Home of the Japanese Heart:

By Juno Crown

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Abstract

This thesis aims to contextualize gender politics, nationalism, and animism as interconnected cultural patterns reflecting 19th century acculturation and post-WWII national reconstruction of Japan. In particular, state-nationalism, hegemonic femininity, commodity animism, uniform fetishism, and power structure are analyzed through the symbolisms and discourse of the Japanese indigenous faith: Shinto, female practitioners, and followers. There are two points of ideological and linguistic rupture in modern Japan: late-19th century and mid-20th century, in which a large part of this thesis is dedicated to for a holistic contextualization in accordance to historical narrative and events. Materials for this thesis were collected through three separate occasions of field research: winter of 2016 to 2017, summer of 2017, and the spring of 2018 where participant-observation, semi-structured interviews across different platforms, internet ethnography, and archival data analysis were combined. The thesis is separated into three parts: super state-nationalism, gender politics, and commodity animism, and each chapter has its own thematic focus for analysis while the ideological shifts are explained largely based on Ideological State Apparatus and subjectivity. The development of the several thousand year old faith is the preoccupation of this thesis in an attempt to interpret the collective identities, tendencies, and patterns of Japanese modernity.

Keywords: Shrine Maidens, Miko, Shinto, Acculturation, Super State-Nationalism, Ethnic Religion, Monoethnicity, Gender Politics, Hegemonic Femininity, Commodity Animism, Uniform Fetishism, Rupture of Modernity.
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**Glossary**
(Alphabetical Order)

*Association of Shinto Shrines:* Established in 1946, Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honsho) is a religious administrative organization that manages some 80,000 shrines in Japan.

*Gonnegi:* Provisional suppliant priest.

*Guuji:* Chief priest/priestess.

*Jokin:* Assistant employees. Includes *Miko Jokins* and part-time male employees.

*Kawaii:* Cute, adorable, or lovable. Emerged during 1970s as a counterculture to corporate masculinity.

*Kokoro:* Heart. A metaphysical part of the ‘self’ where knowledge, emotion, and will are produced and exercised.

*Meiji Reform:* Socio-political movement that occurred in the mid-19th century due to ideological acculturation/Westernization (Chapter II).

*Misogi:* A broad term for all purification rituals. *Oharae* is also apart of *Misogi*.

*Miko:* Shinto shrine maiden.


*(Miko) Jokin:* Part-time/assistant Miko. Seventy shrine maidens that were hired for the new years at Tomioka Hachiman shrine were all *Jokins*.

*Nagako Tomioka:* Chief priestess (Guuji) of Tomioka Hachiman shrine that was murdered in December 2017.

*Oomamori:* Amulets.

*Otakiage:* Burning Ritual.

*Oharae:* Purification Ritual.


*Shinshoku:* Deity Work or Deity Worker.

*Shakai:* Society. An ideological and linguistic importation from the West during Meiji Reform.
*Shakai-ji*: Society-person. “Responsible member of society who has a job and income” (Okano, 1993).

**Wasei Kango**: Japan-made Chinese words that were developed during Meiji Reform. *Shakai* (society), is a significant Wasei Kango discussed in Chapter III.
Informants

**Shinto shrine employees**

*Tomoko Miko (Miko Honshoku):* One of the six Miko Honshokus at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. Lead Miko at the West Tent.


*Maki (Miko Jokin):* 23 year old female. Graduate Student (MS in Marine Biology). 4th time Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine.

*Ayana (Miko Jokin):* 24 year old female. College educated (BA in Global Studies). 1st time Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. She had been a Miko Jokin at a smaller shrine when she was 17.

*Naoko (Deity Worker):* Middle aged female provisional suppliant priest (*gonnegi*). Has a certificate of Deity Worker but mainly works in shrine management. Been in charge of hiring and training Miko Jokins for 25 years.

**Occasional Shinto shrine visitors**


*Taka:* 27 year old male. College educated (BA in Film Studies). A videographer and a photographer.
CHAPTER I

1.1 Research Question and Purpose

This thesis originally began as a quest to deconstruct gender politics and femininity through the symbolism of Shinto shrine maidens, but through the course of production, morphed into something larger than that. Though my original question was to understand gender inequality, the material I’ve gathered represented an ideological rupture through acculturation that was embedded in Shinto rituals, discourse, and patterns. The overarching research question is then, how acculturation (in particular Westernization) of ideology, language, and representation has impacted Shinto: the traditional faith of Japan. Through focusing on two historical turning points in Japanese modernity: late-19th century Meiji Reform and mid-20th century WWII, the process of national rebuilding reveals the spread and interrelation of ideological rupture. This thesis is an attempt to conduct a historical contextualization for a holistic understanding of seemingly unrelated issues in Japanese modernity.

1.2 Introduction

“You girls are so kawaii (cute)! Do you want to work as a part-time Miko (shrine maiden) at our shrine?” said Sailor Mars’ father who’s a Deity Worker (shinshoku). Staring at Sailor Mars dressed in her Miko uniform, Sailor Moon replies, “So cool and beautiful! This is what a Miko looks like? I wouldn’t mind working as a part-time Miko.” (Sailor Moon, 1992)

Figure 1: Sailor Mars as a shrine maiden. (Tooei Animation, 1992).
The reader who is unfamiliar with Shinto or Miko might be familiarized with Sailor Moon: an animation TV series that became an international sensation in the 1990’s, with its revolutionary genre of fashion-action. One of the characters in the series, Sailor Mars, is a Shinto shrine maiden (Miko) who works at her family-owned shrine during the day but transforms into a superhero at night. Sailor Mars uses fire, paper talisman, and clairvoyance to fight evil characters, to which her powers reflect that of pre-Meiji Reform Mikos. Though all three rituals: purification of spirits through fire (otakiage), paper talisman as a calamity repellent, and fortune telling are still prevalent in Shinto shrines today, these rituals that were traditionally held by Mikos have been taken over by what is called Deity Workers (shinshoku). Deity Workers include all employees of Shinto shrine, except for Mikos and janitors. To become a Deity Worker, one must obtain a certificate of Deity Work from the Association of Shinto Shrines, which can only be awarded at two universities in the country. While becoming a Deity Worker requires four to five years of university studies and training, the only requirement to become a Miko is based purely on aesthetics and gender. The Miko’s transition from the pre-Meiji Reform powerful prophet, to the current exclusion from Deity Work is a result of Westernization and reformation of religion in accordance to the then-newly imported notion of civilization and enlightenment, but this will be analyzed later. Lisa Kuly, a scholar of Asian Religion presents the premodern Miko as:

The most illustrious female shaman in Japan’s history was Queen Pimiko who ruled the land of Wa (Japan) in the third century. Before the Medieval ages, the miko was an important figure who was associated with the ruling class and with great shrines ... In addition to her ritual performances of ecstatic trance, she performed a variety of religious and political functions. Barbara Ruch emphasizes her importance: “… from early on, shamanism was a part of the daily life of Japanese on all levels. The statesman Fujiwara no Kaneie (929-990), for instance, would not make a move without consulting the uchifushi no miko [Shaman who falls into a trance] attached to the Kamo shrine in Kyoto” (Ruch 1990: 523). As such, in premodern Japan, the miko functioned as an institution, with rituals that became a necessary part of daily life. (Kuly, 2003)

Today, Mikos are known for their occasional Kagura dancing (a religious dance), but mostly as a young female between the age of 18 to 25, who sells amulets, paper format fortune tellers, and cleans and maintains the Shrine’s order.

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1 For more on premodern Miko: Japanese anthropologist Taro Nakayama has conducted extensive research on the history of Mikos over the last two millenniums (2012).

2 While Mikos have lost political power through recent history, Kuly stresses the importance of Kagura dancing as, “[Modern Mikos are] a far distant relative of her premodern shamanic sister ... despite her modern incarnation, her dance is the basis of folk and classical performing arts, and her contribution to their development has not been overlooked” (Kuly, 2013).
At this point, the reader might be wondering what Shinto exactly is. According to the Association of Shinto Shrines that oversees over 80,000 shrines in Japan, Shinto is:

> The indigenous faith of the Japanese people. [...] Shinto is more than a religion and encompasses the ideas, attitudes, and ways of doing things that have become an integral part of the Japanese people for the better part of 2000 years. Shinto, unlike other major religions, does not have a founder, nor does it possess sacred scriptures or texts. On a collective level Shinto is a term which denotes all faiths, however, on a personal level, Shinto implies faith in the deity (kami), incorporating the spiritual mind of the kami through worship and communion. (Association of Shinto Shrines)

As explained above, Shinto is more of a belief system and a cultural pattern of the Japanese people, often described as an ethnic religion by Western scholars and the Japanese themselves. Originally resembling nothing similar to that of abrahamic religions, Shinto was conformed to the rules of Western religion and reshaped into a state-run ‘religion’ during the 19th century Meiji Reform. In modern Shinto, this animistic faith is divided into three worship types: nature worship, ancestor worship, and emperor worship. Because of the lack of one omnipotent entity, Shinto followers usually worship eight million deities interchangeably, according to the purpose of worship, geography, or kinship. Shinto shrines usually have multiple deities enshrined, and each deity brings different effects\(^3\) to the worshiper. While Japanese people will visit more than a handful of shrines during their lifetime\(^4\), the typical Japanese person might deny this as a religious affiliation. This discrepancy between Shinto as a religion and a cultural practice will be discussed throughout this thesis.

To contextualize and understand nationalism, gender politics, and animism in modern Japan, I am focusing on two important historical periods: 1) Mid to late-19th century Meiji Reform when the U.S. forcibly ended the isolationist foreign policy of Japan, and 2) Mid to late 20th century post-WWII national reconstruction after the fall of the Empire of Japan. These two time periods will be constantly referred to throughout the thesis.

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\(^3\) These effects include academic success, romantic success, economic success, and so on.

\(^4\) Visiting famous shrines is usually a part of school curriculums.
1.3 Fieldwork

The focus of my fieldwork was a particular group of young females working at Shinto shrines: Mikos. Every year, popular shrines employ a few dozen young females (and sometimes males as Jokins) to work as Mikos Jokins (part-time Mikos) for their peak season, between December 31st to mid January. The criteria for the position are, as seen in over thirty job adverts I’ve encountered in the field, being a healthy young female student or a new graduate, and one who has long and black straight hair. Historically, Mikos have been unwed, and even though this personal attribute is not listed in any of the Miko’s job qualifications today, it’s an unspoken rule that all applicants are aware of.

Upon arriving in the field in the fall of 2016, I made some physical alterations to myself so I could apply to become a Miko Jokin during the New Years. I dyed my hair black, straightened it, and wore little to no makeup, as it was often listed as a requirement for the position. I went to Japan at the end of October, 2016 which was too late to apply to most of the shrines in Tokyo as they start recruiting at the beginning of September. The interview process starts a few months prior to the New Years because large shrines usually employ between seventy to a hundred Miko Jokins. After applying to a couple of shrines that were still hiring at the end of October, I got hired at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, a 400 year old shrine that hires seventy to eighty Mikos every year during the New Years.
Figure 2: A group photo of Miko Jokins\textsuperscript{5} and male Jokins at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. (Tomioka Hachiman, 2016)

Tomioka Hachiman shrine had over 200 applicants for the position, and they conducted a group interview of five, giving each group approximately five minutes to discuss the position. The interview was conducted by one Miko Honshoku who did most of the talking while one male \textit{Gonnegi} (provisional suppliant priest) sat next to her staring down at the applicants’ resumes. I had been clear about my intention as an anthropologist throughout the application process, to which shrine employees and co-workers showed interest, but wasn’t asked about my research purpose or question. After two weeks from the interview, I got a postcard with a job offer and details of the training day in December, 2016. This training was unpaid, but mandatory for first and second time Miko Jokins. During this training day, Miko Honshokus and other priests taught the new Jokins about how to wear the uniform, the history of the shrine, background of the deities enshrined at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, how to behave during the shifts, and the priests took all seventy of the new Miko Jokins and male Jokins into the main shrine for a purification and prayer ritual and to tell the deities that those Jokins were serving them during New Years. At the end of the ceremony, Jokins were given a small portion of sake offerings for the deities, as a token of the newly purified spirit.

The training day concluded with a quick photoshoot in front of the main shrine. (Above Figure 2) There was a dedicated time slot for this photoshoot, in which a photographer took a couple of pictures of the whole group, and shots of Mikos Jokins and male Jokins who were stationed together. One of the Miko Honshoku explained this ritual as a way to prevent Miko Jokins from taking photos during their upcoming shifts and posting them on social media. It was later explained that posting photos of the uniform and mentioning that we worked as a Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine was strictly prohibited.

I began my service as a Miko Jokin on the night of December 31st, and continued to work for five more days in January. At the beginning of my shift on the 31st, around twenty Jokins who

\textsuperscript{5} Photo taken from Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s website. Since the training day was only held for first and second time Miko Jokins, the photo doesn’t include the entire group of Miko Jokins for this particular year.
began working before the new year were taken into the main shrine for a quick purification ritual. Seventy Jokins were sorted into six different sections in the shrine, where we were given different tasks and duties. My section was called the West Tent, where roughly twenty Miko Jokins, a couple male Jokins, one Miko Honshoku, and two Deity Workers (*gonnegi*) sold amulets, lucky charms, and other sacred goods to visitors. Each shift was eight hours long, with an hour long break that came with a lunch box provided by the shrine. My research method during this time was concentrated on participant-observation in which I participated as a Miko Jokin while I observed and communicated with other Mikos, Deity Workers, and shrine visitors. During my three month fieldwork in 2016, and a two week visit to the field in the summer of 2017, I visited over thirty shrines, and received two separate purification rituals.

In October, 2016 I conducted an interview with a Deity Worker, and in January, 2017 I conducted three interviews with Miko Jokins I had met during my time at the Tomioka Hachiman shrine. The Deity Worker is married to a chief priest (*Guuji*) at a small shrine in Tokyo, and she was in charge of recruiting and training Miko Jokins at their family-owned shrine. The three interviews with Miko Jokins were held at a cafe for over an hour each. In the spring of 2018: about a year after my initial fieldwork, I interviewed three occasional shrine visitors. At this point, I was away from the field so interviews took place over telecommunication and social media platforms such as Skype, Instagram, and Facebook. (More on this in the next section.) I also re-interviewed two of the *Miko Jokins* in 2018.

### 1.4 Methodology

My time at Tomioka Hachiman shrine and the epirical data gathered from seven in-depth interviews became the anchor of my research. As I was heavily integrated into the field and the subject of my research while I worked at the shrine, the method of participant-observation became largely based on participation. Other methodologies include participant-observation with the emphasis on observation at the other thirty shrines I visited, seven semi-structured interviews, internet ethnography, discourse analysis of material data, and archival data collection.

The emphasis on participant over observer during my time at Tomioka Hachiman shrine turned out in my favor as I encountered difficulties in communicating with Mikos as a regular
shrine visitor. Working and being an internal actor in a shrine enabled me to research cultural patterns that otherwise wouldn’t have been accessible to an outside observer. Another benefit of participation is that I was able to observe how the shrine visitors acted towards Mikos. This was hugely beneficial for me as I wouldn’t have had access to this particular set of interactions (communication between shrine visitors and Miko) if I hadn’t become a Miko myself.

Initially in the field, I was introduced to four male Deity Workers through personal contacts, which I chose not to pursue for interviews as they showed little to no interest or knowledge about Mikos who worked at their shrines. During my field research, I realized that long interviews were essential for qualitative data collection, however, it was difficult to find Mikos that were willing to participate. After my in-field participant-observations and interviews with four female Shinto practitioners, I noticed a lack in data from non-Shinto practitioners, and thus I extended my fieldwork by conducting three interviews with occasional shrine visitors. Since these informants were my acquaintances prior to the field research, the interviews generated qualitative data despite the fact that they were conducted online. The interview with Aiko was conducted over the phone, while the other two interviews with Kazu and Taka were conducted in a chat-format as requested by them. They had requested this interview structure because of the time difference, and because they wanted to think about each question before answering them impromptu. Though I was concerned about losing non-verbal cues through conducting online interviews, the written format interviews produced interesting data that might have not been collected in an in-person interview. Differently from what anthropologist Charlotte Aull Davies characterizes as the safeness of online communities because of the users’ anonymity (Davies, 2008), the chat-format interviews offered a safe platform for my informants to textualize their thoughts accurately without using non-verbal communication methods. Because Japan is one of the most high-context cultures, a large amount of information is exchanged non-verbally, but the chat-format interview gave them a medium to reflect on each question and textualize their answers in a coherent way for me to comprehend them online.

Pseudonyms are used for all of my informants to protect their anonymity as some of my research topics (gender, religion, and nationalism) are sensitive to many Japanese. I haven’t had the chance to fully convey my research aim or analysis to my informants, and because Tomioka
Hachiman shrine has been in the spotlight of mass media for the last year because of the murder case, it seemed unnecessary to disclose my informants’ identity. Especially because I am disclosing their employer: Tomioka Hachiman shrine, and how my informants think of the organizational structure of the shrine, I thought it is best to keep the anonymity in case my informants want to keep working as a Miko Jokin in the future.

Archival data of Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s newsletter, Mikos service guidelines provided by Tomioka Hachiman shrine, pamphlets, newsletters from other shrines, internet ethnography of official blogs, job adverts, and shrine websites all proved to be efficient methods of quantitative data collection, in which the subjectivity of the researcher is completely muted, and thus the data is uninfluenced. As Davies describes as “the ultimate in pure observation” (Davies, 2008:156), these methods were beneficial in combination with methods such as participant-observations and interviews, in which the researcher’s presence will always influence the data outcome.

1.5 Discourse Clarification

Clarification of my word choices for certain concepts/positions might appear necessary as multiple translations exist, and as Charlotte Davies urges the importance of textual reflexivity as “ethnographic writing is at one level rhetorical in the sense that it seeks to persuade through the use of a variety of linguistic strategies. Thus, it is essential that ethnographers be reflexive about the way in which they construct their ethnographic texts” (Davies, 2008:257). I am utilizing this space to exercise the reflexive methodologies of ethnographic textualization in hopes of minimizing any confusion or misunderstanding of my linguistic intent.

Mikos are sometimes translated as shrine priestess or shamans in English, but I chose to use shrine maidens as it most accurately describes their current position at shrines. Shrine priestess implies that they are Deity Workers, to which they were excluded during Meiji Reform, and the same goes for the title of shamanist. The traditional role of Mikos were closer to what can be described as shrine priestess or shamans, but in a desperate attainment for the then-newly imported notion of secular enlightenment, a Miko became temporarily excluded from Deity Work and hasn’t regained its authority since (Chapter II). Out of my four informants who worked as
Mikos, only Tomoko Miko is referred to with the title of her position accompanying her first name. This is because Miko Honshokus were addressed with Miko at the end of their name, while Miko Jokins were not. This emphasis on subject-position is analyzed further in Chapter III. Shinto kamis should be, and most commonly are translated as *deities*, but I use the term *god* when an informant is describing a single omnipotent entity, or when it’s a quotation from a written text.

*Meiji Ishin* is almost always translated as *Meiji Restoration* in English, but I am using the less common term *Meiji Reform* for the purpose of this thesis. Meiji Reform, a term surprisingly adopted by Ruth Benedict despite her inaccurate depiction of historical events, is a better translation of *Meiji Ishin*. Meiji Ishin is literally translated as ‘the reform/revitalization of the Meiji period,’ and the restoration of the emperor’s reign was only a fragment of the entirety of the event (Chapter II).

I’ve used the word *working* to describe my time as a Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, and also have described the transaction of shrine commodities (amulets and sacred goods) using retail discourse such as *selling* or *buying* for a more intelligible flow, but I must clarify that these words were prohibited to use at the shrine (More on this in Chapter III). In the words of Tomioka Hachiman shrine, I was *serving* as a Miko Jokin, and I was *handing down* amulets and sacred goods while *holding on* to the visitors money. I hope the reader accepts my choice of discourse in an attempt for a more comprehensible thesis that allows me to execute my analysis coherently.

1.6 Thematic Focus and Theories

My overarching thematic focus is most similar to what design theorist Nicolas Cambridge describes in his research of sartorial patterns of the Japanese uniform as, “using an approach proposed by Grace Lees-Maffei that involves 'alignment of object-based understandings . . . with analyses of socio-historical contexts' through integration of a practitioner's perspective on the semiotics of dress into an outline historiography of the modernization of the country” (Cambridge, 2011:181). While Cambridge conducted a historical multi-sited ethnography of uniforms, my thesis is an attempt to contextualize Mikos and Shinto by aligning them in a socio-
historical context to analyze gender politics, commodity animism, and nationalism represented in modern Shinto.

Since the preoccupation of this thesis lies in the alignment of Mikos and Shinto in a socio-historical context, I have employed several theories that best analyze my three themes of this thesis: nationalism, gender politic, and commodity animism. In my first ethnographic chapter (Chapter III), the analysis of state-nationalism and subjection of the Japanese is anchored in Sadami Suzuki, Amy Borovoy, and Marilyn Ivy’s theories on the Japanese post-Meiji and postwar recreation of discourse and national identity. I am also using Dorine Kondo’s theory of subject-position in Japanese discourse, and Anne Allison’s adaptation of Ideological State Apparatus.

For the analysis of Shinto gender politics in Chapter IV, I employed sociologist Mimi Schipper’s theory on hegemonic femininity as a dominant femininity triumph to subordinate femininities, Ozawa-de Silva and Allison’s theory on ideal Japanese femininity to contextualize the perplexing social status of Mikos who are expected to carry both maternal (society-person) and neotenous (kawaii) femininities. Lastly, I am using anthropologist Van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage to analyze how Mikos construct social identities that align with the uniformity of Japanese subjects discussed in Chapter III.

For my final ethnographic chapter (Chapter V) on commodity animism and uniform fetishism, the theoretical analysis is anchored in Anne Allison’s theory of the ontology of Japanese materiality and commodity fetishism, and design theorist Nicolas Cambridge’s theory on the Japanese identity construction through sartorial patterns.

Each theory is discussed in depth in each chapter for better coherence and intelligibility. Since my structural approach of this thesis is to align Shinto and Mikos in a socio-historical context, theories I’ve applied are specific to the themes of each chapter.
1.7 Chapters

This thesis consists of six chapters, in which three of them are ethnographic chapters from my field research in Japan. Nationalism, Gender, and Animism are each thoroughly analyzed in the ethnographic chapters, while an alignment of Shinto, Mikos, and the Japanese subjects in a socio-historical context are being made for a holistic contextualization. In short, each chapter is organized in a way so that the reader should be able to place Shinto, Mikos, and the Japanese subjects in a historical context, and understand how the ideological ruptures of modernity have changed nationalism, gender, and animism. As explained in previous sections, 19th century Meiji Reform and late 20th century post-WWII reconstruction are the two time periods focused on to align Shinto and Mikos for this socio-historical contextualization.

The first two chapters are introduction and background information to conceptualize Shinto and Mikos (shrine maidens) that might be unfamiliar to the reader. In Chapter III, I discuss Super-State Nationalism, kinship structures, and the notion of Japonesenes in relation to the two important time periods, and how these ideological shifts are represented through modern Shinto and Mikos. This chapter includes an analysis of the linguistic development (*wasei kango*) that conceptualized the then-newly imported notion of “literature,” which resulted in solidifying the Emperor System and transformation of the nation as a single family unit (*Kokka*), in which the Emperor is the paternal figure to all Japanese subjects. The analysis of authentic Japonesenes and Shinto as an ethnic religion are also deeply embedded in the structure of nation-state, and Shinto as the representation of Japonesenes and family unit. Lastly, I analyze the significance of subject-position of Mikos. Because the sense of unity and social belonging is the essence of the Japanese self, careful positioning of subjects is unavoidable (or encouraged) in all interactions. Subject-position helps place individuals in a vast network of relationships, to which actors involved understand the social order of each given environment.

Similar structures to that of Chapter III are held by the following ethnographic chapters. Chapter IV is an analysis of Gender Politics, Femininity, and Identity Construction in Shinto through a socio-historical alignment and theories on gender structures (Shippers), the dichotomy of ideal femininity accelerated by the notion of society-person (Allison; Ozawa-de Silva) and Miko’s identity construction through Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s initiation ceremony (van
Analyses for gender politics and femininity are anchored in the three interviews I conducted with Miko Jokins, and the identity construction focuses solely on the process of interpellation of Mikos.

Chapter V in short, is an analysis of Commodity Animism and Uniform Fetishism. Commodity animism is analyzed largely based on interviews with three occasional shrine visitors who go into detail about their understanding of shinto commodities (amulets), calamity, and uniforms. Purity is central to both animate (humans) and inanimate (commodities) spirits because of Shinto’s ontology of life and death, to which a large section is dedicated in analyzing spiritual purity. Discourse of Shinto is also analyzed as a representation of animist ontology. The last two sections of this chapter are preoccupied with the post-WWII national reconstruction and its impact on the modern hyper-consumerism. Meiji and Post-WWII ideologies also aided in the formation of the national uniform system, which not only represents acculturation (Western mimicry) and commodity fetishism in a consumerist society, but also the uniformity and standardization of the Japanese subjects. Uniforms are an essential representation of social belonging and relationships, similar to the function of subject-position discussed in chapter III.

In my concluding chapter, I give an overview of the findings from each chapter and recontextualize Shinto animism, gender politics, and nationalism in relation to Meiji Reform and post-WWII reconstruction. I conclude the thesis with a short reflection on the method of socio-historical alignment, and its effects on analytical execution.
Chapter II

Modern Shinto cannot be explained without an in-depth analysis of the deeply embedded ideological influence from the 19th century Meiji Reform. I am applying a historical approach to create a more holistic contextualization of gender politics within Shinto and more broadly, of Japanese society. I am also employing a diffusionist approach: in this case, the spread of Western ideologies, materialism, education, and politics to explain the most symbolic political revolution in the history of Japanese modernity. In this section, I will begin with a social analysis of 1868’s Meiji Reform and gender specific law reform that followed, and conclude with an analysis of the recent death of the head priestess of Tomioka Hachiman shrine. The section will also include a scrutinization of Ruth Benedict’s subjective research narrative on Meiji Reform in her well established classical ethnography: *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946).

2.1 History of Westernization - Meiji Reform

To begin my social analysis on the historicity of Meiji Reform, I’d like to depart with an etymological examination of the concept. Meiji Reform, or *Meiji Ishin* in Japanese, consists of two separate words. The former word, *Meiji* is the name of the regnal year of Emperor Meiji: the 122th emperor of Japan who ruled the country between 1867 and 1912. The distinct notion here is that *Meiji* is not the Emperor’s name but the official title of his regnal years⁶ (Sotoyama, 2013). The act of titling a regnal year derives from the idea that the emperor not only rules the nation with spatial force, but also on a metaphysical level of time. The unique Japanese ontology of time is famously theorized by Joy Hendry as a concept far from the linear model of the West. Hendry explains that while Western cultures focus on efficiency and velocity to complete a task, the Japanese value the ritualization of time (Hendry, 1993). Hendry argues that “the Japanese year can be seen as a ritual closing and opening. Indeed, the words used in Japanese for various beginnings often imply an opening” (Hendry, 1993: 142). While in modern Japan, regnal year (*gengo*) is only renewed at the time of a new emperor’s reign⁷, regnal year used to change multiple times during one emperor’s reign before the Meiji period. Regnal years used to be

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⁶ The concept of Gengo (regnal year) originates during the Taika Reform around 650 AD, according to *The Chronicles of Japan*, written roughly seventy years after the concept first emerged. (Sotoyama, 2013)

⁷ *Issei Ichigen no Mikotonori*: law for each emperor to change the *Gengo* only once during their reign. This law was established in 1868, at the time of Meiji Emperor’s reign (National Diet Library).
renewed after auspicious events, natural disasters, or at the end of large scale battles, to indicate an ending to a historical event and an opening of a new era and fortune. To add to Hendry’s theory, I would argue that the concept of regnal year not only reveals the Japanese ontology relating to time and space, but also reflects the significance of labeling, titling, and categorizing in order to produce or attach meaning to a concept. It is through social positionality that the Japanese understand meaning, and thus the naming of a regnal year is a distinctive characteristic of Japanese society. The importance of attaching social positional indicators (in this case, subject-position) is especially crucial when analyzing subjectivity in Japan, but I will discuss this further in Chapter III.

The second word of *Meiji Ishin*, is said to derive its meaning from a passage in the *Chinese Classic of Poetry*. *Ishin*, short for *Kore aratanari*, can be translated as a complete reform and renewal of an object or a concept. Rather than a political transformation or change, the word implies a bottom-up approach to a vast sociopolitical reform, recreating Japanese society, culture, politics, law, and education for the then-newly reborned nation. At this point, it should be clear to the reader that *Meiji Ishin* (Meiji Reform), meant the sociopolitical renovation during the Meiji period. A period which most historians and anthropologists note as the single most significant and drastic turning point in modern Japanese history.

Ruth Benedict characterizes mid-19th century Japan as “just emerging from medievalism,” yet she fails to explain the significance, multiplicity, and causality of Meiji Reform that moved Japan beyond this ‘medievalism’ and transformed the country into the modern capitalist state. (Benedict, 1946:79). In Benedict’s effort to minimize the magnitude of American influence on the then-current Japanese politics and militarization, she carefully framed her analysis of the political movement as the Japanese’ mere attempt to restore the emperor’s power and a refusal of Westernization of Japan. This is of course true to some extent, as Meiji Reform was originally a causal effect of the anti-Westernization propaganda and neo-confucianist political movement.

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8 *Shijing*, or *Chinese Classic of Poetry* in English. Written between 7th to 11th century B.C. (Sotoyama, 2013).
9 Joiron: Order to Expel Barbarians. Sonno Joi: A political philosophy and a social movement derived from Neo-Confucianism. Emperor Komei is the 121st Emperor of Japan; father of Emperor Meiji. *Boshin Senso*: Two year long civil war between the new Meiji Government and the pre-Meiji, *Kyubaku-fu* power. Bummei Kaika was coined by Fukuzawa Yukichi in 1875 in his book “An Outline of a Theory of Civilization” after his decade long studies throughout Europe and the U.S. *Fukoku-Kohei*: Enrich the state, strengthen the military. (Gluck, 1985)
(Sonno Joi) that emerged to reject 19th century Western imperialism that was spreading across East Asia, and was a result of the forceful termination of Japan’s isolation policy by the U.S. government in 1858 (Gluck, 1985). However, the anti-Westernization propaganda (Joiron) led by Emperor Komei that spurred the nation right after the U.S. forcibly entered Japan in 1858 was quickly terminated when the U.S. fleets entered the coast of Southern Japan in 1865, and the then-newly established Meiji Government won the civil war (Boshin Senso) in 1869. By this time, it was clear to Japan that they had to surrender to Western imperialism, which led to the most important ideological revolution that forced Japan into adopting Western modernity (Bummei Kaika). This then, is the critical notion Benedict lacks in her analysis to frame a holistic contextualization of Western influence on Japanese culture. She fails to include Bummei Kaika, (translated as Civilization and the Enlightenment), a characterizing slogan of Meiji Reform which was arguably the greatest ideological and linguistic rupture in Japanese modernity.

Civilization and Enlightenment (Bummei Kaika) became Meiji Reform’s slogan as a response to Japan’s growing Western influence and the desire to join the Western power\(^\text{10}\). It was a sociopolitical slogan that encouraged Japan to mimic Western culture, politics, and philosophy to achieve a true civilization. When the statesmen of Iwakura Mission: a three year long diplomatic mission to the U.S. and Europe, came back to Japan in 1873, not only did they fail to renegotiate the treaty between the U.S. and Japan, but they brought back the Western ideas of capitalism and industrialization that would ultimately lead the nation to Civilization and Enlightenment (Bummei Kaika) and militarization (Fukoku Kyohei). They led a major reform of the country’s structure by: abolishing the feudal separatism to create a centralized bureaucracy, reconstructing of social order, creating a conscript army to replace samurai house-band as the ultimate instrument of authority, establishing factories, encouraging foreign trade, and forming a new Western style of education (W. Beasley, 2013). This was a drastic sociopolitical reformation, all in the attempt at modernization and joining the West as a member of the civilized and enlightened world.

\(^{10}\) It should be clear to the reader that anti-Western propaganda was almost entirely terminated after the Bosin Senso (civil war) and the forcible entry of the US military in 1865.
Although more than a century has passed since Meiji Reform, the embedded ideologies of Civilization and Enlightenment (*Bummei Kaika*) still live strongly in the heart of modern Japanese culture. Society (*shakai*), was a newly formed concept at the end of 19th century, (Weinstein, 1990) and "Japan in 1865 bore small resemblance to the Japan of 1890" (Gluck, 1985). Because of the vast sociopolitical and economic modernization objective of Meiji Reform, the beginning and ending of this movement isn’t clear even to Japanologists. In this section, I only highlighted a few key events that display acculturation of Japan and the ideological revolution that followed.

### 2.2 Gender Specific Law Reform - Making of the Western Body

In 1889, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan was established by the statesmen of Meiji government, advised by their German legal advisor, Hermann Roesler. After years of analyzing Western constitutions and using them as templates to recreate the constitutional structures, this was the first national constitution ever to be established in Japan (National Diet Library). Social equality of all women and men, and rationality over faith were key concepts of the enlightenment Japan had a strong affinity and fascination for. After the abolishment of feudal separatism and the creation of the constitution, all Japanese subjects, no matter the class or gender, were allowed to take a last name, and gain marital and occupational freedom. This was a major reform in the societal structure of the country, and analysing this judicial behavior would be in fact, looking at Japanese political behavior as a whole. However, in my analysis of gender specific law reform that followed Meiji Reform and Civilization and Enlightenment (*Bummei Kaika*), I will be focusing only on a few laws that were established to reconstruct Japanese masculinity and femininity in an attempt for Western acceptance. This section will introduce gender normativity seen through specific laws that followed a drastic acculturation in the mid-19th century Japan.

When the statesmen of *Iwakura Mission*\(^{11}\) were photographed in San Francisco in 1872, apart from Iwakura (leader of the group), were all seen in Western outfits and hairstyles. (See below Figure 3). Iwakura’s refusal to conform to Westernization like the rest of the statesmen was said to be due to his aristocratic background and his pride (Tanaka, 2003). However, when he learned that the large crowd he attracted to his hotel was due to his appearance that arose exotic curiosity of local Americans and subjected him to ridicule, he urged the Japanese government to

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\(^{11}\) A diplomatic mission to renegotiate the U.S. and Japanese treaty.
adopt the civilized Western fashion (Tanaka, 2003). It was through Westernization of the body that Japanese men were enable to reclaim their masculinity and pride during this rapid acculturation. This was the origin of the government order for the removal of top knot hairstyles and abandonment of samurai swords (sanpatsu-dattourei) in 1872 (Tanaka, 2003).

Figure 3: A photo of the Iwakura Mission members. Sitting in the center is Iwakura (National Diet Library).

A proper top knot and carrying of samurai swords were signs of privileged upper class men during the feudal system before Meiji Reform. The sword and the hairstyle were symbols of wealth, class, social status and masculinity, and the new law enforcement didn’t appeal, especially to those of the aristocracy (Tanaka, 2003). However, the Meiji government that fiercely urged the Japanese into aesthetic Westernization under Civilization and Enlightenment (Bummei Kaika) had the emperor cut off his top knot, and the rest of the country followed this tradition soon thereafter (Tanaka, 2003). By 1873, all men above the age of twenty were subjected to military service and Western style uniforms and hairstyles were seen less complicated to maintain during combat (Cambridge, 2011). The Westernized body not only symbolized civilization and restored masculinity but also assisted in militarization and forming Japan’s own imperialism. A phenomenon to which, Cambridge notes, “the wearing of uniforms crystallized relationships between military might and modernity, empowering the ruling male elite through displays of nationalist pageantry (Cambridge, 2011:181). A famous poetry (haiku) from this period goes: “Knock on a head with a short-cut hair and we would hear the sound of Civilization and

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12 Enacted under its Fukoku-Kohei: Enrich the state, strengthen the military movement.
Enlightenment (*Bummei Kaika*); knock on the head with a long and knotted hair and we would hear the sound of Imperial rules coming back; knock on a head with a half-shaved hairstyle and we would hear the sound of ancient traditions.” Western influence not only affected sociopolitical structure of Japan, but also revolutionized Japanese masculinity and how Japanese men construct their identity through physical appearance and material objects.

National order for haircuts and prohibition of samurai swords (*Sanpatsu-dattourei*) isn’t gender specific in its title, and thus a number of women followed this new law by altering their hair length. A drastic physical difference, as Japanese women strictly maintained their long black hair until the Meiji period. In 1872, the same year of this law enforcement (*Sanpatsu-dattourei*), young women were allowed to attain an education for the first time in Japanese history. These women who were gaining Western education, often were the first to adopt Western cultural patterns and became the target of criticism in a national newspaper in March 1872. The newspaper *Shinbunzasshi* announced the following:

Lately, there have been girls who cut their hair short. This is neither a [Japanese] tradition, nor is it appealing to the Western nations. This disgusting and disgraceful behavior is intolerable… Girls with proper principles of obedience and mildness will keep and decorate their long hair, as this is the universally popular aim [of obedient girls]. Girls with a straight face after cutting off their long black hair in attempt for civilization or to gain a sex appeal only cause pain [to the observer]. (Shinbunzasshi qtd. In. Odaira, 2009)

In April 1873, a month after this newspaper was published, the Meiji government enacted a new law prohibiting women from cutting their hair. While it was in the act of Western mimicry that Japanese men restored their masculinity, women who possessed lower sociopolitical power were advised to remain traditional in their appearance. It was in their submissive nature that Japanese femininity was inherent and Westernization posed a threat to the existing patterns of femininity and gender structures.

However, not all Westernization of the female body was prohibited. In 1872, traditional makeup technique of dyeing one’s teeth black (ohaguro), and shaving one’s eyebrow off (*mayuzumi*), were prohibited by the government in pursuit of Western acceptance of Japanese female beauty. The blackened teeth accentuated the whiteness of female skin, and shaving off

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13 Joshi danpatsu kinshi rei: government order to prohibit women from cutting their hair short.
eyebrows to hide facial expression were seen as a humble and beautiful feminine quality before Meiji Reform (The POLA Research Institute of Beauty & Culture). Yet, this long tradition came to an end in similar circumstance to that of the national order for haircuts and prohibition of samurai swords (Sanpatsu dattourei). Rutherford Alcock, the first English diplomat in Japan famously told his countrymen, “when [Japanese women] paint their teeth with black varnish and pluck out their eyebrow, their artificial grotesqueness exceeds all competition” (The POLA Research Institute of Beauty & Culture). Because Japan was an isolationist country before this rapid and forceful acculturation, newly introduced criticism on Japanese beauty ideals or gender normativity was shocking and demoralizing for the Japanese (Tanaka, 2003). To avoid further criticism or embarrassment, Westernization of the body became a critical aspect of the transformation into a civilized society, and thus gender specific laws that regulate new Japanese masculinity and femininity under Western ideals were critical. Though gender structures were reformed during the Meiji period to mimic that of the West, anthropologist Marilyn Ivy notes, “the colonized responds to colonial domination via a complex "mimicry," a mimicry that can never succeed in effacing the difference between the western original and the colonized copy (Ivy, 2010:7). Westernization of Japan has taken a slightly different approach to those nations that were forced into cultural adaptations. Westernization of Japan has largely been generated within the nation in an attempt to ‘catch up’ with the civilized West, and the Japanese Western mimicry of cultural patterns has taken its own form detached from the original.

2.3 Gender Politics within Shinto

The shocking incident of the violent death of Nagako Tomioka, head priestess of Tomioka Hachiman shrine, on the night of December 7th, 2017 revealed the perplexing political status of women in the world of Shinto. Nagako Tomioka was stabbed to death with a Japanese sword by her own brother and his wife in a suicide attack. In a country with one of the lowest murder rates in the world, a violent homicide in a culturally sacred realm attracted a flock of both local and international media. The Japan Times reported the family feud that caused the incident as the following:

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14 Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-97) Britain's first consul-general in Japan in 1858.
Shigenaga Tomioka [the brother of Nagako Tomioka] was arrested some 10 years ago for blackmailing his sister. After he left the post of chief priest in 2001, he sent a threatening postcard to his sister in January 2006 in which he wrote, among other things, that he would send her to hell. At the time, his sister had held a post known as negi, the second-highest rank at a Shinto shrine after the chief priest…. Tomioka Hachimangu found itself in hot water with the Jinja Honcho (Association of Shinto Shrines) in 2010 over the appointment of the shrine’s chief priest. The shrine left the association on Sept. 28 this year and Nagako Tomioka became the chief priest shortly after. (The Japan Times, 2017)

Figure 4: A picture of Shigenaga Tomioka as the head priest in 2000 (left) and Nagako Tomioka as the head priestess in 2014 (right) (Mainishi Shinbun, 2017).

The murder motive was clear when Shigenaga Tomioka’s blackmalls were released to the public following the incident: he had threatened Nagako Tomioka and the shrine to restore his position as the head priest. Because of his obsession with his sister’s position in the shrine, investigation was focused on the structure of shrines, which resulted in an exposure of the complicated sociopolitical status of women in Shinto. What accelerated this emphasis on gender politics in Shinto was Nagako Tomioka’s blog post from the day before her homicide. Below is the last blog post she made in Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s official blog that was quickly deleted following the incident:

What’s wrong with this world? I haven’t been feeling content these past few days. This is because it is the year-end party season and I must attend these events where alcohol is being served. I don’t take a single sip of alcohol at home but I sometimes drink during these parties… I especially hate the drinking parties of Deity Workers (Shinshoku). Some of these head priests (Guuji) have normalized sexual harassment, power harassment, neglect, and bullying. This is the reason why I don’t go to these parties anymore. Not only because of the perpetrators but also the others around them who unconsciously inflate and support such behaviors have no sense of morality. One of the head priests who we [Tomioka Hachiman shrine] have a close relationship with, called me without an honorific title (by first name), groped my body, held my hand, and put his arm around my waste, so
I clearly rejected him and said ‘That’s enough. Please stop.’ Then another deity worker said ‘Calm down, [the head priest] thinks of you like family and can’t help it because you’re too cute (kawaii).’ The head priest then praised the deity worker by replying ‘Ah, yes! You’re so good with words!’ The two priests are the same age so they might have similar values but I hate this! Isn’t this ridiculous? Isn’t this wrong? Obviously I’m not his kin, nor am I friendly with him, but to reason such a behavior by saying ‘it’s because you’re too cute (kawaii), it can’t be helped,’ [the deity worker] doesn’t understand that he’s actually implying that I should tolerate this. Isn’t this twisted? How dare he force me to tolerate harassment. Wouldn’t you [the reader] be disgusted as well? A stranger calling you Omae (a degrading form of You) and groping you can’t possibly be fun right? If your wife or daughter was being subjected to this, wouldn’t you [the reader] stop this? Don’t you hate that these cowardly people, who can’t even stop their ‘group members’ from such behaviors, are Deity Workers (Shinshoku)? These so-called head priests who keep their silence and inflate such behaviors only care about themselves, are cheaters, and cowardly species. It’s about time that the moon punishes them. If the same thing happens again, I’m exposing their identities. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine Guuji official blog, 2017)

While this blog post is said to be unrelated to the murder, the sensitive content attracted mass media to report this blog in relation to the backlash of gender inequality of the Association of Shinto Shrines. One of the final remarks about the moon punishing the Deity Worker, is referring to the signature phrase of Sailor Moon when she fights evil characters in the series. This referral to Sailor Moon while she’s talking about her sexual abuse is worth noting here, as I will discuss the fragmented representation of appropriate femininity in Mikos that shadow the storyline of Sailor Moon in Chapter IV.

To understand modern gender politics in Shinto, we must understand the formation of late 19th century State Shinto. On the subject of Japanese religion during Meiji Reform, Benedict notes:

Meiji statesmen made such more bizarre formal arrangements than in government. They were however carrying out the same Japanese motto. The State took as its realm a worship that specifically upholds the symbols of national unity and superiority, and in all the rest it left freedom of worship to individual. This area of national jurisdiction was State Shinto. (Benedict, 1946:87)

What Benedict lacks in her analysis of ‘Japanese religion’, is that Shinto was never categorized as religion until the mid 19th century. Shinto is rather a cultural belief system passed on through kinship systems, traditions, language, and natural environments. Rather than acknowledging cultural differences between Japan and the West as something inevitable, the Meiji government

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15 “In the Name of the Moon I'll Punish You,” is the famous phrase from the series (Toei Animation).
tried to reform and mold its couple thousand year old tradition into the framework of Western religion. John Owen Haley, a professor of law notes this ideological shift as:

The modern Japanese state confronted the dilemma of defining Shinto in order to use its association with imperial ritual and ancestor worship for purposes of statecraft and national unification. In the end, Shinto was established as a state “religion.” In so doing, elements of myth and ritual that had long defined the legitimacy of the state and governance were absorbed along with local community practices into the category of religion. (Haley, 1998:188)

The rise of Japanese imperialism began with this radical shift in how Japanese animism reformed into a State-run religion. This forced ideology of Shinto as religion can be seen in my informants’ confusion when I asked about their faith and religious beliefs (More on this in Chapter V). This perplexing shift of a cultural system not only aided in the formation of state-nationalism but also became the point of female exclusion from Shinto.

During the construction of Japanese State Shinto, women were banned from working at shrines. Following the ideologies of the Enlightenment, the Meiji government sought to cease irrational and spiritual elements of Shinto. This then led to the abandonment of women from the Shinto sphere because it was women (especially Mikos) who used to carry out sacred rituals as prophets (Odaira, 2009). The common anthropological theory behind female exclusion from religious rites is often theorized in relation to female sexuality. As anthropologist Radfor Ruether notes, “most human religions, from tribal to world religions, have treated woman’s body, in its gender-specific sexual functions, as impure or polluted and thus to be distanced from sacred spaces and rites dominated by males” (Ruether qtd. In. Sweetman, 1999). What is unique to the gender politics within Shinto is that women were not excluded from religion because of their sexual impurity, but rather because of their traditional ties to shamanism and spirituality. Unlike most religions in the world, women have historically possessed higher religious power in Shinto. Mikos were prophets that exercised spiritual rites that went directly against the then-newly imported morality of the secular enlightenment. Thus, it was cultural diffusion (Western mimicry) during Meiji Reform that led to the current gender hierarchy in Shinto (Kuly 2003; Odaira 2009; Gluck 1985). The prohibition of female shamanists from Shinto lasted until the end of WWII.¹⁶ During the postwar military occupation of the Allied Powers in Japan, State Shinto

¹⁶ Potsdam Declaration: surrender of Japan during World War II.
was forcibly terminated as they saw it as the root of Japanese fascism. As a result of this abolition, in 1946, the Association of Shinto Shrines was formed by three religious organizations that regulated State-Shinto under the Meiji government (Association of Shinto Shrines). While the abolishment of State-Shinto signifies the reinclusion of women in shrines, the gender segregation that became embedded into Shinto under Meiji ideologies became an obstacle to restore female status in Shinto. Today, the Association of Shinto Shrines regulates over 80,000 shrines throughout the country, and out of 21,000 Deity Workers (shinsyoku), only 3,000 positions are occupied by women (Odaira, 2009).

Although inclusion of women in shrines have been steadily increasing after the abolishment of State-Shinto, higher gender limitations are seen in larger shrines that Association of Shinto Shrines protect as their primary shrines (bepyou jinja). Tomioka Hachiman shrine, as one of the eleven primary shrines in Tokyo has been subjected to careful supervision by the Association of Shinto Shrines since the end of WWII (The Japan Times, 2017). As the oldest child of the former head priest, Nagako Tomioka was appointed by the shrine as the head priestess after her brother’s discharge, and she had been applying for an approval of this organizational rearrangement from the Association of Shinto Shrines. After seven years of neglect without any apparent reason from the association’s side, the shrine had left the association in 2017 to officiate Nagako Tomioka as the head priestess. It is not a complete exclusion of women as the Association of Shinto Shrines has approved Nagako Tomioka and a number of other women to work at the shrine, but the position of head priest appears to be reserved exclusively for men. The case of Tomioka Hachiman shrine exposed that systematic gender hierarchy in Shinto is managed on an institutional level due to deep-rooted political ideologies of female exclusion that stem from Meiji Reform.

In this chapter, I’ve given a detailed overview of the chronology of Meiji Reform, and its ideological effects on Shinto, Mikos, gender politics, and masculinity and femininity. Meiji Reform is critical in understanding Japanese modernity because it was a rapid nation-wide acculturation of ideologies, aesthetics, and language which I will be referring back to continuously throughout this thesis. Benedict analyzes Japanese imperialism as an entirely Japanese production detached from the U.S., but this chapter aimed to shed light on the history of ideological rupture and its following political events. A cultural phenomenon cannot be analyzed
without a proper socio-historical contextualization and that’s why I am aligning Shinto and Mikos in critical time periods to understand modern cultural patterns of Japanese society.
Chapter III

The two main foci of this chapter are the formation of post-westernization State-Nationalism and Ideological State Apparatus of Shinto subjects, represented through the history of Japanese literature, discourse of shrine employees, Mikos, visitors, and my informants. The aim of this chapter is to analyze the chronology of linguistic and ideological rupture, and how this reformation has helped establish the Japanese nation as a culturally and ethnically homogeneous family entity. The analysis is based on Sadami Suzuki (1994), Amy Borovoy (2005) and Marilyn Ivy’s (2010) theories on the Japanese post-Meiji and postwar discourse and national identity. Materials in this chapter are derived from interviews, participant-observations, textual documents and archival data.

3.1 Super State Nationalism and the Linguistic Rupture of Modernity

Mid to late-19th century Meiji Reform and WWII has been the preoccupation of most Japanologists in modern history because it marks critical points in Japanese history where modernity, in these cases: rapid Westernization, has accelerated rupture in pre-existing cultural patterns, customs, and even language. In this section, I am mapping out the historical events and processes that have aided in forming the Japanese nation-state and the illusion of the omnipotent emperor that has been transformed to a paternal figure for Japanese citizens today.

Major language and ideological reconstruction occurred during the Meiji Reform, and amongst them was the vital linguistic development of the Japan-made Chinese words (waseikango). These Japan-made Chinese words (waseikango) marked an important point in Japanese linguistic history because the Meiji government had created Kanji words (essentially, new Japanese words) to express the newly imported Western concepts. These concepts that had never existed in Japan were then incorporated into everyday Japanese discourse, represented by Kanjis that hid their linguistic roots\(^\text{17}\). These new words included: society (shakai), nature

\(^{17}\) Japanese is composed of three different alphabets: Kanji (some 6000 Chinese characters), Hiragana (46 characters for grammatical particles) and Katakana (46 characters to spell loanwords). The Japanese usually combine the three alphabet to create a complete sentence. For example, a simple sentence such as ‘I like coffee’ will be expressed using all three alphabets. ‘I’ and ‘like’ will be written in Kanji combined with Hiragana particles, and ‘coffee’ will be in Katakana as it is a foreign object/term. It should be clear to the reader that loanwords: foreign concepts and terms, are
(shizen), science (kagaku), consciousness (ishiki), theory (riron), space (kukan), state (kokka), police (keisatsu), economy (keizai), and industry (kogyo) (Suzuki, 1994). Concepts that are well familiarized by modern Japanese that, unless informed of the history of post-Meiji linguistic reconstruction, the common Japanese will think these concepts originated in Japan. These are fundamental ideological concepts that have shaped how the Japanese view themselves in modern Japan, and thus can be seen as a linguistic rupture of modernity.

A professor of Japanese studies, Sadami Suzuki, and anthropologist Marilyn Ivy have similarly argued that the construction of the Japanese nation-state was fueled and accelerated as a result of Western dominance in the newly reformed country (Suzuki, 1994: Ivy 2010). While Ivy’s study focuses on the discourse of the modernity, Suzuki’s study is anchored in a single paramount Japan-made Chinese word (waseikango): literature (bungaku)\(^\text{18}\), which became a fundamental actor in the formation of what Suzuki calls the Japanese Super state-nationalism (Suzuki, 1994). The reader might assume this imported linguistic ideology would have resulted in an adaptation or remolding into a Japanese context, but oddly enough, the concepts stayed untouched. In Fukuchi Ochi’s 1875 article, he stated, “even the barbarians (Westerners) write poems and fictional stories. Needless to say, civilized people respect literature (Ochi qtd. In. Suzuki, 1994). Here, on the one hand he’s belittling the ‘barbaric’ Westerner, but on the other hand praising their appreciation for ‘literature’ and urging the Japanese to embrace this concept as a member of the civilized society: a duality that reflects the tension of early Meiji Reform.

Suzuki also argues that the concept of Western literature itself is closely tied to state-nationalism (Suzuki, 72, 1994). Originating in the middle ages, Western ‘literature’ represented culture, national character, and its pride. Suzuki continues that 19th century Western literature that was built by state-nationalism also carried the idea of intra-nationalism: the denial of acculturation in the history of literature, while attaching a single cultural origin to each literary texts (Suzuki, 1994). Following this ideology of intra-nationalism, the concept of ‘state,’ (another Japan-made Chinese word), emerged without any tension between the Japanese state and the

\(^{18}\) First appeared in a newspaper article in 1875, author Ochi Fukuchi stated that the Japanese haikus and poems are like that of Western romantic novella and theatre plays, which Suzuki’s analysis of this stresses that early mentions of ‘literature’ (bungaku) displayed the understanding of the concept as an artistic medium of writing (Suzuki, 1994).
people, because unlike most Western countries that have overthrown or changed the ruling class, Japan has had the same ruling family since the 3rd century (Suzuki, 1994). The post-Meiji Reform nation-state formation occurred without any backlash and the Japanese people had accepted the Emperor system (*tennosei*) generated by the restoration movement of Meiji Reform (Suzuki, 1994). Here then, one of Meiji Reform’s slogans: restoration of the emperor, systematized this social structure through the newly established constitution and education system.

At this point, the reader might be wondering why the imported concept of ‘literature’ had resulted in forming the Emperor system. This is because the 19th century concept of Western literature was applied to Japanese written text that dated back for more than a thousand years. Under its new notion of ‘literature,’ *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) written in the early 8th century was defined as the origin of the Japanese literary history (Suzuki, 1994, 82). *Kojiki*, originally read as historical accounts about the origin of deities, the country, and emperors (often fictional) became one of the oldest forms of historical literature: the Japanese pride and the representation of its nation-state that is *intra-national*. Applying this ideologically charged concept of ‘literature’ to categorize ancient texts about deities and emperors resulted in the formation of Super State-Nationalism as Suzuki calls it (Suzuki, 1994). *Kojiki* introduced past emperors as deities, and traced back emperors’ paternal lineage to the great deity (*oomikami*). To reiterate Suzuki’s theory: 1) the newly constructed concept of ‘literature’ reflected that of the 19th century Western ideology of intra-nationalism (denial of acculturation) and the pride of nation-state, and 2) categorizing Records of Ancient Matters (*kojiki*) as literature, a text that depicts emperors as direct descendants of deities, resulted in 3) the formation of super state-nationalism, that later have been characterized as Japanese fascism that led the Empire of Japan in its global expansion under the people’s oath to serve the divine emperor. In Ivy’s words, “an obscure emperor was restored and positioned as an absolute paternal subject reigning over a totalized national body comprised of individuated (through education, conscription, and moral discipline) imperial subjects (shinmin) who were simultaneously constructed as modern citizens (Ivy, 2009). To reconstruct and reorganize Japanese historical texts according to the 19th century Western concept of ‘literature’ was not only an import of ideology, but a Westernization of Japanese ideology altogether.
Worshiping of emperors as deities, accelerated by 19th century Westernization, is still prominent in modern Shinto\(^\text{19}\). Association of Shinto Shrines that manages over 80,000 shinto shrines has explained the role of the emperor and the imperial family as the following:

In Shinto, the Emperor of Japan (Tenno) is believed to be a descendant of Amaterasu-Omikami (the Sun Goddess)... Since the founding of the nation, Tenno himself has conducted Shinto rituals in the Imperial Palace to pray to the deities centering on Amaterasu-Omikami for the happiness of the people, for the long continuation of the nation, and for world peace. There are clergymen and women in the shrines of the Imperial Palace who assist Tenno to perform the rites. Tenno performs these rites around 40 times a year. This is perhaps why there are some scholars who call Tenno “the highest priest” of Shinto. (Association of Shinto shrines)

The emperor as a symbolic divine figure is still central to Shinto even after it’s postwar collapse of State-Shinto ordered by the U.S. government. Emperors are not necessarily worshiped because of their historical achievements but because of their lineage to the great deity. The symbolism of the emperor remains essential not only within Shinto but also to the modern nation-state. The Japanese constitution begins with the mentioning of the emperor as “CHAPTER I : THE EMPEROR  Article 1. The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power. (The Constitution of Japanese).\(^\text{20}\) As Ivy noted, the emperor was a symbolic paternal figure for the then imperial subjects (shinmin), but also current state subjects (kokumin) (Ivy, 2010: 6).

3.2 Myths of Japaneseness, Monoethnicity, and Ethnic Religion

In Ivy’s study of the modern Japanese discourse, she argues that the notion of ‘Japanese culture’ is an entirely modern concept emerging in post-Meiji reform (Ivy, 2009). After the country’s rapid Westernization and rise of Super State-Nationalism (Suzuki, 1994), there was an urgent need to concretize what is meant to be ‘Japanese’ and to bear its culture. In restoring the emperor’s reign and forming State-Shinto during the Meiji period, Shinto represented the nation-

\(^{19}\) To give an example of emperor worship, Hachiman: the deity of battles that is worshiped at Tomioka Hachiman shrine is the most enshrined deity out of the 80,000 shrines across the country. This deity (Hachiman) is thought to be the spirit of the 15th Emperor Ojin, after his appearance in the 11th century historical text (Fuso Ryakuki). Not only Emperor Ojin, but hundreds of different emperors (both fictional and non-fictional) are enshrined across the country. In fact, the most visited shrine in Japan, attracting some 320,000 people just over the new years, is Meiji Shrine where Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken are enshrined.

state, Japoneseness, and Japanese culture. Similarly to how the divine symbol of the emperor kept its strength post-WWII, the notion of Shinto as the core of ‘Japoneseness’ has stayed prevalent well into modernity. Louis Althusser’s famous theory of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)\(^{21}\) is essential in understanding the cultural patterns within a nation of institutionalized oneness and defined gender roles, and thus, I take this section to analyze Shinto discourse.

Different from Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) where the dominant group inserts its power to control the lower class (examples include police or military force), I am focusing on ISA that perpetuates the individual subject to play a role in the ideological framework of modern Japan: a subtle and disguised insertion of power through everyday discourse, practices, media, and education.

Below, I am listing five examples of Shinto discourse that represent this cultural pattern of Shinto as an ethnic religion. Association of Shinto Shrines describes its shrines on their website as the following: (Notice the repeated referral to ‘the Japanese’)

Deeply indebted to the blessings of nature, the Japanese people came to acknowledge its spiritual powers that brought forth life, fertility, and prosperity. Divine spirits dwell in all of nature, and bring joy and bounty to our lives. Through this intimate contact with nature and the divine, the Japanese people have continued to respect and draw inspiration from its spiritual beauty. At the same time, the Japanese people have long revered the ancestors who contributed enormously to the goodness of society. At various turning points in an individual Japanese person’s life, visits are made to a shrine to pray for divine protection and to give thanks for the deities’ blessings. These rites of passage for the Japanese begin with hatsumiya\(^{22}\) mode. (Association of Shinto Shrines)

Here, it is clear that Shinto and the Japoneseness are inseparable concepts. The unified notion of the ‘Japanese’ is represented throughout shrine discourse. Shinto shrines don’t differentiate active Shinto practitioners and a secular non-participant, but see the whole “Japanese people” as a subjects of Shinto. The last sentence: “The rites of passage of the Japanese” implies that Shinto rituals are entirely cultural rather than religious.

In a newsletter I picked up at Tokyo Daijingu shrine in 2017, I saw a small advert for a Certificate of Shrines (Shinto culture certificate):

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\(^{21}\) I take the privilege in assuming the reader has a basic understanding of realism and ideology that becomes crucial in forming ISA through interpellation (subjection of an individual to a specific ideology) (Althusser, 1970).

\(^{22}\) A newborn’s first visit to a shrine.
Certificate of Shrines: Let’s get to know shrines! If you like shrines and if you want to learn more about Japanese culture, this certificate is for you. (Tokyo Daijingu shrine: Association of Shinto Shrines, 2017).

Supported by the Association of Shinto Shrines, this certificate should not be confused with that of certificate for Deity Workers (Shinshoku). This Certificate of Shrines is catered for private individuals who are interested in learning about ‘Japanese culture.’ On its official website, Certificate of Shrines has a page dedicated to ‘the voices of the examinees.’ (Certificate of Shrines) Out of the Thirty-Eight examinees that are listed on this webpage, twenty of them refer to ‘Japanese culture’ and ‘Japanese’ in their reviews of the certificate. Below are a few comments that represent the ISA of Shinto as the anchor of ‘Japaneseness.’ (The profession of the examinees are bracketed next to their comments.)

This helped me understand Shinto and Japanese history, as well as the history of Japanese psychology. (Senior Managing Director)

I was blessed with the opportunity to learn about the depths of shrines, and the origin of the Japanese heart, described in the ancient historical texts. (Physician)

A lot of the knowledge I’ve gotten from my university degree in Japanese literature is similar to what I’ve learned from Shinto, and now I feel close to Shinto. Shinto is the Japanese lifestyle-culture, but there aren’t enough opportunities to learn about it, so I’d like it if more people get interested and study Shinto. (College student)

Shinto is the ‘heart of Japanese’ and it’s my guide of life. (Tour Guide)

Through learning, I understand the depths of the way of thinking of ancient Japanese. Now that I’ve received the highest level of certificate, I am allowed to write a magazine column, introducing shrines and Japanese culture through my perspective. (Model)

In Anne Allison’s 1996 study, she explains ISA as something that “serves not only their stated objective but also an unstated one, that of indoctrinating people into seeing the world a certain way and accepting certain identities as their own within that world (Allison, 2010:82). ISA of Japaneseness works in the way that it’s accepted as their own identities, history, mentality and way of being, while the lack of such ‘Japaneseness’ (lack of knowledge in Shinto) is policed by private individuals within the subject group. As Allison put it, “ideology is so potent because it becomes not only ours but us,” ISA becomes the foundation of the collective identity of the ‘Japanese.’

I’ve also italicized “I am allowed,” in the last comment because this is an example of the complex Japanese discourse of subjectivity described by Dorine Kondo’s 1990 study in a
Japanese workplace. She describes the Japanese speech as inescapable from subject-positioning because it is “impossible to form a sentence without also commenting on the relationship between oneself and one’s interlocutor” (Kondo, 1990:31). While the last comment displays a ISA of Shinto as the model Japaneseness and the reinforcement of this cultural pattern, it also displays Kondo’s theory of subject-positioning, as the examinee addresses the hierarchical order of society in which she expresses her gratitude by implying her submissive status to the publishing agency and the consuming public. Japaneseness is often tied to maintaining the structural order by keeping one’s unified identity, and thus to attribute personal success to individual identity is often unacceptable in public discourse. (More on subject-position in the next section.)

In the same newsletter by Tokyo Daijingu shrine, a short article about the 2017 G723 visit to the Ise Great Shrine was printed in the first page. The article quoted the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from when the visit was planned in 2016:

[Ise Great Shrine] is a great place for [the G7] to see our eternal history and feel the Japanese mentality. (Prime Minister Abe qtd. In. Tokyo Daijingu shrine: Association of Shinto Shrines, 2017).

Even roughly seventy years after the separation of the shrine and state, Shinto and their shrines remains deeply embedded in the discourse of ‘Japanese culture.’ Shinto is accepted as a representation of ‘Japaneseness’ on a national level and this is displayed by the Prime Minister’s statement and also through my informants. On the subject of religious beliefs, Ayana stated “I’m an atheist, but I don’t mind the State supporting Shinto,” and the Deity Worker (shinshoku) who recruits Miko Jokins mentioned that most of the applicants come to her shrine because they want to “learn more about Japanese culture.” The postwar forcible termination of State-Shinto by the U.S. government, led to a new nationalistic discourse of Shinto as the way of Japanese being, detached from the Western notion of religion. With this new discourse of Shinto as a cultural tradition rather than religion or faith, the separation of Shinto and Japanese culture became impossible.

23 Group of Seven: inter-governmental political forum formed by, Japan, Canada, U.S., Germany, Italy, UK, France, and the EU.
Large Shinto shrines usually have what is called a Sukeikai: a shrine-run non-profit foundation for active Shinto practitioners of a particular shrine. Two of the largest shrines in Tokyo: Meiji Shrine and Yasukuni Shrine24 advertised this Sukeikai in their brochure as the following:

Yasukuni Shrine: When the whole country becomes unified by the “Yasukuni’s heart (kokoro),” that’s when the Japanese will regain their “Japaneseness (people and culture).” Yasukuni Shrine will eternally remain as “the native home for the Japanese heart (kokoro)” (Yasukuni Shrine Sukeikai, 2017)

Meiji Shrine: Our Sukeikai was formed to worship the Meiji emperor, and ignite a healthy mentality by being the native home for the heart (kokoro) of the Japanese people. We want to protect our exceptional Japanese tradition and culture, cultivate a heart (kokoro) that worships the deities, and help make a moral home and society. (Meiji Shrine Sukeikai, 2016)

Here, morality is displayed as a central aspect to the discourse of shrines. These examples imply that authenticity of Japanese people and culture lies solely within Shinto, and to be an active practitioner is a gateway to a healthy morality and inclusion into kinship structures and society. The repetitive referral to the concept of ‘native home’ is yet another Meiji construction according to anthropologist Amy Brovory. In her 2005 study, she notes, “[the Japanese notion of] family as the template for all society has roots in late nineteenth-century and particularly prewar discourses on the national policy. Discourses of family had been central to Meiji period and prewar visions of Japan’s modernity and shared national culture” (Brovoy, 2005:57). With the emperor as a divine paternal figure (Borovoy, 2005: Ivy, 1995), the Japanese people became a totalized subject in which Shinto represented ‘home’ and kinship.

This unity of family and Shinto can also be seen in Aiko’s comment on her idea of Shinto as:

Aiko: I think of Shinto as the protector of customs and traditions, as well as the religious heart (kokoro). In Japan, I think of shrine rites (religious rites) as an inheritance of traditions that have been passed down through generations. That’s why I think of Shinto practitioner as someone who honors traditions and structures.

This hereditary structure of Shinto that Aiko describes aligns with Borovoy and Ivy’s claims that Japaneseness was defined with family traditions and customs. With this concept of national unity

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24 While I acknowledge the political controversy of Yasukuni shrine, my thesis does not focus on political status of shrines and thus won’t be exploring the history of Yasukuni shrine.
and emperor as a national father (Shinto deity), Shinto became deeply embedded into the discourse of Japaneseness.

The notion of Japaneseness and national unity (super state-nationalism) has since made Shinto as the cornerstone of Japanese culture, and this has helped conceptualize Shinto as an ethnic religion for the ‘monoethnic Japanese.’ Borovoy explains the Japanese unity emerged as a defining national identity against the West, and Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro celebrated the Japanese family as “the institution that shielded the Japanese from the “self-centeredness” of the West and allowed them to cultivate a sense of national oneness.” (Watsuji qtd. in. Borovoy, 2005) Under the mid-19th century super state-nationalism, Japanese culture and Japaneseness became an exclusive body where concepts of culture, religion (faith), and ethnicity merged together to represent Shinto as the core of Japaneseness. Similar to how Shinto shrines advertised themselves as the ‘native home,’ Ivy explains this Japanese socio-cultural apparatus as:

> Japan emerges as the armature of intense preoccupations with essential national-cultural identity, continuity, and community that mark and remark it with the signs of totality. The effort to sustain this totality announces itself in every tourist advertisement, every appeal to "home" (furusato), every assertion that "we Japanese are modern, but we have kept our tradition," every discourse on public (Japanese) harmony. This effort to maintain the self-sameness of Japanese culture thus exposes itself by its denial of social difference—race, ethnicity, class. This denial is not sheerly ideological, for the policies of the Japanese state and historical contingencies have determined that in fact those differences are reduced: less than 1 percent of the population of Japan are non-Japanese citizens, so say the official statistics. There are strong structural, institutional, and legal denials and controls of ethnic and racial differences; there are refusals of heterogeneity at many levels. (Ivy, 26:1995)

As Ivy describes here (also seen in the next chapter of uniform fetishism), sameness, unity, and homogenity are all essential concept of Japaneseness. This ethnic oneness was evident in job descriptions of Mikos and also from comments of shrine visitors and employees who pointed out my ethnic otherness in the field. Out of over fifty adverts for Miko Honshoku and Miko Jokins I’ve encountered in the field, the overwhelming majority stated that long straight black hair was a prerequisite for the position. When I asked Naoko (Deity Worker) about whether she mentions this to her employees, she replied “I don’t have to go out of my way to tell our Mikos that they need to darken their hair because it’s an unspoken rule. They do it [darken their hair] without me having to tell them.” There’s a template of traditional female beauty that applies in this context, which either excludes women who can’t conform to this image, or as many women, including
myself, amend their look in order to fit the proper apparatus of ‘the Japanese’ for inclusion into society.

Shrine visitors and employees also displayed signs of confusion in my ethnic otherness, even after my conformity to that of the ‘Japanese appearance.’ While I worked as a Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, a countless number of visitors commented on my appearance (ethnicity) as being unusual to the environment of shrines. More than a handful of visitors expressed their curiosity in my position and said “I didn’t know foreigners were allowed to work as shrine maidens.” When I told them I was Japanese, most of them responded with confusion. Another comment I often received was about my Japanese linguistic skills. Many visitors complimented my Japanese, and asked me when I had moved to Japan or how long I have been studying the language.

During my fieldwork, I went to Yasukuni Shrine on two separate occasions for a purification ritual (oharae). The first time was in the winter of 2016, with my ethically non-Japanese father, in which upon arriving to the shrine office to register for a purification ritual, a Deity Worker approached us and said “Are you religiously adapt? I mean… are you familiar with the prayer etiquette?” When I went to the same shrine in the summer of 2017 with my ethnically Japanese mother, the Deity Worker and two Mikos greeted us without any questioning of our religious stand. These examples support Ivy’s claim of the Japanese ideology of oneness and cultural and ethnic exclusivity, creating an ethnically homogeneous uniform that is: ‘Japanese.’ To be ethnically other is to also be a national other: an outsider (or a visitor) in the Shinto sphere that is the core of Japanese culture.

To summarize my analysis, according to Suzuki, Borovoy, and Ivy’s theories: When 1) Shinto became the core of Super State-Nationalism, and 2) the notion of family was central to Japanese modernity and national culture, 3) the Emperor is a paternal figure to all state subjects, then 4) Shinto that practices emperor worships (and ancestor worships) is the ultimate ‘family,’ a kinship structure that represents national culture and ‘Japaneseness’ that is ethnically, culturally, and socially a homogeneous entity.
3.3 Subject-Position

Because subjection is the nexus of ISA, positionality also becomes vital in understanding one’s place in society. I will use Dorine Kondo’s theory on gender and discourse in a Japanese workplace to address the importance of positionality in relation to ISA (Kondo, 1990). “The women I knew were not members of some unproblematic category, “women,” but were constituted through a variety of specific subject-positions--- wife, mother, part-time worker,” states Kondo (Kondo, 1990:44). This was indeed the case at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, as Mikos were always addressed as Miko Jokin (temporary worker) or Miko Honshoku (Full-time worker). To the average shrine visitor, this difference of employment status is unnoticeable (if reflected at all) as the only aesthetic difference is in Miko Honshoku’s hair tie and the slightly patterned white top (hakui). However, for internal communication within the shrine, addressing the two groups with the title of their employment status was essential not only for maintaining the power structure and hierarchical order, but it also reflected social patterns attached to the concept of ‘part-time’ and ‘full-time’ workers. While shrine visitors often referred to Mikos as a whole, shrine employees: including Deity Workers, Miko Honshoku, Miko Jokin, and janitors never ceased to address the Mikos in their respective groups (Jokin or Honshoku).

In Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s Jokin duty guideline (Jokin kinmu kokoro) which was handed out to during the training day stated:

When you wear the white top (hakui), brace yourself and keep in mind that you are serving the deities. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2016)

Our shrine visitors won’t see you as part-time employees. Take extra caution in your choice of words and actions. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2016)

These are examples of how subject-positioning is important to the discourse of shrines. The uniform functions as a transitioning process in which the subjects (Mikos) become positioned directly under the deities, and the emphasis on ‘part-time employees’ is referred as a title, charged with expectations from such a group. Because Jokins are constantly referred to as Miko Jokins or plainly Jokins, their employment status (an important marker of the hierarchical order) becomes a collective identity in which the subject group (Miko Jokins) accepts this subjection and starts to reinforce the subject-position themselves as my informants often referred to themselves and others according to their employment status.
The importance of the discourse of subject-positioning is also evident in Nagako Tomioka’s blog that I’ve included in the introduction chapter. While she explains her story of sexual harassment, she equates her abuse to the inappropriate subject-position she had experienced:

One of the head priests who we [Tomioka Hachiman shrine] have a close relationship with, called me *without an honorific title* (by first name), groped my body, held my hand, and put his arm around my waist. [...] Wouldn’t you, [the reader] be disgusted as well? A stranger calling you *Omae* (a degrading form of You), and groping you can’t possibly be fun right? (Nagako Tomioka Official blog post)

The lack of her honorific title, and being subjected to an ill-mannered discourse are mentioned both times before the sexual harassment, implying that her subject-position is equally, or even worse than the physical abuse she had experienced. Especially for Nagako Tomioka, who then held the title of Chief Priestess (*Guuji*), it was vital to be positioned in the correct hierarchical order. This can also be understood as: subjection (and in turn, ISA) is only effective when the subject is put in the right subject-position that reflects its immediate social structure.

In a slightly different approach to subject-positioning, I want to show an example of what Kondo noted as “my friends, neighbors, and co-workers located themselves in larger contexts, among which the most often invoked were distinctions based on firm size and the symbolic geography of Tokyo” (Kondo, 1990:74). Similar to the idea of ‘brand-name nation and people,’ (Chapter V) subject-positioning occurs as a direct reflection of power structures (hierarchical order) in which the subject positions his/herself through social distinction. To give an example of this, when I turned down the job offered by Naoko (Deity Worker), she asked me which shrine I’ll be working at instead. When I replied that I’ll be a Miko at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, she became noticeably excited and replied, “Wow, Tomioka Hachiman shrine? That is amazing! It’s a large and famous shrine with such a long and distinguished history so I think you will learn a lot from them. And how does training work?” When I answered that Tomioka Hachiman shrine is holding a training day two weeks prior to New Years, she said she was impressed and that it was as expected from such a distinguished shrine.
In another example, during the training day for the first and second time Miko Jokins, one of the Miko Honshokus at Tomioka Hachiman shrine yelled across the large conference room that silenced all seventy of the new shrine maidens.

I don’t know what you have seen in other shrines or in the media, but we [at Tomioka Hachiman shrine] prohibit bangs\(^{(25)}\) [of shrine maidens]. Bangs are for infants.

While acknowledging that the modern image of Miko has been appropriated freely in the media and other shrines, this Miko Honshoku differentiated Tomioka Hachiman shrine from others by emphasizing the powerful subject position. This discourse of power and organizational identity is seen in Kondo’s analysis of the phrase ‘uchinokaiha’ (Kondo, 1990). Just as Kondo encountered this phrase uchi no kaisha (our company) throughout her fieldwork, I heard Miko Honshokus and Deity Workers constantly repeat uchi no jinjya (our shrine), as seen in the above quote. Kondo notes this phrase as “an arena for the exercise of authority and the generative play of power, giving rise to a plethora of creative practices and often creating warm feelings of solidarity and commitment.” (Kondo, 1990:212). This notion of ‘our shrine’ represents a collective identity in which the power structure of Shinto shrines become evident in the positioning of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ As Kondo argues, it’s a representation of solidarity and commitment to ‘our shrine,’ while this exclusive identity helps Miko Honshokus and Deity Workers exercise their authority (through positioning) and elicits loyalty from Jokins.

3.4 Chapter Summary

The linguistic rupture of “literature” has given birth to the Emperor System and has helped form Japanese nationalism and a nationwide kinship unity. Because Kojiki (Records of Ancient matter) was categorized as “literature” which held the structure of intra-national Western notion of denial of acculturation, the Emperor and Shinto became the characterizing symbols of super-state nationalism. And because of its hyper nationalism and the emphasis on unity, the emperor (father) and the Japanese subjects (children) became a fundamental aspect of the family unity, that is the nation-state. As ISA of Shinto discourse has made it clear, these nationalistic ideologies have been accepted and accelerated by Japanese subjects themselves. The authenticity of the

\(^{(25)}\) Shaped cutting of the front part of the hair.
Japanese identity lies in the homogeneous and uniform whole, to which Shinto became the ultimate family unit that fosters uniformity of its subjects.
Chapter IV

This chapter aims to examine gender politics and hegemonic femininity in modern Japanese society represented through Mikos, and how this ideology is reinforced by shrine employees, family, friends and Mikos themselves. The socio-politically perplexing identity of Mikos is constructed through cultural patterns from both in and out of the realm of Shinto. I am employing sociologist Mimi Schippers’s theory on hegemonic femininity in analysing gender structures, Anne Allison, Chikako Ozawa-De Silva and Amy Borovoy’s theories on the dichotomy of femininities in understanding the fragmented idealism of Mikos, and Van Gennep’s theory of Rites of Passage to explore Miko’s initiation ceremony and the effects of the rites in constructing their uniform social identities. Most of the empirical data in this chapter is drawn out of interviews with my informants and participant observation during my field research at Tomioka Hachiman shrine.

4.1 Hegemonic Femininity in Modern Japan

A clarification of what is meant by femininity in this context is necessary to begin my analysis on hegemonic femininity in contemporary Japanese society, represented through shrine maidens. By femininity, I am not referring to physical characteristics that determine a person’s sex, but rather exploring what Iris Marion Young described as “a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves (Young, 1980:31). I would like to stress that my intention is not to simplify all female existence as a hegemonically feminine experience, but to examine reoccurring cultural patterns and signs that are attached to Japanese femininity, and reinforced or sometimes refused by shrine maidens through their female subjectivity. That being said, while female subjectivity is often inevitable for the female body, femininity, on the contrary, is up to the individual to employ its structures and conditions. However, in a patriarchal society, women are structurally forced to appropriate femininity that is projected onto their subjectivity (Schippers, 2007). However, social hierarchies within femininity, and the subordinate relation to hegemonic masculinity delimits women from choosing their own female identity free from the social structure of gender.
The reader who is familiar with R.W. Conell’s defined theory of hegemonic masculinity might recall her denial for hegemonic femininity, because femininity in a patriarchal society is always constructed through gender structures that positions women subordinate to men (Connell, 1987). And thus, hegemonic femininity cannot hold the same dominant power position in a particular society as hegemonic masculinity does (Connell, 1987). In my analysis of the femininity of Mikos, I am applying Mimi Schipper’s theory on hegemonic femininity as ascendant in relation to pariah femininities26 (Schippers, 2007:94). Schippers argues that just as hegemonic femininity works to emphasize the dominant position of hegemonic masculinity through subordination of women, the domination of hegemonic femininity over other femininities (such as pariah femininities) aids in maintaining gender order and male domination (Schippers, 2006).

With hegemonic femininity being clarified, this chapter analyzes different types of femininity that were employed or discussed during semi-structured interviews with three of my key informants and participant observation at Tomioka Hachiman shrine.

During my field research, I conducted three structured interviews with three informants who worked as Miko Jokins at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. During the six days I worked as a Miko Jokin at the shrine, I got to interact with a few dozen Miko Jokins and Miko Honshokus, and a couple Deity Workers, but I decided to conduct a sit down interview with three informants who became more than workplace acquaintances. My first key informant, Shiho, holds a bachelor’s degree in Japanese, and worked full-time at fitness center, and at the time of my research, it was her third year working as a Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. Shiho and I were both stationed at the West Tent27, located in front of the main shrine, where we sold amulets and sacred goods. After a couple weeks after our final shift at the shrine in mid-January, I met her at a cafe near her workplace and conducted a semi-structured interview. After a few basic questions about her name, education and age, I asked her for the reason why she applied to become a Miko at Tomioka Hachiman shrine three years ago when she first applied. She answered:

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26 An alternative word/concept to subordinate femininities. Pariah femininities are characteristic that pose a threat to the existing gender structure. For example, women who exercise ‘masculine’ characteristics.

27 Seventy Miko Jokins that were hired by the shrine for the new year were put into groups of five to ten people and stationed in different functions of the shrine. (Chapter II)
Shiho: I was just looking for a short term part time job. My mother told me about the position and I thought it sounded interesting. I was excited that I might be able to wear the real Miko uniform. I only applied because I live close by. I wasn’t interested enough to look for other shrines.

Tomioka Hachiman shrine is located just a couple minutes away from a famous Buddhist temple. Buddhist temples also attract a large number of visitors over the new year holidays, and when I approached this temple in November, 2016 to ask if they were hiring for the holiday season, they said they were looking to employ a couple dozen people for their amulets and sacred goods sales: similar to the role of Miko Jokins at shrines. A temple and a shrine were located almost next to each other and employing holiday workers for near identical tasks to one another. Why then, do more young women chose to work at shrines instead of temples? Shiho replied, “I didn’t see a job posting for the temple. Even if there was one, I wouldn’t have applied because I don’t go to temples that often.” In the case of Shiho, it was the alluring nature of wearing a Miko uniform and working at a shrine close to home that made her apply to become a Miko.

My second key informant Maki was a graduate student in Marine Biology, and at the time I met her, it was her 4th year working as a Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. Similarly to how I met Shiho, Maki and I were both stationed at the West Tent and became acquainted there. A few days after I interviewed Shiho, I met with Maki at a cafe for an interview. I asked her for her initial intent when she applied to become a Miko four years ago.

Maki: I applied because I thought the Miko uniform was *kawaii* (cute). For my second year, I just applied because of the salary increase. I think both the animated and real Miko uniforms are so *kawaii* (cute). I’ve always liked *Inuyasha* (a Japanese cartoon where the lead character is a Miko) and I wanted to become [a Miko].

I asked her the same follow up question: Why not work at a temple? She replied “I prefer shrines. I really wanted to wear the uniform.” There’s a correlation between the two informants, and also with many of the young women I encountered in the field. Almost every Miko Jokin said they had applied for the job because of their desire to wear the uniform. (This phenomenon of uniform fetishism will be analyzed in Chapter V).

My final key informant, Ayana was in her last year of her undergraduate work in Global Studies, and was finishing up her Bachelor’s thesis at the time of my field research. As I knew she had worked as a Miko Jokin in high school, I asked her if she wanted to work at Tomioka Hachiman shrine with me. She agreed as she said this is the last year as a student and the last
chance to work as a Miko. At Tomioka Hachiman shrine, she was stationed to work inside the main shrine to assist Miko Honshokus and Deity Workers with the prayer rituals. Following my structured interview, I asked her why she originally applied to become a Miko in high school. She replied:

Ayana: I applied because my then-current boyfriend was the son of a head priest of a shrine.

I followed up with the question: would you have applied to work at a temple?

Ayana: No, because I can only wear the Miko uniform at shrines. I wanted to try on the uniform when I was in high school, and when my boyfriend’s mother asked me if I wanted to work during New Years, I said yes, but only if I get to wear the Miko uniform.

In all three interviews and during my participants observation, informants expressed their desire for a representational transformation into a Miko as their reason for applying for the position. Admiration for shrines, religion, or the actual duties of Miko were rarely discussed, but the Miko uniform drew great attention from young women who aspired to become a Miko.

In this section of the interview, the recurring concept of kawaii appeared central to understanding hegemonic femininity in Japanese society. Kawaii is an adjective for cute, adorable, and lovable, that is used to “describe things that are small, delicate, and immature” (Burdelski & Mitsuhashi, 2010). It is arguably the most fluid Japanese word that connotes a wide range of definitions and meanings depending on the social setting of its time of use. The recurrence of kawaii exceeded all other words or concepts I encountered in the field. As a follow up to my previous question about their intent of application, I asked my informants about the reaction they received when they told their friends and family about their new position at the shrine.

Shiho: My parents were happy for me, but my then-current boyfriend laughed and thought I was joking. When he realized that I was serious, he was happy for me but was surprised that non-virgins can work as a Miko.

Maki: My family was happy for me because they knew I wanted to try it out. My friends told me that I’ll be kawaii.

Ayana: Becoming a Miko is only seen as cosplay. When I told my friend that I’m going to be a shrine maiden this year, she said “Girls who become Mikos think they’re kawaii.” When I told people that I was going to be a Miko for Hikawa shrine [seven years ago], people were jealous of me. I had a boyfriend during both of the times I worked as a Miko. When I told them that I was going to be a Miko, they both reacted by saying how they’re excited to see me in the uniform... as a form of cosplay. This year, my boyfriend was in his
calamity year\textsuperscript{28} (yakudoshi) so he talked about how he might go for a purification ritual at the shrine I was working at. While he thinks of Miko as cosplay, he took his calamity year seriously.

I then asked how their interactions between the shrine visitors and themselves went.

Shiho: A lot of people commented on my unusual name. (Mikos at Tomioka Hachiman shrine wear name tags) Elderly men and women, and young men told me I’m kawaii. Quite a lot of men in their 30s and 40s told us that they wanted to buy the amulets and sacred goods from a female Miko [instead of male Jokins].

Ayana: My first year as a Miko, I was hit with a storm of visitor’s comments that all said I was kawaii.

Cuteness and the concept of kawaii has been widely discussed by many scholars to deconstruct Japanese social structures and psychology. Linguists Burdelski and Mitsuhashi note that kawaii has been a cultural phenomenon in Japan since the 1970s (Burdelski & Mitsuhashi, 2010:67). From its original meaning as an adjective to describe ‘cute’ objects, kawaii has transcended beyond its linguistic limitations. It can represent a form of lifestyle, communication and discourse, fashion, bodily movement, and other abstract concepts. However, kawaii is associated most closely with Japanese femininity (Kinsella qtd. in. Burdelski & Mitsuhashi 2010). My informants expressed their desire to become a Miko because of their kawaii femininity that Miko possessed through material representation (uniform), physical representation (appearance) and cultural symbolism. Emphasis on this femininity was reinforced by Mikos themselves, shrine employees, shrine visitors, friends, and kin. If kawaii symbolizes “small, delicate, and immature” objects or people (Burdelski & Mitsuhashi, 2010), the desire to obtain such submissive and subordinate social status appears perplexing. However, if we refer back to Schippers’ theory of hegemonic femininity as a characteristic that reinforces gender hierarchy and the dominance of hegemonic masculinity (Schippers, 2007), it is evident that kawaii is in fact a distinct feature of hegemonic femininity in Japanese modernity. Kawaii is an antonym to kakkoii (an adjective to describe cool objects) that is mostly used to describe masculinity and male attractiveness (Burdelski & Mitsuhashi 2010). This then stresses the significance of kawaii, a comparison with

\textsuperscript{28} Yakudoshi: a calamity year according to the Shinto calendar for people born on a specific year. The calamity year differs depending on your sex, and a lot of people go to shrines to get an exorcism or carry amulets to remove the bad spirits. For more on this, anthropologist David C. Lewis has conducted extensive research on the concept of calamity year in urban Japan (Lewis, 1998).
Japanese hegemonic masculinity, as a triumph of all other femininities that can pose a threat to the existing structures of gender relations.

While I have stated that *kawaii* is the characteristics of hegemonic femininity, my informants also revealed their puzzling relationship the subordinate status *kawaii* interpellates them in. Like all other socially constructed concepts, femininity too, is subjected to constant change. While cute and fragile femininity remains dominant in Japanese society, this social structure becomes an obstacle for female succession in shrines. On the subject of Miko Honshoku (Full-time Miko), I asked my informants for their thoughts on them and their status at the shrine, as my informants saw it.

Maki: I’ve always thought their hairstyle is *kawaii*. I like how they wrap their hair with paper. Mikos are always friendly and smiling. [About their status] they are at the very bottom of the shrine hierarchy. [Because of the age restriction] once they pass a certain age… I guess they have to move onto another position within the shrine. I think of them as the face of shrines. Shrine maidens are young and *kawaii* girls.

I then asked her if she would be interested in pursuing this role as her professional career.

Maki: No, I don’t want to become a Miko Honshoku but would like to continue working as a Miko Jokin [every new years]. Miko Honshokus can’t continue to work forever and I don’t want to be sent away to another position. Even if I could do it for a long time, I don’t want to because it’s physical labor and I don’t want to be selling amulets and just cleaning the shrine forever.

Ayana: [Miko’s] duties are essentially what housewives do. They’re like the leader of shrine janitors. When they dance the Kagura (the sacred dance) or assist in prayer rituals, it’s shamanistic and spiritual but in their daily routines, they seem like housemaids.

While in the previous section of the interview, all three informants projected *kawaii* characteristics to the symbolism of Miko and indicated their desire to attain such qualities, here, they show little to no interest in being subjected to a shrine hierarchy that suppresses the socio-political power of Miko. Here then, hegemonic femininity that had appeared desirable pre-contextualization, loses its allure when alternative social hierarchies appear to counteract the dominance of hegemonic femininity by emphasizing the subordinate social status of Miko. This implies that hegemonic femininity in this particular society is 1) a set of cute, fragile and neotenous characteristics that enhance and empower a woman’s status within the hierarchy of femininity due to their superiority over subordinate femininities, but 2) loses its dominance when

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29 Only *Miko Honshokus* wrap their hair in paper.
an alternative structural hierarchy (organizational structure: gender politics in Shinto shrines) prohibits women from maintaining the social dominance of hegemonic femininity.

4.2 Identity Construction

In Chapter II, I noted the formation of Shakai (society) as a newly formed conception in the midst of late nineteenth century Meiji Reform (Weinstein, 1990). Here, the word Shakai-jin (Society person), stemming from Shakai, becomes crucial as it haunts all active members of Japanese society. Shakai-jin, translated as society-person refers to an adult who is a responsible member of society with a job and income (Okano, 1993). On the concept of Shakai-jin, ethnographer Kaori Okano notes, “Japanese society considers that securing a permanent position in the workforce, not necessarily leaving school itself, is a prerequisite for a youth (male or female), to become a Shakai-jin” (Okano, 1993:10). This implies that Shakai-jin (Society-person) and Otona (adult) are inseparable concepts, and thus, to be considered a member of Japanese society, one must be an adult who occupies a full-time position in the workforce. Shakai-jin defined as such, Kaori Okano argues in her more recent ethnography that the concept or word for ‘young adults’ doesn’t exist in the same way it does in many Western cultures (Okano, 2009:13). While being a young adult in the West works as a gradual transitioning process from childhood to adulthood (Okano, 2009:12), the absence of this process in Japan makes the transformation of teens into adulthood an abrupt and instantaneous process. When a young person graduates from school and enters the workforce, they instantly become a mature adult and a Shakai-jin (Okano, 1993). This then, indicates that the Japanese concept of ‘child’ and ‘adult’ are in binary opposition, where one is an accepted part of society and the other isn’t. This concept of Shakai-jin becomes essential in understanding the perplexing social status of Miko as young, unmarried women who are often students but who also fulfill their duties as Shakai-jin by being a part of the workforce.

Here, I would like the reader to refer back to the Chapter II where I discussed the significance and evolution of the concept of makeup and physical appearance. During the training day, one Miko Honshoku yelled across the room where seventy Miko Jokins were changing into their uniforms:
I don’t know what you’ve seen in the media or other shrines but hairbangs are for infants and it’s prohibited at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. The same goes for heavy make up. Do you want to buy a sacred amulet from a Miko who has eyeliner or fake lashes on? No one wants that. If you have hairbangs, make sure to use hairpins to keep all your hair in place, and go light on the make up.

Later that day, during the all employee introduction meeting, the head priestess (guuji) Nagako Tomioka, who kept silent during most of the meeting reached out for the mic and said “You are all girls, please make sure to wear some pink blush and lipstick during your shifts.” This very specific request on shrine maiden’s physical appearance was also listed in Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s Miko Jokin duty guideline, which was handed out during the training day.

Having the Miko Honshoku and head priestess’s comments in mind, I asked my informants if something similar had happened in their previous training day(s). Shiho replied:

Shiho: No one yelled at us like [the Miko Honshoku did], but they told us that not wearing any makeup is unacceptable as a Shakai-jin (society-person) and as a Josei (women).

This implies that being a shakai-jin and being a woman are inseparable and interconnected. Make-up then, is a crucial representation of female maturity and a tool for female inclusion into society in Japan. However, employing this representational act isn’t completely up to the individual, as specific guidelines on make-up are given by the shrine.

During the training day, Tomioka Hachiman shrine provided a number of information materials to Miko Jokins. Out of those materials: Tomioka hachiman shrine’s Jokin kinmu kokoroe (Jokin duty guideline), included a section on Mikos appearance during their duty. The guideline stated:

It is important for your makeup to signify cleanliness. Lip color must be in red or pink, and make sure to not be too flashy. (Hair coloring and nail polish are strictly prohibited).

While what is meant by ‘cleanliness’ is rather ambiguous, Miko Honshoku’s disapproval of eyeliner and false eyelashes helps us deduct excessive eye make-up as a proper representation of cleanliness and female maturity. If 1) being a woman and a shakai-jin is inseparable, and 2) applying ‘clean’ makeup is a prerequisite for these positions, this implies that cleanliness and purity are symbols of female maturity, and representing these characteristics is the only way for
inclusion into society. This notion of *Shakai* (society) is also a preoccupation in Cambridge’s study of Japanese uniforms as he notes:

> The increasing authority of the Japanese state—a Foucaultian 'micro-physics of power' exerted in [the post-Meiji uniform system] was replicated in the private sector in the early twentieth century through the introduction of liveries...An awareness of *seken* (the eyes and ears of the community) is instilled at an early age—affecting behaviour even before authority is exerted over the uniformed body of the school student by the state. (Cambridge, 2011:180)

Uniforms are an early insertion of government power, in which the uniformed subject cultivates an identity in contrast to the *Shakai* (or *Seken* as Cambridge notes). Because makeup is standardized and enforced as a part of the official aesthetics of Mikos, makeup can be seen similar to Cambridge’s analysis of uniform, as an integral part of identity construction in which the wearer cultivates an awareness of the *Shakai* (society) and their uniformed subjectivity. Makeup, like uniforms, is a way to police the body and its subjectivity, which Cambridge characterizes as a “Foucaultian micro-physics of power” (Cambridge, 2011:180).

In a slightly different approach to makeup and its subjection, in anthropologist Anne Allison’s research of Japanese cartoons and toys in 2000, she emphasizes the importance of makeup in her analysis of fashion-action heroes such as Sailor Moon. Characters of Sailor Moon go through a morphing process called ‘make-up’ where the lead female heroes become empowered through the process of beautification (Allison, 2006). To align Allison’s analysis with my own, appropriating makeup in public is not only an inclusion into *Shakai* (society) but also signifies empowerment, and thus is perpetuated and reinforced by female subjects themselves. An implication of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) in which the subjects accept and normalize the ideological structure (Chapter III).

The perplexing social status of Miko becomes evident when we look into cultural patterns attached to female maturity. On the subject of *Shakai-jin*, medical anthropologist Ozawa-de Silva examines the concept as an integral process in deconstructing the increasing phenomenon of internet suicide pacts in Japan (Ozawa-de Silva, 2008). She argues that Japanese female maturity is intimately connected with motherhood, and sometimes seen as the only way to maturity (Kinsella 1994; Lebra 1984; Pike and Borovoy 2004 qtd. In. Ozawa-de Silva, 2008). She also
notes that the young women’s obsession on kawaii (cuteness) is a “form of protest against the
gendered role of mature motherhood,” an alignment with Allison and Cambridge's understanding
of the postwar kawaii culture. (Kinsella, 1994; Ozawa-de Silva, 2008; Allison, 2006; Cambridge,
2011). This theory can be employed to analyze my informants’ desire to attain such kawaii
femininity of Mikos, but also explains their withdrawal of admiration for the position. While
neotenous characteristics of Miko represent hegemonic femininity and thus elevates their social
status, their occupational restriction on marriage and childbearing prohibits them from attaining
true female maturity of motherhood as Ozawa-de Silva described. And if motherhood is essential
to female maturity, Mikos’ subjectivity as a Shakai-jin is challenged due to their lack of ability to
partake in such activities. Similar to this dichotomy of ideal femininity (kawaii) and mature
femininity (Shakai-jin), in Allison's analysis of Sailor Moon, she notes, “given the time-space
compression indulged by the story, Usagi [Sailor Moon] is thus a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl
who, at the same time, has a long-standing partner and also a child (Allison, 2000). Sailor Moon
exists in two time spaces simultaneously where in one universe she’s a middle school student, and
in another, she’s a mother and a wife. This is a representation of the fragmented and idealized
notion of women in Japan, in which women are expected to possess neotenous and mature
femininity simultaneously. A fragmentation and discrepancy of femininity is also reflected in the
subjectivity of Mikos, as the public sees them as kawaii girls while the shrine enforces them to be
a mature Shakai-jin (society-person). This is pivotal in my analysis on Miko’s identity and
symbol as socio-politically perplexing, as they symbolize dominant female characteristics
(hegemonic femininity) through their ‘clean’ and ‘pure’ representation, but cannot be a complete
integral part of society as a Shakai-jin until they achieve ‘complete maturity’ through
motherhood.

4.3 Rites of Passage - Initiation Ceremony

Van Gennep defined rites de passage (rites of passage) as “rites which accompany every
change of place, state, social position and age” (Van Gennep, 1960). In his theory of rites of
passage, the process can be divided into three phases: separation, transition (liminal) and
incorporation (Van Gennep, 1960). In this section, I will analyze the initiation process of Mikos

30 It is traditionally prohibited for Mikos to get married or have children.
in accordance with the three phases of rites. From the job interview to the first hours of the training day as the separation rite, initiation ceremony (purification and worship rituals) as the transition rite, and the introduction meeting as the incorporation rite.

About a week after I had submitted my resume for the position of Miko Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, I got a call from the shrine to come in for an interview in November, 2016. On the day of the interview, I headed to their wedding ceremony hall where the interview was being held. As I entered the building, I saw a couple of Miko Honshokus greeting the applicants and assisting them in registering their attendance at the reception. Once the registration had been made, I was given a number and advised to wait upstairs until my number was called. In the large waiting room that held roughly thirty young women at the time I was there, we were each given a small piece of paper with short questions on them. The questions were regarding the applicant’s availability, preferred working hours, commuting method and time, and the intent of application. After waiting for about ten minutes, my number was called together with four other applicants, and we were escorted to a smaller room by a Miko Honshoku. This Miko Honshoku is Tomoko Miko, who I ended up being stationed together with at the West Tent where she was the lead Miko.

As Tomoko Miko opened the door to the interview room, a provisional supplicant priest (gonnegi) stood inside the room greeting us to come in. Each applicant bowed deeply while saying shitsurei shimasu (roughly translated as, excuse me) as they passed the priest. As the applicants entered, we were instructed to sit in the five chairs along the wall. Tomoko Miko and the priest sat across from us with all five of our resumes laid out on the wide table in front of them. Upon being seated, Tomoko Miko explained the interview structure and announced, “Now, we would like you to individually stand up, state your name, reason for applying and walk straight towards us to hand the piece of paper we had you fill in earlier.” The young woman sitting on the far left began the process as she stood up and followed the request. When the applicants walked up to Tomoko Miko, they bowed deeply while holding up the paper with both of their hands for Tomoko Miko to take it out of their hands. This is a body movement familiar to many Japanese as a social indicator of respect, gratitude and humility to express the power structure in a particular interaction.
The applicants in this particular group were young women between the age of 18 and 20, and most of them had no prior working experience. Age is one of the most important aspects of becoming a Miko as most shrines have rigid age restrictions. At Tomioka Hachiman shrine, the job posting for Jokins was exclusively for women and men between the age of 18 to 25. On the subject of age, my informant Ayana mentioned that she made a remark during her interview as, “I’m probably the oldest one in this group as I just turned 24.” Tomoko Miko and the priest responded by laughing and told her “Don’t worry. We’ve hired Mikos up to the age of 28 before.” During my research, I encountered a few job postings for Miko Honshoku that explained the age restriction as a way to support young professionals’ career development. While I found a few explanations on this guideline for Miko Honshokus, the reason for the age restriction on Miko Jokins was never found. The position of Miko has traditionally been exclusive to unmarried women due to religious reasons that young virgin women possess a certain purity and sacredness that transformed them into prophets and shamanists. This status of purity has an age restriction of mid to late twenties, regardless of one’s marital status.

Many of my informants between the age of 22 and 24 talked about this sensitive concept of their age as a Miko. Ayana was 24 years old at the time of my research and she displayed a clear awareness of her age during the job interview and later during the shifts as she hadn’t encountered another Miko of the same age or older. A year after my field research, I contacted Shiho to see if she continued her work as a Miko Jokin, and she mentioned that it was her final year as a Miko as she had turned 24. When I asked Shiho if she was quitting because someone told her to resign, she replied “No, no one told me to [quit] but I just don’t feel comfortable about my age anymore. It’s hard when everyone around you is a college student.” Another informant I met in the West Tent told me “I’ve always wanted to become a Miko but I was already 23. I thought to myself, if I don’t apply to become a Miko this year, I would never be able to do it.” Here, I argue that this obsession with age is the first phase of the rites of passage: separation. Through the application and interview process, Mikos gain a numeric identity with an expiration

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31 During my field research, a dozen young men worked as a Jokin at Tomioka Hachiman shrine. These men carry out the same duties as Miko Jokins, but are not addressed as Miko. Male Jokins wear a green hakama (traditional pants), instead of the red hakama which Mikos wear.
date. It is no longer the religious marital restrictions that leads to Mikos’ age restriction, but that of cultural patterns attached to the concept of age.

This separation phase not only helps subjectify these young women into a hierarchy of age, but it also separates them from their everyday social identities through material objects (uniform) and communications (discourse structures between Miko Jokins and shrine employees). Applicants who were selected to become a Miko Jokin were called in for a mandatory unpaid training day in December, held at the same wedding hall as the interview. When I entered the building, a Miko helped me register and instructed me to go upstairs to find my section: West Tent. I went up the stairs and found the same room I had been in before for the interview, but this time a large whiteboard stood in front of the door as I entered the room. The whiteboard had a map of the room and indicated where to sit depending on one’s station. After I found my section on the whiteboard, I walked into the room where over seventy young women sat in silence. I found my seat as my name tag was placed on a pile of papers and the Miko uniform. A few minutes after I arrived, the training day begun.

The large wedding hall was occupied by seventy Miko Jokins and a few Miko Honshoku that stood at the front of the room, watching over their new employees. Before any formal introduction or ice breakers, the first thing Miko Honshoku announced was for everyone to undress and strip down to their underwear so they could teach the Miko Jokins how to properly wear the uniform. The room kept its silence but the Jokins looked around at each other in what seemed to be confusion and discomfort. In a later interview with Ayana, she described this experience as:

Ayana: It felt like I was in a concentration camp. We were forced to suppress our thoughts and feelings and just obey their orders. I lost control of myself and didn’t understand why I was there or what I was doing there.

This metaphysical state of liminality Ayana described implies the stripping of everyday Western clothes as a separation from their old identity, but this process also overlaps with the transition phase (Van Gennep, 1960). The interview in November provides ontological indicators relating to age and female subjectivity, and the representational transformation through material objects (uniform and makeup) on the training day is one long ‘preliminal’ phase (Van Gennep, 1960),
where socio-cultural identities of the participants are gradually separated and reshaped both physically and metaphysically to fit the ideologies of Shinto. Representational hegemony of Mikos: uniformity of one another through uniforms, makeup and hairstyles, assist in rapid transformation from the preliminal state to the liminal state of ‘self’ as Ayana expressed. As she described, “losing control of herself” is the crucial characteristic of entering the liminal transition phase.

The transition phase continues as newly transformed Miko Jokins were taken by Miko Honshoku and a few priests to the main shrine for the initiation ceremony. They instructed the Miko Jokins to line up in single file to wash their hands and mouth with water\textsuperscript{32}, and then to proceed inside to the main shrine. Once Miko Jokins entered the main shrine, they sat on the aligned chairs facing towards Hachiman (Shinto deity of warriors). When everyone was seated, the priest introduced the Miko Jokins as servants to the dieties during the holiday season, and proceeded with the purification ritual. After the Miko Jokins’ bodies and souls were purified, two Miko Honshoku came out to dance the *Kagura* (sacred ritual dance). The dance lasted for roughly five minutes and then the priest rang the large gong that stood in front of the room to signal a moment of silence and a prayer for succession. After this, Miko Jokins were instructed to leave their seats and line up to drink the sacred sake and receive a gift (sugar that was previously offered to the deities) as a closing ritual.

As Ayana mentioned her liminal mental state during the undressing process, I asked her how she felt about this initiation ceremony.

*Ayana:* We all stood in line as we were ordered, bowed, washed our hands and mouth, drank sake... I was thinking if this was poison, we’ll all be dead. My head and *kokoro* (heart) were empty during the entire ritual.

*Kokoro*, transcending its literal translation as heart, can also be understood as the metaphysical part of the ‘self’ where knowledge, emotion and will are produced and exercised\textsuperscript{33}. Here again, she expresses her fading sense of ‘self’ as the initiation ceremony continued to guide the Miko Jokins through the liminal transitioning process. This ceremony was the final step of the second

\textsuperscript{32} This is a ritual all visitors of shinto shrines go through as they enter the main gate.

\textsuperscript{33} *Kokoro* is constantly referred to in Shinto discourse (Chapter III).
phase: transition (Van Gennep, 1960), as Miko Jokins were brought back into the postliminal stage of incorporation after this initiation ceremony.

The official introduction to the shrine, employees, and the job itself began after the Miko Jokins got back to the wedding hall from the initiation ceremony. When the Miko Jokins entered the wedding hall, they were joined by a dozen male Jokins who had changed into their male uniform in the room next door. The head priestess (Nagako Tomioka) and the same gonnegi (provisional suppliant priest) from the interview sat in front of the Jokins and introduced the shrine employees and their titles, the history of Tomioka Hachiman shrine, and what is expected from Jokins during their duty. This can be seen as the final phase of the rites of passage: incorporation (Van Gennep, 1960), as Miko Jokins went through the first two phases of physical and metaphysical transformation and has finally been accepted into this society as a member of the shrine. The incorporation phase signifies the rejoining of the newly transformed members into a particular group (Van Gennep, 1960). Through the first two phases, Miko Jokins gained a new status as purified and sacred servants of the dieties, and they were placed into the social structure of the shrine together with the male Jokins in the final phase of rites.

4.4 Chapter Summary

I have analyzed the Miko’s obsession on uniforms and kawaii in relation to Mimi Schipper’s theory on gender structures to contextualize Japanese modern femininity. Hegemonic femininity is a triumph of all femininities because of its submissiveness to masculinity, and thus unthreatening femininities such as neotenous kawaii becomes idealized. However, because maturity of women is intrinsically tied to maternity, and attaining such qualities is a fundamental part of being a society-person (shakai-jin), Miko’s socio-political identity becomes fragmented, as in one sense they possess hegemonic femininity (kawaii) but also have to possess maternal femininity to be included into society. The initiation ceremony (rites de passage) interpellates Mikos into uniform subjects, in which a new collective identity is given as the subjects’ individual identity becomes detached through aesthetics, discourse, and idealism.
Chapter V

This chapter aims to analyze the hyper-consumerist culture, commodity animism, post-war consumer identity, uniformity of modern Japan and discourse of commodity. My analysis is based on seven semi-structured interviews, participation observation, and archival research. Theoretical analysis is anchored in Anne Allison’s study on the ontology of Japanese materiality and commodity fetishism, and Nicolas Cambridge’s theory on the Japanese identity construction through sartorial patterns.

5.1 Social Analysis of Commodity Animism

Commodity animism in Shinto doesn’t follow that of the popularized theory of modern techno-animism defined by Erik Davis (1998). The global techno-animism trend, as Anne Allison argues originated in Japan during the 1990’s with the rise of child-catered digital pets and now abundant in our daily lives through smart phones and computers, elicits a fetishistic dependency on digital objects fragmenting the self through extending our cognition and emotions onto techno-objects. On the contrary to the structures of techno-animism, the commodity animism in this chapter follows the traditional Shinto animism of omnipotent strength in inanimate objects (Allison, 2006; Marenko, 2014). Omnipotent objects in modern Shinto, not exclusive to god nor wealth (in the sense of values), represent an object charged with spiritual energy, where the action of the object possessor can change one’s future. In other words, karma is often associated with such spiritual objects: a sign of acculturation between Shinto and Buddhist ontology. Here, I will analyze modern Shinto, and more broadly Japanese commodity animism through several encounters in the field.

In 2002, Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s spring edition of their official newsletter reported as following:

Doll Burning Ritual: To answer your concerns about how unbearable it is to just throw away your dolls and stuffed animals that have been a part of your family and daily lives, and that you want to show your appreciation for them, we’ve begun our doll burning ritual. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2002)

34 Buddhism came to Japan some 1500 years ago through China and Korea (Dunn, 1972: Sotoyama, 2013).
Accompanied with a picture of a priestess performing a burning ritual, the prices of such service are listed, depending on the size of the doll. If the doll is less than 30 cm, the burning ritual will cost 2000 yen, and for dolls between 31 to 100 cm, the service is available for 3000 yen. In the fall of 2002, the same ritual was advertised in the newsletter as the following:

Thank your dear doll: To answer your request that it is unbearable to throw away your cherished dolls that have been a part of your family, we offer doll burning rituals. Our priests (shinshoku) will conduct a purification ritual (oharae) and ritual incantation to show appreciation and rest the doll’s spirit. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2003)

This doll burning service is offered as a part of the Shinto ritual of burning amulets, talisman and lucky charms from the previous years (otakiage). The idea is that sacred commodities lose their potency after one year and must be returned to the shrine for a type of closing ritual for the object’s spirit to get purified and rest in heaven. A ritual that supports Joy Hendry’s theory on ritualized ontology of time in Japan, with the emphasis on opening and closing rituals (Hendry, 1997). This burning ritual is also a clear implication of Shinto animism that all commodities, regardless of the object’s association to god, have a spirit within them. This spirit, not necessarily emerging through its own creation, is cultivated and strengthened through connectivity with other spirits (Sotoyama, 2013). As philosopher James W. Heisig put it, “the Gods of Shinto are the life of the natural world in all its rich variety. The sacred does not lie outside of life but is one with it” (Heisig qtd. in. BBC). God and spirits are interchangeable in Shintoism, and because an object that has been taken care of by a spirit (whether it is deity, human or animal) can cultivate its own spirit, material objects can be both sacred and animate.

Commodity animism defined as such, the reason why the closing ritual is significant is because of Shinto’s ideology regarding death. The burning ritual is an important purification process for the spirited object. As Japanologist Charles Dunn notes, “Shinto is preoccupied with cleanliness and the avoidance of defilement, and prefers not to have anything to do with death.” (Dunn, 1972:4). As discussed in the previous chapters, purity and cleanliness have been deeply embedded into Shinto ideology and is central to the way of being. Hence, the burning ritual becomes essential in purifying the objects because 1) life and death are non-binary and spirits

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35 Liturgical text read in the form of a spiritual spell: Norito.
36 I use this term loosely as Shinto ‘heaven’ is not a concrete idea nor a place like that of Abrahamic religions.
that can live past their material ‘death’, and 2) physical death has been strongly associated with calamity (yaku) and throwing away objects without a proper ending ritual that purifies the spirits might result in bad karma.

This idea of commodity animism, the blurred line between god(s) and spirits, sacredness of spirited commodities, and calamity associated with death, were seen in three separate interviews I conducted with my informants Kazu, Taka and Aiko in 2018. Here, I want to remind the reader that all of my informants denied being religious in the sense that they believe\(^{37}\) in god. On the subject of what they think about Shinto amulets (omamori), Taka replied:

Taka: I like amulets. It’s a nice way to feel god closer. You can’t physically see god but when it’s in a form of an amulet, you can feel its presence.

So it is through objectification (in its literal sense) that you feel god’s presence, I replied.

Taka: Yes. But I don’t believe in god. Though I do think god exists.

Do you believe in the effects of the amulets, I follow:

Taka: For me personally, amulets aren’t about effects or potency but about security. By carrying an amulet with me, I feel safe. I’ve kept all of my amulets but I know you’re supposed to return\(^{38}\) them to the shrine after a year. I know I should bring it back [for a burning ritual] but it’s a hassle and I keep forgetting.

In a separate interview with Aiko, I asked the same question: What do you think about Shinto amulets?

Aiko: I take good care of them. By care, I mean I’ll never throw them away in the trash. Even if they’re no longer effective\(^{39}\), and need to be returned, I’ll never throw them away... even though amulets are merely a little pouch with a piece of wood with blessed words written on them.

Why do you take care of them if you don’t believe in Shintoism, I asked:

Aiko: Belief… maybe I do. I don’t want bad karma by throwing amulets away. I don’t really know how they make [amulets] but someone put in their prayers and spirits in the process of making them, right? So even if [the amulet] is no longer effective, I want to respect those prayers. We’re taught to take care of amulets from a young age, you know.

I then asked whose prayers/spirits are the amulets charged with:

\(^{37}\) Chapter II.
\(^{38}\) Once the amulet has lost its power, it is recommended by the shrines to bring it back for a burning ritual. (otakiage)
\(^{39}\) Most shinto amulets (omamori) are only potent for up to one year.
Aiko: The people at the shrine and the people who bought it for me. You don’t really buy amulets yourself, you know... people usually give it to you as a child. And that’s why I can’t throw them away, because of the prayers and spirits of the people who gave them to me… But I also can’t throw away amulets that I have purchased myself.

Do you believe in the effects of the amulets, I followed:

Aiko: That’s difficult…I want to. Or maybe I do. I did give an amulet to my friend before her university exam because I used to live near Yushimatenjin40 shrine. You know it’s the deity of academic success? Sugawara something...I don’t remember the deity’s name but I guess I believed in the effects of amulets then. Because I wouldn’t buy it for someone else if I didn’t believe in the effects, right? Yeah, I guess I do believe in it… a little.

In the third interview, Kazu explained his idea on amulets as the following:

Kazu: Amulets… I feel complicated about them. Of course if you go to a famous shrine, they make their amulets with actual prayers and spirits in them… For example, when I was sick last year, two of my friends gave me those real amulets.

I asked why did the amulet content him even though he doesn’t believe in Shintoism:

Kazu: I guess it’s the thought that counts. It showed that she really cares, especially because it wasn’t an over-the-counter amulet...My friend told me that she had a priest purify and invoke the amulet.

I then followed: are you bringing it back to the shrine for a burning ritual? He laughed and said:

Kazu: No, I don’t believe in [the effects of the amulets] so I’ll just keep it.

The sense of confusion on religious beliefs, omnipotent commodities, calamity associated with death has reflected the nature of Shinto as a custom and a tradition rather than the forced categorization as a religion since the 1868 Meiji Reform (Chapter II). Pre-Meiji Reform traditional Shinto used to be separated into two worship types: nature worship and ancestor (spirit) worship. Shinto deities are everything in nature from oceans, mountains to natural disasters, and ancestor spirits dwell in them (Sotoyama, 2013). As Taka mentioned, he doesn’t believe in god but thinks it exists; Shinto spirits or deities are more of an aura of existence than a single omnipotent entity. Commodity animism reflects this cosmology of Shinto as a belief system of Japanese philosophy and customs rather than the Western notion of religion. Shinto amulets (omamori) have historically been more of a calamity repellent than an active lucky charm, which explains why my informants expressed that the effects of such objects are secondary compared to the karma associated with abandoning spirited amulets without a burning (purification) ritual.

40 A famous Shinto shrine in Tokyo: devoted to the deity of learning.
5.2 Restoring Purity in Commodities

As mentioned throughout this thesis, purity and cleanliness have always been central to Shinto ontology. To give an example of this, all Shinto shrines, including those small self-run shrines, offer a water ablution station\(^41\) located at the entrance for visitors to purify their hands and mouth before visiting the deities in the main shrine. Originating from the legend of the great deity (\textit{Amaterasu})\(^42\), this is an essential ritual when visiting a Shinto shrine, which may be offered at multiple locations throughout the shrine to ensure the visitors purity before entering the deity’s realm. At these water ablution stations, a visitor can perform a quick self-purification ritual (misogi) that cleanses their physical body and mind from pollution (Sotoyama, 2013). This simple ritual only cleanses the individuals from pollution but not from sins: to cleanse the body and mind from sins and bad spirits, priests must perform a purification ritual in the main shrine (\textit{oharai}).

As a Shinto shrine visitor, I went through the water purification ritual at each shrine I visited (over twenty shrines during my field research), but only had a priest purify me from sins and bad spirits on four separate occasions: twice at Tomioka Hachiman Shrine while I worked as a Miko, and twice at Yasukuni Shrine as a private visitor.

Thus far, this idea of Shinto purity must sound not at all unique to the reader who is familiar with Mary Douglas’s theory on the universal ideology on purity across all cultures. However, my focus here is the ontology of Shinto purity that is central to commodity animism. The obsession on purity in Shinto is not exclusive to the body and soul, but extends to that of material objects. In 2016, I conducted a phone interview with Naoko, a Deity Worker (\textit{shinhsoku}) of a small shrine in Tokyo. Though she had acquired a national certificate of Deity Work (\textit{shinshoku}), she rarely worked as a priestess, and instead worked in shrine management, including recruiting and training Mikos for special occasions and seasons. Most small shrines like the one she worked at only employ part-time Mikos because they don’t need and/or can’t afford to employ a full-time Miko Honshoku. On the subject of Miko uniforms, I asked her how she maintains the uniform after each use.

\(^{41}\) Temizuya.

\(^{42}\) Amaterasu, according to the Records of Ancient Matters, was born during a purification ritual, after a male deity went to the land of dead (\textit{yominokuni}) to see his deceased wife (Sotoyama, 2013).
Naoko: I bring the red pants (*hakama*) to the cleaners but I wash the white tops (*hakui*) at home. I don’t know if this is actually effective… but I always put salt in the washing machine when I wash the white tops (*hakui*), as a small purification ritual, because I use the same machine to wash other clothes.

Salt is often used in Shinto rituals when purifying the body and mind. Here, Naoko uses salt to purify the material object (white tops) that has been exposed to other spirited objects that enters the same physical space: the washing machine. This is another example of commodity animism, where the material object itself has its own spirit and its own relationship to other commodities that possess spiritual energy. It is especially important for Mikos to be pure and clean because of their relationship to deities\(^43\), and thus restoring purity in their uniforms is also essential.

During the time I worked at Tomioka Hachiman Shrine in the winter of 2017, Miko Jokins were instructed to refrain from selling amulets that touched the ground. Such amulets had to be collected and sorted into a special box for the priests to re-purify the objects before reselling them. I came to learn this through my own experience of dropping an amulet that was about to be sold to one shrine visitor. In the process of wrapping the amulet in the sacred paper bag, the amulet fell out of the slippery paper. When I reached down to pick the amulet up to put it back in the paper bag, Tomoko Miko quickly came behind me and whispered, “you need to put it in the box for purification.” I apologized and told her I wasn’t aware of this. “It’s no problem at all. Just make sure you never sell a dropped amulet” she replied. On another occasion, a visitor who stood in front of the West Tent had put a large paper bag full of newly purchased amulets and sacred goods on the ground. As soon as Tomoko Miko saw this man, she ran across the tent while shouting, “Sir! You really shouldn’t have your amulets on the ground!”

At the end of each day, the white box was filled with ‘polluted’ amulets that had fallen to the ground and brought to the priest for a purification ritual before being resold the next day. Restoring purity is central to commodity animism in Shinto. Though pollution is inevitable and thus retaining purity is impossible, purification rituals offer a medium for commodities to regain their spiritual purity.

\(^43\) Chapter II and Chapter IV.
5.3 Discourse of Animism and Heritage

Ontology of animism and the importance of consumption was reflected throughout the discourse of my informants and shrines. Shinto is best described as a hereditary belief system that is built on nature and ancestry worships, but the word ‘belief’ has caused confusion in all of my informants. The word ‘belief’ in Japanese (shinjiru/shinko) implies an active practice of religion and none of my informants, including the three women who have been working as Mikos for several years thought of themselves as religious. Unlike most religions that only have one term to describe their followers (For example, Christians), Shinto has two separate terms for their members: Ujiko and Sukeisya. While Ujiko (literally ‘family child’) is attributed to those who worship ancestor deities that dwell in their region, Sukeisya stands for people who worship deities that are unrelated to them by blood or by region. Ujiko was originally exclusive to kin, but today, the word has reformed to include those who were born in the same region as the deities (Association of Shinto Shrines). Ujiko and Sukeisha implies that kinship structure has been central to the cultural practice of Shinto. However, despite these defined terminologies, the Associate of Shinto shrine, as well as other shrines explain Shinto as the Japanese people’s faith: a universal cultural belief that is deeply embedded in their ontology of life (Chapter III). On the subject of Shinto deities, Aiko noted:

Aiko: I can’t say I believe in it, but I’m not an atheist either. It’s more like… if a large tree is enshrined, I do feel thankful. But I don’t have a specific image of god as a single entity or multiple deities. I guess I do feel closer to Shinto compared to Buddhism. Logging forests or moving a large tree or stone feels like it’ll bring bad karma.

This ontology of nature worship that Aiko described can be seen in the Japanese counter words. Counter words are usually a single kanji attached to the number, to indicate what the object being counted is, and specific counter words are used to count deities and amulets that reflect Shinto cosmology. The counter word for Shinto deities are hashira (pole): a word used to refer to trees. Since counter words function as an indexicality, counting deities as ‘one tree’ implies that deities

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44 I have italicized ‘religion,’ as I’ve discussed the forced reformation of Shinto according to the Western notion of religion during Meiji Period (Chapter II).

45 In Japanese, they use a couple hundred types of counter words along with numbers to count different animate and inanimate objects, events and actions. For example, to count two dogs will be 2 hiki, two books are 2 satsu, and two minutes is 2 fun.
are in fact trees. Not necessarily that deities dwell in nature, but that nature (in this case, trees) itself is/are deities themselves. While the counter word for deities reflects animist ontology of nature worship, the counter word for amulets and talisman reflects commodity animism as they are counted as tai (body). Amulets and talisman are charged with spirits (from nature, humans, or deities) so each object becomes a body on its own: a clear implication of commodity animism that sees inanimate objects as animate.

Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s Jokin duty guideline (Jokin kinmu kokoroe) also had specific instructions for Miko Jokin and male Jokins discourse that reflected Shinto animism. Below are a few rules regarding commodity exchange (selling of amulets) listed in the guideline:

We do not ‘sell’ our amulets and sacred goods, but we ‘award’ them. In other words, we are handing down borrowed objects from deities [to the visitors].

If you are in charge of exchanging money, fully understand that you are not selling merchandise.

If someone asks you about the price, answer “Please post X yen,” or “It will be a post of X yen.”

[About handling cash] When you hold on to money from a visitor, answer “I will hold on to this X yen.”

When you greet or thank our visitors, never say “Thank you very much,” but instead say “Welcome [to our shrine] for your prayer visit.” (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2016)

This shrine discourse is not exclusive to Tomioka Hachiman shrine, but was seen in all of the Shinto shrines I visited in the field. The trickle down commodities (handing down) and the careful avoidance of retail discourse can be seen as a reflection of the hereditary structure of Shinto. Shrine visitors inherit amulets and sacred goods, in exchange for posting money temporarily, as the word ‘hold on’ suggests. Shinto’s ‘trading’ of commodities and services functions in a circular model where an object (amulets or money) is never obtained by an individual but rather continuously handed down and shared with the rest of the collective society. This is a dichotomy between individualism and collectivism,46 in which postwar consumerism has

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46 Most contemporary Japanologists (including Allison and Ivy) suggest that Japan has shifted dramatically towards an individualistic society during modernity, one in which people live in isolation of one another.
focused on the autonomy of the consuming subject, while Shinto discourse still represents the collective identity of kinship.

The notion of trickle down object was also seen in the food offerings of shrines. During my field research, I went to Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo twice for a purification ritual (oharae), once in the winter of 2017 and again in the summer of 2017. Purification rituals are available either by reservations or drop-ins for private or corporate individuals and groups. During both visits, I dropped-in to sign up for a ritual as a private group. After the purification ritual that took about thirty minutes in the main shrine, we were directed by a Miko to pick up our ‘gifts’ at the reception. This gift that is a type of souvenir including a ‘Deity Sweet’ and an amulet of Yasukuni shrine: a memento of the deities and a token of the newly purified spirit. On the back of the package of this Deity Sweet (sweet jellied red bean paste), there was a short description that stated “This is a piece of the Deity Sweets offered to the deities. We are sharing this with you as a hand down.” (Yasukuni shrine) Similarly to English, the expression ‘hand down (osagari)’ in Japanese is often used to describe an object passed down within a family. Whether it is a newly purchased amulet or an edible souvenir after a purification ritual, a shrine commodity is always a hand down from deities, as such I argue that it represents the hereditary structure of Shinto. As the notion of family is deeply embedded in the Japanese State-Nationalism, this national kinship structure is also central to the discourse of Shinto animism.

![Figure 5. A gift for visitors after the purification ritual. Deity Sweet to the left and Yasukuni shrine amulet to the right. (Yasukuni shrine)](image-url)
5.4 Post-War Commodity Fetishism

During its peak season every year, popular shrines drastically increase their capital income. In 2017, News Post Seven reported that the estimated gross of Tomioka Hachiman shrine for the holiday season is over $2 million (News Post Seven, 2017). Though it isn’t quite as lucrative for all shrines, the holiday season continues to thrive as a multimillion dollar market for famous shrines (The Mainichi, 2017). According to the National Police Agency, Tomioka Hachiman shrine hosts up to 200,000 visitors during the New Years, making it the seventh most visited shrine in Tokyo.

During my time at Tomioka Hachiman shrine, I witnessed this extreme profitability of shrine merchandise over the holiday season. Four large wooden boxes were set under the table at the West Tent for Miko Jokins to slide in the 10,000 yen note (Roughly $100) through a small slot on the top of the box. Hundreds and thousands of people surrounded the tent every day until the peak season ended in mid-January. This was a hectic environment that reminded me of Black Friday in the U.S. Money quite literally flew in the air, as visitors were tightly pressed against each other while shouting and reaching their arms out to Mikos to hand over their cash. Most visitors spent between $50 to $100 on amulets and sacred goods for family and friends, carefully choosing the right merchandise out of the 150 different types of amulets, talisman, lucky charms and sacred goods sold by the shrine. While elderly people often came to purchase paper-format talismans of a specific deity, and corporate groups purchased paper or wooden format talisman for business prosperity, private individuals almost never approached the tent with a set objective. Private visitors most commonly browsed across the tent, asking Miko Jokins about what each deity stands for, and what each amulet is potent for. Though the majority of the visitors were unfamiliar with the deities, different types of amulets, and how to handle them, most of them purchased a large quantity of amulets for themselves or as gifts to others.

47 The Mainichi reported that over sixty percent of head priests make less than $30,000 a year (The Mainichi, 2017).
48 There are 1866 shrines in Tokyo according to the Agency for Cultural Affairs’ “Religion Yearbook 2017.”
49 As I’ve explained in my Discourse Clarification section in Chapter I, shrines make it clear that these commodities are not merchandise, but a gift from deities. I am calling them merchandise for the purpose of a coherent execution of my analysis.
On the subject of post-war reconstruction of the Japanese economy, anthropologist Anne Allison who conducted her field research in Japan between 1999 and 2000 stated, “I am struck by how excessive if also mundane are the signs of material abundance surrounding me. This is one of the most visible, if superficial, markers of Japan at the other end of its postwar period—a national obsession with material things. A fantasy of abundance” (Allison, 2006). The newly defeated and collapsed empire in the post-war marked a period of rapid reconstruction of national identity, increase in labor force, access to the global economy, industrialization and technologization (Allison, 2006). As Allison put it, rebuilding the nation in this post-war period was “targeted far more at the personal level of lifestyle and material consumption also fueled reconstruction” (Allison, 2006).

Here I would like the reader to refer back to the comment “Amulets… I feel complicated about them,” expressed by Kazu during the interview with him. Why do you feel complicated about them, I asked:

Kazu: I feel weird about those over-the-counter amulets… it’s just kissing up to tourists. I don’t think they have any religious meaning to them. I mean, I understand that shrines need to make money somehow.

What do you mean by ‘kissing up to tourists’, I followed:

Kazu: Amulets are commercialized for tourist consumption. Not that it’s a bad thing… but I wonder how actual Shinto believers feel about it. Like do you really want these? Do you really think it’ll bring you good luck? I wonder how people from back then will think when they see the situation today.

On the subject of Japanese consumerism, Kazu noted:

Kazu: I feel like people just mindlessly follow what the media tells them. People like trends, and trends are safe. For example, if there were a pair of the same exact T-shirt: one is an expensive brand name T-shirt and the other is a cheap no-brand T-shirt, Japanese people will always go for the expensive one.

This Japanese affinity for brand-name commodities described by Kazu can also be seen in the case of a Japanese patient of psychiatrist Ken Ohira, in Allison's 2006 study. A young female patient of Dr. Ohira described herself and Japan as a brand-name people and nation. (Ohira qtd. In. Allison, 2006) Not necessarily being mentally sick but carrying a social ‘disease’, as Ohira argues, this patient described how the Japanese choose their school, work, partners, friends and their life entirely based on brand-names (Ohira qtd. In. Allison, 2006). To this, Ohira notes that in
post-war reconstruction, material wealth was the Japanese dream, yet “the ‘treasures’ of these earlier years have long been realized, and the “dream” has nowhere else to go. What Japan is now experiencing is a pathology of abundance” (Ohira qtd. In. Allison, 2006). While the notable trend of brand-name commodity consumerism is seen in any capitalist society, the Japanese idea of brand-names isn’t necessarily limited to that of luxury items or status, but has to do with social exclusivity (which in turn, is inclusivity) and uniformity. (Discussed further in the next section).

Continuing the interview, why do you think Japanese people will choose the brand-name option, I asked:

Kazu: I think it comes from the national characteristic derived from Shinto ideology. The proverb “Let the long one wrap you” (Nagai mononiwa makareyo) sums up the Japanese societal mentality. I think all Shamanistic religions are similar in the sense that you can’t disobey god… kind of like natural disasters. And it’s like that in offices too, right? You can’t say no to your superiors.

So you’re saying that consumerism projects Shinto ideologies, I questioned:

Kazu: In Japan, yes. I think it comes from Shinto. It went from believing in gods as omnipotent entities like natural disasters, to the absolute monarchy of the samurai way of life (Bushido) to the consumerist society today.

The Japanese proverb “Let the long one wrap you” is similar to the English proverb, ‘if you can’t beat them, join them,’ meaning, it’s better to obey those with greater power or status than you.

The total control government had over its citizens and business management during the rapid post-war reconstruction from the 1950s to 1980s changed Japan into a single corporate entity. (Allison, 2006) This alignment of business and government interest has been described as Japan, Inc., and it had a significant impact on post-war economic reconstruction. In Japan, Inc., consumers as well as laborers were invaluable in rebuilding the economy. While I will refrain from making the claim that Japan, Inc. directly reflected Shinto ontology, there are similarities in the two: a blind trust in superiors, valuing hierarchy, and devotion to one’s social group. Japanese consumerism emerged as a post-war governmentality, urging individuals to partake of massive commodity consumption in an attempt to reconstruct their national identity, and this structure is still prevalent in modern day Japan.

In the years of massive economic reconstruction, the concept of ‘Kawaii’ emerged as a resistance to the harsh labor market subjectivity the Japanese were interpellated into (more on this
in Uniform Fetishism). Cute characters such as Hello Kitty, first emerging in 1970s, increased their popularity in the late 1990s following the then-recent economic bubble burst (Allison, 2006). Cambridge describes the social phenomenon of kawaii as “a form of resistance to the existing masculine productivist ideology suffusing Japan—one played out through acts of consumption and escapism” (Cambridge, 2011:181). To give an example of this, Tomioka Hachiman shrine sold 17 different types of amulets, talisman and different sacred goods that featured Hello Kitty, at the time of my employment in 2016-17. First advertised in 2001 in the official newsletter of Tomioka Hachiman shrine, the Hello Kitty amulets were not only popular among children but attracted adults who expressed their desire for such commodities because of their cuteness. (Tomioka Hachiman Shrine, 2001) Allison noted in her 1999 field research in Japan that the abundance of cute character commodities is fetishstic and that they are “appropriated as symbols for personal, corporate, group, and national identity...Certainly, the images of cute characters are as omnipresent today as animist spirits” (Allison, 2006). Here then, if 1) Kawaii emerged as a resistance against harsh reality of Japan, Inc. in the 1980s and has expanded in its popularity after the post-bubble distress since the turn of the millennium, 2) character commodities function as a type of amulet itself, protecting the object possessor from reality with its cuteness, while blurring the line between the binary-opposite concept of child (non-society person) and adult (society person) (Chapter IV). The kawaii characters open a passage between childhood and adulthood, society and non-society, which are otherwise inaccessible after maturity.

While the need for active consumerists is crucial in any capitalist society, the Japanese education theorist Masaru Takahashi has made a unique claim on the relationship between the Japanese declining birthrate and consumerism. Takahashi argues that by the 1970s, the rapid modernization and post-war urbanization helped lessen the gap between urban citizens and farmers, and resulted in the demise of the collectivistic society (Takahashi, 2002). In a consumerist society, he argues, the ability to consume commodities determines one’s place in the social hierarchy, and in modern Japan, children are treated as mature consumerists because of the rapid depopulation (Takahashi, 2002). Takahashi stresses that the structure of Japanese consumerist society today is changing the traditional relationship between children and adults (Takahashi, 2002).
In 2013, Tomioka Hachiman shrine debuted their official shrine mascot: Miko-chi. “Come visit our super *kawaii* Miko-chi at Tomioka Hachiman shrine,” said the shrine on their official blog. A mascot, noticeably designed after a Miko is characterized by the enlarged eyes that take up half of the mascot’s neotenous face.

![Miko-chi](image)

**Figure 6:** Miko-chi captured on her first public appearance in 2013 (Tomioka Hachiman-gu Shamusho Nikki, 2013).

In 2016, the shrine’s official newsletter advertised the following novelty:

Novelty Miko-chi Lunch Box: Children who post above 7000 yen (Roughly $70) for their prayer ritual will receive the *kawaii* official Miko-chi Lunch Box as a novelty. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2016)

From the first archived newsletter in 2000, there is a noticeable trend in the last few years of marketing towards a younger audience. After its debut in 2013, Miko-chi has been featured in almost every newsletter, explaining different shrine rituals clearly catered towards children. While this can be seen as the shrine’s attempt at shrine education, the increased consumer marketing towards children can imply, as Takahashi argued, that children are a crucial actor in a consumerist society struggling with depopulation.

![Advertisement](image)

**Figure 7:** Advertisement for the ‘Miko-chi Lunch Box’ novelty gift in the 2016 Tomioka Hachiman shrine official newsletter. (Tomioka Hachiman shrine, 2016)
5.4 Uniform Fetishism

“When I hear the word Miko, I picture the costume and a shrine mascot,” said Aiko in our interview in 2018. When I asked her opinion on part-time Mikos, Aiko replied, “I feel like they just do it for fun as an excuse to wear the costume.” While Aiko’s image of Miko Jokins are based solely on stereotypes seen in the media, a fetishistic facination of the uniform was central in all of my informants who worked as a Miko Jokin (Chapter IV). “I applied [to become a Miko Jokin] because I thought the uniform was kawaii (cute). I think both the animated, and real life Miko uniforms are so cute” said Maki, and “I wanted to try the uniform when I was in high school, and when my boyfriend’s mother asked me if I wanted to work during New Years, I said yes, but only if I get to wear the Miko uniform,” said Ayana. Allison analyzes the Japanese emphasis on appearances as “sharply attended to, orchestrated according to a logic of commodity fetishism that, over the years, has come to reside ever more at the level of the person” (Allison, 2006). Uniform fetishism\(^{50}\) is a branch of commodity fetishism that has become a central post-war national identity.

“Historically, uniforms were used to keep a large group of people in order. But in Japan, the concept of uniforms is quite new. I think it fits the Japanese way of thinking really well,” said Kazu on the concept of uniforms. He continued,“first of all, anything resembling the modern concept of uniform was only seen in Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples back then. It’s only recently that uniforms are used by the masses, as a result of foreign influence. The sailor school girl outfit is a perfect example.” On the subject of Japanese fashion, design historicist Nicolas Cambridge notes, “appearing appropriately dressed became a crucial element in this endeavour and, in this respect, the Meiji Reform can be seen as a sartorial ‘year zero’ in the development of a contemporary fashion system and catalyst for the advent of a variety of strategic dress practices” (Cambridge, 2011:172). To understand the history of uniform fetishism in Japan, we must first return to the the late 19th Century Meiji Reform.

\(^{50}\) It should be clear to the reader that fetishism discussed in this chapter refers to that of Marxian commodity fetishism, which is not to be confused with the Freudian notion of sexual fetish. That being said, there is a uniform fetish that follows the Freudian framework of sexual fetish, but that is not the preoccupation of this thesis.
Originating in 1868, during the first major national reconstruction: Meiji Reform, military uniforms were formed to mimic that of Western uniforms. Inspired by the newly constructed Western military uniforms, by 1872, Western style school uniforms were established as a governmental policy (History of Uniforms, Muratado). What’s unique to the history of uniforms is that it marked an early instance of gender-bending in Japanese appearance, allowing female students to wear the traditional male pants (*hakama*). Though it marked an important shift in Japanese gender history, this new tradition caused anxiety in the public, followed by major newspapers publishing their disgust and disapproval of such behaviors. (Tanaka, 2003). By 1881, female students were prohibited from wearing male pants, and by 1891, women were prohibited from wearing Western style uniforms altogether (History of Uniforms, Muratado). However, by 1910, sailor uniforms for female students were introduced and Western style female school uniforms were standardized by 1930. During WWII, the government issued what was called the standardized national uniform for both male and female students, but was soon abolished in the process of post-war national reconstruction (History of Uniforms, Muratado). On the subject of Japanese school uniforms, Cambridge notes, “uniforms are the agency through which subjectivity is constructed and that the repetitive practices associated with the wearing of uniforms constitute Bourdieu style habit within which productive future members of society are nurture” (Cambridge, 2011:181). As Cambridge and other Japonologists such as Allison and McVeigh argue, uniforms have been central to the interpellation of the Japanese subject, a Foucaultian insertion of government power through materiality (Cambridge, 2011; Allison, 2006; McVeigh, 2000).

The symbol of school girl uniforms were also present in a few shrines I visited in the field. Below, figure 8 is an example of how a school girl character was used in a prayer etiquette educational poster for both Japanese and foreign shrine visitors. The doe-eyed, infantile school girl meticulously follows the *kawaii* mascot structure that has often been appropriated as group identity, as Allison claims (Allison, 2006).
Cambridge notes that schoolgirl uniform fetishism “can be seen as a legacy of the original uptake of European-style military dress...to their recent incarnation as a provocative cladding for the hyper-sexualized schoolgirl, who has become a living metaphor for the perceived vicissitudes of contemporary Japanese society” (Cambridge, 2011:181). Though this thesis does not focus on the hyper-sexualized school girls and mikos in the media and mass consumer products, there is no denying of the abundance of such products that objectify ‘uniformed girls’ as commodities for consumption. Both Mikos and schoolgirls are often infantilized and sexualized (not necessarily simultaneously, but the two are not binary opposites) for institutionalized public and internalized private consumption (Cambridge 2011; Allison 2006).

While policing the public appearance of women is not unique to Japanese history, the obsession on uniforms is particular to modern Japan. On the subject of Mikos, Aiko stated:

Aiko: I don’t think Mikos are kawaii but I do think their uniforms are kawaii. It’s like a special label.

Why are Miko uniforms kawaii even though Mikos themselves aren’t, I asked:

Aiko: Because only a limited group of people can wear them. It’s also so picturesque when you think about Mikos. A girl with long black hair in a white and red uniform, in a lush green shrine. It’s that stereotype that makes it attractive.

Why are the uniforms kawaii instead of pretty or beautiful?

Aiko: I think you say “the uniform is kawaii” rather than “the uniform is pretty” in Japanese. It’s weird to say “Miko uniforms are pretty,” because they’re not pretty.

What makes it a kawaii uniform then, I followed:
Aiko: Rareness. Exclusivity. Miko uniforms are so simple, and that’s why you wouldn’t call them pretty. Neither Miko uniforms nor schoolgirl uniforms are pretty but it’s the standardization of style that makes it kawaii. It’s not that each uniform is kawaii on its own, but rather the uniformity that makes it kawaii.

An interesting remark made by Aiko that uniformity and sameness is what actually produces kawaii, making this uniform attractive to young girls who wish to join the exclusive group to gain such collective identity. This can be supported by historian Andrew Gordon’s analysis on the middle-class consumer trend from the early to mid 20th Century Japan as “a process that involved the transposing of difference as much as the diffusing of sameness” (Gordon, 2007). Sameness and uniformity has been an important aspect of national identity for at least over the last hundred years. And to cultivate this collective identity, uniforms function intrinsically, as Cambridge argues, but “the normalizing gaze that continues to operate is an internal one” (Cambridge, 2011:180). Hence, uniform fetishism is an essential aspect of identity construction of young Japanese women today. Similar to the brand-name obsession discussed in the previous sub-chapter, uniforms operate as a gender, class, and age marker that not only is institutionalized but also internalized on an individual level.

The rise of kawaii culture in the late 20th Century has also affected the subjectivity of uniforms. “Infantilized visual culture,” as Cambridge puts it, often depicted neotenous girls in school uniforms and costumed characters which gave rise to the cosplay culture (Cambridge, 2011:181). Mikos are not excluded from this gaze of uniform fetishism that underlies their material transformation to a form of cosplay (Chapter IV). While a couple of my informants expressed discomfort in such tendencies, some Shinto shrines themselves help perpetuate this subjectivity of Miko as a character-like symbol. Since 2011, Tosho Shrine in Saitama Prefecture has advertised the following announcement on their website:

Volunteer recruitment (candidate: elementary and middle school students) - Looking for someone who would like to dress up as a Miko and dance the sacred kagura dance. Would you like to be a Dancing Girl (maihime)? (Tosho Shrine, 2018)

In 2018, Izumotaisha Fukui Shrine in Fukui prefecture advertised their vacant position for Miko Jokin on the job hunting portal Indeed as, “Looking for a part-time Miko: A glamorous job you can brag about to your friends” (Izumotaisha Fukui Shrine, 2018). In these two examples, the symbolism of Miko is used to emphasize the aesthetics of the position and the status attached to it.
The fetish-like admiration for Miko uniforms can also be explained with the status attached to traditional kimonos.\textsuperscript{51} As Cambridge explains, post-war rapid Westernization in Japan resulted in the disappearance of traditional Japanese clothing which in turn led to the scarcity and rarity of kimonos. Traditional Japanese outfits were only worn on special occasions, creating a new symbol of exclusivity in such costumes. Cambridge argues that kimono itself “has become a uniform by virtue of the stabilization of the codings of age, status and gender and diminishment of the arenas for its appearance” (Cambridge, 2011:182). In the case of Miko uniforms, the disappearance of everyday objects (kimonos) might have contributed in the rise of uniform fetishism attached to the nostalgic aesthetics of Mikos.

\textbf{5.6 Chapter Summary}

This chapter has examined the animist’s preoccupation on purity and the importance of purification rituals that cleanse pollution from both animate and inanimate spirits. Through the analysis of shrine discourse and informants’ interviews, it has been clear that all objects (both animate and inanimate) possess a spirit, and hence a spiritual purification that is necessary before any material death. The ontology of animism and the hereditary structure of Shinto is also reflected in the discourse of Shinto, in which the linguistic pattern can be analyzed by ISA. Animist ontology and the importance of heritage is embedded in Shinto discourse, and by employing the language, the Japanese subjects make these ideologies intrinsic to them. Commodity fetishism was analyzed based on Allison’s theory on post-war reconstruction as: hyper-consumerist society and brand-name obsession as a by-product of the accelerated nationwide economic rebuilding during the late-19th Century, and kawaii products as a protector from the corporate masculinity of Japan, Inc. In the last section, my informants’ strong affinity towards their occupational (Miko) uniforms is analyzed in accordance to the growing phenomenon of uniform fetishism in modern Japan. Cambridge analyzes the uniform system as a Foucaultian power insertion to raise homogeneous and systematic state subjects, to which informants expressed a similar inclination towards uniformity through sartorial patterns.

\textsuperscript{51} Traditional Japanese garment.
Chapter VI

6.1 Connecting Gender, Nationalism, and Animism

After an in-depth analysis of gender, nationalism, and animism through multiple theories based on the cultural patterns of Japan, and an alignment of Shinto, Mikos and the Japanese subjects in a socio-historical context, it should be clear that the three concepts are interconnected products of ideological rupture of Japanese modernity. Meiji Reform aided in reforming the traditional role of Miko through its aim of Westernization (civilization and enlightenment), because traditional shamanists (Mikos) posed a threat to the achievement of a secular, civilized society. Because Mikos held shamanistic rituals as prophets, they were temporarily banned from working at shrines during the Meiji period, and when they were allowed to reenter, the exclusion of Mikos from Deity Work (Shinshoku) had been solidified. This transformation of gender politics of Shinto during Meiji Reform is still deeply embedded on a national level as seen in the case of the deceased head priestess of Tomioka Hachiman shrine: Nagako Tomioka. Despite her lineage to the previous head priests (guuji) and the appointment from the shrine, the Association of Shinto Shrines never officially accepted her as the head priestess (guuji) which resulted in Tomioka Hachiman shrine’s resignation from the association in 2016.

Meiji Reform also helped enhance existing gender structures by threatening traditional Japanese masculinity. While ideals of aesthetic masculinity were reformed to mimic Western beauty ideals (appropriating Western style outfits and hairstyles), and reinforced by male subjects in attempt to restore their masculinity and aim for inclusion into society; women who conformed to Western ideals were denigrated because it posed a threat to gender structures in which femininity must remain subordinate to masculinity in a patriarchal society. Meiji Reform was a confusing time for Japanese women as their male counterparts were in a desperate rush for Westernization that signified enhancement of masculinity and inclusion into society as a civilized subject, while they were subjected to a perplexing socio-political uncertainty during the drastic ideological rupture. Women were stuck in a discrepancy between honoring the existing gender structures by remaining traditionally feminine, but struggling for inclusion into society, as only
civilized and enlightened (Western mimicry) individuals were considered to be society-persons (Shakai-jin).

This concept of Shakai-jin: an ideological product of the then newly-imported notion of society (Shakai) also regenerates the perplexing status of women. To be a Shakai-jin is to be a mature adult with a full-time job (often tied to motherhood), but the set of cute, fragile and neotenous characteristics of hegemonic femininity that infantilizes women in fact enhance and empower a woman’s status within the hierarchy of gender structures: a dichotomy of ideal femininity (hegemonic femininity of neoteny) and mature femininity (motherhood) that interpellates Japanese women into fragmented and often unattainable female subjectivity. The ideological framework of Shakai-jin does not only concern women but affects all Japanese subjects. Postwar national reconstruction under Japan, Inc. (an alignment of the government and corporations) especially accelerated the production of working subjects that contributed to the major economic reconstruction. As Shakai-jin is largely focused on the employment status of an individual, and postwar reconstruction was preoccupied with an economic succession: Shakai-jin meant that one was a national subject as an integral part of society.

This emphasis on collective identities (such as Shakai-jin) is not only an intrinsic aspect of femininity, but that of nationalism and animism as well. As the ideological rupture in literature (defining Kojiki according to the 19th century Western concept of literature) restored the emperor’s reign and positioned him as a paternal figure to all Japanese citizens during Meiji Reform, the collective identity as a national subject became an integral part of the Japanese self. An emphasis on kinship and hereditary structure of Shinto amplified during the Meiji Reform as Shinto became the core of Super State-Nationalism (State Shinto), the notion of family as a central aspect of postwar national identity, and the Emperor as a national father to all state subjects perpetuated Shinto as the ultimate family unit: a kinship structure that represents national culture and ‘Japaneseness’ that is ethnically, culturally, and socially homogeneous.

The notion of ‘Japanese culture’ emerging during Meiji Reform as an equal or superior culture to the West, the national identity represented what Suzuki calls super state-nationalism. Uniforms are essential in the formation of state subjects, in which Cambridge has noted the Japanese uniform system as a Foucaultian insertion of power through the subjection of
uniformity. Uniforms, as the name implies, govern uniformity and sameness to which my informants and theorists suggest represent the Japanese national identity. Construction of national subjects of the Meiji state (Shinmin), Meiji’s formation of uniform systems, and the development of Japan, Inc. all encouraged an interpellation of the Japanese subject to achieve inclusion by uniformity and standardization. A process which can be described as Ideological State Apparatus, as Meiji and post WWII education, language, and law assisted in the process of subjection to the newly reformed ideologies of the state, which became accepted and reinforced as Japanese authenticity. ISA becomes socially or sometimes culturally coded because of the subjects’ willingness to accept their ideological structures. ISA inserts its ideologies by empowering and raising the status of the interpellated subject in comparison to the non-obliged subject. This willingness is cultivated through the social positioning of subjects: a reflection of power structures though social distinction. Social distinction is fundamental to nationalism, as well as uniforms and brand name notions that strengthen their exclusivity through distinction.

While modern anthropologists such as Allison and Ivy describe Japan as an increasingly individualistic society, the notion of unity, sameness, and uniformity appeared central to my research. Anthropologist Bachnik has described the sensitivity of the Japanese as, “not directed primarily towards marital or family relationships, but towards other relationships, even at the expense of the former… relationships are primarily identified with the board spectrum of social life outside of the primary group of family” (Bachnik, 1998:91). The unity of nation and the uniformity of state subjects is fundamental to the ideology of Japan as a family unit. Relationships with others (outside of your primary family) and uniformity (sameness of subjects) help systematize social inclusion, and thus the importance of relationships and group identity are intrinsically coded in everyday discourse, practice, and cultural patterns.

Retaining and restoring purity is a central aspect of both femininity and animism in Shinto. In the case of femininity, being a mature woman and a shakai-jin are inseparable concepts, and the emphasis on cleanliness and purity of Mikos imply that these are symbols of female maturity, and representing these characteristics is the only way for inclusion into society. Purity is also central to Shinto as they are preoccupied with cleansing the soul from pollution and calamity. Because Shinto sees spirits in inanimate objects, retaining purity is also essential for commodities. However, since all animate and inanimate objects possess spirits, and avoiding
spiritual diffusion (pollution) is inevitable, purification rituals such as the burning ritual (otakiage) for commodities, and watering ritual (misogi) for humans are encouraged for spiritual cleansing. Purifying animate and inanimate objects are important because life and death are non-binary as spirits can live past their material death, and restoring purity periodically detaches the subject from calamity.

The notion of kawaii (cute) also appeared fundamental in my analysis of femininity, commodity animism, and nationalism. Kawaii emerged as a counterculture to that of the 1970’s corporate masculinity, accelerated by the structures of Japan, Inc., and since then popularized in mass media, everyday discourse and even in Shinto. Kawaii femininity, commodities, and identities function as a type of protector from subjection, because the possessor of kawaii can freely move between the binary-opposites of a child (neotenous non-society person) and an adult (mature society person). Kawaii infantilized the possessor, to which they become a non-society person free from structural enforcement. Corporate masculinity and Marxian industrial subjectivity, motherhood and ageism, and uniformity of state subjects are cultural patterns Kawaii protects the possessor from. Though most adults strive for inclusion into society (shakai-jin), kawaii offers a medium where subjects can move between the structural limits of morality.

6.2 Reflections on the Method of Socio-historical Contextualization

This thesis was an attempt to analyze gender politics, nationalism, and animism as by-products of 19th century Meiji Reform and 20th century postwar reconstruction. The ideological ruptures in cultural ontology that followed the two historical events has produced (or accelerated) modern cultural patterns (fragmentation of ideal femininity, the notion of Japaneseness, and consumerism and uniform fetishism), that was represented through Miko and Shinto discourse, commodities, uniforms, and signs and symbols. This systematic alignment of concepts (Shinto and Mikos) through socio-historical contextualization to analyze cultural patterns (gender politics, nationalism, and animism) has proved to be an efficient method in analyzing and contextualizing a seemingly unrelated set of data. Analytical execution should be anchored in the alignment of concepts, and a wide range of theories can be applied to interpret each thematic focus.
The alignment of concepts through socio-historical contextualization was also essential because of the Japanese ontology of circular time. Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji has famously stated “structure of human existence is no less spatial than temporal, and no less social than individual; consequently one cannot subordinate spatiality to temporality, [...] and one must always take into account the social-individual duality of the human” (Watsuji qtd. In. Berque, 1998:57). The Japanese ontology expands both vertically (time) and horizontally (space), and thus historical alignment of modern space (in this case, Shinto and Mikos) produced a holistic contextualization of cultural patterns.
References


