

DR. GENCHI KATŌ'S MONUMENTAL WORK ON SHINTŌ

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Genchi Katō, Shintō no Shūkyō Hattatsushi teki Kenkyū 神道の宗教發達史的研究 ("A Study of the History of Religious Development in Shintō"). Published by the Chūbunkwan [中文館], Tōkyō, October, 1935. Price, Yen 9.50

The Western World, no less than Japan, is already deeply indebted to Dr. Katō for his numerous authoritative publications in the field of Shintō. His latest work increases this indebtedness many fold. No contribution by any modern student of the subject under consideration, that has come under the observation of the writer of this review, compares with Dr. Katō's new book in comprehensiveness of content. The student of things Japanese who has access to the vernacular is here presented with the ripened fruit of a lifetime of study on the part of one who is qualified to speak with unrivaled finality in his chosen field. Dr. Katō's latest volume is particularly noteworthy for the light shed on the detail of Shintō belief and practice through the wealth of comparative data which the author adduces from his extended researches in the history of other religions, and, also, for the fidelity and frankness wherewith Japanese cultural developments are traced from the simple beginnings of a nature folk to the high ethical and intellectual levels of an advanced civilization.

The book may not incorrectly be regarded as an elaboration of, and commentary on, materials previously put

in print by the author. The essential view-point, for example, is already available to English readers in Dr. Katō's *Study of Shintō, the Religion of the Japanese Nation*, published in 1926. The new study, however, contains a vast amount of detailed exemplification and discussion not available outside of the Japanese original, as may be judged by the unusual size of the book—almost one thousand pages of main text, some three hundred pages of notes, about fifty pages of pictures, and twenty-six pages of index, making a grand total of close to fourteen hundred pages.

In the opening sections of his discussion the author calls attention to the fact that the institutional life of modern Shintō flows in two great streams, namely, National Shintō (*Kokka teki Shintō*) and Sectarian Shintō (*Shūha teki Shintō*). The affairs of the former are administered by the Bureau of Shrines in the Department of Home Affairs and, under the law of the land, are treated as lying outside of the ordinary religious classification. High officials of the government have repeatedly declared that National Shintō is not a religion. Sectarian Shintō consists of thirteen recognized sects, in addition to various sub-sects, and is managed by the Bureau of Religions in the Department of Education. Its religious nature is freely admitted by government officials and scholars alike.

Regarding the position of the authorities of the government in denying the religious nature of National Shintō, Dr. Katō has some very important statements to make. He subdivides National Shintō into two phases: *Kokutai Shintō* and *Jinja Shintō*. *Kokutai* cannot be translated readily into English. "National-structure Shintō" gives a formal rendering of the words but very little idea of the content. It means the sentiments, attitudes, national habits, and moral principles centering in the Shintō tradition. It under-

lies and inspires the national educational system and supplies the spirit in accordance with which the affairs of state are conducted. Dr. Katō says, "Kokutai Shintō furnishes the fundamental principles and inner secret of our national education and consequently is under the supervision of the Department of Education. The education of all the schools is conducted in conformity with the spirit of Kokutai Shintō, and in the realm of government the affairs of state of our country are carried out according to the spirit of Kokutai Shintō. This fact is set forth in Article Three of the Imperial Constitution, wherein the statement is made: 'The Emperor is sacred (*shinsei*) and inviolable.'"

Jinja Shintō, of course, means Shrine Shintō and refers to that phase of the national life that centers in the shrines and their ceremonies.

Dr. Katō is emphatic in insisting that all these forms of Shintō, without exception, must be regarded as genuine religion. He says, "Just as the writer regards Sectarian Shintō as a variety of religion, so also he regards National Shintō as a variety of religion." And again, "Along with Sectarian Shintō, I regard National Shintō, embracing both Kokutai Shintō and *Jinja Shintō*, as a variety of religion—a religion with aspects differing from those of Buddhism and Christianity, to be sure, but nevertheless always a religion." (pp. 2 and 3)

It is difficult to see how anyone can survey the spectacle of veritable mountain ranges of historical evidence unrolled in the wide panorama of Dr. Katō's learning and fail to concur with him in the conclusion that Shintō, in whatever form, is genuine religion.

Dr. Katō's main purpose does not lie, however, in the direction of developing argument specifically along the lines indicated by the remarks just made. It lies rather in utiliz-

ing the methods and materials of critical historical investigation in such manner as to make plain the factual data and specially the forms of development that underlie all Shintō. Shintō must be submitted to the same methods of research employed by scholars in the study of the science of religion and the history of religions elsewhere. The real nature of Shintō becomes apparent only in the light of such study. Because of failure to apply such methods a great deal of misunderstanding exists among the Japanese people regarding the real nature of Shintō. Dr. Kato's study thus becomes, not an exposition of the institutional history of the numerous sects and schools of interpretation in which the history of Shintō abounds, but rather a genetic statement of the ideas and practices that are fundamental to Shintō as a whole, illuminated by unusual resources of knowledge regarding similar or identical developments among other peoples.

As may be judged by the above remarks, a thorough-going developmental or evolutionary point of view underlies the entire discussion. Shintō is not a static entity. It is not possible to discover a Golden Age in the past, wherein the primary forms and ideas that are so cherished in certain circles today were given classical embodiment as historical absolutes, once for all delivered to the Japanese race. In the study of Shintō we must recognize the fact of evolution from lowly beginnings just as we do in the study of the culture of any other great and ancient nation.

In establishing definitions within which the Shintō data may be arranged and tested, the author enumerates the primary characteristics of religion under some fourteen different forms of classification, such, for example, as theocratic or deocentric religion as over against theanthropic or homo-centric religion, tribal or national religion as over against

universal religion, and proselytizing religion versus non-proselytizing religion. In these terms, Shintō is nationalistic, theanthropic (in the sense of merging the human with the divine to the extent that man may become god) and non-proselytizing, except in the case of the modern sects. Various definitions of religion are given, all finding a common basis in the postulating of the essential nature of religion as man's consciousness of a special relationship with the Divine, and the ideas and practices that emerge directly from this consciousness. The Divine is explained as an object or group of objects on which special dependence is felt, as evoking loyalty, feelings of mystery, incomprehensibility, or transcendence of the immediately human in some sense or other. This gives a definition of religion sufficiently comprehensive to include a range of data as wide apart as the fetishism of the savage and the "common faith" of John Dewey.

The major discussion is devoted to the presentation of the facts of Shintō history in three stages: first, the stage of lower naturism or polydemonism, secondly, the stage of higher naturism or sheer polytheism, and, thirdly, the stage of Shintō as an advanced culture religion wherein we may discover ethical and intellectual elements of a high order.

Dr. Katō finds Shintō beginnings in a simple naturism or animatism in which conspicuous objects of nature such as fire, wind, sun, moon, rivers, mountains and trees are immediately, and in and of themselves, worshipped as living, sentient beings. At still an early stage of development this simple naturism passes into a polydemonism which rests on a belief in the existence of innumerable invisible superhuman agencies dwelling in the visible objects of nature. In this stage Shintō does not as yet possess gods and goddesses in the true sense of the words, but rather spirits and more or

less personalized agencies. In this connection Dr. Katō studies minutely and with an extraordinary wealth of comparative material early Japanese beliefs and practices connected with the spirits or powers animating sun, moon, stars, sky, earth, storm, rain, thunder, lightning, wind, sea, mountains, local land areas, earthquakes, volcanoes, hot-springs, wells and springs, stones, rocks, plants, and animals.

This is followed by the presentation of such subjects as the worship of the living, especially of living Emperors and heroes, the worship of the dead, fetishism, phallicism, spiritism, the state of the dead, ancestor worship, remnants of totemism and alleged vestiges of primitive monotheism in Old Shintō. Even today, remarks Dr. Katō, if one leaves behind the more sophisticated cities and penetrates into the byways of rural areas he will find abundant evidence of the survival into the present of this old nature worship which is accompaniments of beliefs in spirits, fetishism and phallicism.

Dr. Katō takes issue with the thesis defended by G. W. Aston and others to the effect that there is no genuine ancestor worship in primitive Shintō and in particular concludes that the earliest records concerning the Great Deity of Ise, Amaterasu-Ōmikami, picture her in the two-fold aspect of a mythological sun-goddess and of a human ancestress who once actually existed.

五〇二
In the second stage of its development Shintō gives expression to its intrinsic polytheism. We now encounter a vast array of well articulated gods and goddesses, regarded by their worshippers as possessing sex and procreating offspring like humans, as engaged in man-like occupations and as entering into various reciprocal relations with mankind, even to bargaining like tradesmen for good deals in rewards and offerings.

The most valuable portions of this section are the chapters on Shintō as the National Religion of Japan and an extended study of Shintō ceremonies (pp. 396-526). In summary of the former subject the author says, "As pointed out above, anthropolatry makes its appearance at an early period in Shintō. This anthropolatry took the form of Emperor worship which revered the living ruler as divine. With this, National Shintō, that is to say, Shintō which is intimately fused with the national life, took shape, and it may thus be said that this is the national religion of Japan and that the center of this National Shinto is Mikadoism (lit. "Divine-emperor-teaching"). This is Kokutai Shintō. The spirit and essence and the inner nature of Shintō, of a truth, reside here." (pp. 395)

Shintō ceremonies are treated in chapters of unusual wealth of detail on rites, offerings, origin of shrines, priesthood, purification and conception of sin, expiation and exorcism, divination, magic, oaths and ordeals. The Shintō shrine is referred to a three-fold origin in groves, tombs and the dwellings of living men.

In the third stage of its evolution Shintō attains the status of a higher culture religion, manifesting tendencies toward universalism in both ethics and philosophy. The natural development of intelligence and moral perspective in the Japanese people is here supplemented by the positive influence of Buddhism and Confucianism, resulting in the refinement of cruder and more irrational, mythological elements into forms that are consonant with higher attainments in knowledge and the social life. In this process, various, local guardian spirits and deities of diverse origin are amalgamated into higher concepts; a tendency for lesser deities to be absorbed by greater deities appears, and under the pressure of more unified philosophical and ethical de-

mands, Shintō polytheism tends to pass into pantheism. The new ethical demands give rise, for example, to various symbolical interpretations of the three sacred objects of the Imperial Regalia—to cite a concrete formulation, the mirror is made to stand for wisdom, the jewels for benevolence, and the sword for courage. The import of the transition from the old naturism to the enlightenment of the new culture-religion may be gauged by the greatness of the distance lying between a native confidence in the efficacy of phallic rites and human sacrifices to an inspired ethical insight such as that contained in the *Shinto Gobusho*, wherein declaration is made: “The gods desire not material gifts but offerings of uprightness and sincerity.” (p. 764)

Of some of the minor matters placed under discussion, Dr. Katō's study will invite difference of opinion among those best informed in the details of Shintō history, as, for example, the legitimacy of conclusions regarding the presence of authentic ancestor worship and of traces of monotheism in early Shintō. In larger issues, by the very irrefutability of the overwhelming weight of scholarly evidence which he marshalls, he raises very difficult problems for Shintō itself. For example, with the inescapable conclusion in mind that institutional Shintō, in whatever form, is genuine religion, how meet the issue of a vast inconsistency introduced into certain contemporary adjustments of the problem of religious freedom in Japan? Again, how harmonizes the genuine universalism discoverable in Shintō with the concrete requirements of its nationalistic center? These questions cannot be discussed, much less answered here. They suggest, however, that important events in Shintō—and in Japanese—history lie immediately ahead.

In conclusion one is impelled to raise a vote of congratulation and thanks to a great scholar for a great work.