

A Social History of Ise Shrines: Divine Capital.

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A Social History of Ise Shrines: Divine Capital asserts that the geography, economics, and ideology of Japan's Ise shrines developed in correspondence with the evolution of people's lives, especially after the system of the priest agents was established. *Divine Capital* is the subtitle of this book, and, fittingly, the authors' purpose is to reexamine the history of Ise shrines from a social and economic perspective within the context of Shinto with this definition. The purpose of this research, as the authors mention, is to argue that Shinto played multiple roles throughout various historical stages. Nevertheless, the Ise shrines have been depicted as the cradle of Shinto in the later stages of Shinto history as permanent mainstream opinion as well. Moreover, the authors intend to erase the misconception that the history of the Ise shrines is invariable and revise the legend of its connection with the imperial institution. In the introduction, the authors point out that the Ise shrines do not represent, as is repeatedly contended, "two thousand years of unbroken history," but have had a multitude of layers and a complex social, political and religious history since the seventh century. The authors also argue that they reconfigure a clear map of the social history of the Ise shrines rather than examining the history of Shinto at the Ise shrines. The authors assert that this approach tends to pinpoint the prominent turning points in the history of the Ise shrines, instead of being hindered by a reliance on the ideology of Shinto and the pitfalls of nostalgia.

To support their assumptions, the authors develop their arguments through dividing the history of the Ise shrines into periods as follows:

From the seventh to the tenth centuries, the belief in the goddess Amaterasu was established between 673 and 698, in which Emperor Tenmu and Jitō were deeply involved. In the second stage, from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Watarai and Arakida challenged the authority of the Onakatomi; they expanded the priesthood and developed a priest-managed commendation system. Due to dwindling court taxes, the economic justification for the shrines shifted from generating income to increasing land rights holdings.

From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, the invasion of the Mongols led to significant Buddhist investment in Ise, which was seen as the base of Japan's protector deity. Ise's new temples competed with those of many Watarai, Arakida and Onakatomi priests. Bakufu and the court attempted to restore the shrine lands but failed. This failure inspired the priests of Watarai to establish their lineage of esoteric lore, which for the first time, was referred to as Shinto.

The period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries included the rise of pilgrimages. The victorious Ashikaga bakufu established a regime which began the grand pilgrimages to Ise starting in the 1390s, and the interaction with the shrines through *oshi*. The incomes of the *danna* contracted, and the fees related to *oshi* replaced land rights as mainstay incomes of Ise's economy.

From the seventeenth century to 1868, Ise became the national cultural center. The Edo bakufu incorporated the restored Ise shrines into the new order, which included the sengū. The Buddhist temples declined and were excluded from the pilgrimage business by 1675. In the seventeenth century, Ise was seen as the site of Shinto.

From 1868 to 1912, both the Emperor Meiji and his father, Emperor Kōmei, signaled the heightened significance of Ise and its kami to the modern and emperor-centered nation. The Ise shrine

was transformed into a mausoleum of the emperor's ancestor, Amaterasu Ōmikami. Japan's leaders sought the divine assistance of Ise's kamis.

From 1912 to 1915, Ise was affected by numerous trends in the Meiji transformation. Along with a new state-determined discourse delivered by state educators and journalists, Ise's modern priesthood emerged as Ise was incorporated into the imperial institution.

From 1945 until the present, Ise underwent privatization. Japan's American occupiers exerted the greatest influence on Ise in the postwar period. The General Headquarters (GHQ) reduced Ise's dominant position in the public sphere, relegating the Ise Shrine to a private religious charity. During the restoration of Shinto in the postwar period, Jinja Honchō attempted to free Ise from the influence of the GHQ. The authors point out new, recent narratives: "Both Jinja Honchō and the Ise Shrine Office are actively co-opting alternative views on shrines and Shinto that are catching the imagination of the public" (p. 239).

Reflecting on the trajectory of its history, the authors indicate that "Ise went through a number of distinct phases, each characterized by different networks of people and founded on different economic models" (p. 239). Today, Ise "evokes both nostalgia and environmental idealism, while leaving plenty of space for religious, spiritual, ethnic and nationalist interpretations" (p. 241).

The book's most important points are the following: "The impressions of a typical visitor to Ise (or to any other significant site of pilgrimage or tourism) are filtered through multilayered narratives about what he or she is supposed to experience." "Our aim in this history has been to present a stratigraphic survey of the most important of these layers and to reconstruct their social contexts" (p. 235).

In addition to the discoveries highlighted above, we find out what the authors wish to emphasize from the questions they pose. First, economic development that goes hand-in-hand with the political situation is closely connected with the Ise shrines in every historical phrase. Second, the Ise shrines are not always dominated by Shinto, which competed with Buddhism during the Mongol invasion. Third, the area surrounding Ise, Furuichi, was one of the best-known pleasure quarters in Japan in the medieval period and the mainstay of Ise's economy as well. Its development may be connected with the custom of *shojin otoshi* after the pilgrimage. The relations between Ise and the Furuichi pleasure quarter require us to think of the issue of the sacred and the vulgar. Fourth, Emperor Kōmei and Emperor Meiji's attempts to engage with their Ise-enshrined ancestor and religious issues better our understanding of the Ise shrines' becoming an imperial institution after the Meiji period. Fifth, in the postwar period, pilgrimages to the Ise shrines reached a peak. In 1993, 5.5 million people visited Ise. However, this indicates a kind of new style of consumption economics rather than piety to Shinto. Sixth, Prime Minister Abe Shizō's announcement that the 2016 Summit of Industrialized Countries would be held at a location near Ise implied that Ise's divine capital will be transformed into its next phase.

Through focusing on the role the Ise shrines played at every historical phase and the evolution of the role of the Ise shrines, the authors achieved a persuasive conclusion that the Ise shrine is an icon rather than a representative of Shinto closely tied with the history of social change. The authors' meticulous analysis of every prominent turning point of the Ise shrines successfully releases it from the ideology adhering to Shinto and the imperial institution.
