Religions Policies During the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945–1952

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Abstract
Religion played a prominent role in the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945–1952) that followed the brutal Pacific War (1941–1945). Officially, the occupiers were to promulgate religious freedom, separate religion from the state, and encourage the Japanese people to develop a ‘desire for religious freedom’. Promulgating religious freedom was the easy part. Separating religion from the state without infringing on religious freedom was far more challenging, and the ambiguous objective of instilling a desire for religious freedom in the Japanese populace was nearly impossible to measure. This review article provides a brief overview of trends in Occupation research, traces historical changes and paradoxes in Occupation religions policy and examines the unexpected and frequently ironic outcomes of that policy. It provides a cursory look into the postwar efflorescence of ‘new religions’ and the politically fraught category of ‘State Shintō’. It closes with an overview of archives and records on the Occupation.

Video abstract (click to view)

The Allied Occupation of Japan (1945–1952; ‘the Occupation’ hereafter) that marked the close of the brutal Pacific War (1941–1945) was a pivotal moment in the history of modern Japanese religions. This was not only because Occupation reforms brought significant changes to
longstanding Japanese religious practices, but also because narratives constructed during the
Occupation have deeply structured how scholars have understood prewar and wartime Japanese
religiosity. Moreover, the postwar infrastructure for studying Japanese religions—including the
Tokyo-based International Institute for the Study of Religions and the precursor to the *Japanese
Journal of Religious Studies*—was developed shortly after the Occupation by people such William
Woodard (1896–1974) and Kishimoto Hideo (1903–1964) who were intimately involved in
crafting and executing Occupation religions policy. Furthermore, many of the topics that have
exercised scholars of Japanese religions in the postwar period—Buddhist war responsibility, the
relationship of Shintō to the state, the rise of ‘new religions’—can be traced to the historical
moment of the Occupation (Thomas, 2014).

Not all of these topics can be covered here. This article provides some brief background on the
Occupation and a survey of general trends in foregoing scholarship on the Occupation before
turning to some of the questions specifically related to Occupation policy and religion: How have
scholars understood the impact of Occupation reforms on religion? What were the ramifications
of promoting religious freedom in Japan, and on what conceptions of ‘religion’ and ‘freedom’
were they based? How can the concept of ‘State Shintō’ be understood in light of recent historical
scholarship on modern Shintō and theoretical scholarship on religion–state relations? An appendix
introduces some of the archives and primary sources that are useful for any study of the Occupa-
tion and briefly mentions some topics not covered by this introductory review.

**Basic Historical Information about the Allied Occupation of Japan**

The Allied Occupation of Japan has been an attractive topic for American and Japanese histo-
rians (and their audiences) in part because of its crucial role in the formation of postwar national
identities on both sides. While the general topic of the Occupation has been extensively
researched, new source materials and new ways of approaching the Occupation era continue
to emerge (Seraphim, 2014). Historians have paid some attention to religion in their exami-
nations of the Occupation, but the topic of religion in the Occupation remains insufficiently
studied, and the unique insights of religious studies can provide new angles for approaching
topics that might otherwise seem settled (Nakano, 2003).

While the Occupation was technically a joint effort on the part of the Allied Powers, it was
undoubtedly an American project. From an administrative standpoint, the Occupation repre-
sented a peculiar situation in that one government (the American military government) dictated
policy while another (the Japanese) enacted it. This unusual arrangement created opportunities
for Japanese bureaucrats and Occupation advisors to inject their ideals into policy; it also pro-
vided circumstances for innovations in understandings of democracy, rights, and liberties.

**PARADOXES, TENSIONS, AND IRONIES IN OCCUPATION POLICY**

Occupation policy was fundamentally characterized by paradox. In the name of promoting
freedom of expression, the occupiers censored every document published in Japan. In the name
of promoting democracy, Occupation advisors peremptorily scrapped a Japanese constitutional
draft and replaced it with one written by a team of Americans (Dower, 1999, pp. 346–373). In
the name of promoting religious freedom, they gave preferential treatment to Christian mis-
sionaries (Moore, 2011) and subjected Shintō shrines and priests to special scrutiny (Woodard,
1972). Even as the American occupiers policed Japanese public school education and politics for
signs of inappropriate religiosity, a move was underway in the United States to bring religion
into a more central place in civic life and American foreign policy (Inboden, 2008). Finally,
although they claimed to be instructing the Japanese in the meaning of ‘true’ religious freedom,
in the course of the Occupation the occupiers themselves came to understand religious freedom
in a completely new way. That is, the unique circumstances of the Occupation demanded that they make the previously fuzzy concept of ‘human rights’—a wartime Allied propaganda talking point—more concrete by treating religious freedom as innate, universal, beyond the purview of any particular state, and antecedent to the ordinary rights and duties of democratic citizenship (Thomas, 2014).

Trends in Foregoing Scholarship on the Occupation

While the periodization is hardly neat, scholarship on the Occupation has happened in roughly three waves. The earliest efforts were archival and involved the collection of censorship materials, Occupation-era publications, and government records. A second phase occurred as the United States declassified military government records and as people who had played key roles in the Occupation made their personal papers available to the public through bequeathals to university and presidential libraries. Takemae’s (2002, originally published in Japanese in 1983) masterful history of the Occupation is a model for the type of granular research made possible by thorough attention to declassified government documents and these memoirs. The work of historian of United States–Japan relations John Dower (1999) has spurred a third phase of research that has moved beyond the issues of governmental policy and legal change to address the broader cultural ramifications of the Occupation reforms. This recent research has mobilized newly discovered, declassified, or hitherto untapped archival resources in Japan, the United States, and—recently—Australia and New Zealand (Seraphim, 2014).

If the first wave of research confirmed the basic historical facts of the Occupation within a somewhat triumphalist framework that saw the Occupation as a unidirectional process in which the Americans democratized the Japanese, the second and third waves of research have generally called this narrative into question by highlighting Japanese agency and by elucidating some of the many aforementioned ironies that characterized Occupation policy. Although scholarship in the second wave abandoned the triumphalism of the early post-Occupation years, it generally maintained the interpretation that the Occupation represented a drastic departure from the practices of the past (Ikado, 1993; Takemae, 2002).

The most recent wave of scholarship has questioned this view. For example, in his recent study of new religious movements, media, and authority in Occupation-era Japan, Benjamin Dorman (2012) shows that reportage on marginal movements during the Occupation period reproduced and elaborated on journalistic tropes that were established around the turn of the twentieth century. Other scholars have questioned whether the 15 December 1945 Shintō Directive successfully eliminated ‘State Shintō’ by pointing to the postwar survival of institutions, legal interpretations, and practices reminiscent of the wartime regime (Hardacre, 1989; O’Brien and Ohkoshi, 1996; Breen, 2010; Breen and Teeuwen, 2010; Shimazono, 2010; Mullins, 2012). Moving in a slightly different direction, Okazaki (2012) has recently shown that the ideal of religious freedom that was central to Occupation policy mitigated against some of the most drastic anticipated reforms such as MacArthur’s desire to Christianize Japan; at the same time, religious freedom formed a way for Japanese agents to ‘protect and preserve the national polity’ (kokutai goji) by making shrine and imperial household rites into ‘religion’. This analysis is close to that of Mullins (2010), who showed how legal status as a religion allowed the controversial Yasukuni Shrine to survive the Occupation despite its notoriety as one of the main locales for the dissemination of ‘State Shintō’ ideology and associated ritual practices such as veneration of the war dead. An additional strength of Okazaki’s aforementioned work (in addition to 2012, see Okazaki, 2010) is the close attention he has paid to both American and Japanese stakeholders’ attempts to use public education as a vehicle for fostering specific attitudes toward religion.
Two Understandings of the Impact of Occupation Reforms on Religion

The aforementioned issue of rupture versus continuity indirectly informs two competing strains of scholarship on how the Occupation influenced Japanese religion-state relations. First, some scholars have seen the Occupation as a triumph for liberal principles in that Occupation reforms introduced ‘genuine’ religious freedom to Japan where there previously was none. This interpretation is problematic not only because it hastily dismisses the 1889 constitutional guarantee of religious freedom as illegitimate and treats prewar and wartime leaders as being ignorant of the importance of separation of religion from the state, but also because it ignores the clear evidence of prolonged debates about religious freedom and religion-state relations that took place through democratic processes throughout the first half of the 20th century.

In a second approach that is a corrective for the first, some scholars have argued that the Occupation reforms—and the triumphalist histories that followed—overlooked the existence of a unique ‘Japanese-style relationship between religion and the state’ (Nihongata seikyō kankei: Yasumaru, 1979; Inoue and Sakamoto, 1987). This corrective has rightly shown that multiple types of religion-state relations can exist without one necessarily being better than the other, but it has incorporated a problematic cultural nationalist perspective in its assumption that all Japanese people interpret religion-state relations in the same way. Indeed, both aforementioned views problematically focus on the level of state policy and national cultural dispositions at the expense of analyzing the competing claims about religion-state relations advanced by various stakeholders throughout modern Japanese history and during the Occupation itself.

Consequently, one challenge for future research is to mobilize existing archival materials to elucidate the ways in which the Occupation not only involved the reconciliation of ‘Japanese’ and ‘American’ worldviews, but also involved negotiations between many different interest groups with divergent expectations (Mullins, 2010 and Okazaki, 2012 are two recent examples of this sort of archival work; much more remains to be done). In the realm of religion, the interests of Buddhist sects, Shintō shrines, Christian churches, clerics and laypeople, foreign missionaries, ‘new religions’, lay religious societies, transsectarian and trans-denominational organizations, and scholars of religion were very different. The reactions of these competing interest groups to Occupation policies were likewise diverse. Moreover, individual American policymakers and Occupation officials themselves had very different interpretations of religious freedom and ideal religion-state relations: some saw Christianity as an essential component of the democracy they sought to instill in Japan; others strictly interpreted the thoroughgoing separation of religion from the state as a prophylactic against the use of political power for religious ends and vice versa.

Three Phases in Occupation Religions Policy

Occupation policymaking can be divided into three general phases. A pre-surrender planning phase culminated in the promulgation of the Civil Liberties Directive of 4 October 1945, which proclaimed freedom of religion and expression and abolished draconian prewar legislation such as the 1925 Peace Preservation Law (legislation that gave the state considerable latitude to quash objectionable movements so as to maintain ‘peace and order’). A short second phase roughly corresponding to the first 6 months of the Occupation was characterized by negative reforms such as the disestablishment of ‘State Shintō’ through the research and crafting of the 15 December 1945 Shintō Directive.

Finally, a longer third phase saw the pursuit of long-term goals such as the inculcation of ‘a desire for religious freedom’ in the Japanese populace. This third objective was ambiguous and could not be accomplished by mere fiat. The promulgation of liberal ordinances (the Religious Corporations Ordinance of 28 December 1945) and the revised constitution (3 November 1946)
1946) formed a basis for this objective by relaxing the rules for religious incorporation and secession and providing an unqualified guarantee of religious freedom, but it would take a combination of public outreach and prolonged collaboration between Occupation officials, Japanese religious groups, and scholars of religion for the ‘desire for religious freedom’ to set in. The nature of religious freedom would also need to be defined, and more precisely than the vague appeals to religious liberty seen in American wartime propaganda.

**PHASE ONE: PRE-SURRENDER PLANNING AND POLICY**

The importance of religion in the Occupation matched the prominent role that religion played in the Pacific War, most notably in the American claim that the Axis Powers’ totalitarian philosophy was inimical to Christian democracy (Nakano, 2003, 51–83). American wartime propaganda depicted the Japanese enemy as slavishly devoted to an emperor with laughable pretensions to divinity, while Japanese propaganda used vaguely ‘religious’ imagery and ideas to exhort citizens to greater efforts in the war (Dower 1986). By the close of the war, American propaganda had begun to reduce Japanese militarism to an ‘abuse of religion’, as seen in Office of War Information films such as *Our Job in Japan* (1945; the film was written by Theodore Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss).

Pre-surrender planning documents included a directive for the occupiers to proclaim religious freedom promptly on the start of the Occupation. However, these documents scrupulously avoided discussing what was to be done about any specific religious organization. Military planners had contacted the United States Department of State with a list of specific questions about how the occupiers should treat Shintō in particular, but internal divisions in the State Department between people who were more sympathetic to Japan and those who were more sympathetic to China resulted in a policy that aimed for neutral treatment of religions and did not officially regard Shintō as deserving of special negative treatment (Nakano, 2003).

**PHASE TWO: THE CREATION AND DESTRUCTION OF ‘STATE SHINTŌ’**

The particular focus on Shintō evident in the questions posed by the military planners reflected the influence of one particular missionary-scholar, Daniel Clarence Holtom (1884–1962). Holtom’s books were required reading for American policymakers in the later part of the war; they advanced the pat narrative that militarists’ abuse of a benign primitive religion had created Japanese ‘ultranationalism’ and had resulted in Japanese expansionism (Holton, 1938 and Holton, 1943). While Holtom’s portrayal was an oversimplification of foregoing scholarship and a radical departure from previous scholarly usage of the phrase ‘State Shintō’, his narrative proved convenient for propaganda and policymaking alike (Miyamoto, 2006; Suga, 2009; Thomas, 2014).

At the start of the Occupation, there was no official policy of eliminating Shintō, but the abrupt departure of several sympathetic ‘Japan hands’ in the State Department led to a similarly precipitous shift in policy. The proclamation that ‘National Shintō’ would be eradicated came through the unconventional channel of an offhand comment on national American radio by the State Department Chief of the Far East Division, John Carter Vincent (1900–1972). Speaking on 7 October 1945 (just three days after the promulgation of the Civil Liberties Directive in Japan), Vincent proclaimed that Shintō would be protected insofar as it was an individual creed, but that Shintō as a national religion would be abolished.

This unexpected announcement was greeted with enthusiasm in the popular press at home, but it created a conundrum for the policymakers stationed in Japan who had to come up with a rationale to support the new objective of eradicating a national religion while still protecting
religious freedom. This conundrum was furthermore complicated by the fact that the Japanese government had never formally designated Shintō as the national religion of the country. Policymakers therefore had to rationalize abolishing a state religion that did not actually exist in any formal, legal sense (see Sakamoto, 2000 for a discussion of when and how Shintō might be described as a ‘national religion’).

The man who was assigned the unenviable task of rationalizing the eradication of ‘State Shintō’ was William K. Bunce (1907–2008), who would go on to serve as head of the Religion and Cultural Resources Division (RCR) of the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) of the General Headquarters (GHQ, also referred to as SCAP: Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers). Bunce turned to existing anglophone scholarship, including many of Holtom’s books and books in English by Japanese scholars of religion such as Anesaki Masaharu (1873–1949) and Katō Genchi (1873–1965), to make his case. He also studied intensively with Kishimoto Hideo (1903–1964), a professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo who served as a consultant to the occupiers at the behest of the Ministry of Education (Kishimoto, 1976, 3–87; Takagi, 1993; Okuyama, 2009; Kishimoto was Anesaki’s son-in-law and academic protégé).

Bunce’s research resulted in a ‘Staff Study’ dated 3 December 1945 that was used to provide academic support for the Shintō Directive of 15 December 1945. While conventional wisdom has it that the Shintō Directive abolished a national religion, there are good reasons to question this view. On the one hand, some scholars have seen the activities of some postwar institutions such as the ‘emperor system’, the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, the National Association of Shrines (Jinja Honchō), and various right-leaning political groups such as the Shintō Seiji Renmei as evidence of the continued postwar survival of a nationalistic state religion (Breen and Teeuwen, 2010, 199–220; Mullins, 2012). On the other hand, recent research has questioned the historical accuracy, internal consistency, or analytic coherence of the term ‘State Shintō’ (Okuyama, 2011); a small body of scholarship has attempted to take the idea of ‘non-religious Shintō’ or a ‘Shintō secular’ seriously without necessarily condoning wartime practices or policies (Josephson, 2012; Scheid, 2013). Where one falls on the interpretive spectrum of this politically charged issue depends largely on the type of evidence one prefers and the basic political orientations one brings to the topic of the Occupation, but neither position should be rejected out of hand.

PHASE THREE: CREATING A ‘DESIRE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM’

However one understands ‘State Shintō’, with the benefit of historical hindsight even a cursory reading of the Staff Study and the Shintō Directive shows that these influential documents defined ‘State Shintō’ and ‘ultranationalism’ circularly and inconsistently, cherry picking ideas from foregoing anglophone scholarship in the service of a foregone conclusion. Similar problems attended the more positive Occupation reforms. When it came to the long-term aim of establishing a ‘desire for religious freedom’ in the Japanese populace, the occupiers encountered an unforeseen problem in that while they understood religious freedom to be an unmitigated good, they had not bothered to define the content or scope of religious freedom before boots were on the ground. This problem was exacerbated by the historical fact that Japan had technically maintained a constitutional guarantee of religious freedom since the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889, meaning that the occupiers had to prove to the Japanese not only that they needed religious freedom, but that the religious freedom they already had was insufficient.

The problem of vague definition was furthermore complicated by the fact that some Occupation personnel—most prominently Supreme Commander Douglas A. MacArthur (1880–1964)—understood religious freedom as the promotion of Christianity to the
exclusion of other religions (Moore, 2011; MacArthur, an Episcopalian, clearly favored Protestantism, but he provided logistical support to Catholics as well—see Mullins, 2010). The occupiers in charge of religions policy therefore not only had to define religious freedom for both American and Japanese audiences, but also had to articulate why the preexisting form of religious freedom enshrined in the Meiji Constitution was false. They could not do this alone. Policymakers in the Occupation Religions and Cultural Resources Division turned to Japanese scholars of religious studies, leaders of transsectarian and trans-denominational religious groups, and local journalists and constitutional scholars to help them promote a new vision of religious freedom. These various interest groups not only translated and interpreted religious freedom for their Japanese compatriots, but they also exerted pressure on Occupation officials to make mild adjustments to religions policy. Earlier generations of research (e.g., Woodard, 1972) tended to portray Occupation officials as immune to such pressures, but more recent studies suggest that some religious leaders skillfully created circumstances in which policy reflected their interests (Dorman, 2012). Japanese scholars of religion were also not averse to using their academic authority to influence Occupation policy and religious doctrine alike (Thomas, 2014).

Ironies and Unexpected Outcomes of Occupation Religions Policy

One of the criticisms the occupiers leveled at the wartime Japanese state was that political leaders co-opted religious organizations for militaristic ends (Bunce, 1955, pp. 33–43). However, the occupiers themselves could not entirely avoid reproducing this pattern. They became deeply dependent on trans-denominational organizations such as the Japanese Religious Federation (founded May 1946) for information on the religious world; these same organizations served as crucial mediums for disseminating Occupation directives to member religious organizations. Another unexpected outcome of the Occupation is that land reform left Buddhists in an economic quandary due to concerns about their ability to retain access to traditionally held lands (Covell, 2005, 30–31). The occupiers therefore had to ensure that the principle of separation of religion from the state, which was linked to the land reform effort, did not paradoxically pose an excessively onerous economic imposition on religious groups. Although the problem was eventually addressed through a relaxation of land reform law, the Occupation reforms also created new disputes over sacred territory (Bernstein, 2008). In addition to these economic challenges for Buddhist temples, while the ‘democratization’ of existing religious law facilitated easier management of religions from a bureaucratic perspective, ironically it solidified power in the hands of clerics and diminished the ability of the laity to exert control over religious institutions. (Takemura, 1993). At the same time, sectarian authority weakened as many temples seceded from their parent sects.

This pattern of secession should not be attributed solely to the legal changes introduced by the Occupation. While many scholars have posited a direct, monocausal relationship between the occupiers’ promotion of religious freedom and the proliferation of new sects and new religious movements during the Occupation, this interpretation oversimplifies the complicated range of factors that contributed to religious secession, amalgamation, and doctrinal and ritual innovation in the Occupation period. However, the interpretation has been so tenacious that even scholars who critique it (Astley, 2006, p. 99) unconsciously reproduce it (ibid., pp. 101–102).

In fact, the persistence of this account reflects the apologetic origins of the academic category of ‘new religions’. By its own account, the Japanese Federation of New Religious Organizations (Shinshūren) was created at the suggestion of RCR researcher William P. Woodard, who apparently thought that many marginal religious movements could better protect their interests through collaboration and collective political action (Shinshūren Chōsa Shitsu 1963,
pp. 173–175; Woodard makes no corroborating claim in his 1972 memoir). From its inception, Shinshūren made a successful push—at least in academic circles—to replace the pejorative terminology shinbō shūkyō (‘new fad religions’) with the term shinshūkyō, or ‘new religions’ (Oishi, 1964, pp. 47–49). The new category served an apologetic purpose in that it granted the new movements legitimacy by favorably contrasting them with the ‘old religions’ of temple Buddhism and shrine Shinto. Later scholarship on ‘new religions’ seems to have absorbed Shinshūren’s apologetic narrative. That account identified the wartime regime as oppressive and antithetical to religious freedom, praised the Occupation for introducing the religious freedom that finally allowed the formerly oppressed groups to flourish, and warned that most mainstream religious leaders remained ignorant of the importance of religious freedom (Shinshūren Chōsa Shitsu 1963).

Conclusions

There are several topics related to the Occupation and religion that could not be covered in detail here. Briefly, the postwar status of the controversial Yasukuni Shrine (where several war criminals are deified) has been the subject of a great deal of scholarship (Nelson, 2003; Breen, 2008; Mullins, 2010). The Japanese war crime trials are a related and similarly contentious issue that has been covered in a recent monograph by Yuma Totani (2008). Recent Japanese scholarship on the disputed category of ‘State Shinto’ received thorough treatment in a review article by Okuyama (2011).

While these politically charged topics deserve separate review, study of the religious dynamics of the Occupation can offer new insights to people who are interested more generally in the dynamics of military occupation, the geopolitics of religious freedom, or the relationship between religious studies and policymaking. For example, many of the topics that have animated postwar scholarship on modern Japanese religions can be traced directly back to Occupation-era policy concerns about how religion (and religious freedom) related to the practice of democracy. While researchers must strictly resist the urge to project contemporary concerns onto the past, the Allied Occupation of Japan can also serve as a productive point of historical contrast with more recent military invasions and occupations. For example, the official designation of certain religious practices and dispositions as ‘bad’ (violent or otherwise deleterious to peace and order) and ‘good’ (conducive to peace and order) has been evident in recent American foreign policy just as it was in the Occupation period. In conclusion, scholarship on the Occupation may be vast, but there is much work yet to be done. The following appendix provides a guide to resources that can support future research projects.

Appendix: Research Resources

In order to conduct research on the above topics or other issues related to the Occupation and religion, at a minimum the researcher should research the primary sources of the Occupation housed at the national archives of the United States and Japan. An additional layer of detail can be added by mobilizing the private records of personnel who served in the Occupation. Contemporaneous Japanese and American popular publications such as newspapers and magazines can elucidate how ordinary citizens, missionaries, religious leaders, and journalists understood the role of religion in the Occupation project.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Many primary sources have been kept in very good condition at government archives in the United States and Japan as well as in some university libraries. Virtually all documents related
to the Occupation of Japan produced by the military government are available at the National Archives and Records Administration II, located in College Park, Maryland, USA (Thomas, 2013b). Nearby is the University of Maryland, College Park campus, which houses the Gordon W. Prange Collection (Thomas, 2013a). This unique trove of documents includes every publication that passed through the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD). Many documents in the collection show signs of redaction; some were suppressed for their objectionable content. The Prange Collection also includes an impressive collection of newspapers and magazines from the Occupation era on microfiche; copies of these valuable sources are housed at universities in both the United States and Japan.

Another crucial collection is the William P. Woodard Papers housed at the University of Oregon in Eugene, which includes not only the materials Woodard consulted in writing his informative 1972 account of Occupation religions policy, but also some of his diaries, private correspondence, and typewritten and handwritten speeches he delivered in both Japan and the United States. A similar collection of materials housed at the Claremont Colleges just outside of Los Angeles holds the private correspondence and research materials of Daniel Clarence Holton, the missionary-scholar whose writings on Shintō deeply influenced Occupation policy. Kokugakuin University maintains a small library of Japanese-language texts that formerly belonged to Holton; these books include Holton’s marginal notes and, given proper attention, could be a source for fascinating future studies of this influential figure. A small collection of papers belonging to William Kenneth Bunce, author of the Shintō Directive, is held at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. The MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia also has a research library that includes correspondence between MacArthur and Catholic missionaries, as do the Maryknoll Archives in New York; Sophia University in Japan holds archival materials on Fr. Bruno Bitter.

In Japan, the Political Documents Archive (Kensei Shiryō Shitsu) housed at the National Diet Library of Japan holds copies of some SCAP records and Occupation-era government documents. One particularly fascinating journal from the Occupation era that gives insight into the attitudes of the Religious Affairs Section (Shūmuka) in the Ministry of Education is the short-lived Shūkyō jihō (Religion Times), which was published between 1947 and 1952 and was intended to serve as a bridge between the bureaucrats in the Religious Affairs Section and clerics. Each issue included articles and editorials describing how religions should respond to the new circumstances of the Occupation and the postwar constitution; issues also featured pragmatic information about how to adjust to new policies regarding taxation, incorporation, and reporting. This journal is available on microfiche at the National Diet Library and at the Prange Collection, as are a number of other contemporaneous journals that were published by transsectarian organizations or targeted to a transsectarian or trans-denominational audience (some examples include Shūkyō kōron, Daihōrin, and Chūgai nippō). These journals are invaluable for understanding how religious groups understood the new regime.

EARLY POST-OCCUPATION SOURCES

The earliest scholarly research on the Occupation was less argumentative than archival; it can be considered primary source material since many of the compilers of the documents had direct experience working in or with the Occupation. In his post-Occupation capacity as chair of the International Institute for the Study of Religions (founded in 1954), William P. Woodard used the Institute journal Contemporary Religions in Japan (CRJ, the predecessor to the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies) as an outlet for publishing copies of crucial Occupation documents as a way of facilitating future scholarship on the Occupation. All back issues of CRJ are freely available online; researchers interested in finding Occupation-era documents can find them
under the headings ‘Translations and Official Documents’ and ‘Editorial Staff’, as well as under the names of Occupation officials such as William K. Bunce (1907–2008). One other source that provides a good overview of how members of the Religions Division understood the state of Japanese religions is the book *Religions in Japan* (Bunce, 1955), which was based on a research report compiled by members of the division in 1948.

The ‘Editorial Staff’ heading in the list of CRJ articles includes a serialized publication with the title ‘Reminiscences of Religion in Postwar Japan’. This translation corresponds to a very informative study entitled *Sengo shūkyō kaisō roku* that was produced by the research office of the Japanese Federation of New Religious Organizations and published by PL Kyōdan Press in 1963. The Japanese version of that publication can be found at major research libraries in the United States and should be available via inter-library loan; the original Japanese text includes essays and interviews that were not included in the CRJ translation.

One crucial source included in the aforementioned document is Kishimoto Hideo’s recollection of his role in the research and crafting of the Shintō Directive. This fascinating apologetic document allowed Kishimoto to simultaneously absolve himself of responsibility for the content of the Directive while also claiming that Shintō had been saved from total annihilation due to his interventions (Takagi, 1993). Because he played a crucial and frequently activist role in the creation of Occupation policy, Kishimoto’s publications from the Occupation era also deserve close attention; they can be found in the fifth volume of Kishimoto’s collected works (Kishimoto, 1976).

Kishimoto’s close collaborator in the postwar construction of Japanese religious studies, William P. Woodard, published a crucial retrospective documenting the policies and activities of the Religions and Cultural Resources Division housed in the Civil Information and Education Section of GHQ (Woodard, 1972). Woodard himself had the job of ‘researcher’ and he does not seem to have made major policy decisions, but his close proximity to Division Chief William K. Bunce gave him keen insight into Occupation objectives and policy challenges. Woodard’s book was critical of the misunderstandings of Japanese religions (Shintō in particular) that he felt skewed Occupation policymaking, but he praised Bunce for his consistently even-handed treatment of Japanese religions. While dated and hardly unbiased, his book is required reading for anyone interested in the religions policies of the Occupation. Several appendixes also include reproductions of crucial Occupation documents.

Although it was published much later and should be considered a secondary source, Ikado Fujio’s edited volume (1993) on the Occupation and religion included a comprehensive guide to secondary sources in Japanese. It also featured retrospectives by people who were actively involved in (or privy to) the formation of religions policy on the Japan side, such as former head of the Religious Affairs Section (Shūmuka) of the Ministry of Education Fukuda Shigeru (1910–1997), former head of the Japanese Federation of New Religious Organizations Ōishi Shūten (1903–1996), and Kishimoto Hideo’s former assistant, Takagi Kiyoko (1918–2011).

**Short Biography**

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Note
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