

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN SHINTO COMMUNITY

By

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To my brother, Travis

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Abstract of a Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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My work examines the formation and the current practices of a Shinto community in North America and what this community can teach us about religion in America. This community is called Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America and was established in 1992 by Reverend Koichi Barrish, the first non-Japanese Shinto priest in history.

First, I use historical and biographical data to detail the formation of the shrine. Then, I provide a first-hand account of my experiences at the shrine and my interviews with people who participate in Shinto rituals. I have found that while the Shinto at the shrine authentic to its Japanese origins in that its practices come directly from its base shrine in Japan, the shrine's community has become successful by adding elements, such as Aikido or group water purification rituals, that would not necessarily be present in Japan. Furthermore, Tsubaki has managed to gain attention by maintaining extended networks outside of the shrine's local and religious community, and by being present in the online community in the form of a website and email listserv. Additionally, many people come to the shrine and get involved with Shinto because of the shrine's connection with Aikido. Others favor ritual purification practices. Still others see Shinto as a way to venerate the sacrality of nature, and become interested in learning

more about it because of their love of nature or concern for the environment. Lastly, I compare the past and present Tsubaki community to followers of other Japanese religions in America.

In attempting to understand the workings of a specific Shinto community in America, I hope to contribute not only to current scholarship on Shinto, but also to add new data related to the study of religion in America. This community reflects tendencies in this country toward ecumenism and the incorporation of spirituality with growing concern for the natural environment. My examination of the community also puts it in conversation with other Asian religions in America on the issue of ethnicity. Finally, this work also sheds light on the future prospects of Tsubaki Grand Shrine and Shinto in America.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America, located in Granite Falls, Washington, is the only Shinto shrine in mainland North America. It was established in 1992 by Reverend Koichi Barrish, the first non-Japanese Shinto priest in history. The existence of such a shrine generates a host of questions that I hope to address in this thesis. Shinto, translated as “the way of the *kami*,” has been described and defined by both Japanese and Western scholars over time in a variety of ways: as the indigenous religion of Japan, the racial faith of the Japanese (Ono 1962:111), the national religion of Japan (Muraoka 1964:1), part of being Japanese (Littleton 2002:11), not indigenous to Japan (Kessler 2005: 51), a world religion, a universal religion (Yamamoto 1999), not a universal religion (Reader 1998: 22), and not a religion at all (State Shinto rhetoric; Barrish 2007). None of these classifications are adequate, however, in understanding how Shinto has now become part of the North American religious landscape. Although Shinto *is* a Japanese religion, the existence of this community has taken Shinto out of the realm of exclusivity to Japan and the Japanese, and has placed it in the larger context of global religions. How does Shinto, widely thought to be indigenous or peculiar to the Japanese, incomprehensible to the West, and blamed for an ugly nationalistic past, fit into a North American religious setting with a largely non-Japanese following? What does this community teach us about Shinto and about religion in America?

Although Japanese immigrants began coming to the United States over one hundred years ago and Japanese Buddhism has established itself as a religion in this country, Shinto has not followed this pattern. The difficulties Shinto has had in traveling to new countries is connected to localized conceptions of sacred space, recent American and Japanese history, and the nature of religion in America. Though there are shrines in Hawaii that have been built and maintained by

the local Japanese community, they too have had difficulties becoming sustainable religious communities. The first reason Shinto has difficulty being transported to a new country is because the worship of *kami*, particular expressions of the divine, is tied to the land, the people, and the history of Japan. In Japan, Shinto shrines are built because of a specific sacred history such as an exceptional natural feature of the local landscape, or legends about the *kami* or great people having a certain connection to that place. In North America, which lacks the sacred history or geography crucial to Shinto, many Japanese could not conceive of a reason to build a shrine. Furthermore, if one wishes to worship a *kami*, this can simply be done in the home with ritual objects brought over from Japan. The second reason Shinto had difficulties being maintained in Hawaii and had a late start on the mainland is because of the tradition's dubious ties to State Shinto and Japanese military aggression in Asia and later during World War II. By institutionalizing State Shinto, the Meiji government (1868-1912) mandated that all Shinto shrines in Japan propagate the worship of the emperor. This had the damaging effect of connecting the tradition of Shinto to emperor worship and, by extension, to right-wing fanaticism and violence. Because of State Shinto and WWII, several things happened. Not only were Americans highly suspicious of Shinto because of its association with the war, but also the Japanese community in America largely turned away from "things Japanese." This led to a rejection of Shinto, especially by the second generation of Japanese immigrants who experienced American prejudice most directly. Shinto struggled to survive after the war both in Japan and in Hawaii because of its links to the Japanese war effort. Conversely, as a reaction to the war, a new wave of commitment to world peace and understanding manifested itself among religious organizations and individuals in Japan and America. Some of the individuals were directly or indirectly involved in the creation of a Shinto shrine in America, as we shall see later in this

thesis. Lastly, the nature of religion in America had its effects on immigrants from Japan. Although most Japanese would practice both elements of Buddhism and Shinto inclusively in Japan, American concepts of religious exclusivity have reinforced the individual religious commitment solely to one religious organization. Additionally, we see that the Japanese community's needs for celebrations like *shichi go san* (a ceremony for children) or weddings, that would typically be covered by Shinto in Japan, are conducted by Buddhist temples in both Hawaii and the mainland.

Though there are many reasons why Shinto has had problems establishing roots in the United States, this does not explain why Shinto has gained a foothold in America now, and why for the first time some non-Japanese Americans are self-identifying as followers of Shinto. This is what I hope to explore in my study of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. In order to do this, I have done research using available literature on Shinto and other factors that are relevant to the shrine. Due to a dearth of academic work on Shinto outside of Japan, this was largely done by utilizing biographical sources on key figures involved in the transmission of Shinto to America, Kesaya Noda's unpublished work on Tsubaki Shrine done for Harvard's Pluralism Project (Noda 1991), and Paul Gomes III's master's thesis for the University of Hawai'i on Shinto in Hawaii (Gomes 2007). In combination with these sources, I conducted field research at the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America, which included participating in one of the Shinto seminars and interviewing its participants in the summer of 2007. In doing so, I was able to gain a first hand perspective of the character of the shrine and the people who practice Shinto, giving me insights beyond what can be garnered from textual sources. Because one of the purposes of this thesis is to examine the ways in which practitioners describe their experiences with Shinto and how they

self-identify their religious orientation, I have given the practitioners a voice by quoting them frequently.

The first chapter, “The Beginnings of a North American Shinto,” outlines the serendipitous combined efforts of Shinto scholars, Yukitaka Yamamoto, Unitarians, and the International Association for Religious Freedom, their webs of connections, and how it eventual came that Yamamoto was able to buy land and establish the first Shinto shrine on mainland American soil.

In Chapter Two, “Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America,” I first give a biographical account of Rev. Koichi Barrish, the priest at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. Then I describe my personal experiences attending the Summer Shinto Seminar at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America on July 21 and 22, 2007. My style of writing in this section takes on a much more personal tone, as I want to convey to my reader the atmosphere of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America (TGSA) and the experience of participating in Shinto rituals as much as possible. My purpose in doing so is to immerse the reader in life at the shrine, so that the rituals and other religious practices will give relevance and nuance to other information. So much of the thesis is focused on forces that happened in making the Shinto community as it is now, that I wanted to set aside a space to feature shrine life and ritual at present-day TGSA as a shrine goer would experience them. These seminars act not only as conceived in Yukitaka Yamamoto’s imagery at binding the community vertically to the *kami*, but also horizontally to each other. As individualistic as some Shinto practice seem to be, an organized religious congregation could not exist in America without having a sense of community. Seminars and celebrations at TSGA, create opportunities for pilgrimage to the shrine and give participants a chance to meet each other and have shared experiences. In the last part of this chapter I focus on the successful community building Rev.

Koichi Barrish, the current priest of TGSA, has been able to do at the shrine through his personal connections and innovations.

Chapter Three, “American Followers of Shinto,” details the main reasons why people visit and participate at the shrine’s programs and rituals. Though the question of “conversion,” being shaded by its Christian connotations, is not a good indicator for religious association, I have found that some Americans are now self-identifying as Shinto practitioners. The reasons for this self-identification are varied. I have classified four groups of people who go to the shrine and I elaborate on some of these reasons here. Additionally, I trace the origins of certain key aspects of the ritual life at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. In this chapter I include extensive information I have gathered through interviews, in an effort to let the practitioners of Shinto, speak for themselves. I feel that if we want to understand the reasons why people are practicing and self-identifying as Shinto we have to give some credence to what the people themselves are saying.

“TGSA and Japanese Religions in America,” the final chapter of this thesis, was written with the intention of exploring the nature of the community at TGSA via comparisons with other Japanese religions in America. In this chapter, I take a look at the recent history of Shinto in Hawaii, Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Soka Gakkai. From these examinations, I have been able to make comparisons between these Japanese religious traditions in America and TGSA. By understanding the subtle differences between TGSA and other similar religious communities, we can gain perspective on the points of countenance as well as the unique phenomenon of an American form of Shrine Shinto.

In this thesis I am dealing with what is known as *Jinja* or Shrine Shinto, not the other categories of “Folk,” “Sect,” or “State” Shinto, though they may be referred to from time to time.

Japanese names are written with the given name first and the family name last, as is done in English. I hope this thesis adds something to the study of Shinto in America. In it I offer some tentative conclusions on the nature of shrine Shinto in America, as well as point to potential future avenues for the development of American Shinto.

## CHAPTER 2 THE BEGINNINGS OF A NORTH AMERICAN SHINTO

Today Shinto practice in North America is not widespread and many Americans' first exposure to Shinto is through literature or classes on world religions. Because of this, it is important to examine the ways in which Shinto is being portrayed and looking into the backgrounds of those who write about it.

Since the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in Japan in the sixteen century from Portugal and Spain, Japanese religions, including Shinto, have been researched and written about in three basic ways. The first way of portraying Shinto has been highly critical, and the motivations behind this type of “scholarship” were either to justify and encourage the spread of Christianity or to learn about the “enemy” or justify aggressive military action towards the Japanese, such as in WWII.<sup>1</sup> The second type of scholarship is purely academic. Much of this type of Shinto scholarship examines historical development, rituals, or philosophy, or provides translations of texts or prayers. The third type, the type that is most relevant to this thesis, is written or translated by English speaking scholars on Shinto history or practice in a sympathetic tone. I will refer to this genre of Shinto scholarship as “sympathetic scholarship.” This type of literature is a key component of the popularity and understanding that Shinto enjoys in some circles of North America today. I am not inferring here that this genre of books is necessarily not academic. I set them apart because these authors had connections with Yukitaka Yamamoto or their works have made Shinto accessible outside of academic circles and are distributed or promoted amongst Shinto practitioner circles. Most of the following authors qualify in both ways.

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<sup>1</sup> One example is Robert O. Ballou, *Shinto the Unconquered Enemy: Japan's Doctrine of Racial Superiority and World Conquest* (New York: The Viking Press, 1945).

## Sympathetic Shinto Scholars

The first notable sympathetic scholar is Joseph Warren Teets Mason (1879-1941), an American journalist, who published *The Meaning of Shinto* in 1935 while living in Japan. In this book he argues for the validity and vitality of Shinto as a religion. He reminds his readers that though many Japanese cannot explain Shinto in any satisfactory way to a Westerner, this does not mean that Shinto has no meaning. Mason also calls for Japan to begin its scholarship on Shinto in order to be able to explain its culture and religion to other nations (Mason 2002:14). His desire for more Japanese scholarship is both political and personal.<sup>2</sup> Although he never directly professes his feelings toward Shinto, his sympathetic leanings come out through his writing. He writes that if Japan could make the full meaning of Shinto available to world, “it will vitally influence all progressive conceptions of spirituality in every enlightened culture, and will rescue divinity from the burial mounds of intellectual materialism” (ibid.: 179). He sees Shinto as something which could modify religion and point to the connectedness between man and the divine spirit (ibid.: 85). Shinto, to Mason, is a universal form of spirituality that Christianity in Japan has benefited from. He writes that what he sees as the spiritual foundations of Shinto, such as human equality and the notion that all religious ways lead to the divine, “is beginning to find self-conscious expression in the West, among people who never have heard of Shinto, indicating that the Shinto conception is more than a racial one” (ibid.: 82).

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<sup>2</sup> Mason is reacting against the rising political nature of Shinto in Japan. At the time he was writing, Japan was involved in aggressive military campaigns throughout Asia and State Shinto was underway. Understanding the political background in which Mason was writing makes his work that much more incredible—he was truly against the political grain of the time.

After Mason, there was a long silence in sympathetic scholarship, largely due to the political climate between the United States and Japan during and after WWII.<sup>3</sup> The next notable book in the sympathetic scholarship genre is John Nelson's *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*, published in 1996. In this work, he analyzes the finer points of shrine life based on his experiences of participating and interviewing priests at Suwa Shrine in Nagasaki. Nelson also provides much theory and research to back up his experiences, giving his readers a unique insight into life at a Shinto shrine. Unlike Mason, who writes that Japan needed to provide the West with more scholarship, Nelson faults the West for its lack of understanding of Shinto (ibid.: 4). He finds Western definitions of religion obstructive for understanding Shinto because "Shinto does not act the way religions usually do" (Nelson 1996: 3). Nelson finds the term "indigenous," which most scholars use to describe Shinto, a problematic term for understanding the nature of Japan's relationship to Shinto because of the many traditions which have influenced what we call Shinto. He also argues that belief, a common way to measure and understand religion in the West, is not an applicable way to measure the depth of Shinto nor one's devotion to it (ibid.: 7-8). Because Nelson is participating to some degree in most of the rituals taking place at Suwa shrine, readers gain a sense that Shinto is open to foreigners in Japan.

In 2001, Ann Llewellyn Evans, a Canadian Shinto priestess published, *Shinto Norito: A Book of Prayers*, with a foreword by Yuki-taka Yamamoto.<sup>4</sup> Each prayer is written in the original Japanese (in both *kanji* and *furigana*), romanization (Japanese words written phonetically with the Roman alphabet), and English translation. Evans also includes ritual instructions and shrine

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<sup>3</sup> Though this might not be a direct factor for the lack of sympathetic scholarship long past WWII, there was a sense, Nelson notes, especially in the 1980s, of resentment towards Japan for its economic success and fear of the Japanese economic power because companies in the United States were being bought by Japanese businesses.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Evans maintains another branch of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan called Kinomori Jinja in British Columbia, Canada. Unfortunately I was not able to gain much information on Evans and her shrine. Such work would make for excellent future scholarship on Shinto in North America.

etiquette guide. This publication is significant because it is the first instructional guide meant for an English speaker who wants to practice Shinto, but may not have access to a priest for instruction. Evans' book also serves as a valuable resource for non-Japanese speaking Shinto practitioners who want to know the meaning behind their prayers. A year later, she would re-publish and add a forward to J.W.T. Mason's *The Meaning of Shinto*, which was out of print at the time.

Also in 2002, Stuart D.B. Picken, a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, religion scholar and professor at the International Christian University in Tokyo, published *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth*, also with a forward by Yukitaka Yamamoto. Though Picken had published other works on Japanese religion, including *Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Roots* in 1980 and the comprehensive *Essentials of Shinto: an Analytical guide to Principle Teachings* in 1994, *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth* is significant in that Picken departs from his usual scholarly approach and writes from the perspective of an insider and practitioner. Picken opens this book asking the reader:

Does religion puzzle you?...Do you ever feel that you want to belong actively to a group that seeks the cultivation of spirituality? Do you also become disappointed that, often as not, these groups demand in return that you submit to articles of faith you really don't find 'believable'? And doesn't it seem difficult to choose among a wide array of faiths open to you? Do you feel a special reverence for nature and the environment but lack the means to explore this feeling of reverence in your daily life? If the answer to any or all of these is 'Yes,' then this is the book for you. (Picken 2002: 9)

Picken promotes Shinto as a religion, but a different kind of religion, namely a system of beliefs with profound meaning but without all the unwanted baggage of creeds and doctrine,

“the most straightforward and basic approach to religion that there is or ever has been” (ibid.).

He tells the story of a woman, who although unfamiliar with Shinto, “found” Shinto one day when she was enjoying nature and decided to jump into a waterfall. His book takes Shinto out of

the realm of the shrine and places it in the hands of those who are in awe of the earth, but have not found a way to commune with it (ibid.: 15). Picken critiques State Shinto as false Shinto and places the blame for what Shinto became leading up to WWII on Japanese political forces and not the tradition itself (ibid.: 24). Similar to J.W.T. Mason's work, Picken depicts Shinto as having qualities that can enrich all other religions because its "source is nature and not doctrines of supernatural revelation, it isn't mutually exclusive to any religious belief" (ibid.: 25). Unlike other Shinto writers he argues against Shinto making claims to "universality," which he sees as a dangerous argument for authoritarianism (ibid.: 124). Throughout many of his works Picken often reminds his readers that Shinto is "caught not taught," meaning that Shinto must be experienced (Picken 1994: xxxii). One has to wonder to what extent, then, Picken has "caught" Shinto. His work blurs the lines between scholarship and personal faith. The book contains litanies he has written in English that were inspired by Shinto *norito* (Shinto prayers or invocations). They follow this basic pattern:

*Leader* Speak to us the flow of life as growth and not as completion, not as alpha and omega, but as beginning that never ends and the end that never ceases—the seed that germinates and sprouts new life that in turn grows and falls and leaves the seeds to begin its journey again....

*All* Teach us the meaning of purity, brightness, and the uprightness of the soul  
Teach us how to return to our higher origins  
Teach us the power of purification (ibid.: 41).

Picken infuses his ministerial training with his long involvement with Shinto to make a creative new type of Shinto worship. Picken and his work become especially important because of his relationship with Yukitaka Yamamoto and Koichi Barrish, as I will explore later in this chapter. Toward the end of his book he even features a brief description of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. He states that Shinto is not at all out of place in its new North American setting because "most of the necessary awareness is already in place" (ibid.: 124).

The most recent example of sympathetic scholarship is Thomas P. Kasulis' *Shinto: The Way Home*, published in 2004. Kasulis writes that Shinto spirituality is a feeling and not a static quality of being. He admits that he has "felt Shinto" many times, but that he is not a follower of Shinto. His stated goal is "to encourage readers to look for correlates in the own lives— regardless of whether they have ever been to Japan or visited a Shinto site" (Kasulis 2004: 3). He defines feeling Shinto as the existential feeling of awe and fear for manmade or natural wonders, or the feeling of connectedness (ibid.:152). The way Kasulis deals with Shinto, like Picken, Evans, and Mason, leaves the faith open for non-Japanese to explore in order to enrich their own spirituality.

#### **Yukitaka Yamamoto, 96<sup>th</sup> High Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine**

Yukitaka Yamamoto was born in 1923, the second son of Yukiteru Yamamoto (1886-1970), 95<sup>th</sup> High Priest or Guji of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie, Japan (Yamamoto 1999: 15-31). Like many men in his day, he was drafted into the Marines and sent to serve in New Guinea during WWII. There he endured innumerable tragedies. He writes in his autobiography that of the 2,200 people that he was sent to New Guinea with, only twelve returned to Japan (ibid.: 27). His terrible experiences during the war forged Yamamoto's lifelong commitment to peace and understanding. Both of his older brothers were killed in the war, which left Yamamoto to carry on the duties at Tsubaki Grand Shrine. In order to prepare for his new role, he began Shinto studies at Kogakkan University. When he decided to devote his life fully to Shinto, he began the austerities of daily purification rituals in the waterfall near the shrine and he also engaged in Shinto meditation. He remembers the profound changes in his consciousness brought about by these daily practices (ibid.: 40-42).

Yamamoto is most noteworthy for his commitment to international peace and spreading understanding about Shinto, especially in the United States. In 1987, when he set out writing

*Kami no Michi*, a book of his memoirs, beliefs, and goals for Shinto, he stated his purposes in doing so were: 1) “To explain why Shinto, once branded as a doctrine of nationalistic fanatics, can see itself as sufficiently international to take part in the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF)”, 2) to explain to IARF his longtime dream of “establishing a Shinto presence in the United States to serve as a bridge for intercultural communication and mutual understanding between East and West” (ibid).

It was Yamamoto who took the initiative to create a branch of Tsubaki Shrine, the first Shinto shrine in mainland North America. He explains that he set up Tsubaki of America to explain Shinto to people who are unfamiliar with it. He writes, “We do not want the people of United States to misunderstand the shrine’s objectives. We are not concerned with proselytizing.” 3) His personal goal, he writes, is “to stimulate a human renaissance” in this time of increased conflict and strife. He asserts that “at such time it is a matter of urgent necessity that East meet West and in particular Japanese and Americans become truly close” (ibid.: 11-12).

Yamamoto’s involvement with various educational programs indicates that he valued academic work as a means of achieving understanding of Shinto in the West. According to Delmer Brown, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, when Picken began publishing books on Shinto, Yamamoto took the initiative to meet Picken and they have been working together ever since. Brown himself became associated with Tsubaki Grand Shrine and Yamamoto after working with Picken (Noda “Field Notes” 22 Aug. 1991: 1). Later, Revend Dr. Richard Boeke, a Unitarian minister at the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley and longtime friend of Yamamoto, who also had some influence at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, proposed the idea to develop a Shinto studies center in the Pacific School of Religion (PSR, a school that is part of GTU) (ibid.: 3). Delmer Brown eventually got funding to teach

courses on Shinto at PSR because Picken introduced Brown to Yamamoto and because of the support from Boeke, who also had ties with the GTU. Besides funding Brown, Yamamoto was also involved financially with the Starr King scholarship (at the Unitarian Universalist affiliated school within GTU), with developing software for teaching about Shinto, and founding Tsubaki Shrine of America (ibid.:13). Brown supposes that much of Yamamoto's financial backing came from his relationship with Konosuke Matsushita, chairman and founder of National Panasonic, with whom Yamamoto developed a relationship in the early 1970s (ibid.:14, Yamamoto 1999: 50).

### **Unitarian Connections and the Start of Tsubaki in America**

Yamamoto's dream of disseminating Shinto in the United States as a move toward better world understanding was greatly aided by the various connections he made with Unitarian church leaders and Shinto scholars. In 1937, Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka (1881-1987), leader of the Japanese Unitarian Church called the *kiitsu kyokai*, and well known supporter of liberal religion in Japan (Williams 1984: 9), escorted J.W.T. Mason (author of *The Meaning of Shinto*, published two years earlier) on a trip to Tsubaki Grand Shrine where he met with Yamamoto. This meeting would begin a lasting relationship between various groups promoting liberal religion in Japan, like the Unitarians, and Tsubaki Grand Shrine (ibid.: 40). Yamamoto writes that the guidance he was given by Imaoka eventually led him to participate in further interfaith activities. In 1968 Yamamoto attended the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly meeting in Cleveland, where he performed a Shinto ceremony dedicated to world peace (Yamamoto 1999: 92). The following year, Yamamoto attended the 20<sup>th</sup> IARF Conference in Boston with Imaoka (who was already a member), conducted a Shinto ceremony for peace and joined IARF with translation help from his Unitarian friend Dr. Richard Boeke (ibid., Noda "Iwasaki Field Notes" 23 Aug.1991: 3). Yamamoto recalls his excitement upon meeting with the Unitarians:

“They were happy to participate in a foreign Shinto ritual, and accepted it spiritually. This is amazing!” (Yamamoto 1999: 93). Yamamoto’s involvement with IARF continued to grow until he was appointed Vice President of the Council and then became the first Shinto President in 1996 (ibid.: 95). In this way his connections with Unitarian members brought Yamamoto into the wider circle of the IARF. His friends would play a crucial role in starting Yamamoto’s dream project: the establishment of the Tsubaki Shrine of America.

One of Yamamoto’s earliest supporters for creating a shrine in America was Rev. Boeke. Originally an idea was proposed to set up a shine in a room of Boeke’s church, but some members of the church were opposed to it. Besides Boeke, two other Unitarian ministers were interested in either installing a shrine or a *kamidana* in their churches: Dr. Donald Harrington of the Community Church in New York and Dr. Joel Scholefield of the San Francisco Unitarian Church (Noda “Field Notes” 23 Aug. 1991: 3, 1 Sept. 1991: 1). Even though there were offers from these Unitarian Churches to house a Shinto shrine, Yamamoto acted separately and in 1979 he purchased twenty-one acres of land in Oakland with the intentions of using it for his shrine. Unfortunately Yamamoto ran out of funds and was unable to build the shrine. While his project was put on hold, he continued his activities with IARF (ibid.: 4). Later, in 1984, at the IARF Congress, Unitarian members approached Yamamoto asking him to build his shrine before the next IARF meeting in 1987 because the next meeting would be held in San Francisco, relatively close to Oakland (ibid.: 5). However, this project too was never realized and instead the shrine was built in Stockton, California, primarily because of connection Yamamoto had to Marjorie and John Flaherty, who lived there.

In 1967, Marjorie, who later co-edited Yamamoto’s *Kami no Michi*, and John Flaherty had gone to Japan as emissaries of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to teach

English in Tokyo (Noda “Field Notes” 1 Sept. 1991: 1). While there, they were introduced to Rev. Imoaka, a Unitarian ministers and chairman of the IARF, who in turn introduced the couple to Yamamoto. When they returned to America, they retained their close connections by hosting many exchange students, who came from both the Rissho Kosei Kai<sup>5</sup> and Tsubaki Grand Shrine, including Yukitaka Yamamoto’s son Jun (also known as Yukiyasu) (ibid.). Finally, largely because of Yamamoto’s connections with the Flahertys, the Shrine was built in Stockton. At the time, the structure was to be somewhat of a temporary measure, until a permanent shrine could be established in the San Francisco Bay area (ibid.).

When Kesaya E. Noda conducted her field research at Tsubaki Shrine of America in Stockton in 1991, ten years before the shrine would be officially closed and merged with what was then Kannagara Jinja in Granite Falls, Washington, the shrine was somewhat of a lonely operation. Noda commented, “no one comes to morning prayers and it didn’t sound like anyone goes to the meditation either. The house is very quiet” (Noda “Iwasaki Field Notes” 23 Aug. 1991: 2). Rev. Iwasaki, a priest serving at the shrine from Tsubaki in Japan at the time, confirmed this, but added that sometimes Japanese students came to the shrine, not to pray, but “because their classmates ask them about Shinto or Buddhism and they don’t know how to answer—so they come to learn from the priests, just in order to be able to talk with their classmates” (ibid.). There are other indications that the shrine was not satisfactory. Iwasaki said that some rituals could not be done properly because the shrine was too small. A member of TGSA explained that the other shrine was basically in the backyard of a house in a residential area and that he likes the current shrine in Washington much better (2007).

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<sup>5</sup> A Buddhist organization noted for their commitment to world peace and religious pluralism.

Though Yamamoto was very enthusiastic and committed to explaining Shinto to the West and encouraging Westerners to participate in Shinto rituals, there is evidence to show that he was largely alone in these sentiments. Even in 1995, after Tsubaki Shrine had been established, Katsunoshin Sakurai, the Chairman of Kogakkan University and founding member of the International Shinto Foundation, said in a speech “When I think of the ‘universality of Shinto’, I certainly do not think of it as meaning the propagation of Shinto abroad or the construction of Shinto shrines overseas” (Sakurai 1995: 75). Williams writes that by asking foreigners to participate in Shinto rituals, Yamamoto was challenging his tradition on the matter of ritual purity (Williams 1984: 41). This is apparent in the case of Marjorie Flaherty’s son Casey, who wanted to study to become a Shinto priest and a Unitarian minister. Casey was turned away by all centers of Shinto study except Atsuta Shrine Seminary, which Yamamoto persuaded to give Casey admission. Even though Casey completed the program, he was never permitted full access into priesthood or ritual functions at Atsuta Shrine. Williams assumes that “because he was a foreigner he was impure” (ibid.: 41-42). Rev. Iwasaki corroborated this story, saying that “the Jinja Honcho would not give him a license to be a priest because he was a foreigner. Yamamoto was furious” (Noda “Iwasaki Field Notes” 27 Aug. 1991: 5). Nonetheless, Yamamoto’s first attempt at a Westerner gaining access into the Shinto priesthood was groundbreaking and would soon be realized in a different way.

### **Conclusions**

Reverend Yukitaka Yamamoto was a visionary who, accomplished building a Shinto shrine in North America through his many different connections. His purpose in doing so was not for proselytization or conversion, but simply to expose Americans to Shinto and correct misunderstandings about the tradition. His desire for world peace and inter-faith dialogue was initiated by his nightmarish experiences in World War II and aided by his involvement with the

Unitarians and the IARF. Yamamoto was also able to forge a relationship with sympathetic scholars who were making information about Shinto accessible to Western readers. Besides providing readers with an academic outlook on Shinto, these authors also included much of their personal values and experiences in their writing. They approached Shinto not as a racial, national, or narrowly Japanese religion, but fashioned an image of the tradition that spoke to an audience with interests in spirituality or the East. The works of Mason, Nelson, Evans, and Picken emphasize the openness of Shinto and the ways in which anyone may practice it and benefit from it. Yamamoto would eventually publish his own book, *Kami no Michi: The Way of the Kami*, in 1987. This work is partially his autobiography, his personal philosophies, and ritual instructions in a further effort to educate, proliferate, and make Shinto more accessible to the West. He writes:

I think that the way of *kannagara* is not only for Japanese people but also can suggest the way for all human beings to life. As you know, most religions in the world have a founder, doctrine and peaceful salvation. Shinto is a way with no founder and no doctrine. In Shinto, doctrine is nature itself. We find life worth living, and gain happiness by living along with the restless movement of nature...thus, Shinto can be said to be global, meaning that Shinto is for all human beings. (Yamamoto 1999: 95)

In his own religious community, Yamamoto often stood alone. Many Shinto priests could not understand or support what Yamamoto was trying to do. They either did not see a need or a reason to promote Shinto abroad, or they directly opposed the idea. The association of State Shinto with the horrors of WWII also left lasting impressions on some Japanese Shinto priests, who were against setting up a shrine outside of Japan. Rev. Iwasaki says of the president of the *Jinja Shincho* (the newspaper published by the Jinja Honcho), “he had been most opposed to [Yukitaka Yamamoto]. He was raised a son in a Shinto shrine in Asia during World War II and he saw what Shinto did outside Japan. He said it was wrong to go to other countries and try

to convert people” (Noda “Field Notes” 23 Aug. 1991: 4). Similarly, the shadow of the war left its mark on Americans. Delmer Brown comments on the reasons why a Shinto center never opened at Berkeley, though Yamamoto was pushing it, because of skepticism from Americans about a program or a class founded by a Shinto shrine:<sup>6</sup>

Shinto is so closely tied up with Japanese nationalism in its history that they are skeptical about it...there is already a kind of feeling that the Japanese are buying us out, and this is another... fear, I suppose, a feeling among some that this is a kind of imperialist thrust (ibid.: 14).

Even so, because of Yamamoto’s extensive web of connections, he was able to fund and build the first Shinto shrine in the continental U.S. Yamamoto was an initiator of movement that aimed at transforming Shinto from a localized, national, or racial religion to a cosmopolitan religion. Yamamoto’s work has challenged the notion of a “racial religion” both in Japan and abroad. His teachings would have a radical effect on the ideals and practice of Shinto in North America.

I think he sincerely believes that it’s a religion for all people, for all parts of the world, not just for those people in and around Tsubaki Shrine...His Shinto is one for everyone. But...he’s not a spokesman for Shinto as a whole. He’s only talking about the Shinto of his shrine (Noda “Delmer Brown Interview” 22 Aug. 1991: 10).

In this chapter I have outlined the ways in which Western academic and religious inquisitiveness, coupled with Yamamoto’s life’s work, bolstered a renewal of how Shinto can be seen in the global sphere of religion and assisted its arrival in North America for participation by a largely non-Japanese group. Without Yamamoto’s influence, it is doubtful that Shinto would exist in any real form in the continental United States today. He ushered forth a liberal movement at Tsubaki Grand Shrine that would influence a break from tradition, and allow Koichi Barrish to become the first non-Japanese Shinto priest.

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<sup>6</sup> He supposes that the only reason he was able to acquire a position is through his personal connections (Noda “Field Notes” 22 Aug. 1991: 14).

### CHAPTER 3 TSUBAKI GRAND SHRINE OF AMERICA

In order to understand the how Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America operates as a religious institution, I first examine the background of its priest, Reverent Koichi Barrish, and his path to becoming the first non-Japanese Shinto priest. Next, I give a detailed narrative of my experiences while visiting TGSA. For this section, I adopted the same style of writing as John Nelson in his *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine* in order to provide a feel for the atmosphere and rituals at TGSA. In doing so, I have left much of the terminology in Japanese in part this is how the practitioners talked about it, though many of them do not speak Japanese. I provide descriptions of Japanese terms within the text where possible, but for the sake of narrative flow the larger explanations are contained in footnotes. It is important to get a feel for the guest house and the shrine grounds not only because they were made to intentionally re-create the sense of being in Japan, but also because they are important focal points, in addition to the shrine itself, to pilgrims and regular visitors. In the final section, I describe for how Rev. Barrish and TGSA are sustained financially.

#### **Koichi Barrish**

In addition to Rev. Yukitaka Yamamoto and his many connections, Koichi Barrish is essential to the story of Shinto in America. Barrish's path to becoming a Shinto Priest started in the 1970s with Aikido training. Because Aikido is so heavily steeped in Shinto thought and ritual, this led him to practice *misogi*, a Shinto ritual of purification by water. In the 1980s he began teaching *chinkon*, Shinto meditation, along with Aikido. He was also involved with Byakko Shinkokai,<sup>7</sup> a modern Shinto sect founded by Goi Masahisa (1916-1980) from the

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<sup>7</sup> This group shares a high priority on world peace with Omotokyo and many other post-war religious movements. These priorities are in large no-doubt a reaction to the horrors of WWII. Byakko Shinkokai has also put efforts into

Omotokyo and Sei no Ie lineages, which can be characterized as Shinto-based new religions (Tsushiro 2006). This lineage is significant as the creator of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), belonged to Omotokyo and included many of its practices and philosophy into his martial art. Significant, too, are the close ties Ueshiba had with Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie, Japan. These links undoubtedly led Barrish to travel to Tsubaki Grand Shrine in the late 1980s, where according to his account, he had “a strong experience” (Barrish 2007). From that point forward, he decided to follow Jinja (Shrine) Shinto. He recalls the years following that experience as being extremely busy, filled with much traveling between the United States and Tsubaki Grand Shrine. Additionally, in 1987, Barrish introduced Aikido to the Soviet Union (now Russia) with fellow Aikido master Jamie Zimron (“kiaigolf.com”). The first visit Barrish made to Tsubaki Shrine of America in Stockton was in April 1989, he was also listed as the Aikido master of the Aiki Institute of Everett, Washington, and the director of Aiki Peace Center (Noda “Tsubaki Newsletter Notes” 1988-1991: 4). In 1990, Barrish made another trip to Tsubaki in Stockton and stayed there for three weeks, studying *misogi*, *chinkon* (Shinto meditation), and *taiko* drumming, along with conducting wedding, ground-breaking, and monthly ceremonies (ibid.: 8).

With his earnings from teaching Aikido, Barrish saved enough money to purchase land in Granite Falls, Washington. He began construction of an Aikido dojo and a proper Shinto shrine. Barrish states that at first he aimed only to receive a low-level Shinto license to be able to conduct rituals for his Aikido dojo, particularly the annual memorial of the death of Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido, called Aiki Taisai at TGSA (Barrish 2007). At first, however, Barrish was not permitted to receive even a low-level license, as was the case previously with

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hosting events both in Japan at their headquarters at Mt. Fuji and around the globe. This has been founded by the World Peace Prayer Society (Tsushiro 2006). The World Peace Prayer Society ([www.worldpeace.org](http://www.worldpeace.org)) is perhaps best known for their Peace Pole Project. These (usually white) poles reading “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in four different languages on each of its sides are commonly seen at religious centers and other places of importance around the globe. Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America also has one of these poles planted in the shrine grounds.

Casey Flaherty, because he was not Japanese. Eventually, supportive friends at Tsubaki Grand Shrine used their influence to break with tradition, which allowed Barrish to be licensed upon the completion of his training. Thus, his shrine in Washington, then called Kannagara Jinja, became a branch of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan.<sup>8</sup> While still traveling between Tsubaki Grand Shrine for training, teaching Aikido, and gradually adding to his shrine building, Barrish completed the rank of Senior Priest, a high level of training, allowing him to perform the full range of ceremonies and daily and annual ritual observances. The shrine thus started as part of Barrish's Aikido dojo, and gradually the shrine gained attention and became more well-known.<sup>9</sup> Because of the success of Kannagara Jinja, the decision was made to combine it with Tsubaki America Shrine in Stockton to form the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America (TGSA). Then the ritual and decorative elements from Stockton were moved to their new location at TGSA, and the proper purification rituals were conducted to enshrine the *goshintai* in Washington (Barrish 2007).<sup>10</sup> Today Rev. Koichi Barrish maintains a very busy schedule, managing TGSA and traveling for Aikido, lecturing, and to performing Shinto ceremonies.

### **Summer Shinto Seminar**

The Summer Shinto Seminar was held Saturday July 21 and Sunday July 22 of 2007. It is one of four seasonal seminars that Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America holds annually. I arrived at the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America in Granite Falls on Friday evening just before dinner. I pulled down the narrow gravel road in my rented car and wondered if this was a road meant for cars or only foot traffic. I saw a man walking up the path coming towards me. It was Rev.

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<sup>8</sup> This shrine is also known as Tsubaki Okami Yashiro or Tsubaki Taisha.

<sup>9</sup> Barrish remembers suddenly being very busy one New Years celebration after the shrine was mentioned in a new article in Canada (Barrish 2007).

<sup>10</sup> A symbol of the kami of a particular shrine. This is kept in the innermost part of the shrine and not revealed to the public.

Barrish himself. He greeted me, told me the shrine would close soon, and invited me up to the guest house. I pulled down the rest of the path in order to turn around at the bottom. There I caught my first glimpse of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America (TGSA). There were a few cars parked near the shrine and some men emerged from the shrine wearing uniforms for practicing Aikido.<sup>11</sup> At the shrine's guest house, called the *kaikan*, located across the road from the path that leads down to the shrine, I met Rev. Barrish, his wife, Chika, and another shrine member who had arrived earlier that evening for the seminar.

The guest house is a two-story building with a kitchen and dining area, library, water closet, Japanese style bath, a large *tatami* (Japanese straw mats) room with a large *kamidana*<sup>12</sup> designated that weekend as the women's dorm-style sleeping area, and a door that lead to the living quarters of the reverend and his wife. On the second story of the house there are several private bedrooms, each with a beautiful kimono on display, a large room that is sometimes used as an Aikido practice area, but had been temporarily designated as the men's dorm-style sleep area, and a bath area with two private toilets, a shower in a separate room, and an elegant double sink area that faced a full window looking out on the greenery outside instead of the usual mirrors. Throughout the guest house artistic posters promoting Ise Shrine in Japan were hung on the walls. Later that night, the four of us went out to eat at the local Chinese restaurant in town. Listening to Rev. Barrish's stories from his travels in Japan and Russia, it occurred to me that he is a well-connected, respected, and liked person. He came across as an easy-going, friendly,

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<sup>11</sup> Traditional uniforms including *hakuma*, or wide Japanese pants, are worn.

<sup>12</sup> *Kamidana* literally means "spirit/divine shelf." They are miniature version of a shrine that are set up in homes. Shinto priests perform rituals to activate the *kamidana* by inviting kami to be present. Common elements placed around the *kamidana* include mirrors, small cups for water and/or sake, and dishes for salt and other offerings. These implements were all available to purchase at the shrine.

caring, and good-humored man. His warm and engaging personality, I noted, is no doubt responsible for a portion of TGSA's success.

### *Misogi*

On Saturday I woke early in order to get ready for *misogi shuho*, the water purification ritual, scheduled for nine o'clock. The night before, a shrine member who had traveled here for the seminar described the ritual process to me, but as she said, "nothing can really prepare you for *misogi*." After breakfast, I walked with my new friend from the shrine guest house across the road, through the first *torii* gate, and down the wooded path approaching the shrine. Sun filtered through the leaves, and between the sounds of the gravel crunching beneath our feet, we could hear the birds singing and the gentle rustle of the wind. If the goal was to build a Shinto shrine in America where one could appreciate the *kami* within in the beauty of nature, then TGSA was a success.<sup>13</sup> We purified our hands and mouth at the *te-mizuya*,<sup>14</sup> left our shoes in the entrance of the shrine and then went to change our clothes in the women's change room. We were given white robe called *mizugoromo*, a white cloth belt, and a white *hachimaki* (a cloth band worn around the forehead), with the kanji characters for "*tsubaki taisha*" "Tsubaki Grand Shrine" written on one side, the *mitsu domoe*<sup>15</sup> in the center and "America" on the other. The men were given a loincloth called *fundoshi* and a *hachimaki*. After we changed we assembled in the main

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<sup>13</sup> The *sando*, or main path of approach to a shrine is traditionally very important for setting the mood of reverence and pilgrimage. In urban settings, this is not always possible however. The important thing to note here is that the *sando* at TGSA follows the traditional framework of the shrines in Japan. Because the only way to approach the shrine is through the first *torii* and the shrine itself is not visible from the onset, the shrine goer, is given the sense of liminality; a feeling of an aesthetic journey from the secular into the sacred ground of the shrine.

<sup>14</sup> Literally "hand water," this is a basin usually in a small pavilion that is almost always directly outside the entrance into the grounds of a shrine or the shrine itself. Before a person enters the shrine, he or she should stop at the *te-mizuya* to scoop water from a basin and rinse the hands. Often it is also customary for a person to take a small sip of the water and then spit it on the ground next to the basin. This is done for the purpose of making a person ritually clean both externally (symbolized by hands) and internally (symbolized by the water entering the mouth) before one enters the realm of the *kami*.

<sup>15</sup> This is the symbol of TGSA and represents the three forces of heaven, earth, and humanity (Picken 1994: 171).

room of the shrine and were given sheets of paper with a *norito* (prayer or invocation) that we were to recite during the *oharae*<sup>16</sup> (purification). A few more people had come to the shrine that morning for *misogi*, bringing our group to about five people. The words were brief and I followed the others out of the shrine and down the steps to the Pilchuck River. A container was set up on the bank with some pieces of wood burning in it.<sup>17</sup> Once we were all positioned near the water, facing the sun, we set about doing warm-up exercises to prepare ourselves for *misogi*.

The first exercise is called *furitama* (soul shaking). For this we stood on the balls of our feet in a slightly wide stance, with our knees slightly bent and our hands clasped right over left loosely in front of stomachs. Then we shook our hands up and down rapidly while saying “*Harae do no Okami*” (“great kami of purification”). Yamamoto explains that this acts as an invocation of the *kami* and generates awareness of the *kami*’s presence within the participant (Yamamoto 1999: 118). Next we performed *torifune* (bird rowing), in which we stood with the left leg forward, then we moved our arms as if rowing a boat and yelled, “yie” twenty times. We did the rowing motion twenty times, then changed our stance with the right leg in front while yelling “ei” and “ho” alternatively. Then, another round of *furitama* before a third version of the rowing, in which our left foot was forward and we raised our hands to our chest with a shout of “yei,” and extended them downward and opened our hands with “sa” followed by another round of *furitama*. Yamamoto explains that the purpose of this exercise is to combine the physical with the spiritual. According to him, “since *misogi* is a psycho-physical experience,” both elements are essential (ibid: 119). The third exercise is called *otakebi* (shouting or vocalization). We stood with our hands on our hips and after Rev. Barrish shouted “*Iku tama! Taru tama! Tama*

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<sup>16</sup> Purification is necessary before *misogi shuho* because, as Yukioka Yamamoto points out in *Kami no Michi* (1999: 117) the water is also the realm of the *kami*, therefore special care must be taken before entering it.

<sup>17</sup> Rev. Barrish explained that it is important to represent the element of fire and water together (Barrish 2007: phone interview).

*tamaru tama!*,”<sup>18</sup> the group replied “*Okami! Okami! Kunitsu Okami! Sarutahiko Okami to toshi ya!*” (Picken 2002: 108). For the fourth exercise, *okorobi* (yielding), we placed our left hand on our hip and placed our index and middle fingers together at our foreheads as in a salute. Then, with our right hands we cut the air while taking a step forward with our left foot and each time invoking a kami and yelling ‘yei!’

Next, facing the river, we practiced what is called *ibuki* (breathing). In this exercise we lowered our hands to our knees and then deeply inhaled as we raised them above our heads in order to raise our *ki*’s (life energy of the body) respectability and sensitivity (ibid: 120). After we did this five times, Rev. Barrish and the shrine assistant prepared to do the final purification of the river and the group. He sprinkled salt, an agent of purification, on every participant, and then drank *sake*, sprayed three mouthfuls into the river and then sprinkled salt over the surface of the water.<sup>19</sup> Then Rev. Barrish made nine gestures in the air while reciting “*hi fu mi yo i mu na ya ko to*”<sup>20</sup> and then cut them with his hand like a sword.<sup>21</sup>

The final component of *misogi shuho* is *nyusui* (entering the water). We were instructed to walk into the river with our hands clasped together,<sup>22</sup> with our two middle fingers pointing up

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<sup>18</sup> This is activate the soul’s awareness, affirm the awareness that you can realize the infinite in your soul, and then the last exclamation confirms both of the previous and keeps the soul activated. The last group invocation acknowledges the power of Sarutahiko Okami (Picken 2002: 108).

<sup>19</sup> This is a common element of purifications, offerings, festivals, and banqueting amongst shrine goers. Rev. Barrish explained later that by offering *sake* to whatever negative force or *kami* was lingering in the river, it would not only pacify this negativity, but send it off with a message of “no hard feelings” (Barrish 2007).

<sup>20</sup> This literally represents the numbers one through ten, (Evans 2001: 32) and represents the ten stages of the universe (Barrish 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Yamamoto writes that these nine gestures symbolize the world’s impurities which are removed from the nine areas after cutting them (Yamamoto 1999: 121).

<sup>22</sup> Ideally *misogi-shujo* is done under a waterfall, like at Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan. However, any body of flowing water is effective such as a river, stream or ocean (Clark 2007). This relates to the ritual’s origins in the story of Izanagi washing himself upon returning from the underworld. Also it is believed that the impurities flow down river until they reach the sea where certain *kami* expel them (Evans 2001: 126).

held at chest level.<sup>23</sup> Once our bodies made contact with the water we were to repeat “*Harae tamae kiyome tamae rokonshojo!*” (“purify and cleanse the six elements of the body”) (Picken 1994: 173-4). Even though it was a warm morning in July, the Pilchuck River flows down a mountain, bringing with it snowmelt. My friend was right, nothing could have prepared me for the experience of walking into that river and sinking down until the water was at chest level. On contact with the cold river water, my body was throbbing with shock and it was difficult even to breathe out the invocation between my gasps.<sup>24</sup> After we all continued shouting towards the sun, crouched there while the water flowed over our chests and shoulders, I had a strange surge of warmth and power. We stayed like this for maybe a minute or two until Rev. Barrish yelled “yei,” signaling us that it was time to walk back onto the river bank. Once out of the Pilchuck and back on the sharp rocks, we performed a series of bowings and invocations.

We walked back to the shrine, dripping and invigorated, to change back into our clothes. The next day *misogi shuho* would be done in the same fashion, except there would be many more participants because of the seminar. Half of the people taking part in *misogi shuho* were registered for the Summer Shinto Seminar that weekend; the others had come because they were there for Aikido training afterwards or simply were regulars at the shrine. That Saturday, after my first experience with the *misogi* purification, I stayed for tea, morning prayer (*chohai*), meditation practice (*chinkon*), and then watched part of the Aikido training which takes place three times a week in the shrine.

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<sup>23</sup> This hand gesture is a *mudra* used for focusing energy and generating heat (Barrish 2007: phone interview).

<sup>24</sup> The day before, my new friend at the shrine told me that it is best to shout these words, not only because it makes the purification that much more intense, but also because the shock of the cold water sometimes makes it hard to breath. Shouting from the start, I was told, would keep those airways open. This turned out to be very good advise.

## *Chinkon*

The meditation that Rev. Barrish practices and teaches is called *chinkon* (“calming of the soul”), the purpose of which is to revive the energy of the soul. Some sources date its practice back to the fourth century (Evans 2001: 133). The first day I was at the shrine, we practiced *chinkon* on the riverbank of the Pilchuck, sitting on flat pieces of wood from the shrine. The second day it was raining, so we practiced inside the *heiden*.<sup>25</sup>

Like *misogi shuho*, *chinkon* is practice involving physical gestures and vocalizations. The part of the meditation begins sitting in *seiza*,<sup>26</sup> with the hands cupped together, right over left, leaving some space in between. Then we shook our hands in this position while chanting “Sarutahiko no Okami,” the name of one of the principal *kami* of TGSA. Next we held our palms together as in prayer and recited several invocations.<sup>27</sup> Then we bowed twice, clapped twice, and bowed once again,<sup>28</sup> and then meditated in silence for some time. Next we changed our sitting position, so that the soles of our feet were together. With our hands clasped as before, only this time left over right, we chanted “Sarutahiko no Okami,” again. We went through a series of hand positions and chants, before practicing *Ibuki Undo* (breathing exercise), in which we took a deep breath in through the nose for ten seconds and then tried to exhale out of the mouth for twenty seconds. We repeated that ten times before returning to *seiza*, deeply bowing, and then silently meditating. After another brief recitation we bowed twice, clapped twice, and

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<sup>25</sup> The *heiden* is the main area of a shrine where the sacred objects are and offerings are placed. In TGSA this is almost like a stage area for the main worship hall of the shrine or the *haiden* (Barrish 2007: Phone Interview).

<sup>26</sup> A position where one sits on his or her legs as they are tucked under the body with the shins on the floor. We sat this way for most of the purification rituals as well. During the course of the seminar, Rev. Barrish gave us tips on how to flex our feet to keep blood circulating in the legs during long sitting sessions. Many of the participants experienced pain and difficulty walking after sitting in *seiza* for long periods of time.

<sup>27</sup> Most of the participants read these from a piece of paper, as they did not have them memorized.

<sup>28</sup> This pattern is called *nirei nihakushu ippai* (literally 2 bows, 2 claps, 1 bow). We practiced this pattern at the shrine during many of the ceremonies.

bowed again (Evans 2001: 134-138). This form of meditation was very dynamic and active, especially in comparison to other forms that focus on concentration and are performed silently.

### **The First Day of the Seminar**

Though I had arrived early and already participated in some of the shrine's rituals, the official reception for the beginning of the Summer Shinto Seminar was at three in the afternoon. At four o'clock all the participants in the seminar gathered in the shrine for a formal *Oharae* (purification) in which we recited *norito*,<sup>29</sup> in unison and were instructed on how to offer *tamagushi*<sup>30</sup> to the *kami* of the shrine. Rev. Barrish also recited a *norito*, including each of our names and place of origin<sup>31</sup> and beseeching the *kami* of the shrine to purify each of us and keep us safe during the seminar.

After the *Oharae*, the seminar participants (about thirteen in all) gathered in the meeting room on the second floor of the shrine, above the room that serves as a kitchen to prepare the offerings to the *kami*.<sup>32</sup> In the center of the room there is a coffee table, on one side is a computer from which Rev. Barrish operates the TGSA webpage and listserv, and in front of the windows various pamphlets on Shinto topics and copies of the shrine's newsletter are displayed. Next to those, an array of *kamidana*, varying from very small to very large and elaborate, were displayed for sale along with common implements for use in one's home shrine. Opposite the

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<sup>29</sup> The word *harae* shares an etymological link with the word *harau* which means "to brush off dust" or "to pay off one's debts" (Yamamoto 1988).

<sup>30</sup> *Tamagushi* is a ritual offering of an evergreen branch to *kami*. Commonly *sakaki* is used, but in cases where *sakaki* is not available (as in Hokkaido, the northernmost part of Japan) an evergreen substitute will do. At TGSA we offered branches of *tsubaki* (the shrine's namesake) or Camellia in English.

<sup>31</sup> The *Oharae* is spoken with a Japanese pronunciation in a way similar to the chanting of Buddhist monks. Later, some of the participants asked Rev. Barrish if they had in fact heard their name and state because they were not quite sure. For instance this sounded like "*Furorida-shu no Ishida Sara-san....*" (Sarah Ishida from the state of Florida).

<sup>32</sup> The style of the room was very reminiscent of a Japanese style room that some houses in Japan still maintain. The flooring was *tatami* and everyone used blue cushions to sit on. The area displaying the scrolls was raised a few inches so that it would be set apart from the rest of the room.

stairs and the computer was an area displaying hand painted scrolls depicting the two principal *kami* of TGSA, Sarutahiko no Okami and his wife Ame no Uzume no Mikoto. Because we were instructed never to sit with our backs to the *kami*, we were all very careful to sit in a semi-circle around the table. Chika Barrish, the Reverend's wife, and the shrine assistant brought a cup of green tea for each of us to sip, after which Rev. Barrish said a brief blessing and began a question and answer style lecture session.<sup>33</sup>

By six o'clock we broke up to go back to the guest house and to the local supermarket to get food needed for the potluck dinner that night. The dinner was very enjoyable; after we all had our fill, the participants staying at the guest house stayed up until late into the night talking about Shinto and their experiences, browsing the library of the shrine, and generally having a good time. Eating and lodging together at the guest house helped to foster a sense of community and friendship among the seminar participants. Sharing these experiences is an important part of the process of community building taking place at TGSA. These seminars provide a space for people interested in practicing Shinto to meet, share their experiences, and make new friends, thus strengthening the social networks of the shrine.

### **The Second Day of the Seminar**

By nine o'clock the next morning the participants and I had made our way out of the guesthouse, down the *sando* of the shrine, and into our special *misogi shuho* clothing. It was exciting to go through the water purification ritual again, this time knowing what to expect. For most of the participants it would be their first experience with the ritual. The more seasoned members of the shrine took care sharing their experiences with the newcomers, just as they had

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<sup>33</sup> This was a very free-flowing exchange of information on Shinto ranging from such topics as how Rev. Barrish started the shrine to Shinto thought on the afterlife, to shrine life in Japan, to the deeper meanings of the rituals of *chinkon* meditation and *misogi*.

with me the previous day. I even added my own advice and experience to the conversation. Once we had carefully stepped over the rocks and made our way to the riverbank, the exercises began. Our shouting was noticeably louder, given the increased number of participants from the seminar as well as others who had come early for the other festivities that were going on that day. This gave the exercises an added feeling of intensity and community. Even though the water was just as cold as the day before, everyone went into the river and no one hesitated to sink down so the water would reach their shoulders. On our way back to the changing room we realized that about half the group had forgotten to bring towels from the guest house. Rev. Barrish and his wife were quick to act, and with due respect to the *kami* Rev. Barrish gave us towels from the *heiden* which had been donated to the shrine's guest house earlier.

We gathered in the upper room for tea, and then proceeded down to the main hall of the shrine for *chohai* (morning prayer) and *chinkon gyoho* (meditation practice). Unlike the day before, it was raining so we did not go out to the bank of the river. After that, we gathered upstairs again for more tea and another question and lecture session with Rev. Barrish. He also took us on a detailed tour of the shrine and the surrounding grounds, explaining what each element was, the symbolism surrounding it, and proper shrine etiquette for a given area.<sup>34</sup> At one o'clock we were back at the guest house, enjoying a large lunch of curry and rice that Chika Barrish had prepared for us. After lunch we gathered at the shrine for a group picture, final purification and prayer for our safety,<sup>35</sup> and a drink of *sake* called *naorai*, a symbolic communion that acts as a feast of transition back into secular life (Nelson 1996: 40).

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Rev. Barrish explained the different implements used in offerings, how to use the *te-mizuya* and the different layers of meanings as to why a bell is shaken when one prays at a shrine.

<sup>35</sup> This purification is known as *shubatsu*. The priest purifies the participants who are seated in *seiza* and bowing in a 45 degree angle with their hands on the floor, by waving a *haraigushi* (this resembles a wand and is made of folded paper on a wooden pole) to symbolize sweeping away impurities (Evans 2001: 119). John Nelson writes that

After that, a few people had to leave to get on the road in time to make it home or to catch a flight, but most of us lingered at the shrine for the next thirty minutes, talking and looking over the various things for sale that were set up in the main hall for the day. Several people purchased *Omamori* of one kind or another,<sup>36</sup> some browsed the TGSA T-shirts, others looked at the books on Shinto,<sup>37</sup> and one couple purchased *Omikuji* and delighted in sharing their predictions.<sup>38</sup> By that time, I noticed more people stopping to bow at the entrance of the main hall before entering.<sup>39</sup> They were here for the next event.

### The New Statue

Since the previous spring, a member of TGSA who is a woodcarver and lives in California had been working on a wooden statue of one of the principal *kami* enshrined at TGSA,

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participants in *shubatsu* like to feel the *haraigushi* brushing their heads (Nelson 1996), in this case I could feel the breeze of the *haraigushi*, but not the paper itself.

<sup>36</sup> These are usually in the form of a small brocade bag and used as a protective talisman or for good fortune. In the case of TGSA, they sell a wide assortment of *Omamori* for the following purposes: *hada* (general purpose) in red, purple, white, or orange; *yakuyoke* (to protect against one's critical ages); *kotsu anzen* (travel safety); *michihiraku* (a compass to find one's life path) in gold, white, or green; *kubosa* (business success); *enmusubi* (find/maintain a love relationship) in blue or pink; *housaiyoke* (protection against misfortune associated with unlucky directional forces); *anzan* (safety in childbirth); *gei no* (success in the performing arts) in pink or white; *gakutoku* (success in studies) in red or purple; *gankake* (for making a wish) in blue or red; *shiwase* (for happiness). There were also several varieties of card-shaped *Omamori*, as well as keychain-shaped *Omamori* for pets or good fortune. These were all ten dollars each. Other protective implements available include *suzu* (small bells attached to a string) for protection one of each of the shrine's two main *kami* and a general one for good fortune, and a *magatama* bracelet made of crystal. There were also traffic safety stickers, Ofuda, and Eto-Hamaya and yakuya arrows to dispel misfortune were also available ("Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America").

<sup>37</sup> Available to purchase were: *Shinto Norito* by Ann Llewellyn Evans, J.W.T. Mason's *The Meaning of Shinto*, *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth* by Stuart Picken, Yukitaka Yamamoto's *Kami no Michi: The Way of the Kami*, and *Tales of the Gods* by Aki Izumoi (ibid). [all items and more are also listed on the TGSA website]

<sup>38</sup> A system of fortune-telling by drawing lots: this is a common practice at both Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in Japan. If the fortune is not desirable, the practice is to try the piece of paper that the fortune is written on to a tree branch in the shrine and temple grounds thereby escaping the bad luck that lays ahead.

<sup>39</sup> Much like entering and exiting a cathedral, it is customary to bow towards the *heiden* when entering and leaving the room to show respect to the *kami*.

Ame no Uzume no Mikoto.<sup>40</sup> The previous year, the same member had carved a statue of Sarutahiko no Okami, which was displayed in the *heiden*.<sup>41</sup> Members of the shrine donated generously for the project.<sup>42</sup> To make the statue, a log Hinoki (sacred white cedar) needed to be purchased (which was also donated by a member) and the carving took over three months to complete (“Tsubakiko ML” 29 March; 25 April; 24 July 2007). The dedication of the statue was timed to coincide with the end of the Summer Shinto Seminar, and a *taiko* drum performance was added to the event. Earlier that day, the statue had been moved into the *heiden* and had a cloth covering it.

Reverend Barrish performed the statue dedication ceremony, first with offerings, then purification of the statue and the audience, several *norito*, and finally the statue was unveiled. The artist who carved the statue used the hand-painted scrolls that were displayed in the upper room as a model. The new carving of Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, along with her partner Sarutahiko no Okami, were exact replicas of the scrolls. There was much care in adding beauty and detail to the statue and the audience was visibly impressed.

Also performing that day was a *taiko* drumming group from Portland. The three Japanese-American women in the group, along with the artist who carved the statue offered *tsubaki* branches at the *heiden*. Then two of the women set up their drums and presented two well-performed *taiko* drumming pieces to Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, accompanied with vocals and Japanese flutes. Their performance was not only notable because of the artists’ talent, but

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<sup>40</sup> Ame no Uzume no Mikoto is the *kami* of performing arts, entertainment, meditation, marriage, and joy (ibid) who, in the *Kojiki*, performed the so-called lewd dance when Amaterasu no Omikami (who is also enshrined at TGSA) hid herself in a cave. She is the wife of the other principal kami, Sarutahiko no Okami.

<sup>41</sup> Sarutahiko no Okami is the earthly kami of “positiveness, guidance, protection, and justice” (ibid).

<sup>42</sup> A total \$4,200 was donated for the completion of this project. Half was donated by shrine members and the other half by the artist who created the statue.

because they performed with their backs to the audience, facing the *heiden*. It was clear that the performance was a gift to Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, not only in word, but also in deed.

Afterwards, everyone present joined in the final part of the ceremony, the *naorai*, and enjoyed a sip of *sake*.

After the ceremony, Rev. Barrish conducted a private purification for the *taiko* group. A couple of us waited in the kitchen for the ritual to be over; most people had made their way home and a few still went to the guest house.<sup>43</sup> Afterwards, I joined the Rev. and Chika Barrish, along with a couple of shrine members, for dinner at a local restaurant. Even though he had been performing ceremonies all day, Rev. Barrish was as energetic in his conversation as ever. In addition to performing rituals and holding seminars at TGSA, Barrish maintains connections with other groups interested in Shinto. For example, the day following the Summer Shinto Seminar, he flew to the Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado, a Tibetan Buddhist retreat, to perform purification rituals and to lead another Shinto Seminar to celebrate the annual Shinto ceremony held at their shrine.

### **TGSA Networks**

Following Yukitaka Yamamoto's legacy, Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America maintains many connections and is involved in many networks. Rev. Koichi Barrish is an active member of the International Association for Religious Freedom<sup>44</sup> as a North American Advisor and maintains a close friendship with sympathetic academics Stuart Picken and Delmer Brown (Barrish 2007). He also does Shinto ceremonies for Unitarians and is involved with the

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<sup>43</sup> We were waiting because one was not allowed to enter or leave the shrine in the middle of a ritual as per Rev. Barrish's instructions. I used the time to interview a person who attended the seminar, help clean-up and put away some of the shrine's dishes, and visit with Chika Barrish and Ne-chan, the shrine's adopted cat wearing a pet *Omamori* on her collar.

<sup>44</sup> Yukiyasu Yamamoto (also known as Jun), Yukitaka Yamamoto's son and current high priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan also currently serves on the counsel for IARF ("IARF").

International Shinto Foundation. Besides this he maintains a shrine email listserv called Tsubakiko ML and posts occasionally on the more general shintoML. He writes on the Tsubakiko mailing list that he conducted a three-day seminar especially for IARF at the shrine, which was attended by mainly Unitarian ministers (“Tsubakiko ML” 29 June 2007). In addition to these connections, others have sought connections with Barrish and TGSA. One such group is the Shambhala Mountain Center near Red Feathers Lake, Colorado. In 1992, Daitozan Jinja (commonly called “Kami Shrine”) was installed at the Center. For the past eight years, Rev. Barrish has served as the priest of this shrine, and this July he conducted the annual ceremony of the shrine and the first Shinto seminar there (“Tsubakiko ML” 29 July 2007).<sup>45</sup> Inspired by TGSA and its mailing list, John Hidalgo set up the Texas Shinto website and study group listserv. The group considers itself a branch of TGSA and has held benefits for the shrine (“Texasshinto” 3 March 2007). Tim Clark, a former assistant at the shrine, has also recently begun plans for the making of another TGSA branch in Tampa, Florida. By continuing the many links initiated by Yamamoto, building new connections, and maintaining the shrine’s presence on the Internet, Barrish is strengthening the shrine’s network, as a result of which, many more people become involved with the shrine.

### **Promotions**

Besides four seasonal seminars, Rev. Koichi Barrish is extensively involved in creating new avenues for shrine participation through Aikido seminars, educational exhibitions, ceremonies for shrine members, and in tandem with Japanese cultural events. Because he is the sole Shinto priest on the West coast,<sup>46</sup> he has the market cornered, so to speak, on Shinto rituals.

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<sup>45</sup> According to Rev. Barrish, twenty people participated in the Shinto seminar at Shambhala and over 300 attended the ceremony.

<sup>46</sup> There are Shinto priests in Hawaii and a priestess who serves at the International Shinto Foundation office in New York City.

The most commonly requested rituals outside of the shrine for Barrish is the *jichinsai* (ground breaking ceremony) and the *jitsugyo kaishi* (ceremony for the opening of a new business), which Barrish has recently performed in Minnesota, Oregon, and Las Vegas. Locally, in the past year Barrish has also done many ceremonies, both inside and outside of the shrine. He has given talks at the University of Puget Sound and performed ceremonies to educate students on Shinto (“Tsubakiko ML” 4 April 2007) and at the Annual Omikoshi Matsuri, a festival held at Bellevue Community College. This was part of Eastside Nihon Matsuri (ENMA) and the only event in North America where a *mikoshi* (*kami* palanquin) is used. (“Texasshinto” 28 April 2007). He also performed an opening ceremony for the Sakuracon anime and cultural event in the Seattle Convention Center (“Tsubakiko ML” 3 April 2007). These two examples are indicative that the shrine operates not only on a purely religious level, and they underscore the mutual interaction between TGSA and the Japanese American community.

Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America exists because of the contributions of its members and the services Rev. Barrish is paid to perform as opposed to receiving funding from Japan. In addition to TGSA’s seminars and ceremonies that Barrish does on request at the shrine or elsewhere, he has been able to form some financially beneficial partnerships. Barrish maintains an important link with SakéOne, the only American-owned *sake* brewery company (“SakéOne”). The company’s president, Steve Boone, is a member and donor of TGSA (ibid. 18 June 2007). Annually, Rev. Barrish performs an *Oharae* (purification) ceremony at the company, which is covered by the local press and attended by the Mayor of Forest Grove, Oregon, where the company is based (“Tsubakiko ML” 16 March 2007). This year, the company developed a special *sake* for TGSA. The label for the *sake* features TGSA’s *ema* design of Sarutahiko no Okami standing between Japan and the North American continent. Barrish writes,

This is really exciting news for us...of course in Japan it is natural for shrines to have [a] relationship with sake breweries, but for us to have special Tsubaki America Sake is a very important milestone in our pioneering work of in North America as the Shinto shine... (ibid. 15 June 2007).

Later, the announcement was made that the label had been approved by the Federal Government, and the *sake* was ready to order from the SakéOne website (“Tsubakiko ML” 7 Oct. 2007). On the site, SakéOne lists the 750 ml bottle of *sake* for twenty dollars, with the introduction, “We are honored to now offer the Tsubaki Grand Shrine Junmai Ginjo Genshu Saké, bottled in celebration of our on-going relationship with the shrine and Reverend Koichi Barrish who performs our annual blessing ceremony” (“SakéOne”). SakéOne also advertises that 20% of the sales are donated to TGSA, and they encourage customers to visit the shrine. Another partnership has been made with Chado-En, a tea company, which donates tea to TGSA and lists the shrine on its webpage (“Chado-en”).

Another way of supporting the shrine, common in Japan, is the sale of ritual objects. At the shrine and on the shrine’s website there are many different kinds of *Omamori*, stickers, books, jewelry, *ema*, arrows, *kamidana* supplies, prints, *Ofuda*, and *sake*. Although many of the ritual objects sold at TGSA are imported from Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan (Barrish 2007), Barrish has been innovative in creating more items for the shrine. In one case, Barrish was able to impress the high priest of Tsubaki with the Magatama Bracelet, a bracelet made from crystal beads and used for protection. He writes on the Tsubakiko listserv:

As many members and friends know the Magatama Bracelet is the special protective amulet that I arranged to be carved in Japan for our members and friends...this past summer when Yamamoto Guji (97<sup>th</sup> generation High Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan) visited at time of Nagoshi-no-O-Harahi Taisai I gave a set to him and his wife...he liked them so much he asked me to arrange to make some for close members of the Tsubaki Daihonguu as well as some to be available there....so I arranged a larger order to be made for benefit of Tsubaki...in so doing I was able to re-order [the bracelets] for us and lower the

price ...they have just arrived....so from now the price is: \$50.00. This is in time for early holiday shopping (“Tsubakiko ML” 19 October 2007).

Funds are also raised from membership donations and money paid when one requests a special prayer. The money one donates to become a member starts at fifty dollars and is renewed annually. Regular members receive a membership handbook, a newsletter subscription, various ritual objects, and special prayers done on their behalf each month on one’s birthday. The four other types of members above the regular membership receive additional ritual objects and in some cases gifts from the shrine (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America”).

### **Conclusions**

Those who attended this Summer Shinto Seminar were a combination of people who lived near the shrine and those who had traveled to be there among those who had been to the shrine many times or were experiencing their first visit. There was a strong feeling of community among the group, as most of us stayed at the shrine guesthouse and ate together. Many shared their experiences with Shinto and answered each other’s questions, strengthening the feeling of community between the practitioners of Shinto at the seminar.

For those who cannot attend the shrine regularly, if ever, the Tsubakiko listserv is another way community takes place is online. Besides using the mailing list to post announcements about the goings on at TGSA, providing members a way to feel ‘in touch’ with the shrine, Barrish also answers shrine members’ questions, offers advice, and forwards information and pictures. Other members of the Tsubakiko mailing list can communicate with each other by replying to postings. The other email listserv, shintoML and to a less frequent extent Texasshinto, provide a type of online community where members introduce themselves, ask questions, and share information on upcoming Shinto events. By utilizing the shintoML listserv and TGSA’s electronic mailing list, Rev. Barrish is able to reach many in the online community.

Rev. Barrish, by keeping the shrine active in the online community and visiting places around the country and exposing people to Shinto, in combination with maintaining lasting and beneficial partnerships and supplying innovative ritual objects (which are to some degree very well marketed), he ensures the continued existence of TGSA and Shinto growth in North America. In my work I look specifically at one of the functions of the shrine; the Shinto seminar. These seminars serve the functions of teaching and transmitting Shinto practices and forming a community for Americans who want to learn about and practice Shinto. Financially, Rev. Barrish sustains TGSA and himself with the money he makes performing rituals, prayers, selling religious objects, and donations members make to the shrine.

## CHAPTER 4 AMERICAN FOLLOWERS OF SHINTO

In this Chapter I examine the reasons and motivations people have for coming to Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America and participating in its rituals, and the ways in which they describe their religious orientation. What initially draws people to this shrine and why do some decide to continue being involved with it? Based on interviews I conducted with ten people participating in TGSA's Summer Shinto Seminar, Rev. Koichi Barrish, Tim Clark, and what I have seen on the shintoML listserv, I have arrived at four general classifications for those who are interested in Shinto within the American context. These four categories include individuals whose initial interest or exposure to Shinto was through 1) physical disciplines 2) religious experimentation, 3) scholarly pursuits, or 4) through their Japanese heritage (Table Appendix C).

The physical disciplines I am referring to are Aikido and the *misogi* purification ritual. These two practices often go hand in hand, but not necessarily so. Both *misogi* and Aikido are practiced regularly at TGSA and for many of the people who come to the shrine these practices are their initial approach to Shinto. The second way people come to practice Shinto is through a certain type of religious experimentation, trying multiple religions either in an attempt to discover a path to pursue or in order to gather rituals or beliefs to enhance their eclectic practices. Shinto, for many religious experimenters, is often approached as a natural religion that parallels other values and practices such as environmentalism or Pagan religious traditions. The third reason for initial interest in Shinto stems from what I call scholarly pursuits, or that a person first read a book dealing with Shinto or learned of the tradition in an academic classroom setting. The final motivation is Japanese heritage. This interest in Shinto stems from either the desire to retain a connection to Japanese traditions or to re-connect with one's Japanese heritage. It is important to note then, that when I refer to the first three categories of people, they are, for the

most part, Caucasian Americans. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the first two groups because of their unique relationship to TGSA. This is not to say that people do not join other religious groups because of their desire to experiment, but reasons for their interest in Shinto are indicative of the way Shinto is being practiced and understood in America.

These categories are broad and do not portray the overlap of people who might fall into more than one category. For example, one could be ethnically Japanese, but became involved with Shinto because of their dedication to Aikido or one could have learned of Shinto first in a class on world religions, but come to practice it in the way of religious experimentation. However, by classifying the participants, we can better understand the reasons Americans are practicing this religion.

### **Intersections of Shinto and Aikido**

The characters for Aikido literally mean “meeting spirit way,” also translated as the “Way of Harmony” (Stevens 1996: vii). TGSA uses the equation Jujitsu + Shinto = Aikido (“shintoML” 17 July 2007). This means that Aikido is more than a martial art (Jujitsu), it is a spiritual discipline. The members of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America and Reverend Koichi Barrish are deeply involved in the study and transmission of Aikido. This extends far beyond the Seattle area or even the United States, as Rev. Barrish has traveled many places to teach Aikido along with performing Shinto rituals. In May of 2007, he and members of TGSA traveled to Moscow to practice Aikido and perform Shinto purification ceremonies and to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Aikido’s introduction to Russia. This trip was co-sponsored by the International Shinto Foundation (ISF) (“Tsubakiko ML” 14 May 2007). For Rev. Barrish and for many members of TGSA, the practice of Aikido has acted as a gateway into Shinto. In many cases, the spread of Aikido has gone hand in hand with Shinto transmission. More than becoming an afterthought or assuming a secondary role to Aikido, Shinto thought and practices have been

molded into the foundation of Aikido. This is because many Shinto practices and Shinto thought were incorporated into the martial art by its creator, Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), who visited Tsubaki Grand Shrine in 1958 to offer his martial art to Sarutahiko no Okami (the principal *kami* of TGSA). Like the Yamamoto, the chief priest at Tsubaki, who saw Shinto as a vehicle for international understanding, Ueshiba envisioned Aikido as a way towards world peace. It was through Ueshiba that Shinto became part of Aikido, and it was through his ties with Tsubaki Grand Shrine that Aikido became an important part of shrine life there and later at TGSA. (See Appendix D for the history of Ueshiba's formation of Aikido.)

At TGSA, those practicing Aikido at the shrine show a high level of commitment to the shrine, often helping with grounds work and maintenance of the shrine and shrine grounds. One of the most attended events is the annual Aiki Taisai, which lasts three days and celebrates the life of Morihei Ueshiba, Aikido's founder. During this event, Aikido training, *misogi shuho*, and *chinkon* (Shinto meditation) are practiced ("Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America"). Many describe Aikido as the means by which they were introduced to Shinto. Here are some personal testaments about experiences with Aikido and Shinto.

For me, when I first started to experience [Shinto], it was closely related to Aikido...martial arts for me is a way to explore myself and develop my person. Shinto appealed to me as a way to further what you know, through *misogi* practice and *chinkon* practice, and chanting, and all the resonances and embodying all the resonances is what initially stood out. (2007)

It went from Aikido and then different ceremonies in Taisai and participating in those and moving on to coming up here and as books started getting published in English they were available and I started purchasing those. I've got quite a little library...Amazon.com is a great source and the Shrine here [has books]... (2007)

I was coming up here and learning about it, but also my [Aikido] sensei [and I] we were doing many of the same practices like *misogi* together and *chinkon* and various things. I moved up here three and half years ago. [Was that in large part because of the shrine?] Absolutely, I moved up here primarily to train in Aikido and also to be close to the shrine. (2007)

It has really shifted my perception, my day to day practice, my experience at the shrine, my experience in Japan, and my Aikido training, how it all connects. My perception of day to day life shifts and I see connections ... I would say that that's directly related to my practice. For me, it has deepened my sense of who I am and also brought out my awareness just in general. *Misogi* and Aikido practice has really opened me up...I see a lot more than I used to and I attribute that directly to Aikido and Shinto. (2007)

From some of the participants' impressions, we learn that Aikido and *misogi* are practiced in close connection with each other. Aikido has been an entry point into Shinto for many practitioners. Once one becomes committed to Aikido, this often leads to further investigation of Shinto and involvement in other activities at TGSA including the performance of *misogi*.

### ***Misogi* Ritual Purification**

*Misogi* and Aikido, largely due to the practices of Morihei Ueshiba, have become inseparable. Ueshiba said, "Aikido is *misogi*. *Misogi* of ourselves." ("Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America"). (See Appendix E for details of the history of *misogi*.) Today, while *misogi* is commonly practiced by Shinto priests (Tsushiro 2006), Stuart Picken writes that group *misogi*, while the norm at Tsubaki Grand Shrine and TGSA, is not customary in Japan (Picken 2002: 101). In other words, while the practice would be known amongst the priests of shrines, it is not well-known among the everyday shrine goers in Japan. Picken advocates the practice of *misogi* as a kind of therapy and relates a time when he practiced *misogi* with a group of people who tested their blood pressure before and after the ritual and found that it had significantly decreased their blood pressure (Picken 2002: 112). Yukitaka Yamamoto praises *misogi* for not only connecting a person with ancient practices, but also stress relief (Yamamoto 1999: 117).

At the Summer Shinto Seminar, the morning ritual of *misogi* was introduced to the participants new to TGSA and talked about amongst the members with the anticipation of something of vague significance that must be experienced to be understood. The buzz about

*misogi* could be likened to an eagerness for the “main event” of the weekend. Participants at the seminar who had done *misogi* before offered their advice to the majority who had not. It seemed that those who lived at a distance from TGSA were excited to take part in something that they could only do a few times a year, and the rest of the participants were, anxious because of what they had heard about the practice. One participant in the seminar whom I interviewed commented that *misogi* was the practice he felt was most important:

*Misogi* in particular, seems to by-pass my brain. I tend to over-analyze and it bypasses that. It's a raw experience that I just can't over intellectualize about. You're in the water and you are hyperventilating because its cold... and I just sort of feel how alive I am afterwards and the fact that there is a spiritual side to it is the biggest thing for me. (2007)

Another member of the shrine commented on not catching the usual seasonal cold after having participated in *misogi*, speculating that there might be a connection. Tim Clark, a former assistant at TGSA, who wants to form a *misogi* group in Tampa, Florida, comments of his personal experience with *misogi* and its powers, “Often you have to get the feel for it [*misogi*]...when you know what's going on, it gives you so much energy its amazing.” He recalls that he missed the morning ritual one time and felt “off” the rest of the day. He theorizes that reason Rev. Barrish is able to keep his energy up during his long and busy days is due to his regular practice of *misogi*.

*Misogi*, similarly to Aikido, is a pivotal point in the ritual life of the TGSA and is reputed for its aid to physical and mental well-being. Moreover, it is an important channel through which Shinto is practiced and adopted by visitors to the shrine, and religious seekers reading the Internet or books on Shinto practice. A first-time visitor to the shrine commented that *misogi* was the main reason he wanted to attend the seminar. Another reveals of his commitment to Shinto practice:

Over the years, *misogi* is probably the most significant. Before I moved up here, which was three and half years ago, like I said, I was practicing on my own because I didn't have somewhere to go like a shrine so I would drag my friends out and make them do *misogi* with me. I do all kinds of stuff like that. So *misogi* has always been there. (2007)

Together with Aikido, *misogi* is a key ritual practice at TGSA. It is a very invigorating experience, and for the participants I interviewed, it is pivotal in their Shinto practice. Besides having great ritual meaning, many also report physical and mental well-being as a result of this practice.

### **Green Shinto and Neopaganism**

In recent years, concerns about the state of our environment have led to a “greening” trend in religions. Though prominent Western traditions, namely Christianity, have voiced their environmental concerns and taken on “green” concepts and practices, many individuals still connect Western culture, and by extension its religious traditions, with environmental degradation (Kurtz 1995: 235). If the way we regard nature is in part a product of our religious orientation, then, some suppose, religion can offer a cure for environmental problems.

Many promoters and practitioners see Shinto as a path toward making the earth sacred and correcting our flawed environmental behavior. Although Yukitaka Yamamoto never expressly stated his political stance on the environment in his book *Kami no Michi*, he describes having “a lifelong dialogue with nature” that started in this childhood (Yamamoto 1999: 18). Yamamoto also describes his experiences alone in nature doing *misogi* as transformative. Throughout Yamamoto’s life, we see that his contact with nature is expressly positive and he encourages his Western audience to commune with nature through Shinto practices.

*Misogi* in the style of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America has been practiced for centuries, and there is good reason to believe that people in ages past knew more of the secrets of nature than we know in our modern state of isolation from nature. My own experience with *misogi*...convincing me of its power to do many good things for those who are receptive to its healing and receiving power. (ibid.: 117)

The ritual act of *misogi*, as described in detail earlier, is a powerful experience. Besides being a drawing point to the practice of Shinto, it also serves as a symbolic aspect of Shinto's relation to nature. In *misogi*, nature, in this case a river or a waterfall, is approached with caution and respect. One must prepare the mind and body as well as the sacralized area of nature before this contact. When a person makes contact with the water, it is overpowering. One must submit to the water, which has a purifying effect. TGSA's practice of *misogi* emphasizes not only humankind's responsibility to serve, respect, and submit to natural forces, but also the benefits one can receive from proper contact with nature via Shinto. Stuart Picken's *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth* is based on the principal that individuals need a structured way to worship nature and that Shinto can provide this to anyone who is seeking it.

Kasulis, another "sympathetic" Shinto scholar, expresses similar sentiments to Picken and to Yamamoto who point to Shinto as a prescriptive method of re-connecting with ancient wisdom and nature. Kasulis writes in *Shinto The Way Home*:

Ecological awareness may arise from a nostalgia for a way of living in which humanity used to be a responsive part of nature rather than its manager or exploiter...Shinto nostalgia harks back to such values. (Kasulis 2004:169-170)

John Brockelman writes that "getting our ecological bearings may first entail getting our spiritual bearings in life by *finding our way back to our home in nature*" (Brockelman 1997:43; my emphasis). Although Brockelman speaks to environmentalism as a spiritual issue at large, his view resonates with what Shinto writers are teaching us; Shinto, for the Westerner, is both a way back to nature and a way forward to environmentalism. Many have already made similar connections with other religious traditions. In an interview in 1991, Rev. Iwasaki says:

Shinto's ideas depend on the rule[s] of nature...the idea of Shinto is to harmonize with nature. And we are part of nature. Very simple. Say, don't destroy nature.

And I think people now get interested about Native American culture. Why can they not study about the idea[s] of Shinto. (Noda "Field Notes" 23 Aug. 1991:7)

Even in Tsubaki's earliest days in North America, Iwasaki was making the connection between Native American religions, environmentalism, and Shinto. He is not the only one to do so.

Similar connections have been made by those I have interviewed and by people on the shintoML listserv, as we will explore later. Rev. Barrish also wrote the following on the Tsubakiko listserv:

I can meet with both Yamamoto Guji and Takatsukasa Dai-Guuji in the next few days...now I was thinking to discuss the potential positive role of Shinto in our current global environmental crisis. By arrogantly ignoring natural law of Heaven and Earth we have entered a time of climate change and loss of biodiversity....if humankind is to move forward to progress in harmony with Great Nature meaningful political dialogue will have to precede true actions. As Shinto can complete and transcend religion, ...I believe Shinto is uniquely suited to speak for Nature and future generations in the political arena. ("Tsubakiko ML" 27 November 2007)

These Shinto practitioners see Shinto practice and thought as a way for humans to form a spiritual connection with nature and as a way to sacralize nature, a step they see as necessary toward solving the environmental crisis.

The natural aspect of Shinto was one of the main reasons people come to the shrine. Of the group of religious experimenters, I expected a large portion of them to be dabbling in Eastern religions. What is somewhat surprising perhaps, is that many individuals from this group had either found Shinto through their interests in Pagan religions, or were hoping to add or had already incorporated Shinto practices to their Pagan or Native American repertoire of practices.

One reason for this could be certain structural similarities of Shinto and the group of practices Sarah M. Pike calls Neopagan religions. Pike describes Neopaganism as being highly personalized fluid networks of individuals who "commune with their gods not as archetypes, but as living beings" (Pike 2004: 11), honor nature, view ritual behavior as key to self-identity (ibid.: 21), recognize divine power both within people and in nature, and recognize interconnectedness

(ibid.: 23). Neopagans reinvent religions of the past and exhibit trends towards inclusiveness and eclecticism. With this comes the tendency to “romanticize ancient and non-Christian culture [as]...solutions for a culture gone awry. They search for alternatives to the gods they were raised with by looking to Asian and American Indian religions” (ibid. 27). Pike lists Wicca, Celtic, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, Daoist, Egyptian, American Indian, and some forms of Christianity as traditions Neopagans borrow from to form their own personalized style of worship. We can now add Shinto to that list. My findings support Pike’s analysis on Neopaganism. Interviews I conducted at TGSA, along with information that people volunteer about themselves on the shintoML, reflect a growing trend of incorporating Shinto into a wider variety of Neopagan practices. I will give a few examples from my interviews:

I was raised doing sweat lodges and different Native American ceremonies. So that was definitely spirituality that influenced my life. Then of course coming to Shinto and learning about Shinto now for almost nine years. It’s a really good connection. Definitely elements of those spiritualities I integrate into my life. (2007)

I also support other spiritualities; a lot of Native American stuff and Celtic traditions and what-not. One of the things that really stood out to me as I began to learn more [is] that there are no rules that say I couldn’t participate in other forms of spirituality or believe in them. (2007)

Another seminar participant whom I interviewed said that he belonged to a Pagan group at his university and plans to integrate Shinto into the group’s activities because he sees many similarities between Wicca, Paganism, and Shinto; “They’re [his Pagan group] really interested and they haven’t heard much about [Shinto]...so they are really eager for me to bring things back to them” (2007). Members on the shintoML often discuss Shinto practice and kami and compare these things to other religious rituals that they practice. Here are some examples from the shintoML:

My attitude toward religion in general can be summed up as: ‘you have your gods and I have mine, but if I need to, can I borrow a couple?’ While I may never become a full blown Shintoist, I have the same great respect for the Kami as I do for their brothers and sisters in my culture. (“shintoML” 10 April 2006)

I’ve been reading much on Shinto and I’ve ready to explore...I am formerly of many Pagan traditions, ranging from Neo-Druid to Wiccan to Santeria, but none has filled the thirst for knowledge in me. (ibid. 21 March 2007)

I am too a recovering Christian who is fed up with organized religion. I like the ideas surrounding Shinto... (ibid. 11 April 2007)

I must admit that I decided to try learning about Shinto because of dissatisfaction with western Paganism. (ibid. 12 April 2007)

Celtic Reconstructionism, Asatru, Neo-Wiccan, Shamanism, and Druidry all interest me. And I’m interested in the way they do ritual and celebrate their holidays. I connect most with the god Inari and to a lesser degree Ebisu...So, while I want to have ritual in a Western sense, my pantheon isn’t leaning to Europe at all. So taking a page from Japan’s book, I want to combine them. (ibid. 10 July 2007)

To me Shinto is another part of my beliefs. My beliefs are combination of Native American (Blackfoot), which has a respect for and belief in the gods of nature and honoring of ancestors, and Shinto. I have found that incorporating Shinto into my life has made my spiritual life stronger and helped me bring my life into better focus. (ibid. 19 Oct. 2007)

These are only a few examples, but there are many such instances of self-identification and reasoning behind joining the listserv or practicing Shinto. Others have identified themselves as Hellenist, Norse Pagan, Hellenic Reconstructionist, Zen Buddhist, Hellenic Polytheist, Christian, Unitarian, and Wiccan, to name a few. Although people of many different religious persuasions have sought Shinto out as a source of inspiration, it is not a mutual borrowing.<sup>47</sup> Here is an example of a person who contacted Rev. Barrish through the Tsubakiko mailing list about combining Wiccan practices with Shinto. Barrish responds:

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<sup>47</sup> This statement should be tempered with instances where Rev. Barrish explains exploring the past of Native American spirits who have inhabited a place. I see this as a Shinto way of recognizing the sacred that is inherent in a given geography and not as a way to integrate multiple believes and practices.

As for Wiccan Shinto, wow—this is the first time for me to hear of such a thing...it is really interesting but since the amazingly profound Shinto already exists as [a] spiritual technology it seems an interesting choice to make up one's own without looking into the existing one...however it would certainly be easier to make up one than have to bother with learning anything. But in such a case why not make up an entirely new name instead of borrowing a name that already has meaning? (Tsubakiko 24 June 2006)

Another trend I discovered through interviews is that people practicing Shinto also tend to see it as 'common sense' or that Shinto corresponds with ideals they already held, and so Shinto practice comes naturally.

On one hand Shinto is very ritualized, very esoteric, very strange, but on the other hand, its total common sense. (2007)

The more I got around it, the more I started understanding things of the practice, being of an agricultural background, it's a more natural thinking and practice... its not really fitting a niche, it just makes a little bit more common sense. (2007)

It parallels ideals I've found and followed my whole life. I think that what I've started to realize in Shinto is being able to accept the teachings in nature, I guess, which I have always found sacred. To me, nature can teach us and ...[Shinto]...is all kind of relative to nature. (2007)

I'm just starting out, but I get the sense that Shinto spirituality, since its so ancient and so simple... can be inadvertently reproduced. It feels so human that I feel as if although you may not articulate it with the cultural language of the kami that it is still in human nature to connect with the environment and nature. Although the framework may not be there you still could have experiences that are analogous to Shinto experiences. So I don't think I've ever consciously been Shinto, but I've certainly had experiences in life analogous to Shinto. I grew up in the redwood forests and even though the trees didn't have *shimenawa* tied around them they very well could have been sacred...trees that for no other reason than I just felt something from them. I've had a lot of experiences in the forest like that, where I'll just come into a grove and come upon a tree and I'll just feel something different from it. (2007)

Shinto practice is a natural way to express ideals and beliefs they already had, but had no way to contextualize and conceptualize. Letting individuals speak for themselves reveals much about the attitudes non-ethnic Shinto practitioners have about Shinto, how they feel it fits into their lives, and in general, why Shinto has become a viable religious expression in America.

## Religious Self Identification of Shinto Practitioners

The ways in which practitioners of Shinto describe their religious orientation indicates some reasons Americans are attracted to Shinto and points to larger trends in religion in America. We cannot really look at Shinto as a religion people convert to. The term “conversion” is an especially difficult term to use in a Shinto context. Besides being associated with Christianity, conversion has no widespread religious history in Japan as Japanese freely practice Shinto in tandem with Buddhism and perhaps other religious traditions. Furthermore, there is no initiation, no creed, and no strict division of who can and cannot be practiced. Still, because Shinto has been introduced into North America, where Christian understandings about religion are predominant, the term ‘conversion’ has inevitably come to play.

When Yukitaka Yamamoto envisioned his shrine in America, he wanted a place that would clear up misunderstandings about Shinto and give people the opportunity to practice, but not to *convert* American people to Shinto. Rev. Iwasaki explains the difference, in his view, between converts and practitioners.

People who want to come to Shinto shrine and who want to study they can come. We have no membership...even in Japan we don't have a term Shintoist. If we call Shintoist [it means] a Shinto priest and Shinto scholars. Ordinary people, they [simply] come to Shinto shrine...I and Rev. Yamamoto believe the idea of Shinto can [be] acceptable for anyone...the way Aikido is accepted by anyone in the world. Why not Shinto too? (Noda “Iwasaki Field Notes” 23 Aug. 1991: 7)

Because TGSA does have a membership, this complicates the issue of being ‘converted.’ If one donates money in order to become a member, does that imply a conversion, at least to some degree? The participants would likely reply in the negative, however it is important to note that level of commitment to the shrine and the concept of conversion do not correspond at TGSA.

Rev. Barrish is careful not to use the word “conversion” (or the word “religion”), instead referring to Shinto as the participants at the shrine do. Sometimes the subject of conversion will

come up on the shintoML listserv. Usually people echo the opinion that “you can’t convert to Shinto, its not that kind of religion” (“shintoML” 12 March 2007), or “you cannot really ‘convert’ to it, so much as practice its values and rituals. [Shinto] is a lifestyle philosophy, not a ‘religion’ in the western sense of the word” (ibid.: 10 April 2007). Another person writes that they wanted to relay to the group his “journey to full Shinto conversion,” which included attending a cherry blossom festival, setting up a *kamidana*, and his plans to purchase books from TGSA (ibid. 15 April 2007). I also asked participants at the Summer Shinto Seminar if they thought it was possible for a person to convert to Shinto and elicited the following responses:

In my experience there was no formal conversion for me... I think someone can decide for themselves if its something they want to participate in or not. So if someone chooses that this is what I want to do and I want to do this for the rest of my life, then they have more or less converted to that way of thinking and I’ll probably practice this for the rest of my life, but I won’t exclude other practices. (2007)

From what I understand from what I’ve read, you can’t really convert, its more of a way of doing things. Because when you convert to something it kind of implies... it usually involves renouncing something else...Shinto is more of a way of doing something than actually believing in one particular doctrine. (2007)

I think that there’s not really a way to convert, per se, but once you really accept the ideas of Shinto, the *kami* and everything, once you do the rituals and once you feel you have a relationship with Shintoism, I don’t see why you couldn’t call yourself Shinto. (2007)

No because I don’t think that Shinto is exclusive... its just a way of approaching the world. (2007)

I don’t think its something you become, I think its something you realize. (2007)

Many interviewees’ responses were shaded by a Christian understanding of the word ‘convert’ which they took to imply sole allegiance and renunciation of other practices. To avoid this pitfall, I asked people to describe their religious orientation. Like the discussion of conversion in the Shinto context, the way in which participants self-identify is equally as

mottled. Asking a person what religion they follow or practice is often more telling than asking what religion they “are” or how they feel about conversion. Regardless of Shinto practice, the way people self identify their religious affiliation is highly varied. In Noda’s field work, Marjorie Flaherty, a longtime friend and support of Yukitaka Yamamoto, participated in Shinto rituals including *misogi* and kept a small shrine in the garden of her home, she firmly says, “I’m Unitarian. I’m not Shinto” (Noda “Flaherty” 1 Sept 1991:10). Conversely, Dr. Richard Boeke, another longtime Unitarian friend of Yamamoto’s says that he practiced shower *misogi* everyday and that he thinks of himself “as a Unitarian Universalist Shintoist” (Noda “Rev. Boeke tape” 1 Sept. 1991:8). Likewise, some participants at the seminar identified as Shinto in combination with another faith or practice, but the majority described themselves as being “Shinto” (see Table in Appendix C). Therefore, there is a kind of clear Shinto identity without “conversion.”

### Conclusions

I have found four general motivations why people are interested in Shinto and attend the shrine. These motives stem from their first exposure to Shinto: either through Aikido or *misogi*, which are very prominent at TGSA; through religious experimentation or borrowing, as we see largely occurring in Neopagan circles; through initial exposure to Shinto in an academic setting; or because of one’s prior orientations and ethnic ties to Japan, or a wish to re-orientate one’s self-identity to Shinto in a way analogous to that of heritage Shinto practitioners.

As far as Aikido is concerned, it is unclear whether Ueshiba’s practice of *misogi* and the rituals it encapsulates were more influential on Tsubaki Grand Shrine’s practices or vice versa. What is apparent is how significant the partnering of Aikido with Tsubaki Grand Shrine is for Shinto in North America. Many of TGSA’s members as well as its priest, Rev. Koichi Barrish, have come to the practice of Shinto because of their experiences with Aikido. *Misogi*, ritual purification by immersing one’s self in water and the set of ritual practices that accompany it, is

also a focal practice at TGSA and very important for those who participate in it. Shrine goers relate their personal experiences with Aikido and *misogi* as the reasons they attend functions at TGSA.

Brockelman writes that environmental concerns may make possible a genuine religious reform and renewal (Brockelman 1997: 40). His prediction seems to be true of Shinto, in that many people who come to the shrine and participate in Shinto explain that their feelings for nature and concern for the environment make them feel at home in this tradition. According to them, Shinto's way of making nature sacred is in harmony with values and feelings they already held. Shinto is often, in this case, seen as an expression of environmentalism or as a formal extension of values and concerns they already felt.

Lastly the ways in which practitioners of Shinto describe their religious orientation present an element of ambiguity and resistance to the explicit articulation of an exclusive religious identity. In the following chapter, we will see how the non-exclusive nature of Shinto is another aspect which attracts people to the tradition. What is notable is that some people describe themselves as followers or practitioners of Shinto. This would be almost unheard of in a Japan, but at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America, self-identification as "Shinto" is becoming normative, which is a major feature of the Americanization of Shinto.

## CHAPTER 5 TGSA AND JAPANESE RELIGIONS IN AMERICA

I compare Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America with other Japanese religious traditions in North America. First, I examine Shinto in Hawaii and how it compares to TGSA, its mainland counterpart. Then, I examine and compare TGSA with three Japanese Buddhist sects in America: The Buddhist Churches of America, Zen, and Soka Gakkai International. By exploring the circumstances of Shinto in Hawaii and Japanese Buddhism in America and using these religious communities as points of comparison, I highlight the unique quality of the Shinto community at TGSA. In these comparisons, the issue of whether these communities are made up of mostly ethnic Japanese or non-Japanese practitioners comes to the forefront. I also show how TGSA fits into models previously created for understanding the transmission of Japanese religions in America.

### **Comparisons with Shinto in Hawaii**

Though Shinto was first introduced into the United States by Japanese immigrants starting in the late 1800s and the first shrines were established starting in the early 1900s, the social and cultural make-up of the institutions did not (and still have not) to any meaningful extent attracted non-ethnically Japanese participants or members. Still, the fact that Shinto shrines have existed outside of Japan and continue to exist post-WWII is significant and deserves our attention. In order to fully understand the circumstances surrounding Shinto shrines in Hawaii it is necessary to briefly explore the history of Hawaiian Shrine Shinto.

Unfortunately little academic research has been done to date on Shinto in Hawaii. Paul Gomes III, in his thesis “A History of Shinto in Hawaii,” bemoans the destruction of many shrine records and Shinto material culture by Japanese living in Hawaii in the face of harsh discrimination and investigation after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He wonders if the lack of

scholarship is due to the lack of materials or simply because Shinto was merely a “secondary phenomenon” in Hawaii (Gomes III 2007: 4). Whatever the case, it is evident that the events surrounding the Second World War took an extreme toll on Japanese and Japanese Americans living in the United States and on their religious institutions. It seems unlikely that Shinto institutions in America had a nationalistic agenda before and during WWII. If they did, it would be because of the politics of the individuals who maintained the shrine. As Gomes explains, the shrines that were founded in Hawaii as branch shrines of larger religious entities in Japan were the minority. Shinto in Hawaii was practiced and shrines were built largely as a grassroots movement by laypeople, suggesting that the shrines had little or no connection with the Japanese government and its policies. This pattern presents a departure from Japanese Buddhist temples, which were mostly established as missionary operations from Japan, and from TGSA, which was established as a branch shrine with priests on rotation coming from Japan.

In his work, Gomes finds that the primary function of the shrines were to provide Japanese workers living in Hawaii with “protection and benefits.” They especially enjoyed a boom of popularity after 1912, when Christian marriages were no longer mandatory (ibid.: 24).<sup>48</sup> The majority of the weddings conducted among Japanese immigrants were Shinto. Even so, Shinto found difficulty being transplanted in Hawaii. Because immigrants in Hawaii came from different regions of Japan, there was no common tutelary *kami*, *kami* with ties to specific places in Japan, among the immigrants in Hawaii.

Because of the importance of the cultural and national ties to Japan among the first generation of immigrants, there was little motivation for adapting Shinto for those born in

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<sup>48</sup> In 1904, the U.S. Government no longer recognized marriages in absentia, so picture brides coming to Hawaii were all married at the port in Honolulu by a Christian minister. This practice was heavily criticized by the Japanese community and starting in 1912, these couples could be married at their place of choice (Gomes: 24).

Hawaii, or for that matter maintaining interest in what was largely viewed as solely a Japanese tradition tied to the land of Japan. For these reasons, shrine life struggled to maintain itself (ibid.: 42). However, Shinto practice remained a common fixture of most homes, which maintained a *kamidana* and other ritual objects brought from Japan or obtained from the shrines in Hawaii.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, and the United States declared war on Japan, Shinto priests and other Japanese community leaders were the first to be detained and investigated. Because Shinto was highly tied up in Japan's aggressive military rhetoric at the time, Shinto as an institution in the United States was perceived as an indication of Japanese nationalism and sedition. However, this mark of discrimination left a powerful impression on the first and second generation Japanese in Hawaii and many burned household items that had any connection to Japan, including the household *kamidana*, in order to be spared the label of "enemy." Gomes calls this a "rapid and grass-roots rejection of anything having to do with Japanese culture" (ibid.: 57). This was a trend that also occurred on the mainland, where whole Japanese families, American born or not, were uprooted and detained. It is no surprise then that all shrine activity ceased. Before the United States became involved with the war there were some attempts to publish statements refuting Shinto's bad reputation. In 1940, the Honolulu Shinto Association released a statement pointing to its very 'American' practices, such as being a legally registered religious institute, raising the American flag, and worshipping the spirit of George Washington (ibid.: 52). During the war, all attempts at defending Shinto were futile in the face of heavy discrimination.

After the war, several shrines struggled to reopen, only to have their property confiscated by the federal government. It was not until the Hawaii Shinto League asked for clarification of

Shinto's legal status in 1955 that the Department of Justice stated that shrines were religious entities and therefore had the legal right to exist (ibid.: 70). Because of the dual blows of government restriction and the abandonment of its patrons many shrines never reopened after their long struggle to be recognized as outposts of legitimate religion. Before the war, 59 shrines were recorded as operational. By 1955 there were only ten (ibid.: 5).<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the Shinto community had to face multiple problems, such as the aging and death of devotees and priests, population movements away from the rural agricultural areas where shrines were established to urban areas, and shrine property ownership issues (ibid.: 80). Moreover, because many shrines in Hawaii were started as grassroots movements with no connection to Shinto shrines or organizations in Japan, when priests went into retirement a replacement could not be requested from Japan. The few shrines that could recruit faced issues of language and cultural differences between the priest and the shrine community (Gomes: 83).

Much like Buddhism in America, many of the shrines in Hawaii developed different methods for sustaining membership and patronage. Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha became a center for the study of kendo, Hilo Daijingu explained rituals in English, and Hawaii Daijingu took to educating outsiders<sup>50</sup> (ibid.: 91-92). Besides steps taken to make the shrines more accessible and understandable to those who were not fluent in Japanese language and customs, the shrines began to market themselves better.

No longer able to support themselves on the donations of Japanese members as the shrines had done prior to WWII, actions have been taken to appeal to the sensibilities of the Hawaiians for support. In some cases, connections have been made to shrines in Japan for

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<sup>49</sup> Today there are fewer still. Only seven shrines remain in Hawaii currently (Gomes III 2007: 5).

<sup>50</sup> We can assume this means both ethnically Japanese who were unfamiliar with Shinto rituals and non-ethnically Japanese.

support (ibid.: 94). The common use of ground-breaking ceremonies (ibid.: 92-93), performed by Shinto a priest or priestess, provides another source of revenue and has positive effects on the popularity for shrine Shinto. One of the more creative approaches to adapting Shinto to Hawaii has been taken by the Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha, which has created uniquely American *Omamori*. Listed on their website, [www.e-shrine.org](http://www.e-shrine.org), are *Omamori* printed with the American flag, Hibiscus flowers, and even an *Omamori* for golf!

With these means of broadening the appeal of Shinto in Hawaii, the shrines have taken on a distinctly Hawaiian character that has not been imported wholesale from Japan. The way in which Shinto started in Hawaii, as well as its turbulent struggle to continue to exist, have shaped it as such. Paul Gomes III names this unique form of shrine Shinto religiosity Kama'ainu (Hawaiian for 'of the land') Shinto.

By comparing this distinctive form of American Shinto with Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America we gain an appreciation for the dual effects of history and culture on any given religious community, and also valuable insights as to the future of Shinto in North America and how these communities are maintained. In both the cases of TGSA and Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha,<sup>51</sup> the marketing of religious objects is very well done. Both shrines offer an extensive selection of religious material items that can be easily obtained both at the shrine and through their websites, another modern update gaining them recognition and accessibility in immediate and worldwide communities. In his visits to Hawaii Kothira Jinsha, Paul Gomes III has noticed that the shrine highlights “the religious efficacy of blessed *Omamori* as opposed to those purchased from secular vendors” (ibid.:98). This is stressed on their website as well, which asserts, “All *Omamori* has been consecrated in religious ritual” (“Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha”). Furthermore,

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<sup>51</sup> Because the most information is available about Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha, I will refer primarily to it as a point of comparison for TGSA.

Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha has produced *Omamori* to corner other specific markets. On their website they use slogans such as “Don’t go to Las Vegas without this *Omamori*” or “Rake in wealth and abundance with this traditional New Years amulet. Great for businesses” (ibid.). As we have seen in Chapter 3, one of TGSA’s strengths is in the variety of *Omamori* one can purchase. On just the *Omamori* page of the *Juyosho* (supplies) section of their website, thirty-one different articles are listed for sale (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America”). In both of these shrines, the marketing and supply of religious objects is well maintained and we see creativity in developing distinctly American types of objects. While Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha sells American flag *Omamori*, Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan has its own *ema* (votive tablets for writing prayers) which features Sarutaihiko no Okmai standing between Japan and North America. This is one way of fitting Shinto into its new American setting. However, whereas the ritual power of TGSA’s amulets is assumed, Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha makes a special point of promoting their amulets as authentic.

This is a reflection of the struggles Shinto in Hawaii faces. One of the priests Gomes interviewed admitted that he is “concerned that Shinto is taken as simply culture and blessings and nothing more” (Gomes: 101). This is significant because we see here that part of the strategy for Shinto’s survival in Hawaii involves promoting it as a religion and not merely as part of Japanese culture. This is a sharp contrast to the way Rev. Barrish explains Shinto, which is subsequently echoed by TGSA members; “I say what Sensei says.<sup>52</sup> It’s not a religion, it’s a spirituality, a natural spirituality” (Spaid Ishida 2007). While shrines in Hawaii struggle to be taken seriously as a religious tradition with weight, history, and universality, Rev. Barrish wishes to take Shinto out of the dubious realm of “religion” that tends to be off-putting to various types

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<sup>52</sup> Literally “teacher” in Japanese; this is how the participants of TGSA refer to Rev. Barrish, regardless of whether they speak Japanese or not.

of visitors to the shrine. By doing so, many members feel that they are either free to participate regardless of previously established religious commitments or feel comfortable participating because the term “religion” implies many things associate with exclusivity, fanaticism, dangerous cults, and violence. Rev. Barrish promotes Shinto in non-religious terms by touting that Shinto is “the way of living in harmony with Great Nature” and claiming that Shinto is optimistic, pure, simple, an expression of the ‘flow of life’” (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America”) and an ancient tradition that arose naturally before religions existed (Barrish 2007).

Along with the creative means they employ to establish financial support, TGSA and Hawaiian shrines have both taken measures to expand the pantheon of Shinto *kami*, proving Shinto to be an adaptive, inclusive, and universal tradition. This also created a way to worship local *kami* in America. In 1940, the Honolulu Shinto Association released “Shinto Under the American Flag,” a statement which swore loyalty to the United States and stated that George Washington would be worshipped in all shrines, along with Abraham Lincoln and Kamehameha I,<sup>53</sup> who were already enshrined (Gomes III 2007.: 52-54). TGSA enshrines America Kokudo Kunitama-no-Kami,<sup>54</sup> the protector *kami* of North America (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America”). Both of these developments, though unrelated, are significant in that great historical figures and the geography of North America are being sacralized. *Kami* originating in Japan are still the primary figures of worship, but by including these new American *kami*, two developments are at hand. First, the boundaries of Shinto are being extended so that it can no longer be only a Japanese religion. Second, because one can justifiably perceive the land outside of Japan being sacred, the practice of Shinto in America becomes much more meaningful and

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<sup>53</sup> Man who conquered united the Hawaiian Islands in 1810 forming the Kingdom of Hawaii.

<sup>54</sup> When I asked Rev. Barrish who was the first person to enshrine this *kami*, a question which in effect asks, who came up with the idea of this *kami*, he answered that it was probably Yunitaka Yamamoto.

personalized. It is one thing to give lip service to the universality of Shinto, it is quite another to ritually claim people and places outside of Japan as *kami*.

Another aspect of shrine life at Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha and TGSA may seem very similar—the inclusion of cultural activities. At Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha there is a pre-school center on weekdays, a Karate club on Saturday mornings, and other community activities are also conducted throughout the year (“Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha”). Gomes’ research shows that Kendo and Kagura (a type of Japanese dance) are taught at other shrines in Hawaii. This trend is much the same as at Japanese Buddhist temples in North America, which serve as cultural and educational as well as religious centers. Aikido is a mainstay in life at TGSA and often works to attract members to the shrine; it is thus intrinsically bound up with Shinto at TGSA and could not be separated from it. Even Rev. Barrish became a Shinto priest because of his Aikido training. Furthermore, the way Aikido is practiced, as a spiritual path and not merely a hobby, indicate that Aikido at TGSA is fundamentally different in function from cultural activities at other shrines.

Two additional aspects of shrine life that deserve mention in the comparison between Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America and Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha are the ethnicity of their participants and their current connections to shrines in Japan. Paul Gomes III’s field research found that though there were sprinklings of non-Japanese and “mixed couples” among the visitors to the shrine, primarily the visitors were elderly Japanese or young Japanese families. TGSA on the other hand, as mentioned previously, enjoys a much larger non-Japanese membership. Next, although Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha maintained connections with Japanese shrines throughout their history as far as the recruitment of priests is concerned, at one time they had to re-establish funding from Japan. On their website they recognize Kotohira-gu and

Dazaifu Tenmangu of Japan for their roles “in the preservation and perpetuation of the shrine by their financial and spiritual support” (“Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha”). In contrast to Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha, which started as a financially independent organization and later had to seek assistance from Japan, Tsubaki Shrine of America started as being financially dependent on its main shrine in Japan. When the shrine in Stockton was combined with Rev. Barrish’s shrine in Granite Falls, TGSA become what is known as *dokuritsu saisan*, a self supporting branch shrine. These two factors point to an important distinction between the two forms of shrine Shinto in America. Using Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha as an example, even though historically the Hawaiian shrines are older and have had to deal with pressures to become Americanized and then were abandoned during the war, they maintain a much greater connection (at least financially) with Japan and are patronized and visited by primarily ethnic Japanese. In contrast, TGSA serves a more ethnically diverse community and is financially independent from Japan.

### **Comparisons with Japanese Buddhism in North America**

Given the prominence of Japanese forms of Buddhism in America, it would be useful to examine briefly the history of Japanese Buddhism in America. This then will provide an important point of departure for comparisons between Japanese Buddhism and Shinto in America. The three largest representations of Japanese Buddhism in North America are the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) or Jodo Shinshu, Zen Buddhism, and Soka Gakkai International (SGI). These Japanese Buddhist groups highlight the complex relationship between Japanese heritage and American “converts” in the formation and makeup of their communities.

### **The Buddhist Churches of America**

What is now known as the Buddhist Churches of America was brought to Hawaii and the west coast soon after the first immigrants from Japan arrived in the late 1800s. In 1889, the first missionary to Hawaii was Rev. Soryu Kagahi and on the mainland the first missionaries, Shuye

Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Pure Land Buddhism came to San Francisco in 1899 and set up the Buddhist Mission of North America (BMNA) (Bloom 1988: 35).<sup>55</sup> Services from the start were conducted in Japanese and the temples served not only as a place of worship, but also a space where immigrants could seek advice on matters regarding adapting to their new homes. Because of the dual pressures of increasing anti-Japanese sentiments and the rising second generation, the BMNA sought to adapt by promoting the use of English. WWII proved to be a devastating shock to the BMNA. Similar to Shinto in Hawaii, priests and other prominent figures in the temples were the first to be interned.<sup>56</sup> Internment had the double effect of reinforcing ethnic ties and creating a new drive for Americanization. In an effort to appear less threatening and more loyal to the country, the BMNA drafted a new constitution in 1944 which called for a shift to the primary use of English and changed the organization's name from the Buddhist Mission of North America to the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) (Tanaka 1999: 8). Today the BCA remains largely an ethnic community, which both Tanaka and Bloom see as a result of their political history in America. Today, Bloom explains the community is facing attrition due to problems of the aging clergy, the focus on funerals, out-marriage,<sup>57</sup> and lack of adult education and special programs (Bloom 1998: 41-44).

### **Zen in America**

In the United States, the first Zen temples were established in 1913 in Hawaii and 1922 on the mainland by Japanese immigrants (Asai and Williams 1999: 20). Zen received much attention, both scholastic and popular, during the 1950s and the 1960s when American cultural

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<sup>55</sup> Tanaka points out that the pre-war Japanese government's stance on missionaries was that they be confined to Japanese American communities (6).

<sup>56</sup> Of the 110,000 people interned, sixty percent were Buddhists, the vast majority belonging to the Jodo Shinshu school (Tanaka 1999: 7).

<sup>57</sup> A Japanese member of the BCA marrying a person of a different race or religion.

phenomena, such as Beat poetry, interest in Asian culture, and the emergence of drug culture, helped to popularize Zen philosophy and meditation. Zen's development in America has been characterized by what Paul Numrich in his work on Theravada temples calls "parallelism" (Asai and Williams 30). On one hand, the ethnic Japanese members tend to participate in cultural activities while non-ethnic, "convert" Buddhists, go to the temple for different reasons such as meditation and lectures.

In their study of Zen temples in America, Asai and Williams have found that amongst ethnic Japanese the primary function of a temple is for cultural observances and community building, and that the biggest revenue maker is funeral and memorial services. These temples primarily act as a way to continue ancestor rites and Japanese culture, while religion and spiritual matters often come secondary; "Japanese culture is so central to Japanese American Zen temples that even cultural activities with no relationship to Buddhism have become major activities at the temple" (Asai and Williams 1999: 27). Examples of these events are food bazaars and *shichi-gosan* celebrations, a Shinto rite of passage.

Conversely, a combination of Japanese Roshis and Zen scholars led to the popularization and transmission of Zen amongst non-ethnic Japanese Americans. Seager traces the beginnings of American Zen to Shaku Soen, a Zen monk who appeared at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki acted as Soen's translator. D. T. Suzuki's academic training, coupled with this personal affiliation with Zen, led him to translate and write a number of works which made Zen accessible to an English speaking audience. Partnered with Soen's colleagues Joshu Sasaki and Eido Tai Shimano, who opened Zen centers around the country, the Rinzai sect of Zen flourished starting in the 1960s (Seager 1999:93). During the same time, author and Zen practitioner Alan Watts published *The Way of Zen*. Another Zen

master, Hakun Yasutani, brought a unique blend of Soto and Rinzai to America. His students Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken, in particular, would also have a major role in popularizing Zen. Kapleau published *The Three Pillars of Zen* in 1965, Aitken translated Buddhist sutras and hymns, and both men started Zen centers (ibid.: 94-95). Shunryu Suzuki originally came to the United States as a priest to serve the needs of the Japanese community, but became involved teaching Americans about Zen in the 1960s. He also founded the San Francisco Zen Center (SFZC) and ordained several American practitioners who would succeed him after his death (ibid.: 97-100). We see here that Zen in America was bolstered by the culture of the 1950s and '60s, by priests who actively taught and ordained Americans, and practitioner-scholars who made Zen available to a wider public through their books.

### **Soka Gakkai International-USA**

Soka Gakkai, a branch of Nichiren Buddhism, known in the USA first as Soka Gakkai of America and later as Nichiren Shoshu of America (NSA) was first introduced to North America by Daisaku Ikeda in 1960 (Seager 1999: 70). The climate of American culture when it was introduced and the strong evangelical mission of Soka Gakkai were both much different than that of Jodo Shinshu, and so the results were also a stark contrast. Although Japanese immigrants played an important role in propagating Soka Gakkai, instead of becoming an ethnic Japanese community like the BCA, or one that was mostly white Americans or split between whites and Japanese like Zen, SGI is noted for the being only Buddhist sect to convert African Americans and Hispanics in sizeable numbers. In 1991, Soka Gakkai split with Nichiren Buddhism (and its American counterpart NSA) because of differences on organizational and doctrinal issues. After the schism the organization adopted its current name, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) (ibid.: 78). When Seager did his work in 1999, there were between 100,000 and 300,000 members of

SGI (71).<sup>58</sup> Today SGI prides itself on its commitment to egalitarianism and inter-Buddhist and inter-religious dialogue, and its strong links to Soka Gakkai in Japan (ibid.: 89).

### **Baggage, Import, and Export Religions**

These three groups can also be analyzed in what Jan Nattier terms “baggage,” “import,” or “export” religions (Tanaka 1999:4). Because the BCA remains primarily ethnically Japanese, and was brought over from Japan for Japanese people and their offspring, it is termed “baggage.” Zen Buddhism became popular largely with Caucasian Americans who sought out Zen meditation, hence it is an “import” religion. Third, because Soka Gakkai International was from the start a Nichiren Buddhist mission, it has been able to achieve a far more ethnically diverse membership than either the BCA or Zen sects.

So it is seen as an “export” religion. Although these three terms simplify the complex history and dynamics of individual temples or centers, I find them helpful to understand basic trends that occur when Asian religions find their way to America.

How do the terms “baggage,” “import,” and “export” apply to the complex nature of Shinto in America? Shinto in Hawaii shares many of the same characteristics of the BCA and ethnic Japanese Zen temples. Both Japanese Buddhism and Shinto were brought to America for the propose of serving Japanese living abroad. Thus, the both easily fall into the “baggage” category. Zen, however, is complex because it is simultaneously a “baggage” religion with ethnic Japanese devotees and an “import” religion with its Euro-American followers. This trend is also present in the parallel communities of Japanese and non-Japanese members of other communities. Before we compare Zen parallel communities with TGSA, we need to find a way

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<sup>58</sup> The large margin of error here is because many people practice privately in their homes (Seager 1999:71).

of understanding types of activities held at religious centers and the reasons for different rates of ethnic participation.

One way of distinguishing between types of activities held at shrines and temples is by labeling them “cultural”; a set of practices that have little or no direct relation to traditional religious practices such as *taiko* drumming, martial arts, Japanese language study, food bazaars, or in the case of some Zen temples noted previously *shichi-go-san*. The second type of activities we can group as “spiritual”; the set of practices that involve how individuals seek to improve their understanding or relationship with the divine such as meditation, physical austerities, prayer, or recitations. These groupings are problematic because, as Tanaka argues, they are not mutually exclusive and labeling them as such tends to diminish the importance of the so-called “cultural” activities (Tanaka 1999: 4). While I agree with Tanaka, these labels are helpful when analyzing the ethnic tendencies of participants at these temples and shrines.

The issue of parallel communities in Zen temples is echoed to some extent at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. Both Reverend Barrish and Tim Clark said that TGSA participants were approximately fifty-fifty ethnically Japanese and non Japanese (Barrish 2007, Clark 2007). However even the distribution of participants is, the ratio varies depending on the occasion. At TGSA, this happens much in the same way as the Zen temples. Ethnically Japanese shrine members tend towards events like *shichi-go-san* and *hatsumode* (the first visit to a shrine on New Year’s Day), whereas non Japanese participants make up the majority of those attending seminars, *misogi*, and Aikido. On the surface this follows the “cultural” and “spiritual” pattern. What is interesting to note here is that while martial arts such as Karate and Kendo are subsumed under the “cultural” label of activities at a Buddhist temple, at TGSA Aikido is unmistakably “spiritual” in nature. The same can be said of other activities at TGSA. Though *shichi-go-san*

and *hatsumode* seem to be “cultural” in nature, the actual rituals are more than simply “Japanese people doing things that they would do in Japan.”<sup>59</sup> Unlike Buddhist temples which hold *shichi-go-san* celebrations to meet the cultural demands of the Japanese community they serve, the actual ritual is primarily Shinto and surrounded by specific rituals and meanings. Similarly, nothing is done frivolously at TGSA, as each daily activity and yearly rite is greeted with ritual weight. Therefore, in the case of TGSA, “cultural” and “spiritual” labels are not as helpful. Then why are the highest participation rates for *misogi* and the four Shinto Seminars at TGSA observable among non-Japanese? More research needs to be conducted on the ethnically Japanese shrine members and the regular visitors before this question can be completely answered.

When Yukitaka Yamamoto created a Shinto Shrine in California, his main reasons were to create a cultural link and teach Americans about Shinto, “not to serve Japanese Americans” (Noda “Flaherty” 1 Sept. 1991: 4). Whatever the original intentions were, today TGSA does serve many Japanese and Japanese Americans at the shrine. It is difficult to label it as “baggage,” however, because it was not brought over by Japanese immigrants for other immigrants like Shinto in Hawaii, nor was it requested by Japanese or Japanese Americans living in the United States. “Export” fits TGSA in a way, because of Yamamoto’s original plans to teach Shinto to Americans, but it would be difficult to compare Tsubaki of America to the energetic proselytizing of Soka Gakkai. TGSA could be an “import” religion because of the involvement of the Unitarians in bringing Shinto to America and their support and encouragement for Yukitaka Yamamoto to do so. It could be classified this way also because of Rev. Barrish, who went to Japan to study and then used his knowledge to teach Americans, in a similar fashion to

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<sup>59</sup> I say this here because of the widespread popularity of both of these practices in Japan.

Philip Kapleau or Robert Aitken. However, classifying TGSA as an “import” religion ignores Yamamoto’s crucial contributions to the introduction of Shinto to America. To sum up, I suggest that TGSA’s Shinto is simultaneously an “import” and an “export” religion.

### **Conclusions**

I have provided information about the historical backgrounds of Shinto in Hawaii, the Buddhist Churches of America, Zen, and Soka Gakkai International. Given the prominence of Japanese Buddhism in America and Shinto’s existence in Hawaii, it is somewhat surprising that until recently there has been no Shinto shrine in mainland North America. There are several reasons for this. First, WWII did not devastate Buddhism as completely as it had Shinto in Hawaii because Japanese Buddhism was more widespread, organized, and had taken measures to Americanize before the war (Gomes: 63). Secondly, many Buddhist organizations realized that they needed to appeal to the second and third generations of Japanese through educational opportunities and other activities. The BCA set up the YMBA, YWBA (Young Men’s and Women’s Buddhist Associations), Dharma Schools, and had other cultural activities like *taiko* drumming, making the churches function as cultural centers that maintain the life of the Japanese community (Seager 1999: 62). The BCA established the Institute for Buddhist Studies (IBS) in Berkeley, California in 1966, making it the first institution for the theological study of Buddhism in the USA (ibid.). Similarly, Daisaku Ikeda founded Soka University of America in southern California 1987 (ibid.: 86).

Thirdly, Buddhist organizations began to perform ceremonies that are traditionally held at Shinto shrines in Japan, like *shichi go san* and weddings. Because the cultural, communal, educational, and even higher educational needs were being met by Buddhist organizations, the Japanese community had little need for a Shinto shrine. Furthermore, as we have seen, Zen Buddhism’s influence was bolstered by its celebrity status during the 1950s and 1960s, which

attracted many Euro-American converts, a legacy that continues today. More than Zen, SGI has been successful in its outreach to a broad array of Americans, attracting many practitioners. On the other hand, Shinto has remained primarily an ethnic tradition in Hawaii, and until Yamamoto, was widely believed to be inaccessible to non-Japanese Americans.

The making of the TGSA community shares many commonalities with other forms of Japanese religion in America, but it is also unique in its nature. Like other similar communities, it was started by a priest from Japan, though as we have seen in Chapter 2, this was against the popular opinion of Shinto priests at the time, and it was not intended for Japanese people, but specifically for Westerners. Unlike SGI which openly proselytized, Yamamoto denies the intention of gaining converts. Like American Zen, TGSA was aided by sympathetic scholars publishing about their experiences with Shinto practices. Koichi Barrish's role is comparable to Euro-Americans who converted to Zen, a number of who studied in Japan and then started their own centers in America, transmitting Zen to non-ethnically Japanese audiences. It is important to note that Barrish is seen as a legitimate Shinto priest by both ethnically Japanese and non-Japanese shrine goers. Somewhat similar to SGI and Shinto in Hawaii, TGSA is able to appeal to the American religious market by offering the promise of physical benefits associated with ritual practices and the use of religious items. The elimination of much of the hierarchical structures in Japanese religions upon their arrival in America makes them more appealing to Americans because of their seeming egalitarianism. Shrine Shinto in Japan has a definite hierarchy among priests and a clear distinction between the clergy and the laity, but because Shinto in America lacks the extensive priestly staff this eliminates much of the hierarchical nature of shrine Shinto. Additionally, the laity of the BCA, Zen, SGI, and Shinto in Hawaii have heightened control over the activities of their temples, churches, shrines, or centers, and hold

more crucial roles than they would in Japan. The same can be said of the TGSA community, which funds the shrine and maintains much of its upkeep.

The models that have been proposed for understanding the methods and motivations of each of these religious groups in coming to America are “baggage,” “import,” and “export.” The makings of TGSA show some similarities to each of these models. I have suggested that Shinto operates as an “export,” religion because of Yamamoto’s efforts to teach Shinto to the West. At the same time it is an “import” religion because of the enthusiasm Unitarians have shown for Shinto and because of the continued demand for Shinto among non-ethnic Japanese in America.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America is small but important for what it teaches us about American religious life, Japanese religions in America, and about the Shinto as an emerging American religion. Throughout this thesis I have described the ways in which an American Shinto community was formed and how it operates as a religious institution today. This is largely because of the efforts of Yukitaka Yamamoto and his connections to financial backers, sympathetic Shinto scholars, Unitarians, and by extension the International Association for Religious Freedom. Yamamoto's unique vision for an American Shinto shrine built and run for the purpose of teaching Americans about Shinto practices, and thus fostering world peace and understanding, is the primary reason why Shinto has come to mainland North America. However, other factors that TGSA managed to incorporate along the way also contributed to its success. Koichi Barrish is in part largely responsible for the success of Yamamoto's dream of establishing a Shinto shrine in America. By building a beautiful shrine and guest house, TGSA became an accommodating and desirable site of religious pilgrimage and practice. The regular practice of Aikido, *misogi*, and Shinto meditation has also been a powerful drawing point for those involved in the shrine. Many, in fact, became interested or captivated by Shinto because of these rituals. Barrish promotes Shinto by actively promoting TGSA and Shinto through lectures and ceremonies, as well as via the shrine's Internet presence. Furthermore, at TGSA he was able to appeal to shrine members and donors through services and a variety of religious material objects, by means of which the shrine has been able to achieve financial security without funding from Japan.

Because of the combined efforts of Yamamoto, Barrish, and the supporters of the shrine, Shinto has gained a foothold in America. The formation of such a community is in itself a

groundbreaking event in American religious history. However, what does the existence of such a community tell us about current religious trends in the United States? As I have found, one distinct group of Shinto practitioners and people with interest in Shinto have felt resonance with its teachings and practices because of its implied environmental concerns and its sacralization of nature. Many people within this group find similarities with Neopagan or Native American religions. This speaks to religious trends in America in two ways. First, it reflects the growing connection of concerns for the natural environment with spirituality. Shinto views the natural world as sacred and this is appealing to many people who already felt that nature and our environment should be revered, but perhaps lacked the means to do so. Second, because many who identify as followers of Shinto or profess borrowing from Shinto also follow Neopagan or Native American traditions, this speaks to the rising trend of religious ecumenicalism in America.

TGSA is situated at the crossroads of Japanese and American religiosity and is not only remarkable as an American religious institution, but as a Japanese one as well. Because Yamamoto enshrined the *kami* in the land of America, space outside of Japan can now be seen as a realm of the divine, no longer an exclusive religious phenomenon of Shinto's country of origin. Furthermore, because non-Japanese are self-identifying as followers of Shinto, the religion can no longer be called a "racial faith." This is indicative that Shinto has become a global religion. I interviewed a Japanese man attending the shrine and asked him if he thought it was strange to see non-Japanese people seriously practicing Shinto. He responded:

I guess since I've lived outside of Japan for so long, to me I don't find that as foreign, as strange to me. As a matter of fact, I'm very excited about it. If anything I hope that it could act as a catalyst for people in Japan to be like 'oh lets rediscover our own tradition' because I think that too often when you are in the country...you take it for granted (2007).

It would be natural at this point to wonder to what extent these American Shinto practitioners would be taken seriously in Japan (especially since the category does not exist in the same manner as Shinto followers in America understand it). The shrine is operated in a very authentic way, and Barrish has gone through all the normative training a Shinto priest would, including receiving a high level license. Furthermore, the shrine's architecture is Japanese, shrine etiquette is carried out in the same way it would in Japan, and of course all the ceremonies are conducted wearing the proper attire and are said in Japanese. However, because Japanese usually do not identify their religion as Shinto unless one is a priest, nor does the nation at large demonstrate much concern over religious identity, the Western Shinto practitioner would generally be greeted with warm curiosity in Japan. If this happened on a large enough scale, it could even have the effect of a renewed interest in Shinto in Japan, but that would be surprising. A renewed interest is more likely to occur among Japanese Americans who are living in the United States.

Let me end with a tentative reflection on the future prospects of Shinto in America. In 1991, when Kesaya Noda did her research on Tsubaki Shrine in Stockton, California, she predicted that if something were not done to bolster the shrine, it would probably not be able to continue. She was right. The shrine, as it was then, could not have continued for long as it is unlikely that Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan would have indefinitely funded it. Now because money is no longer a major issue and TGSA continues to maintain close ties with the main shrine in Japan, I see the relationship continuing. However, when Rev. Barrish is ready to retire, I imagine the TGSA community will have to undergo a big adjustment. When interviewed on the subject, Barrish said that he would either have to train someone to replace him or else Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan would probably send a priest (Barrish 2007). Because I attribute

a large part of Barrish's success to his personality and that he takes an interest in giving members advice for their lives, the language barrier a priest from Japan would face could be detrimental to the expansion and maintenance of the shrine's community. On the other hand, although there have been several young men who have worked at the shrine as assistants, it would be difficult to find someone who is dedicated enough to learn Japanese and train as a priest in Japan, as Barrish has done.

The future of Shinto in America is precarious, but there is a tangible prospect for future growth, evidenced in the commitment of the members of TGSA, and the interest in forming branch shrines in other parts of North America. Shinto, a religion which venerates nature, is bolstered by growing concerns for the environment. Furthermore, TGSA has managed to gain members across ethnic boundaries. Therefore, I conclude that Shinto already has a place and a future in North America and in the greater global religious community.

APPENDIX A  
TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES IN SHINTO DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN AND THE  
UNITED STATES

(ALL DATES COMPILED FROM REFERCES LISTED)

- 1853 Commodore Perry arrives in Japan.
- 1858 Townsend Harris demands a commercial treaty between the United States and Japan.
- 1868 Meiji Restoration
- 1869 Forced separation of Buddhism and Shinto by the Japanese government
- 1882 National Learning Institute of Shinto founded, State Shinto institutionalized
- 1876 Japanese government discerns between Sect Shinto and State Shinto; grants sectarian status to groups such as Koruzumikyo, Konkokyo, Misogikyo, Shinrikyo, and Tenrikyo.
- 1889 Meiji Constitution separates state and religion leading to the cleansing of religion objects and rituals from shimes to justify State Shinto as non-religious, Shinto becomes the national “faith” of Japan. The Meiji Constitution also recognized the right to religious freedom, which guaranteed sectarian Shinto freedom from government interference, but also government funding.
- 1890s First immigrants from Japan arrive in Hawaii, largely as workers for the sugar fields
- 1893 Shinto is represented in Chicago along with Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity during the World’s Parliament of Religions.
- 1894 Start of the Sino-Japanese War
- 1908 Tenrikyo recognized as one of the official 13 sects of Shinto
- 1906- Many Shinto shrines in Hawaii are founded  
1916
- 1917 Bonji Kawatsura begins to hold *misogi* rituals publicly. Later these rituals would be adopted by the Jingu Hosaiki (as association of devotees of the Grand Shrines of Ise).
- 1924 Immigration Act banning immigration from Japan and other countries in Asia
- 1920s- Aikido was created by Morihei Ueshiba who synthesized his martial arts training with  
1930s spiritual philosophy and practice from Omotokyo, a Shinto sect (including *misogi* and *chinkon*).

- 1925-1940 Shrines founded in areas of Japanese military aggression; Korea, China, and the South Seas. Many enshrined Amaterasu and Emperor Meiji.
- 1935 Joseph W.T. Mason, an American journalist living in Japan publishes *The Meaning of Shinto*, earning him the reputation of a Shinto scholar.
- 1937 J.W.T. Mason is introduced to Yukitaka Yamamoto's father and Tsubaki Grand Shrine by Shinichiro Imaoka, Unitarian and chairman of the Japanese Free Religious Association.
- 1941 Dec. 7, Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, World War II begins; interrogation and internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans is set in progress.
- 1945 Unconditional Surrender of Japan and the United States' occupation of Japan begins.
- Dec. 15, William K. Bruce produced the Shinto Directive, prohibiting the funding of Shinto doctrines and support of ultranationalistic ideology. State Shinto ends.
- 1955 The Department of Justice clears Shinto as a religious organization in the United States, allowing it to organization and start rebuilding in Hawaii.
- 1958 Morihei Ueshiba visits Tsubaki Grand Shrine for the first time and practiced *misogi* with Yukitaka Yamamoto.
- 1959 Morihei Ueshiba asks Tsubaki Grand Shrine to enshrine Sarutahiko Okami in his Aikido *dojo* after becoming involved with the shrine and *misogi* practice the year before.
- 1968 Yukitaka Yamamoto visits places in the United States and gives lectures for several Unitarian Universalist groups including the General Assembly in Cleveland, Ohio.
- 1969 Yukitaka Yamamoto joins the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) with help from Unitarian friend Rev. Dick Boeke.
- 1979 Tsubaki Grand Shrine was officially incorporated by the State of California as a non-profit corporation for religious purposes after Yamamoto purchases twenty-five acres in Oakland. Eventually decides to build in Stockton instead.
- 1986 Tsubaki Grand Shrine is established in Stockton, California by Rev. Yukitaka Yamamoto, the 96<sup>th</sup> high priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie, Japan. The first time a shrine has ever been built in mainland North America.
- 1987 Stuart D.B. Picken becomes Yukitaka Yamamoto's International Advisor.

Yamamoto receives an honorary Doctorate in Theology from Starr King School of Ministry, Graduate Theological Union at the University of California, Berkeley.

Yamamoto also publishes *Kami no Michi: The Way of the Kami* with an Introduction by Stuart Picken.

1988 April 10, Tsubaki Grand Shrine holds its first Spring Festival Ceremony

1990 Koichi Barrish trains at Tsubaki Shrine of America for three weeks.

1992 Kannagara Jinja built in Granite Falls, Washington by Koichi Barrish

July 27, Daitozan Jinja formally installed at Shambhala Mountain Center in Red Feathers Lake in Colorado, enshrining four *kami*.

1994 International Shinto Foundation (ISF), NGO established to promote the study Shinto, centers in New York City and Moscow, Headquarters in Tokyo ([www.shinto.org](http://www.shinto.org))

1996 John Nelson publishes *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*

Yukitaka Yamamoto elected first Shinto president of IARF

2000 “shintoML,” Forum from the discussion of Shinto affiliated with the Shinto Online Network (<http://jinja.jp/english/index.html>) is formed, moderated by Timothy Leuers. It has approximately 850 members to date (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/shintoML>)

2001 17 acres of land adjacent to Kannagara Jinja was donated to Tsubaki America by the Matsuri Foundation. Tsubaki America in Stockton and Tsubaki Kannagara Jinja are merged forming the current Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America in Granite Falls.

Ann Llewellyn Evans, Canadian Shinto Priestess publishes *Shinto Norito: A Book of Prayers* with foreword by Yukitaka Yamamoto; a book of Shinto prayers with the original Japanese (in both *kanji* and *furigana*), English Romanization and translation for the English speaking Shinto practitioner.

2002 Ann Llewellyn Evans publishes a reprint of J.W.T. Mason’s *The Meaning of Shinto*.

Stuart D.B. Picken, Scottish minister and religion scholar, publishes *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth*.

2004 “Texas Shinto Study Group” listserv and the self-described Texas branch of the membership group of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America started by John Hidalgo. Approximately 70 members to date (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/texasshinto>)

Thomas P. Kasulis publishes *Shinto: The Way Home* as part of University of Hawai’i Press’ Dimensions of Asian Spirituality series.

Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America starts its own “Tsubakiko Grand Shrine of America Ujiko ML” Approximately 460 members to date  
(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Tsubakiko>)

2007 Informal groups loosely related to TGSA are created on Facebook and MySpace, popular social networking websites.

Tim Clark, former shrine assistant at TGSA takes the first steps to starting a Shinto study group and *misogi* group in St. Petersburg, Florida.

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE SHINTO SUMMER SEMINAR  
AT TSUBAKI GRAND SHRINE OF AMERICA

1. Sex
  2. How old are you?
  3. How far did you travel for this seminar?
  4. What is your ethnicity and family background?
  5. Was there any kind of faith or religious practice in your home growing up?
  6. How often did you practice this religion(s) growing up?
- 
1. Why did you come to the Summer Seminar?
  2. Have you attended events at the Shrine in the past?
  3. How often to visit the Shrine?
  4. Do you ever request Rev. Barrish to perform prayers or rituals for you or your family?
- 
1. How would you define or describe your religious orientation?
  2. How did you come to be interested in Shinto?
  3. How old were you when you first started practicing Shinto or making visits to this shrine or others?
  4. When you started to come to practicing Shinto, would you say it was all at once, or gradual. Please describe this process.
  5. Do you speak Japanese or have you been to Japan?
  6. Do you practice Aikido?
  7. What aspects did you find appealing about Shinto when you first started practicing?
  8. What aspects were not so appealing?
  9. How has practicing Shinto affected your day to day activities? In other words, what do you do to practice and how often?
  10. Do you have (a) favorite or have particular feelings toward (a) certain kami?
  11. What ritual or ceremony do you think is most important or are particularly fond of?
  12. Have you ever invited friends or other family members to come to the shrine with you?
  13. Do you feel that it is possible to “convert to” or become Shinto?
  14. Why do you feel, people convert to Shinto or integrate aspects of Shinto into their religious lives?
  15. Do you personally see Shinto as a Japanese religion, a New-Age religion, World religion or other?
  16. Is there anything else I have not touched on that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C  
TABLE OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

Table 1. Breakdown of those interviewed at TGSA

This graph is to show how the ten people I interviewed at the Summer Shinto Seminar at Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America in July 2007 plus the interview I conducted with Tim Clark, former shrine assistant at TGSA. I cases where the totals are equivalent to a number greater than eleven, a person or persons answered in the affirmative to more than one category.

Initial Exposure to Shinto	Aikido/ <i>Misogi</i>	Religious Experimentation	Scholarly Interests	Japanese Heritage	Totals
Live near TGSA	2	1	1	1	5
Live at a considerable distance	2	2	1	1	6
Had a strong religious upbringing	2	2	0	0	4
No strong religion growing up	2	1	2	2	7
Self Identify as Shinto	2	1	1	1	5
Self Identify as Shinto in combination with other religion (s)	1	1	0	1	3
Not Shinto/ No Answer	1	1	1	0	3
Appreciate Shinto's connection with Nature	2	1	1	2	6
Appreciate Shinto's perceived openness and/or simplicity	2	1	1	2	6
Gradual involvement with Shinto	3	N/A*	0	1	4
Sudden involvement with Shinto	0	N/A*	2	1	3

\* The reason why those people in the "Religious Experimentation" group are not applicable for categorization in gradual or sudden involvement with Shinto is because their participation at TGSA marked their initial experience with Shinto.

## APPENDIX D HISTORY OF MORIHEI UESHIBA AND AIKIDO

Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969) was born in Wakayama Prefecture, a very important area for Shingon Buddhism and Shinto, both of which would have an important impact on Ueshiba's spirituality later in life. In 1912, he relocated his family to Hokkaido where he would meet the reputable Sokaku Takeda. He would learn the martial art Daito-ryu and become one of his master's most trusted followers. In 1919, however, he returned to Honshu upon learning of his father's illness. For unknown reasons, he stopped at Ayabe, the headquarters of Omotokyo, a sect of Shinto. He would return to the area after his father's death to become deeply involved with the group and learned *kotodama*,<sup>60</sup> a kind of chanting (Stevens 1996: 8). Before opening Kobukan Dojo in Tokyo in 1931, he is said to have had divine spiritual experiences including possessing amazing physical qualities as well as clairvoyance. Legend dictates that the techniques he used to create Aikido were revealed to him by *kami* (Kasulis 2004:50). Before the start of World War II, Ueshiba had many fervent followers, but with the Japanese defeat, the United States occupying forces outlawed any practice of martial arts. Ueshiba, however, was able to maintain a small group who trained secretly in the mountains (ibid.: 17). By the 1950s, Ueshiba was training several foreigners in Japan who then brought Aikido to their home countries, providing a foundation for what would later greatly effect the outcome of Shinto abroad as well.

Ultimately though, it would be Morihei Ueshiba's vision of Aikido's purpose and place in the world that would lend to its successful propagation outside of Japan. Throughout his life, he was a staunch advocate of non-violence and world peace. He told his students that he was not

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<sup>60</sup> *Kotodama* is a spiritual technology in which specific words used in invocations have vibrational qualities that bring out a relationship between the word and the object. Barrish compared this to the Sanskrit and Hopi recitational practices (Barrish 2007: lectures).

teaching a martial art, but non-violence (Stevens 1997: 70) and that Aikido is “a martial way dedicated to fostering international peace and justice” (ibid.: 68). In 1961, just seven years before he passed away, he was able to travel to an Aikido dojo in Hawaii “to build a silver bridge” (ibid.: 138) between Japan and the world. While there, he taught, lectured, and prayed for world peace (ibid.: 143).

Ueshiba’s desire to spread the teachings of Aikido abroad for world peace lent itself well to Yukitaka Yamamoto’s (96<sup>th</sup> high priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine) vision for Shinto as a vehicle for international understanding. Yamamoto writes that Ueshiba first visited Tsubaki Grand Shrine in 1958 because he was looking for the main shrine of Sarutahiko no Okami. On this trip he practiced *misogi* and “offered Aikido moves to Okami” (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America,” Yamamoto 1999: 58-9). Yukitaka Yamamoto recalls the enshrinement of Sarutahiko no Okami at Aiki Shrine (Ibaraki Prefecture) as “the beginning of the recognition of the growing influence of the *kami* at Tsubaki” (Yamamoto 1999: 45). After visiting the shrine many times that year, he asked to have Sarutahiko no Okami enshrined at his Aiki shrine and dojo. When Ueshiba died in 1969, he was enshrined at Tsubaki Grand Shrine. Today, at his Aiki shrine, a ceremony is conducted on April 29<sup>th</sup> to honor Ueshiba’s death (Stevens 1997: 135). Likewise, at TGSA, one of the most attended events is the annual Aiki Taisai which lasts three days. During this event, Aikido training, *misogi shuho*, and *chinkon* (Shinto meditation) are practiced (“Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America”).

## APPENDIX E HISTORY OF MISOGI

Morihei Ueshiba's contact with *misogi* can be traced to Bonji Kawatsura (1862-1929). As a young man, Kawatsura secluded himself in the mountains near his home and underwent ascetic training. Legend has it that he met a wizard who taught him the practice of *misogi* (Stevens 1997: 114). Other sources say that the ritual was revealed to him by the *kami*, Sojin (Tsushiro 2006). Whatever its origins, Kawatsura is credited with reviving *misogi* and *torifune* (see Chapter 4) and its subsequent popularization, when the rituals were held publicly starting in 1917, and were later adopted by the Jingu Service Foundation (*Jingu Hosaikai*), an association of the devotees of the Ise Shrine network (ibid). It is these purification rituals that Ueshiba adopted as a fundamental part of Aikido training (Stevens 1997: 51). It is even possible that Ueshiba's enthusiasm for practicing *misogi* had the effect of revitalizing the practice at Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Japan. Though Yamamoto writes that he started practicing *misogi* after deciding to devote himself solely to Shinto sometime after 1955 (Yamamoto 1999: 40-41), he writes later that he revived the practice in 1959. Other sources, confirm that the year before Ueshiba became involved with Tsubaki he practiced *misogi* there. The precise details remain obscure, but whatever the case, Yamamoto describes Tsubaki's particular form of *misogi* "which [Tsubaki] has for centuries been a jealous guard of," stems from esoteric practices shared with Shingon Buddhism and *shugendo* (mountain asceticism) (ibid.: 107). Yamamoto recalls that many of shrine Shinto's rituals, including *misogi*, had been suppressed by the government under State Shinto when shrines were purged of their religious practices. With the end of the war, he remembers, he was able to freely practice the ritual again and even, by chance, formed the *misogikai* (*misogi* group) for which Tsubaki Grand Shrine is unique:

I was in the waterfall performing my *gyo* late one night when I heard a voice from behind. Surprised at being disturbed so late and a little annoyed at the intrusion in

my private devotions, I turned to see six people who asked if they could join me in *misogi*. I explained that I did not wish to be interrupted when I was practicing *misogi* myself... They persisted in asking for an appointment and I finally gave in. Their eagerness seemed convincing and I agreed to meet them on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month. (ibid.: 108)

Since then, group *misogi* has always been held on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the fourth Saturday of the month.

Rev. Iwasaki described these *misogikai* sessions as having about 50-70 participants. The ritual usually took place at 10pm and was preceded by a lecture (Noda “Field Notes” 23 Aug. 1991: 1).

APPENDIX F  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORMS

**University of Florida Institutional Review Board**

1. **TITLE OF PROTOCOL:** Shinto Conversion and Practice in the United States
2. **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):** Sarah Spaid Ishida, B.A., Religion Department, Box 117410, tel: 275-6504, sspaid@religion.ufl.edu
3. **SUPERVISOR (IF PI IS STUDENT):** Mario Poceski, Ph.D., Box 117410, tel:392-1625, mpoceski@ufl.edu
4. **DATES OF PROPOSED PROTOCOL:** From July 19, 2007 to December 14, 2007.
5. **SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE PROTOCOL:** The principal investigator is funding the research.
6. **SCIENTIFIC PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION:** To investigate how people have come to practice Shinto at this particular shrine in the United States.
7. **DESCRIBE THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN *NON-TECHNICAL* LANGUAGE.** The investigator will take part in The Summer Shinto Seminar at the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America in Granite Falls, WA. She will ask open-ended questions to participants and the Reverend Koichi Barrish about their involvement with the shrine and their experiences practicing Shinto.
8. **POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND ANTICIPATED RISK.** No anticipated risks or benefits.
9. **DESCRIBE HOW PARTICIPANT(S) WILL BE RECRUITED, THE NUMBER AND AGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, AND PROPOSED COMPENSATION (if any):** Participants will be recruited by meeting with them at the seminar. Both male and female adult (over the age of 18) will be interviewed. I hope to interview at least 20 participants if possible. The participants will not receive compensation.
10. **DESCRIBE THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS. INCLUDE A COPY OF THE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (if applicable).** The investigator will request the participants to sign an informed consent form to engage in this study.

*Please use attachments sparingly.*

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Principal Investigator's Signature

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Supervisor's Signature

I approve this protocol for submission to the UFIRB:

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Dept. Chair/Center Director Date

## **Informed Consent**

**Protocol Title:** Shinto Conversion and Practice in the United States

**Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.**

**Purpose of the research study:**

To investigate how people have come to practice Shinto at this particular shrine in the United States.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:**

You will be asked to answer open-ended questions pertaining to your personal background as well as your relationship with Shinto.

**Time required:**

Approximately 15-20 minutes.

**Risks and Benefits:**

There are no anticipated risks or benefits.

**Compensation:**

There is no compensation for your participation in this research.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any report. My supervisor and I will be the only persons with access to your information.

**Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

**If you have questions about the study you can contact me at:**

Sarah Spaid Ishida, University of Florida, Department of Religion, Box 117410, Gainesville, FL 32611; tel: (352) 275-6504, [sspaid@religion.ufl.edu](mailto:sspaid@religion.ufl.edu)

Or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Mario Poceski, University of Florida, Department of Religion, Box 117410, Gainesville, FL 32611; tel: (352)392-1625, [mpoceski@ufl.edu](mailto:mpoceski@ufl.edu)

**If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in the study please contact:**

UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph 392-0433.

**Agreement:**

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ms. Spaid Ishida holds a BA in East Asian studies from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. As an undergraduate, her focus was Japanese language and East Asian religious traditions. After graduation, she moved to Kagawa, Japan for two years as part of the JET program. While there she was able to develop her interests in Japanese religion and culture, particularly folk and popular practices. Ms. Spaid Ishida is writing this thesis as part of her requirements for the Master's of Arts in religion at the University of Florida, where she has been studying since 2005.