

43 Yoshihiko Ashizu: *The Shinto Directive and Constitution from the Standpoint of a Shintoist* (1960)

Introduced by Mark R. Mullins

Introduction

Ashizu Yoshihiko [sic]^I 葦津珍彦 (1909–1992), was widely known as a Shinto leader and conservative intellectual in post-war Japan. He was born in Kyūshū, into a family with strong Shinto roots: his father had been a strong supporter of the Jingikan 神祇官 movement in the Meiji period, which sought to restore the ancient Office of Deities. In 1922, as a young man, Uzuhiko enrolled in the Tokyo Furitsu Dai Go Chūgakkō, where he briefly became enamoured with Marx, and even joined a study group on socialism. This was followed by a year studying commerce at the Fukushima Kōtō Shōgyō. He returned to Kyūshū in 1921, to assist his father, and take over the family business in the mining industry. His father's faith deeply influenced and strengthened his own Shinto convictions, which led to his active involvement in Shinto circles toward the end of the Second World War. He played a significant role in the reorganisation of shrine Shinto in the early years of the occupation, which led to the formation of Jinja Honchō (the National Association of Shrines) in 1946. Shortly thereafter, he helped to launch *Jinja shinpō* 神社新報, a Shinto publication that represented the concerns of this largest association of shrines. In addition to managing this publication until 1968, he was himself a prolific author, and published over sixty books in the post-war period. Ashizu maintained that shrine Shinto constituted the spiritual foundation of the Japanese people and nation of Japan, and he clearly articulated this view in public debates about the constitution, Yasukuni Shrine, the place of the emperor, and the role of Shinto rites in public life.^{II}

A recent study indicates that Ashizu has had a significant intellectual influence on the views of the conservative-nationalist Japan Conference (Nippon Kai), a political movement established in 1997. This organisation has become a part of a coalition with

I The journal mistakenly renders Ashizu's given name as Yoshihiko, but it should instead be rendered as Uzuhiko.

II For more detailed information about Ashizu's life, see Fujita Hiromasa's 藤田大誠 account in the reprint addition of Ashizu's *Kokka Shintō to wa nan datta no ka* 国家神道とは何だったのか (Jinja Shinpō, [1987], 2006), 173–82.

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Jinja Honcho's Shinto Seiji Renmei (the League Promoting Ties Between Politics and Shinto), and Liberal Democratic Diet members, which work together to promote constitutional revision and support for Yasukuni Shrine, and to strengthen the position of the emperor in contemporary Japan.^{III}

The excerpts from Ashizu's article below provide a post-occupation Shinto perspective, which views some rites and ceremonies as "non-religious" or customary social rituals that should not fall under the auspices of (the strict interpretation of religion-state separation required by) the Shinto Directive (15 December 1945) issued by SCAP's Religions Division. This article appeared in *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, a journal sponsored by the International Institute for the Study of Religion – a non-sectarian institute that had been established by Kishimoto Hideo and William P. Woodard. Kishimoto was a scholar of religious studies at the University of Tokyo, and Woodard was a Protestant missionary who had served in Japan before the war, been employed as a researcher in SCAP's Religions Division during the occupation, and resumed work in Japan in 1953, following a brief break back in the United States. Kishimoto served as the Chairman of the Editorial Board of the journal, and Woodard was the chief editor.^{IV}

Bibliographical Information

Yoshihiko Ashizu. "The Shinto Directive and Constitution: From the Standpoint of a Shintoist."

Contemporary Japanese Religions 1, no. 2 (1960): 16–34; 18, 20–22.

Page numbers given in square brackets refer to this edition.

The Shinto Directive clearly states that "the *purpose of this Directive is to separate religion from the state*" and "to prevent misuse of religion for political ends . . ." In other words, the sphere of the Directive was not limited to the *separation of church and state*, that is, the *separation of religions organizations from the state*; it aimed at the *separation of religion and state*. Therefore, the Directive stated that "The provisions of this directive will apply with equal force to all rites, practices, ceremonies, observances, beliefs, teachings, mythology, legends, philosophy, shrines, and physical symbols

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III Fujiu Akira 藤生明, "Nippon Kaigi to Ashizu Uzuhiiko 日本会議と葦津珍彦," *Gendai Shūkyō* 現代宗教 (2018): 91–110.

IV See "From the Editorial Board, From the Editor" in *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 1, no. 1 (1960): 1–6; for more background on the collaboration between Kishimoto, Woodard, and other academics and religious leaders in this initiative, see Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 226–29.

associated with Shinto.” Thus, the Directive was not satisfied to simply separate the state and shrines. It was intended to completely expel from all public places in Japan all Shinto usages and ceremonies which had spontaneously permeated the racial community. [. . . p. 18–20 . . .]

The people who interpret the Constitution in accordance with the Shinto Directive take the position that the Directive, which ordered the *separation of religion and state* was entirely replaced by articles 20 and 89 of the Constitution. Therefore, [p. 20/21] they persistently insist that the only ceremonies possible for the government and public entities are those that are non-religious.

Constitutional Provisions: Article 20

Our position on this point is different. The Constitution of Japan reads as follows:

Article 20: Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

Those people, who insist in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 20 that the state or its organs shall in no case perform any religious rite, understand religious rite “as naturally included in the religious activity” referred to in Paragraph 3. We think, however, that the term “religious activity” has a clear meaning and does not necessarily include all kinds of religious rites, that is, rites which originate in a religion, or ceremonies which possess a religious coloring. We do not think that the performance of religious rites, which have been naturally merged into the racial social life of the Japanese, are necessarily included in “religious activity,” which is prohibited. It is a natural and normal matter for the Japanese to perform religious rites in the case of funerals or memorial services, to perform the ceremony of purification of a building site at the beginning of construction, and to perform a religious rite at a wedding ceremony. This is also the case in using New [p. 21/22] Year’s pines or Christmas trees. We think that religious rites which have permeated the Japanese social life and customs are outside the category of the “religious activity” forbidden by the Constitution.

It goes without saying that, even though a rite has become very general and is in a social custom, if it is a rite originating in a religion, no one should be compelled to participate in it. This is clearly stated in the Constitution. The provision in the second paragraph forbidding compulsion is necessary in order to guarantee religious freedom. However, this is only intended to forbid compulsory participation, and does not prohibit the performance of religious rites. [Italics in these sections are the original author’s own]