understanding of the new image of shrines and in his particular perception of the shrine’s space within the community. In the midst of this sudden influx of urban

⁵⁶ see Tomioka *ibid.*, *Kōgai Himon'ya-shi (Journal of Suburban Himon'ya)*, pp.106-107.

⁵⁷ Tomioka, "Chinju ni taisuru ujiko no taido (The behavior of shrine parishioners in regards to the tutelary gods)", *ibid.*, *Kōgai Himon'ya-shi (Journal of Suburban Himon'ya)*.

population settling in the community, the local shrine is discovered as something that, encompassing both older residents and the overwhelming number of new residents, materialized their sense of belonging as “modern citizens” into a “flexible” regional community. Tomioka’s ideas hence made possible for the first time the re-interpretation of shrines from the image of being the core of the old residents’ shared history to a new image which almost turned the local shrine into a “mini-Meiji Jingū”.

In the process of reviewing and attenuating his new image of shrines, Tomioka developed even further his argument about the circumstances in which the regional social order can be maintained during the advance of urbanization, by spatially spreading the range of his ideas and always making the center of regional communities converge towards shrines or shrine-like symbols. For example, in the previously mentioned argument about the turning of the pond of Himon'ya into a municipal park, Tomioka says: “opening that pond for public use would be above all a gift for the newly arriving population and for those like me who were born here it would become a fountain bursting of love for our homeland”. To explain his reasoning Tomioka adds that: 1 As long as ownership rests with the town, conforming with “the idea of public use for the townspeople’s pleasure, residents of our community would be able to freely enjoy the park”; 2 “The bamboo-leaf oaks (*shirakashi*, evergreen broad-leaved trees) planted by our ancestors have always been a luxuriant sight and are also a perfect expression of the original Musashino area [to which our town belonged]”. 3 “the location of the shrine Bentendō, at the center of this scenery captures public sentiment”; 4 the opportunity to preserve one section of this grove of mixed trees, which are “a sign of Musashino” and which “are about to disappear from this region”, consists of “yet another reason for which it is worth using the park.”⁵⁸ This argument clearly adapts and puts into practice the conception of a social order based on the new shrine imagery.

The flexible application of this new shrine imagery by Tomioka was stretched to its utmost limits in the following words: “protect the greenery and build a town reminiscent of Musashino”; “to build a town good to live in, cherish the greenery and protect it!” And here is inserted another story reporting the shouts of real desire by the most frank people who live in the newly developed areas which are even more crowded and confined than the city. In fact, “a worker” who was one of the new townspeople who attended the funeral of the landowner of these newly developed areas (himself an influential man among the old residents and one of the town’s public servants) is said to have expressed the wish to have a place like the town’s shrine grove in the area where he now lives.⁵⁹ While we see therefore here the spread of the idea of general preservation of the greenery, the central meaning of preservation ultimately converges to the shrine (and its sacred forest).

It is possible to argue here that such religious nationalistic discourse centered once more on the shrines, supports Tomioka’s key role in the preservation of old town and village names and in his actions towards the conversion of common areas into public parks. Let us finally confirm that at the basis of Tomioka’s ideology lay the kind of understanding that we have discussed so far in regards to a desecularized view of religion and shrines. Tomioka had already emphasized in the mid-1920s that

⁵⁸ Tomioka, "Himon'ya no ike, betsumei San'ya no ike (Mitarashi) (Himon'ya's pond and the pond named San'ya [Mitarashi])", *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Tomioka, "Chihō keikaku toshi keikaku yori mitaru Himon'ya (Himon'ya in regional planning and urban planning)", *ibid.*

the establishment of public leisure park areas in the *gaien* section of shrine grounds, namely in lands that are separated from the solemn forests of the shrines, would be the appropriate method to be used by experts of landscape architecture to preserve the shrine and temple precincts. This is an emphasis entirely based on a new shrine imagery which consists of the following idea: "while preserving by all costs the sacredness of the shrine, a plot of land for use by the public is also to be build, and the holy forests inside the solemn section of the shrine grounds is to be composed by trees characteristic of the local region, so that they become the heart of the local scenery." Why have the preservation and utilization of shrines and temples become necessary now? Let us examine Tomioka's religious views and ideology about shrines which support his emphasis above. "We find ourselves in a situation in which Buddhism has been losing ground at a remarkable pace, so that even sacred Buddhist grounds will be often completely ignored". However, "next time religion enters our lives our perspective towards it will definitely be renewed, so we, as experts of landscape architecture are facing a serious research issue in regards to the best way of thinking about and dealing with our local shrine and temple grounds". "We must protect and use the shrine and temple grounds".⁶⁰

Tomioka, taking thus the de-secularized stance that was born out of the process of modernization of Japan, considers that, in the future, the topology of both temples and shrines will become a problem of the presence of religion in public territories. Tomioka, as an anxious youth, was a member of a stratum of society baptized in his time's trends of social thought, and as such he formed a de-secularized religious view and ideology about shrines. This worldview was receptive of the new shrine imagery which was changed into the religious nationalism of the time and which supported his actions.

In place of a conclusion

Based on the results of the above analysis in which I followed the trail of shrines as " the stages of the public rituals of the state " in pre-war Japan, I hereafter summarize the arguments about religious nationalism in three points.

1 In regards to theories of religious nationalism in modern Japan, arguments like that of Shimazono, who considers that the formation of nationalism from the nineteenth century onwards in a non-Western country such as Japan took essentially the form of religious nationalism, consist of rather unpolished statements. Amidst the opening of Japan, which, although imperfectly, adopted a secularist position and advanced towards sudden, top-down modernization, new social movements that attempted to overcome this secularism appeared and proceeded to define Japanese politics. The formation of religious nationalism which is linked to the oppressive conditions of warring Japan should be viewed thus as an entirely new historical phenomenon, namely the regionalization of nationalism that originated amidst a de-secularization process. If we place our argument in this way, I suggest that it then becomes possible to connect the theory of religious nationalism with research on other phenomena of the modern era, such as Hōtoku Thought, National Learning (*kokugaku*) and theories on National Polity (*kokutairon*).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Tomioka Kyūzō, "Kyōdo zōen no ichiseisatsu (A thought on local landscape architecture)", *Zōengaku zasshi (Journal of Landscape Architecture)*, 2:12, 1928.

⁶¹ Kenjō Teiji, "Nichirosengo-Taishōzenki ni okeru 'dōtoku' to 'shūkyō' no shisōshiteki isō (Ideological topology of 'morality' and 'religion' from the Russo-Japanese war to the beginning of the Taishō era)", *Nihonshi kenkyū (Journal of*

2 Of course, Shimazono's argument is not just a theory that emphasizes continuity. As I explained in the beginning of this paper, Shimazono looks at the phenomenon from the view point of “modernization” (*gendaika*). He argues that religious nationalism led by the ruling class invaded society and was popularized through democratic movements and their circuit building in the midst of the modernizing period of the country. And he says that this oppressive religious nationalism ran opposite the systematization of democracy and dragged Japan along during the warring years. However, as we saw in argument 1 above, this religious nationalism, which after reaching the masses was regurgitated back from society itself, was formed through a different process: in a situation in which everything progressed towards a secularist society (a process originating from the activation of the citizen edification policies that were regularized at the turn of the century and particularly after the Russo-Japanese War), a critical movement was formed at the popular levels of society and of knowledge, and among businessmen, where these secularist policies were re-interpreted in de-secularist terms. It is in these conditions that nationalism was religionalized and came to hold authoritative power on the scale of the Japanese empire in the warring years.

Here, the theory of "religionalization of State Shinto" that was proposed early on by Japanese historians, bears more significance than the above arguments.⁶² According to that theory, State Shinto (centered on shrines), during the times of peace when the secularist theory of non-religiosity of Shrine Shinto, came to be religionalized, leading thus to the warring years' oppressive ideology. It is therefore necessary to shift our position from looking at that move as "a worsening of conditions"- from "democracy" to "fascism", two clearly opposing phenomena- to rather consider it under the banner of "modernization (*gendaika*)". And we need also to pay attention in the above case to both the secularist basis of Japan's modernization, and to the de-secularist movements that spread from the social changes occurring from the turn of the century onwards.⁶³ But I also think that it is important that we do not underestimate the dynamic character of this de-secularist movement as a marginal trend.

3 When looking at religious nationalism from a historical perspective, it becomes clear that the phenomenon is largely linked to elements of the history of regional communities that are not always dealt with in religious history, history of thought or history of cultures. Such is the case, for example, when we take a look at historical studies of periods of “modernization (*gendaika*)” during which city governments started holding their autonomous ideologies. In the 1920s and 1930s, the progress of structuring of regional communities, represented by the expressions "Greater Tokyo" or "Greater Osaka", developed together with the reorganization of the regional order and self-reform. During this process, regional shrines seemed, at first, incapable of dealing with the movements of population and the process of urbanization. Yet, the study of history reveals to us powerful arguments in regards to

Japanese History) 487, 2003 and from the same author, *Kindai Hōtoku shisō to Nihon shakai (Japanese Society and Modern Hōtoku Thought)*, Perikansha, 2009; Konno Nobuyuki "Kindai Nihon ni okeru sai to sei (rites and politics in Modern Japan)", *Nihonshi kenkyū (Journal of Japanese History)* 571, 2010; Fujita Hiromasa, *Kindai kokugaku no kenkyū (Research on National Learning in the Modern Period)*, Kōbundō, 2007.

⁶² Akazawa, as above. For a more recent resource, see Takagi Hiroshi, *Ryōbo to bunkazai no kindai (Mausoleums and Cultural Property)*, Yamakawa shuppansha, 2010.

⁶³ Isomae Jun'ichi, *Kindai Nihon no shūkyō gensetsu to sono keifu (Discourse and Lineage of Religion in Modern Japan)*, Iwanami-shoten, 2003.

the theory of religious nationalism. Here I have made clear that (1) the new role of shrines occupied the mind of those who, during the warring period, mobilized shrines within the local administration of communities⁶⁴, and that (2) the will to create urban shrines consisted of one aspect of the formation of the apparatus of cities, which sought to respond to the social fluidity of urban environments and to maintain a new type of flexible sense of community.⁶⁵

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⁶⁴ Minagawa Masaki, *Tokyo shisei* (*The Administration of Tokyo City*), Nihon Keizai Hyōron-sha, 2007.

⁶⁵ Sumitomo Akifumi, "Yoka no kiritsuka to toshi 'shimin' mondai (The regularization of leisure and the problems of urban "citizens"), *Sōgō toshi kenkyū* (*Comprehensive Urban Studies*) 46, 1992; *ibid.*, "Kindai Nihon no toshi jichiron no saisei (The rebirth of urban autonomism in Modern Japan)". Yamaguchi Yasushi *et al* eds., *Gendai kokka to shimin shakai* (*Today's Nation and Civil Society*), Minerva Shobō, 2005; Kojita Yasunao, "Nihon kindai toshi to sono shōchō (Japan's modern cities and their symbols)", Mizubayashi Takeshi *et al* eds., *Ōken no kosumorojū* (*Cosmology of Royalty*), Kōbundō, 1998; Nogawa Yasuharu, "Ōsakajō tenshukaku fukkō zenshi (History before the reconstruction of Osaka Castle's keep)", *Ōsaka no rekishi* (*History of Osaka*) 73, 2009.