

## Religion and Politics in Modern Japan

From the Meiji to 1945



## The Meiji Restoration

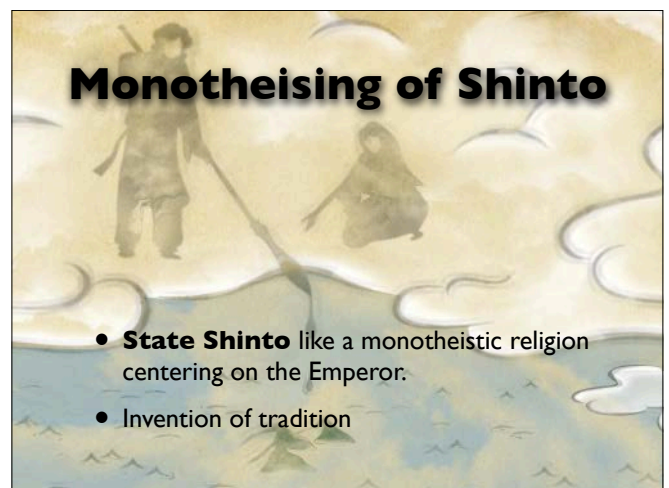
- Imperial radicals seized the palace early in 1868 and declared restoration of direct imperial rule, the *Meiji Restoration*.
- The new government would move to enhance Shinto, as the religion which ultimately validated imperial rule, through its imperialist mythology and its court and national rites.

## Religious Policy

- The revitalized government Shinto department was established, and Shinto was being aggressively promoted as **the state religion**.
- Government sponsored teachers were sent out to indoctrinate the people in Shinto, with special emphasis on the divine origin of the imperial line.

## Imperial Rescript on Education

- The constitution of 1889, in force until 1945, granted the Japanese **religious freedom**, “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects.”
- “Imperial Rescript on Education” of 1890 began: “Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting. . .” then proceeded to moral exhortations couched largely in **Confucian terms**.



## State Shinto

Imperial Shinto

Shrine Shinto

National Polity

## Meiji Buddhism

- Separation of Buddhism and Shinto
- Buddhist priests were no longer allowed to serve in shrines, and the symbols and images of one were not permitted in the other houses of worship, to extirpate any hint of *Honji Suijaku* (kami as Japanese manifestations of buddhas).
- In some places, inflamed by the slogan *Haibutsu Kishaku* ("Destroy the Buddha"), mobs attacked priests and temples.

- By the early 1870s, the government recognized that extreme reactionary and anti-Buddhist policies were non-productive.
- In 1872, legislation allowed Buddhist priests to marry (before all had been expected to be celibate, except for Shugendo priests, and for Jodo Shinshu clerics), to eat meat, to dress and let their hair grow long if they wished rather than take the robe and tonsure.

## Christianity

- Christianity was formally prohibited as a religion until 1873.
- Doshisha was founded in 1875.
- **Uchimura Kanzo** (1861-1930)
  - He refused to bow deeply to the portrait of Emperor Meiji and the Imperial Rescript on Education in the formal ceremony held at the First Higher School in 1891.
  - The Founder of the Non-church Movement



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National Polity

Public Sphere  
Moral, State Shinto,  
Education Rescript

Private Sphere  
Religion  
Buddhism, Christianity,  
Sect Shinto etc.