

The “Separation of Gods and Buddhas” at Ōmiwa Shrine in Meiji Japan

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The development of Shinto during the Meiji period constitutes one of the most fascinating phenomena of modern Japanese history, especially in view of the far-reaching effect that the State Shinto of the late Meiji period had on many aspects of Japanese life. But although the nature of Meiji-period Shinto has been widely researched, far less attention has been directed to the genesis of the movement as an intellectual, political, and religious force. Since many of the keys for understanding the later development of State Shinto are found in the years of the Meiji Restoration, research on this period—which could be called the shinbutsu bunri (separation of gods and Buddhas) period—is essential if we are to comprehend the full significance of the Shinto movement.

The term shinbutsu bunri refers to the separation of Shinto and Buddhism (actually the expulsion of Buddhism from syncretic Shinto-Buddhist sanctuaries) that occurred from the spring of 1868. This separation was one of the central events in the formation of modern Japanese Shinto. The present article analyzes the events of the shinbutsu bunri period at one of Japan’s most important shrines, Ōmiwa Jinja in Nara Prefecture. The events connected with this shrine from 1868 to the early 1870s provide an interesting reflection of what happened to religious institutions throughout Japan during that period.

THE NARA BASIN is sure to impress anyone traveling through its thickly settled plains as a region of deep historic significance. In the distance to the east lie the green-wooded mountains of Yamato, whose beauty has been praised in poetry since the time of the *Manyōshū* 万葉集.

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Students of Japanese history will recognize familiar names everywhere, like Ame no Kaguyama, Unebi, Kasanui, and Makimuku. The innumerable temples, shrines, and emperors' tombs located in this region date back to the most ancient of times.

Where the plain ends abruptly at the gentle curve of the mountains, not far from the city of Sakurai, there rises a single, densely wooded mountain noticeable for its perfect conical form. This is Mt. Miwa 三輪山, also known as Mimoro 御諸山 or Mimuro 御室山 (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 75–80, 650; KANDA 1971, pp. 852–55; ANTONI 1988, p. 79). Even in Japan, a land of sacred mountains, Mt. Miwa is nearly unparalleled as a stage of religious activity and as an object of religious adoration. Archeological evidence shows that there have been cultic centers on the mountain for so long that their origins are lost in the darkness of prehistory (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, pp. 727–923; 1975, pp. 3–30).¹ However, the principal reason for the reverence accorded to Mt. Miwa is the special place it holds in Shinto mythology. Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* tell us that the mountain's divinity, Ōmononushi no mikoto 大物主尊, is a manifestation of the great god of Izumo 出雲, Ōkuninushi no kami 大国主神 (ANTONI 1988, passim; NAUMANN 1988, pp. 122–23). Ōmiwa Jinja 大神神社 at the base of the mountain is where this deity of the Izumo line is worshipped. This “Shrine of the Great Divinity” claims, moreover, to be the “oldest shrine of Japan.”²

Although the historicity of this claim is doubtful (and controversial as well), the Ōmiwa Jinja shows certain peculiarities that make it, indeed, one of the most remarkable sanctuaries in Shinto. Unlike most other Shinto shrines, the main building of the complex is not a *honden* 本殿 (the place in which the deity's *shintai* 神体—the “body of the divinity”—is enshrined) but the *haiden* 拜殿, the “devotion hall” in which religious rituals are performed. The divine mountain Miwama is itself the *shintai* of the god Ōmononushi, and is regarded as holy and invulnerable. Thus religious adoration is directed straight to the mountain.

Around this central sanctuary is located a group of *sessha* 摂社 and *massha* 末社, branch shrines, with their divinities having a special relationship to the main divinity of Ōmiwa Jinja. Among them one can find smaller complexes like Himuka Jinja and Kuebiko Jinja as well as more magnificent examples like Sai Jinja and Hibara Jinja (also

¹ For information on Miwa archeology in English see BARNES and OKITA 1993.

² This assumption is based on the mythical chronology found in the *Kojiki*; even nowadays the shrine's publications accept these dates as historically valid (ŌMIWA JINJA 1977, preface), as does PONSONBY-FANE (1974, p. 57), the only author who has written on the history of Ōmiwa Jinja in English.

known as Yamato no Kasanui no mura).³ Special importance is accorded to the last-mentioned of these, since, according to the *Nihongi* (Sujin), Kasanui is where Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神, the sun goddess and ancestral deity of the imperial family, was worshipped by Toyosukiirihime during the reign of the legendary Tennō Sujin, before her *shintai* had been transferred to Ise. The shrine therefore refers to itself as *moto-Ise* 元伊勢, “original Ise.”⁴

This legend—the historicity of which will not be examined here—reveals a particularly important aspect of the history of Ōmiwa Jinja: its extraordinarily deep ties with the imperial family. The national significance enjoyed by the shrine stems from this relationship. Thus the influence and prestige of this shrine has increased in times of strengthened imperial rule and waned in times of imperial decline. Since the Ritsuryō era it has been one of the most important shrines in the empire; due to its links with the imperial court it was also counted among the so-called *nijūnisha* 二十二社 (twenty-two shrines).⁵

The fortunes of Ōmiwa Jinja rose with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when imperial rule was “restored” and efforts began to remake Shinto into the state religion of the new Japan.⁶ As early as May 1871 Ōmiwa Jinja was made a *kampeitaisha* 官幣大社 (Major Imperial Shrine), the highest rank in the newly created system of Shinto shrines (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 135; MORI 1992, 36; UMEDA 1975, 319–21; LOKOWANDT 1978, p. 274, Dok. 29). After the end of the Pacific War, however, the shrine was deprived of this position by the SCAP authorities, who on 15 December 1945 issued the “Shinto directive” officially abolishing Shinto’s status as a state religion. Since that time Miwa Jinja has been one of the religious corporations united under the umbrella organization known as the Jinja Honchō (Main Association of Shinto Shrines).⁷ The shrine’s close relationship with

³ On Himuka Jinja see SHIGA 1971, pp. 157–58. On Kuebiko Jinja see ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 396; 1977, p. 18; 1968–91, vol. 4, p. 551. On Sai Jinja (Sainimasu Ōmiwa Aramitama Jinja), the largest of the branch shrines of Miwa, see ŌMIWA JINJA 1975: 149, 157, 257, 619; SHIGA 1971: 153; YOSHIDA 1989: 19. On Hibara Jinja see HIGUCHI 1971, pp. 648–52; ŌMIWA JINJA 1977, p. 20; YOSHIDA 1989, p. 30. Hibara Jinja was enlarged in November 1987 by the addition of a small shrine called Toyosuki-iri-hime no miya.

⁴ On the question of the identification of Yamato no Kasanui no mura with Hibara Jinja see ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 3, pp. 614–52. The term *moto-Ise* is found in connection with other shrines as well.

⁵ On the system of the twenty-two shrines see NAUMANN 1988, pp. 230–31; on the position of Ōmiwa Jinja within this system see ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 149.

⁶ For information on State Shinto see, for example, MURAKAMI 1986, 1990; in Western languages HARDACRE 1989; HORI and TODA 1956; LOKOWANDT 1978; and ANTONI 1991a.

⁷ For the history of Ōmiwa Jinja since the Meiji Restoration see INUI 1971; MIYACHI 1971; MORI 1992; ŌMIWA JINJA 1977; UMEDA 1975; HARDACRE 1989, pp. 81–82.

the imperial court has not disappeared in the post-war period, however. Indeed, it seems more alive than ever before.

This fact is glaringly symbolized by a recently erected structure that, because of its stifling monumentality, gives rise to mixed emotions even in the sympathetic observer. This is the new gate to the enlarged shrine area, the so-called *Ōtorii* 大鳥居 (great entrance gate), which was built in 1986 in the middle of Sakurai city following the same design as previous gates but in proportions never before seen. This dark monument, clearly visible even from a distance, is built not of wood in the traditional manner but of black steel, and rises gloomily over the town to a height of 32.2 meters as it frames the green silhouette of Miwa mountain. The slab at the pedestal of the torii proudly proclaims the torii to be the biggest ever built, and that it “will last for 1,300 years.”⁸ The torii’s dimensions do indeed exceed those of the previous “biggest torii in Japan,” another dark steel gate twenty-five meters in height built in 1974 and found at the entrance of Japan’s most controversial shrine complex, Yasukuni 靖国 Jinja in Tokyo.

Special importance should be accorded the fact that the torii was erected in commemoration of a ritual visit (*go-sanpai* 御参拜) by the late Shōwa Tennō, who died in 1989 (ANTONI 1989). The visit took place on 13 October 1984, on which day the emperor offered a large *ōtamagushi* 大玉串 (sacred branch) as a sacrifice to the deity of Miwa (*ŌMIWA* 1989 (no. 77): 50–55.; *ŌMIWA JINJA* 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 169). Shortly thereafter, on 7 January 1985, work commenced on the new torii. It was built along the imaginary extension of the road leading into the shrine, in the immediate neighborhood of the old *Ichi no torii* (first torii), a modest wooden structure in the traditional style. Construction proceeded quickly: various religious ceremonies were held on 12 and 24 December 1985 and 23 January 1986, and the torii was officially opened on 28 May 1986.⁹ Since that time the southern Nara Basin has had a new, clearly visible symbol, one devoted to the memory of the imperial shrine visit as well as to the sixtieth anniversary of Shōwa Tennō’s accession to the throne in 1926.¹⁰

Hence even now Miwa proclaims its close ties to the imperial court, and continues to stress the State-Shintō period prior to 1945. The remaining strength of that spiritual order is attested to by the amazing fact that regular ceremonies are still held in commemoration of the most ideologically significant document of the Meiji state, the *Kyōiku*

⁸ Technical information on the *Ōtorii* is contained in YOSHIDA 1989, p. 5; *ŌMIWA* 1986 (no. 70), pp. 52–54; 1986 (no. 71), pp. 27–30, 44 (with timetable).

⁹ For photographs of the opening see *ŌMIWA* 1986 (no. 71): 58–59.

¹⁰ See plate at the bottom of the torii.

chokugo 教育勅語 (Imperial Rescript on Education). The most recent such ceremony was held on 30 October 1990 (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 174).

The remnants of Meiji ideology in the self image of Ōmiwa Jinja are intriguing enough, but they provide only a hint of the drastic events that took place during the religious and political changes of the Meiji Restoration.

“The Separation of Gods and Buddhas” at Ōmiwa-Shrine

The start of Shinto as a state-related religion was marked by a governmental decree, the *shinbutsu bunri rei* 神仏分離令 or *shinbutsu hanzen rei*, issued on 28 March 1868. This edict, based on Fukko (restoration) Shinto 復古神道 ideology with its orientation towards the Hirata and Mito schools,¹¹ ordered the “separation of the gods and Buddhas” at all Shinto shrines. The carrying out of this directive on the local level was accompanied in part by frightening outbursts of violence against Buddhist institutions (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏棄釈). In this way a thousand-year tradition of religious tolerance between Buddhism and Shinto (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合) came to an abrupt end.

From ancient times until the Meiji Restoration *jingūji* 神宮寺—temples that symbiotically combine elements of Buddhism and Shinto—were found throughout Japan. Miwa itself had three *jingūji*: Daigorin-ji 大御輪寺, Jōgan-ji 淨願寺, and Byōdō-ji 平等寺.¹² The ideological foundation of the *jingūji* was a syncretistic model that identified the indigenous kami as manifestations of various Buddhas and bodhi-

¹¹ For the text of the edict see KUMAGAYA 1902, p. 1; German in LOKOWANDT 1978, p. 250. In translating the term *shinbutsu bunri* as “separation of gods and Buddhas” instead of “separation of Shinto and Buddhism” I follow GRAPARD 1984, p. 241. For an introduction to the problem of *shinbutsu bunri* see COVILLE 1948, pp. 7–18; GRAPARD 1984 and 1992; HARDACRE 1989, pp. 27–28; HORI and TODA 1956, pp. 47–52; IWAI 1984; LOKOWANDT 1978, pp. 13–22 and Dok. 7, 10, 15–17; MURAKAMI 1990, pp. 59–61; NARA KENRITSU NARA TOSHOKAN 1992; ŌMORI 1992, pp. 184–86; ONO 1985, pp. 63–64; TAMAMURO 1977; TSUJI and MURAKAMI 1926; TYLER 1990; TYLER 1992; YASUMARU 1985.

HORI and TODA (1956, pp. 39–41) stress the influence of *kokugaku* (Hirata Shinto), while TAMAMURO (1977) emphasizes the Mito school. On the relationship between *kokugaku* and the Mito school see ANTONI 1991a.

¹² On Daigorin-ji see IKEDA 1974 and 1992; KAWAGISHI 1991; KUBOTA 1971; KURAMOTO n.d.; MURAYAMA 1990; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975; YOSHIDA 1991; UEDA 1989, pp. 77–79. On Jōgan-ji see YOSHIDA 1991, p. 37; MORI 1992; KUBOTA 1971; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 223, 231; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 1, p. 16; sources in ŌMIWA JINJA 1928, pp. 752–85. On former Byōdō-ji see KIKUCHI 1987, pp. 35–36; KUBOTA 1974, pp. 970–73; MARUKO n.d.; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, *passim*, esp. pp. 226–29; SAKURAI-SHI SHI HENSAN IINKAI 1977, vol. 1, pp. 845, 1218–20; YOSHIDA 1991, pp. 34–37.

sattvas. The basis for this ideology was supplied principally by Tendai and Shingon, the two most important schools of Heian Buddhism. *Honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹 thought in Tendai argued for the primary union of kami and Buddhist higher beings in the form of *honji*, “eternal prototypes,” and *suijaku*, “incarnations” or “manifestations”; Ryōbu 兩部 Shintō, associated with Shingon and having close connections with Ise Shinto, attempted to explain the kami in terms of the dual aspects of chief Mikkyō deity, Dainichi Nyorai (the “Great Sun Tathāgata”; Skt. Mahāvairocana). Nevertheless, both Buddhist schools viewed the divinities of Shinto as inferior in position and importance, being simply “local” manifestations of the universal—and thus higher—divinities of Buddhism.¹³

Miwa’s variant of Ryōbu Shinto was known as Miwa(-ryū) 三輪 Shinto. Miwa theology identified the mountain and its deity as being of “one body” (*ittai* 一体) with Amaterasu. Mt. Miwa formed the *shintai-san* 神体山 of Dainichi Nyorai, whose dual aspects—the *kongōkai* and the *taizōkai*—were expressed, respectively, in the south and north portions of the mountain. The various other geographical details of Mt. Miwa were regarded as embodiments of tantric objects of ritual.¹⁴

This syncretistic doctrine dominated religious thought and feeling in Japan for over a thousand years, but especially since the final years of the Heian period (794–1185). In reaction to this outlook, and to the Tokugawa bakufu’s naming of Buddhism as the state religion, there arose among *kokugaku* 国学 philosophers during the Edo period (1600–1868) a movement to purify Shinto of all Buddhist elements. At the time of the Meiji Restoration this nationalistic religious and philosophical movement succeeded in converting its ideals into national policy.

If ever there was an example of religious coexistence in Japan it was at Mt. Miwa, where Shinto, Buddhism, and folk religion existed in a close, seemingly inseparable unity.¹⁵ Yet here too the separation of Buddhism and Shinto—i.e., the elimination of the Buddhism teachings that had in the course of history entered Shinto—was carried out

¹³ On Shinto-Buddhist syncretism see KAWANE 1986, pp. 3–37; KUBOTA 1989; MATSUNAGA 1969; NAUMANN 1988, pp. 221–37; ONO 1985; ŌMORI 1992.

¹⁴ On Miwa Shinto see ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vols. 2, 5, 6, 10; vol. 3, pp. 925–1026; *bekkan* 2, pp. 131–44; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 232–44 u. chap. 7 u. 8 passim; UEDA 1989, pp. 93–134; ABE 1984–85; KUBOTA 1971.

¹⁵ See especially the publications of ŌMIWA JINJA (1928, 1975, 1968–91) and its journal (*Ōmiwa*). For historical sources see also UEDA 1989. A valuable introduction is given by KUBOTA 1971; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 223–31; YOSHIDA 1991; ABE 1984–85. The work of PONSORBY-FANE (1974 [1939]) reflects the official ideology of prewar Japan.

in such a thorough way that today hardly anything remains of the important Buddhist syncretistic past.¹⁶ Of the numerous buildings that used to fill the complexes of the three Miwa *jingūji* of Daigorin-ji, Jōgan-ji, and Byōdō-ji, only a single structure remains.

DAIGORIN-JI

This remaining structure was, until 1868, the *hondō* (main hall) of Daigorin-ji, housing the temple's *honzon* 本尊 (central image), a Tempyō-era (729–748) Eleven-Headed Kannon (*jūichimen-kannon* 十一面観音, Skt. Ekādaśa-mukha) of great artistic merit. The building now stands isolated at the northern edge of the Ōmiwa Jinja complex; experts on Japanese religious architecture can identify it as originally “non-Shintoistic” owing to its roof construction, which is in the *iri-moya-zukuri* 入母屋造 style.¹⁷ Since 1868 the structure has formed a sub-shrine of Ōmiwa Jinja called Wakamiya 若宮 or Ōtataneko 大田田根子 Jinja, dedicated to the ancestors of Ōmiwa Jinja's priests and to Ōtataneko, one of the earthly descendants of Ōmononushi no kami.

The long history of Daigorin-ji, the former headquarters of Miwa Shinto, came to a sudden end with the Meiji Restoration. On 17 March 1868 Ōmiwa Jinja, like shrines throughout the nation, was directed by the new central government to unfrock of the *bettō* 別当 and *shasō* 社僧, the Buddhist priests who had served at shrines; henceforth the former priests were to carry out their duties dressed in white (i.e., rank-neutral) clothing.¹⁸ On 28 March 1868 the *bunri rei* was issued. Three weeks later, on 19 April 1868, a final (!) report was composed concerning the inspection of the “illustrious idols” of what had been Daigorin-ji, now renamed Ōtataneko no mikoto Shrine. The report manages to completely ignore the fact that the shrine had until a few weeks before been the main sanctuary of the syncretic Buddhist Daigorin-ji complex.¹⁹

¹⁶ Although no studies deal exclusively with *shinbutsu bunri* at Ōmiwa Jinja, the topic has been treated in the course of other studies: IKEDA 1992; IKEDA and ŌYA 1974, pp. 1202–1208; KAWAGISHI 1991; KUBOTA 1971; MIYACHI 1971, p. 30; MORI 1992; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2: 133–35, ŌMORI 1992, p. 185; TSUJI and MURAKAMI 1926, vol. 2, pp. 60–61 and photograph on page 1; INUI 1971, p. 677; UMEDA 1975, pp. 313–14; YOSHIDA 1991.

¹⁷ For architectural sketches see ŌMIWA 1989 (*no.* 76): 24–25.

¹⁸ See TSUJI and MURAKAMI for regulations concerning Nara Prefecture (1926, vol. 2, pp. 2–166); LOKOWANDT 1978, Dok. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11.

¹⁹ *Ōtataneko no mikoto go-shinjū no kiji* 大田田根子命御神軸之記事. Text in UEDA 1989, pp. 77–79; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 4, p. 826. The inspection was carried out by an official named Ōtani Shūjitsu of the newly created Jingikan. After seeing the amount of material at the new shrine he sent for the painter Okamoto Tōri who, according to ŌMIWA JINJA (1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 133), was in the service of the Shoryōryō, the Imperial Tomb Department (LOKOWANDT points out, however, that this office started work only on 17

Later in April 1868 the final unfrocking of the Daigorin-ji monks took place: now by national law they had to practice as *kannushi* 神主 or *shajin* 社人 (Shinto priests) (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 133). The following month the removal of the temple's treasures commenced. It is not entirely clear how many of the treasures were saved, but the whereabouts of the most important and valuable items are known. The main image of Daigorin-ji, the statue of the Eleven-Headed Kannon, was rescued by the nearby Shingon temple Shōrin-ji 聖林寺, south of the town of Sakurai. Housed in a separate building, the imposing statue is still there today as a *kyaku-butsu* 客仏, a “visiting Buddha,” although its origin at Miwa is not mentioned in the temple's publications.²⁰ After being relocated to Shōrin-ji it became famous as a work of art through a painting of the American artist, philosopher, and art historian Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1904). His painting of the Eleven-Headed Kannon can be admired in Shōrin-ji's main hall.

In the late summer of 1868 the treatment of the former Daigorin-ji, as well as that of the other Miwa *jingūji*, became far more harsh. On 27 September the Nara Prefectural government authorized the leveling of all Daigorin-ji structures except the main hall, but including the three-storey pagoda and the *gomadō* 護摩堂 (prayer hall) (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 134). Although such drastic measures were not permitted by the *bunri rei* and attacks against Buddhist institutions were strictly prohibited as early as 10 April 1868 (LOKOWANDT 1978, p. 251), such action in the case of Ōmiwa Jinja was obviously sustained. A year later, on 8 October 1869, the installation of the new shrine's deity (*shinzasai* 新座際) took place, and final remodelling began on the main hall to alter it to more Shinto-like lines (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 134). In March 1870 the alteration work—spiritual as well as architectural—was complete, and the once-important temple of Daigorin-ji was now a small branch shrine on the fringes of the Ōmiwa Jinja. By the time Ōmiwa Jinja was made a *kampeitaisha* on 14 May 1871, Daigorin-ji and the other Miwa *jingūji* were no longer mentioned in public. Today their existence is preserved only in documents

September 1869 [1978, p. 71]). Okamoto was instructed, according to the original source, to take photographs (*satsuei*) but the recent chronicle of Ōmiwa Jinja says only that he made copies (*mōsha*) (UEDA 1989, 78; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 133). His report has found its way into the recently published volume of source materials on Ōmiwa Jinja (SAKAMOTO 1989, vol. 6/12, pp. 77–79), but here too there is no comment on the true history of “Ōtataneko-shrine.” Thus even today we see the effects of the elimination of all references to Daigorin-ji at the time of the Meiji Restoration (LOKOWANDT 1978, Dok. 4 and 11).

²⁰ For photographs of the Kannon of Miwa see ŌMORI 1992, p. 185; NARA KENRITSU NARA TOSHOKAN 1992, frontispiece; TSUJI and MURAKAMI 1926, vol. 2). See also IKEDA 1992; KAWAGISHI 1991; KUBOTA 1971; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 4: pp. 1022–26; KURAMOTO n.d.; MOMOBASHI 1984–85; SHŌRIN-JI n.d.; YŌSHIDA 1991, p. 34.

published by the Ōmiwa Jinja and by historians.

The main hall of Daigorin-ji was probably saved—albeit in changed form—only because in the past it had occasionally been referred to as the “Wakamiya” of Ōmiwa Jinja, following the shrine’s syncretistic traditions (MURAYAMA 1990; for sources see ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 1, pp. 43–44). This escape was not open to the other Miwa *jingūji*, which were completely destroyed (although, as we shall discuss later, there has been a recent attempt to revive the former Byōdō-ji).

JŌGAN-JI

All that remains of Jōgan-ji today is the first word in the name of a small sub-shrine of Ōmiwa Jinja, the Jōgan Inari Jinja (KIKUICHI 1987, pp. 36–38). This minor shrine is located at the southern edge of the Ōmiwa Jinja complex, where until the Meiji Restoration Miwa’s Buddhist nunnery was situated. During the Edo period the convent was a subtemple of Daigorin-ji. Owing to the events of spring 1868, however, Ōmiwa Jinja requested on 12 May 1868 that the nunnery be placed under the direct control of Saidai-ji, Daigorin-ji’s head temple in Nara and the headquarters of the Shingon Ritsu school. Just five days later, however, on 17 May 1868, Ōmiwa Jinja requested an official ruling that the nuns of Miwa be unfrocked (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 134). This extraordinary request seems to have caused problems, since on 8 September another such appeal was made, this time to the city government of Nara (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 134).

Unfortunately there is little information available on what happened between then and the final end of Jōgan-ji; a recent publication says only that the temple was dismantled in 1869, along with Daigorin-ji (YOSHIDA 1991, 37). The remaking of the former nunnery into an Inari shrine must therefore have taken place at that time. Although the historical materials published by Ōmiwa Jinja have little to say on the subject of Jōgan-ji, the extensive archives of the Nara Prefectural Library are available for further research and should yield more data on this question.²¹

BYŌDŌ-JI

The site of Byōdō-ji is, like that of the other two *jingūji*, quite difficult to find at Miwa Jinja today. Byōdō-ji, until 1868 the largest temple

²¹ In November 1992 a special exhibition entitled “*Shinbutsu-bunri* and the temples of Nara” (*Shinbutsu-bunri to Nara no jiji*) was shown in the prefectural library of Nara (Nara-ken-ritsu Nara-toshokan). The catalogue for this exhibition lists several relevant historical documents and sources. As the author could find out, of special relevance for Miwa are archival numbers Mei-gan – 9/ 1A, B, C, 3A, A ff.

complex at Miwa (larger even than Ōmiwa Jinja itself), was completely leveled during the Meiji Restoration and its history brought to an end (YOSHIDA 1991, p. 37).

Nothing remains of the original structures in the complex, which stretched for about 500 m to the east and west and 330 m to the north and south on the southern slopes of Miwa mountain. The structures were numerous, and included a *hondō*, *gomadō*, *miedō* 御影堂, *issaikyōdō* 一切経堂, *kaisandō* 開山堂, *akamon* 赤門, and *shōrōdō* 上臈堂.²² Forests and orchards now cover the grounds of the temple that, with Daigorin-ji, once formed the center of Buddhist syncretistic life at Miwa. Byōdō-ji differed from Daigorin-ji in that it was not under Saidai-ji but, for a long time, under Kōfuku-ji, the main temple of the Hossō school (Kōfuku-ji, the greatest temple in Nara, was itself nearly destroyed during the *bunri* period as the result of a clash with the great shrine of Kasuga, Kasuga Taisha 春日大社 [TSUJI and MURAKAMI 1926, vol. 2, pp. 5–108; IWAI 1984; NARA KENRITSU NARA TOSHOKAN 1992, pp. 1–3. For Kasuga Taisha see GRAPARD 1992 ; TYLER 1990, TYLER 1992]).

The recently published chronicles of ŌMIWA JINJA (1968–91, *bekkan* 2) are remarkably taciturn concerning the demise of Byōdō-ji, especially in comparison with their handling of Daigorin-ji. Although far more important than Daigorin-ji in terms of size, temple treasures, number of monks and buildings, etc., Byōdō-ji receives a cursory treatment with only the most basic of information. We learn that the office of the Jingikan agreed on 20 September 1868 to Ōmiwa Jinja's petition to unfrock the Byōdō-ji monks, but that the monks were not actually made *shajin* until April 1870. This fact was made public by the Jingikan in an announcement on 27 December 1870 (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, 135).

Ōmiwa Jinja regards the date of the monk's defrocking as the official end of Byōdō-ji's history; the temple's name does not appear again in the shrine's chronicle, which extends until 23 November 1990, the day of the *Daijōsai* of Emperor Akihito. Concerning the undoubtedly dramatic circumstances accompanying the destruction of the large temple complex we are told only that in April 1870 the buildings of Byōdō-ji had been leveled (the word used is *tori-harau* 取り払う: *toru*: remove; *harau*: chase away, drive out). A later effort of the temple's followers to reconstruct the *kaisandō* building is said to have failed (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, pp. 134–35). YOSHIDA merely notes that the monastery's Buddhist equipment was removed in 1869, its main hall demolished the following year, and its land nationalized in April 1871 (1991, p. 37). The official *History of Ōmiwa-*

²² For sketches, drawings, and historical maps see *Miwa Sōsho* (ŌMIWA JINJA 1928).

Shrine (*Omiwa Jinja shi*) is similarly concise, stating only that the temple was “swept away” (*haku* 掃く) (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 314).

Among the Byōdō-ji properties removed from Miwa after the *bunri rei* were some extremely valuable items, like a set of the *Daihannyakyō* (Skt. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) in six hundred *kan* dating from the late Heian era. This was removed to Hongan-ji in Kashihara, Tōichi Prefecture, but was returned to Ōmiwa Jinja in 1964 (a fact cited by the shrine as proof of its presently amiable relations with Buddhism [ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 697; YOSHIDA 1991, p. 37]).

Another such treasure was a statue of a seated Fudō Myōō 不動明王 (Skt. *Acalanātha*),²³ the main Buddhist image of Byōdō-ji and one of its most important works of art (ŌMORI 1992a, pp. 198–99). The work was registered as a National Treasure in 1908 and has, since the end of war, officially regarded as an Important Cultural Property of Japan. In 1873 the sculpture was taken into the custody of Hase-dera 長谷寺 (Chōkoku-ji), a temple in the mountains just east of Miwa. Hase-dera has since ancient times been one of the most famous temples in Japan and is renowned for its beauty; it presently forms the headquarters of the Buzan school of Shingon Buddhism and is the eighth stage on the western Japanese pilgrimage route (HIRAHATA 1992, pp. 60–65). Hase-dera’s central image is an Eleven-Headed Kannon, which dates from 1538 and is, at a height of 10.18 meters, the largest wooden sculpture in Japan (HASE-DERA n.d., p. 11). Byōdō-ji’s Fudō-myōō image is housed not in Hase-dera proper, but in the small subtemple of Fumon-in in front of the main temple. Fumon-in’s priest Maruyama Tsuranaga took the statue on 14 January 1874 and made it the temple’s *honzon* the following year (see IKEDA and ŌYA 1974, p. 1206; HASE-DERA TATCHŪ FUMON-IN n.d., a). Since that time Miwa’s terrifying Fudō Myōō has been kept there.

In view of the fact of Byōdō-ji’s complete destruction, the student of Miwa history may be surprised when walking south from Ōmiwa Jinja along the *yama no be no michi* 山辺道 to come across an inconspicuous complex of buildings in what used to be the temple’s entrance area. It requires a second look before the complex can be recognized as a Buddhist temple. Hidden behind encircling walls, the buildings have obviously been erected quite recently; a stone sculpture of Shōtoku Taishi at the temple’s entrance has not yet acquired a patina, and the *hondō* is made of ferro-concrete. A few older buildings around the main hall stand in curious contrast to this modern edifice. Most

²³ One of the five (or eight) Dai Myōō in esoteric Buddhism and the executor of Dainichi Nyorai’s punishments. On the Miwa/Hase Fudō-myōō see IKEDA and ŌYA 1974, pp. 1206–1208; MARUKO n.d.; HASE-DERA TATCHŪ FUMON-IN n.d. a/b; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 701.

surprising to the interested visitor will be the name of this seemingly insignificant complex: Byōdō-ji. Once again there is a temple with this great and ancient name at Mt. Miwa; unfortunately the present temple, founded on 4 June 1977, has no ties with the old Miwa syncretism, though it claims to follow the traditions of the former monastery. The “reestablishment” of Byōdō-ji has been made possible, according to the temple priests, through the support of more than 100,000 followers since 1977 (MARUKO n.d.).

Apart from the new “Byōdō-ji,” there can be found on the grounds of the former monastery only one other building relating to religion. This building, located a bit up the mountain, belongs to the Miwa-kyō(kai) 大神教(会), another religious community that has played an exceedingly important role in the modern history of Miwa. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail concerning this community, so I shall only note that the Miwa-kyōkai (which should not be confused with the syncretistic Miwa Shinto of the Middle Ages) was one of the so-called “teaching institutes” (*kyōin* 教院) that, under the administration of Ise Jingū, were set up throughout the country in order to promulgate the “Great Teaching” (*daikyō* 大教), a new state religion or ideology that increasingly took on the doctrines of modern Shinto theology, especially with regard to the position of the emperor (HARDACRE 1989, pp. 42–59). Miwa’s *kyōin*, established on 18 February 1880, was “small teaching institute” (*shōkyōin* 小教院); in 1882 it was renamed the Miwa-kyōkai (Miwa church) and used for the preaching of Shinto. Even after World War II this religious corporation remained in existence, independent of Ōmiwa Jinja (ŌMIWA-KYŌ HON-IN n.d. a/b, passim; HARDACRE 1989, p. 82). Today it is headquartered in the town of Miwa in the area of the First Torii (*ichi no torii*) and in sight of the new Great Torii. The fact that the organization has a quite imposing structure on the former grounds of Byōdō-ji indicates that there have been final decisions made even with regard to real estate.

On the History of the Jingūji of Miwa

The two sculptures—the Eleven-Headed Kannon and the horrific Fudō-myōō—point to a past when Miwa was an important locus of Buddhist-Shinto syncretism. A closer look at the complex’s history might thus provide important clues as to why the expulsion of Buddhist elements was so vigorously pursued.

The history of the Miwa *jingūji* did not begin with the medieval Miwa Shinto described above, but goes back far into early Japanese history. As the *History of the Ōmiwa Shrine* tells us, Miwa’s first *jingūji*, Ōmiwa-dera (also known as Miwa-dera), was already in existence dur-

ing the early Nara period, as verified not only by historical data but by archeological findings in the area of today's Ōtataneko Jinja (the former Daigorin-ji) (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 223–24). Records concerning the temple's foundation can be found in the *Miwa Daimyōjin engi* 三輪大明人縁起, dated 1318 (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 2, pp. 1133–38; UEDA 1989, pp. 95–103; ŌMIWA JINJA 1928, pp. 12–21; see also KUBOTA 1971, pp. 974, 980). According to this document the first Miwa temple was established during the reign of the nonhistorical Emperor Suinin; this legend—obviously syncretistically inspired—established an indirect link to Ōtataneko, which in turn provided the basis for the temple's later tie to Shinto. Another legend says that Shōtoku Taishi discovered the Eleven-Headed Kannon statue in the main hall of the temple, where it has served as *honzon* ever since (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 225).

Although these legends leave us little closer to the temple's actual origins, we do know that it continued through the Heian period but went into an apparent decline at the start the Kamakura era. The monk Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290)—posthumously known as Kōshō Bosatsu 興正菩薩 and famous as the founder of numerous temples in Yamato—is said to have revived the temple, renaming it Daigorin-ji in 1285.²⁴ Eison was educated in the temples of Kōya-san, Tōdai-ji in Nara, Daigo-ji in Kyoto, and finally at Saidai-ji in Nara. His ties with Miwa resulted from the long periods he spent there later in his life.²⁵ During a pilgrimage to Ise Jingū he realized—according to shrine tradition—the unity of Amaterasu-ōmikami and Miwa-daimyōjin (UEDA 1989, 95–97); ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 230). Eison is said to have founded the Ritsu school of Shingon Buddhism (*Shingon Risshū*), reviving Saidai-ji—formerly one of the “Seven temples of Nara”—as the main temple of this school (KANEKO 1987). Daigorin-ji was incorporated into the Saidai-ji system, and remained a branch temple (*matsuji*) until the Meiji Restoration.

The history of the *jingūji* of Miwa is considerably complicated by the presence there of another important Buddhist teacher at roughly the same time as Eison: Kyōen (? –1223), known as Miwa Shōnin 三輪上人, the Saint of Miwa. Kyōen, the founder of Byōdō-ji, was also influential the syncretistic development of Miwa.²⁶ The first record of Kyōen dates to 1255, just a few decades after his death; this is the

²⁴ On the life and work of Eison see KANEKO 1987, pp. 75–192.

²⁵ See ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 225; KUBOTA 1971, pp. 975–76. KANEKO, following the official view of Saidai-ji, quite amazingly leaves this fact unmentioned (1987).

²⁶ On Kyōen see KUBOTA 1971, pp. 972–74; ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 226–29; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, *bekkan* 2, p. 10.

Miwa-shōnin-gyōjo (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 226–27) composed by a disciple of Kyōen. All later work on Kyōen has been based on this source.²⁷

It is said that Kyōen came from Chinzei 鎮西 (present Kyūshū). His date of birth is unknown, but various records set it between 1140 and 1150. After long wanderings through Yamato studying the *Dai-hannnyakyo*, he made his way to the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine and finally to Miwa, where he was enlightened and developed his own teachings. Kyōen is regarded as the actual founder of Miwa Shinto by some specialists (see SHIMONAKA 1937–1940, vol. 3, p. 328; ABE 1984–85; ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 3, p. 1000; see also KUBOTA 1971, pp. 975–76). He established a Buddhist seminary and monastery (*dōjō* 道場) to disseminate his syncretistic teachings based on Shingon Mikkyō; named the Miwa-besshō in 1233, from 1236 it was also called Byōdō-ji (although legend has it that the temple was founded by Shōtoku Taishi and revived by Kyōen).

The temple flourished, and, by the end of the Kamakura period, it surpassed Daigorin-ji. During the Muromachi era the temple came under control of Kōfuku-ji, but it also maintained close bonds to Daigo-ji in Kyoto (see ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, pp. 229–29; YOSHIDA 1991, p. 36). This double alignment eventually led to a split of the temple's priesthood into two groups, one (the *gakushū* 学衆, scholar monks) oriented to Kōfuku-ji and the other (the *zenshū* 禅衆, meditation monks) to Daigo-ji, or, more exactly, to its branch temple Sampō-in. The *zenshū* became increasingly stronger from the latter half of Muromachi period and thus the temple leaned predominantly toward Daigo-ji. It is important to remember here that Daigo-ji, the headquarters of the Shingon Daigo school and the eleventh stage on the western Japanese pilgrimage route (HIRAHATA 1992, pp. 82–87), was at the time a center of Shugendō 修験道, the religion of the yamabushi 山伏 mountain-ascetics who practiced healing, exorcism, and magic. Because of this tie, Byōdō-ji too from late medieval times became known as a center of Shugendō. Here, at the holy mountain of Miwa, the yamabushi would perform their rituals as they traveled south to the sacred Shugendō mountains of Ōmine and Kimpusen in the regions of Yamato and Kii (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 229; MARUKO n.d.; YOSHIDA 1991, p. 36).²⁸ The *History of Omiwa-Shrine* sums all of this up in a single sentence, telling us that Byōdō-ji withdrew from Kōfuku-ji

²⁷ For example, the *Miwa-san Byōdō-ji chūkōkaiiso Kyōen-shōnin betsuden* 三輪山平等寺中興開祖慶園觀上人別傳 (ŌMIWA JINJA 1968–91, vol. 6, pp. 652–66) from 1702.

²⁸ The new Byōdō-ji—a Sōtō sect temple—emphasizes this aspect in its written history of the ancient Byōdō-ji (see MARUKO n.d.). On the classification of the modern Byōdō-ji as a Sōtō sect temple, see NARA-KEN KYŌIKU IINKAI 1991 (no. 11), p. 1.

during the Edo era, turned towards the Shingon teachings, then followed the way of Shugendō (ŌMIWA JINJA 1975, p. 229). We can conclude from this sentence, unsurpassed for succinctness, that the temple was from that time on a center of Shugendō.

This fact provides us with a much clearer picture of why the Fudō Myōō sculpture was so important at Byōdō-ji, and of why the temple fell out of favor during the Meiji Restoration. In no other religious group has the cult of Fudō Myōō taken on such a central meaning as in Shugendō (ŌMORI 1992a, p. 199). En no Gyōja, the legendary ancestor of shugendō, was seen by his supporters as an incarnation of Fudō Myōō, and it was probably the yamabushi's rituals in front of the terrifying Fudō sculptures that caused them to be described by the first Christian missionaries as “devil worshippers.” The yamabushi were also particularly hard hit by the religious politics of the early Meiji era, since their syncretistic teachings and practices—a combination of Mikkyō, Taoism, and folk religion—were incompatible with the Meiji government's newly designed state ideology (LOKOWANDT 1978, p. 33). Shugendō was placed under the jurisdiction of Buddhism in 1870, and prohibited altogether as an independent religious group by governmental decree on 17 October (15 September) 1872. It seems to me that hidden here is the real key to understanding why Byōdō-ji, formerly the biggest *jingūji* of Miwa, was completely destroyed during the *bunri* period.

The philosophical Miwa Shinto, symbolized by the sculpture of the Eleven-Headed Kannon, has enjoyed a high level of interest in the present research on Miwa. In contrast, there is virtually no reference to the other side of Miwa syncretism, the mountain cult of the Shugendō yamabushi, which identified with the terrifying figure of the Fudō Myōō now at Hase. Allan GRAPARD, using the example of Tōnomine (Tanzan Shrine), examines the far-reaching consequences the Meiji *bunri* edict had for Shugendō (1984). As close historical and ideological ties existed between Miwa and Tōnomine, this might provide a fruitful starting point for further research on the question of Shugendō in Miwa.

Conclusion

Anyone who approaches Mt. Miwa on a lovely autumn day and continues to the shrine cannot help but admire the peace and beauty of the place. Old shrine buildings surround the famous cedar of Miwa (*Mino kamisugi*), where believers make offerings of saké and raw eggs to Ōmononushi no mikoto (ancient belief holds that the divinity revealed himself at the tree's base in the form of a snake). Those who

have studied the shrine's history will recall the myths of the *Kojiki* and reflect on the inseparable ties between Miwa and Izumo, or on the profound theme of ancient religious thinking, expressed in the iconographic union of tree, snake, and the drink of life (ANTONI 1988).

What is difficult to think of at such a wonderful place are the questions of destruction and devastation, of suppression and unsolved guilt. The visitor must leave the shrine in order to perceive this nowadays invisible side of Miwa. From their isolated places of refuge the Buddhist sculptures of the former Miwa *jingūji*—the Eleven-Headed Kannon and the terrifying Fudō Myōō—silently attest to an entirely different history no longer spoken of at Miwa itself. It is a history of religious variety, of tolerance and of violent debate as well, a history that proclaims there is always more than one way to the truth. These ways were suppressed and cut off in the years around 1868; they had to make room for the new “traditionalism” of Meiji Japan, for the Great Way of Shinto that declared itself to be the sole truth.²⁹ Now is the time to track down the old paths again.

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²⁹ On the relationship between authentic tradition versus ideologically motivated “traditionalism” in Meiji Japan, see ANTONI 1991b.

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