

# **The SCAP's Policy on Japanese Religious Education**

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## **I . The First Impact**

On October 6th 1945, John Carter Vincent, Chairman of State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee ) SWNCC) of the Far East Committee at the State Department announced through a radio in the United States that “there will be no place for Shinto in their ) Japanese) schools.” Only these ten words broadcasted by the radio were to give a decisive direction to the separation policy of religion and education in Japanese public schools under the guidance of the Occupation powers.

A Tentative Post–Surrender Policy Statement,<sup>1)</sup> the preparation for which was initiated by the SWNCC in the spring of 1944, declared that Shinto should be excluded from all Japanese public schools. Later, however, this draft was amended and no statement concerning Shinto could no longer be found in the official Initial Post–Surrender Policy Statement.<sup>2)</sup> As a result of this, the Department of Civil Information and Education ) CIE) did not start preparing for a special policy on the relationship between school education and religion in Japan. Therefore, the radio broadcasting intercepted on October 6th was a complete bolt from the blue for them.

George Atcheson Jr., SCAP's political advisor inquired of Washington about the real intention of this announcement. The answer to this inquiry made by James F. Byrnes, Secretary of State indicated that “the

pertinent parts of the release were 'paraphrases' of the Initial Post—Surrender Policy".<sup>3)</sup>

Japanese newspapers also asked for Prime Minister Shidehara's comments regarding the Vincent radio broadcast. The news of his rejection of Shinto had a great impact on the Shinto world as well as general public supporting the continuous existence of Shinto in Japan.<sup>4)</sup> However, those who had greatest shock were not these Japanese but the SCAP themselves.

Thus, this Vincent broadcast could be regarded as the very outset in initiating the preparation for drafting the "Abolition of Governmental Sponsorship, Support, Perpetuation, Control and Dissemination of State Shinto ) so—called the Shinto Directive)".<sup>5)</sup> The fact that the drafting of this Shinto Directive was made possible by an incidental interception of an American radio broadcast in Tokyo, which totally deviated from the normal ordering system of the occupation army, is an incredible matter when taking into consideration the great influence of this directive exercised on democracy in post—war Japan.

This historical fact could possibly be seen as an evidence that there did actually exist discrepancies in points of view between the State Department in Washington and the SCAP in Tokyo as to ways of dealing with the Japanese Imperial System and the State Shinto.

## II. The Quick Response of the Ministry of Education

As a matter of fact, it was not the CIE but the Ministry of Education ) MOE) that swiftly took the initiative in responding to the Vincent address and making a policy. Tamon Maeda, the Minister of Education, went through SCAP's instructions regarding the separation of state and religion : "Removal of Restriction on Political, Civil and Religious

Liberties ) so-called the Human Rights Instructions)”<sup>6)</sup>, and planned to abrogate the Ordinance No.12 issued by the MOE in 1899. This Ordinance prescribed that, at any schools including private ones, any religious education, activities, and ceremonies should be prohibited. But only the religious education based on the State Shinto was out of coverage of this ordinance for the quibbling reason made by the government that the State Shinto was not a religion.

The Vincent broadcast was persuasive enough to give an impulse to T. Maeda to make up his mind. Then, thoroughly recognizing that the Ordinance No.12 was incompatible with the occupation policy, he issued an order, the Ordinance No.8, October 15th, 1945 to abrogate the Ordinance without any consultation with either Dr. William Kenneth Bunce, Chief of the Religious Division at CIE or Ken R. Dyke, Chief of CIE.<sup>7)</sup> In other words, CIE was put aside and no information was given in advance concerning the revocation of the Ordinance No. 12. This happened partly because the CIE was little interested in the religious freedom of Christian schools at that time, as far as released materials were concerned.

The Ordinance No. 8 directed the abrogation of the Ordinance No. 12 as well as the freedom of religious instructions at private schools. However, it did not give any instructions to exclude the State Shinto from school education.

The next step taken by the MOE was to issue the instruction directing all the “interference and excessive oppression of Christian schools be stopped” on November 14th. Thus, in spite of the Vincent broadcast, the MOE did not take any special action against the State Shinto and this was another reason for the SCAP to issue the Shinto Directive on December 15th.

### III. The Influence of the Shinto Directive

The Shinto Directive, which sought the termination of militaristic and nationalistic thought by separating Shinto from the state and from education and specifying freedom of religion, was issued as by-laws of the Human Rights Instruction. Also, each article and clause was notified as a requisite order from the ministries in charge to local authorities and detailed explanations to enforce this directive were given in relation to various concrete cases.

The separation of Shinto and education was enforced so strictly that the resulting confusion among the government officials, teachers, textbook writers, and religious leaders raised various problems as follows : (1) How data that impinged on the field of religion was handled in the public school curriculum ? (2) What student activities related to religion were premissible ? (3) How historical facts associated with religion and the inter-relationship of contemporary religious, cultural and social life should be dealt with ? (4) Could professional religionist hold administrative or teaching positions in public schools ? (5) Could they be invited to address students if they did not discuss religious topics ? (6) Were there no exceptions to the prohibition of school-sponsored trips to shrines or temples ? (7) Could the students observe or study as a part of school curriculum national treasures related to religion or examples of unusual religious architecture? <sup>8)</sup>

Virtually, according to the report of a military government team, for example, in some localities teachers were not allowed by the military government teams to take their classes to local temple or shrine grounds even for picnics or to play games. <sup>9)</sup>

The purging of textbooks of all religious references went to such an extent that such incidental information as the distance between a school

and a local shrine had to be changed so that the word “shrine” would be replaced by “post office”.<sup>10)</sup>

Although many essential problems related to the separation of education and religion had been raised, education officers carried out instructions strictly as if everything which had a tinge of religion should be eliminated from classrooms. That was partly because teachers and educational administrators were afraid of being dismissed for disobedience to the SCAP's instructions, on the one hand, and partly because political arguments on the essential problems were not launched into the CIE, on the other.

#### IV. The Attitude of Religious and Educational world

The SCAP's instructions directing the withdrawal of the course of ethics on December 1945 and the following instruction of abrogating the Meiji Emperor's Rescript on Education (MERE), issued next year, caused serious unrest among religious and educational leaders. It was not until after October in 1946 that the Japanese government started discussing the problem as to whether the MERE should be abrogated. Under SCAP's overwhelming military power, it was no longer possible to give ethical instruction based on the MERE for the purpose of national integration. There were those, however, who were anxious to keep religious elements in school education by some means or another. This was partly because they were afraid that without having a religious and exclusive foundation like the MERE, the Japanese would lose their traditional spiritual background since they had been so deeply indoctrinated by those values appeared in this rescript for such a long period of time. Another reason for this was that there existed many professional religionists and other people concerned who had deprived of

benefit from the combination of school and the State Shinto. In fact, the clergy resented the idea of being excluded from teaching positions in public schools and from the use of school facilities.<sup>11)</sup>

#### V. The Cultivation of Religious Sentiment

It was not the first time that religious instruction at public schools was prohibited but cultivation of religious sentiment was encouraged. The pre-war Ordinance No. 12 issued in 1899 prohibited religious education and any religious ceremonies in schools. This Ordinance made it possible to expell all denominations from school education and to invite exclusively the State Shinto into classrooms. The State Shinto which lacked a definite outlook upon the world and a clear logic, however, was not easily used as the basis of educational principles. Therefore, various interpretations derived from ambiguous doctrines brought about confusion and cotradiction in the school education. Especially when Japan went into the path of militatism in full-scale in the 1930's with ultra-nationalism rising to its peak, confusion and contradictions were enlarged, leading many teachers and students to socialism. The cultivation of religious sentiment was contrived to compensate for the weekness of the State Shinto. This was enacted by a vice-minister's notification: "On Cultivation of Religious Sentiment" in 1930. In spite of the provisions of the Ordinance No.12, certain common religious teachings impartial to any specific denominations to be taught in schools were encouraged by the above notification. It goes without saying that it included a clause specifying the prohibition of cultivation of religious sentiment as being contrary to the Rescript on Education.

Since the authorities could not define the concept of "a common religious teaching", various interpretations and confusions were brought

up in the religious and educational world. Consequently, the notification only resulted in inviting professional religionists into schools and promoting more religious and mystical cult of the Emperor. On the other hand, Christians who were concerned about carrying out the religious sentiment education in accordance with their own faith were oppressed because they infringed upon the MERE. To bring “the cultivation of religious sentiment” into classrooms was the last resort for the educational and religious leaders in order to keep some ways of ethical indoctrination based on Emperor worship, when the State Shinto was to be revoked and invalidation of the MERE was to be anticipated. They might have thought it possible to revive the State Shinto based on the spirit of the MERE, some day after the occupation was terminated.

In September, 1945, when the occupation policy was not made clear, the MOE appealed to new Japan, as basic idea of their educational policy, that “for the purpose of the retention of national policy, religious sentiment of the people should be cultivated to foster mind of faith and reverence for gods to restrain oneself”.<sup>12)</sup>

While the Shinto Directive was strictly carried out to separate state and religion, less attention was paid to their sagacity which showed their intention to maintain the traditional notion of religious sentiment based on primitive religious customs with no Bible.

## VI. The SCAP's Policy on Religious Instruction

It was not before 1946 that the CIE began to study seriously how religion in public schools should be dealt with. While reaffirming in a memorandum to the Chief of CIE the ban on the presentation, discussion, dissemination, and propagation of the teachings and beliefs peculiar to any religion on religious system and the performance of religious

ceremonies, observances, rites, and practices, Bunce stated that the teaching of moral principles common to all religions, facts of religious history and factual biography of religious personalities could be taught.<sup>13)</sup>

However, when the memorandum was sent to agencies of the occupation operating in the field of religion and became an official policy, it was regarded as a further enforcement of the Shinto Directive, and consequently, less attention was paid to the essential problems regarding the treatment of religion in public schools.

On March 31st, one month after the Bunce Memorandum, the report of the United States Education Mission concluded that "the observance of ceremonies in reading the Imperial Rescript and obeisances to the Imperial portraits in the schools should be eliminated from schools".<sup>14)</sup> The report also mentioned that "religion" had the same constituents of democracy in respect to the emphasis of brotherly love, human dignity and values, but it goes without saying that the term "religion" in this report did not include such a primitive religion as the State Shinto. The report did not refer directly to how to deal with religious education, but it emphasized whether the Japanese education could become democratic and peaceful depending not upon the "political or sectarian instruction" but upon "a new philosophy", "a new method", and "a new system".

#### VII. Conclusion by the Committee for Educational Reform ) Kyoiku Sashin Inukai)

After the Japanese educators' committee which was to cooperate with the US Education Mission had accomplished its duty, it was reorganized as a permanent organization under the jurisdiction of the prime minister on August 10th, 1946. The committee had examined thoroughly the new

doctorines of the Japanese education in 92 general meetings and 15 special sub-committees from September, 1946 to March, 1948.<sup>15)</sup>

It is possible to know what topics were discussed in the committee but is impossible to know how they were discussed because the minutes of the committees were closed to the public. Therefore, it is not clear how educational leaders of the committee understood SCAP's policy and the report of the US Education Mission, and how they thought of religious education. It is, however, possible to guess them from other materials regarding the problem on religious education.

One of the most difficult problems in constructing a new educational system was what could be a basic idea of education in replacement of the MER on Education. In the Committee for Constitution Revision, the Imperial Diet interpellation about treatment of the MER on Education, was often addressed. The reply to this parliamentary interpellation by Kotaro Tanaka, Minister of Education was consistent as follows: (1) the values of the MER on Education were universal, (2) what was wrong was to make them holy, and (3) the new principles of education should be adopted from the classics as properties left for the world. The classics here referred to mean, for example, the Bible, the Analects of Confucius, the Buddhist scriptures, and so on.<sup>16)</sup>

However, when the abrogation of the MER on Education was inevitable due to the SCAP's instruction, the administrators began to emphasize the third point mentioned above; i. e., religious sentiment based on something religious. The 90th Imperial Diet in August, 1946 passed both the resolution of invalidation of the MER on Education and "the Resolution on Religious Sentiment". This fact shows that the government intended to maintain a principle of education based on the spirit of the MER on Education by means of religious sentiment

education. This basic policy was taken over by the first special sub-committee of the Committee for Educational Reform, where the Fundamental Law on Education was passed. The draft proposed to the sub-committee emphasized "a scientific mind and religious sentiment".<sup>17</sup>

As to the treatment of religious education, the article 9 of the Fundamental Law on Education stipulated that, while schools established by the state or local public corporations were obliged to refrain from religious education or other activities of a specific religion, an attitude of religious tolerance and respect for the position of religion in social life should be valued in education. It is generally accepted that this article allowed religious sentiment education in public schools. Some regarded the article as an encouragement of religious education. However, the original intention of the committee seemed to be different. At the parliament of the House of Representatives which delivered the Fundamental Law on Education on March 18th, 1947, in reply to Soichi Sasaki's interpellation, Minister of Education Takahashi stated that the MER on Education would be invalidated under the New Constitution and the Fundamental Law on Education. However, that essential spirits of the MER on Education as well as of the teaching of Confucius and Mencius, and of the Mosaic Law would be kept as the religious. Against Ushimaro Sawada's cross-examination, on March 26th, mentioning that the Fundamental Law on Education did not purport to encourage to foster religious mind by the state, Minister of Education Takahashi also explained that it was possible to bring up the spirits of the MER on Education under the Fundamental Law on Education.<sup>18)</sup>

Thus, the article 9 of the Fundamental Law on Education and its interpretation gave a slice salvation to the religious world depressed by the SCAP's instructions directing the strict separation of state and

church, and the elimination of religious education from school, as mentioned before.

What is religious sentiment education allowed and encouraged in the Fundamental Law on Education, and how is it supposed to be put into practice? The 13th special sub-committee discussed this problem and its report was adopted at the 71st general meeting on July 2, 1948. Surprisingly enough, the report entitled “Relation of School and Religion” was, almost the same as the vice-minister’s notification, “On the Cultivation of Religious Sentiment” which was issued in 1930. The only revision found in its report is the phrase “in accordance with the New Constitution and the Fundamental Law on Education” in place of “as far as the EMR on Education should be infringed”<sup>19)</sup> At last, the committee could not offer a definition of religious sentiment education and its way of teaching in classroom. On the contrary it can be considered as a progressive aspect that the report emphasizing the problem on relation between school education and religion should be treated together with a democratic principle of the separation of state and church, and freedom of religion speculated in the New Constitution.

#### VIII. Revival of Shintoism through Religious Sentiment Education

The Division of Religion at the CIE came to the conclusion on the articles of the New Constitution and the Fundamental Law on Education that “religious education under any other name or any education under the name or religion in the public schools” was unconstitutional and that, therefore, “any discussion designed to reveal the kind of religion to teach or how it should be taught was artificial in the extreme”.<sup>20)</sup> But Bunce’s personal view was a little bit different. Hideo Kishimoto, an assistant professor of Tokyo University, who gave a private lecture to Bunce on

Japanese religion, insisted that the abrogation of the MER on Education and the complete elimination of Shinto doctrines from school education would cause social anomie, and that the spiritual vacuum of the Japanese mind should be compensated with something. He also asserted that a new religious education should be indispensable from attaining the national integration. Thus, he emphasized that the Japanese culture and the tradition was based on an extensive religious ground.<sup>21)</sup> Compared with SCAP's general policy, Bunce himself is considered to have a different opinion on the treatment of shinto, and the separation of state and church. His flexibility, if any, might come from the lecture by Prof. Kishimoto.

Bunce addressed in a policy statement "All Personnel of Religious Division" in August, 1947 : (1) to prevent the presentation, discussion, dissemination and propagation of religious doctrine in the public school, (2) to prohibit the holding of religious ceremonies, observance and practices in the public schools, (3) to remove religious symbology and paraphernalia from the public schools. On the other hand, he said in the same statement, "If assistance is requested, no objections would be raised to members of the staff advising schools on including in their curricula the moral principles common to all religions, facts of religious history, and factual biographies of personalities".<sup>22)</sup> Hence, he basically supported the policy of religious sentiment education proposed by the Committee for Educational Reform.

Since the historical materials are not opened yet it is impossible to know why Bunce, who was the very person to write a draft of the Shinto Directive, hesitated to strictly carry out the provisions of his statement. Neither can we know whether his understandings on religious education come from his belief or from his generosity toward the Japanese culture

and tradition. However, the only thing that is clear is that the main purpose of the SCAP was to expell the State Shinto from Japan and to establish the separation of state and church in order not to make the State Shinto reseat itself in school education. Therefore, as far as the SCAP was concerned, the relation between the Shinto Directive, and the New Constitution and the Fundametal Law on Education was not a matter of their concern. Bunce explained that “the interpretation of the constitutional provisions was a matter of the Japanese themselves to decide, and that Occupation authorities should avoid giving encouragement, support, or approval to the proposed Japanese governmental actions which might conflict with the provisions of the New Constitution.”<sup>23)</sup>

The SCAP distinguished general Shinto from the State Shinto and admitted the religious freedom of general Shinto as a religious sect. But they did not recognize the fact that the MER on Education was a bible for Shintoism; much of Japanese conventional custom was combined with or derived from Shintoism, the general Shinto was Japanese culture and spiritual background itself, and therefore, Shintoism had a possibility to revive through moral education for the purpose of national integration.

After the termination of the occupation, the first step taken by the MOE in order to revive ethic education was to re-evaluate the MER on Education and to prepare a guideline for national consciousness based on the Japanese tradition but not on the principles of democracy. As a matter of fact, they were concerned with what the public might think. When the Korean War was brought about, the MOE insisted frequently on the necessity of ethic education to foster patriotism. At last, in 1958, moral education was brought into a regular curriculum and, thus, many topics on religion were reseated in the textbooks. Today, as one of the

virtues which should be taught, the course study referred to “a feeling of awe toward one beyond man’s power”. To decide whether there exists something beyond man’s power or not is a matter in the field of religion. Nevertheless, the MOE explains that it does not conflict with the Fundamental Law on Education and therefore, it does not infringe upon freedom of religion. On the other hand, leaders of the economic world expect moral education to teach the virtues and historical role of Shinto as precious Japanese culture in order to integrate people.<sup>24)</sup> They explain that to teach Shinto as religious sentiment education is allowed under the Law because Shinto is a culture and not a religion.

There still exists enthusiasm which tries to uphold Yasukuni Shrine by the state. If these trends are to be combined, moral education in schools would be just like the one in the pre-war period. This have resulted from the half treatment of Shinto by GHQ at the time of occupation after World War II.

- 1) PWC-115/CAC-117 ) Washington), March 15, 1944, Japan: Freedom of Worship, National Library
- 2) SCAPIN No175, October 22, 1945, CIE: Administration of the Educational System of Japan, Education in the New Japan. This was notified later as “Basic Initial Post-Surrender Directive to Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers for the Occupation and Control of Japan”
- 3) William P. Woodard, The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945-1952 and Japanese Religious, Leiden/E.J.Brill, 1972, p.45
- 4) *Asahi Shinbun*, October 9, 1945
- 5) SCAPIN No448, CIE, December 15, 1945
- 6) SCAPIN No93, October 4, 1945
- 7) W. P. Woodard, Religion and Education, Bulletin No2, 1955, International Institute for the Study of Religion in Japan

- 8) W. P. Woodard, op. cit., pp. 106-107
- 9) *Chugai Nippo*, August 3, 1948
- 10) An Elementary school textbook; Mathematics, 1948
- 11) W. P. Woodard, op. cit., p.109
- 12) Educational Policy for Constructing New Japan, Ministry of Education, September, 1945
- 13) W. P. Woodard, op. cit., p.110
- 14) Report of United States Education Mission to Japan, March 31, 1946
- 15) A General Survey of Committee for Education Reform, May, 1949
- 16) K. Tanaka's reply to Kazuo Kato's parliamentary interpellation, Committee for Constitution Revision, the House of Representatives.
- 17) A General Survey of Committee for Education Reform, pp. 118-119
- 18) The full-session of the House of Peers, March 26, 1947
- 19) Report to 71th General Meeting of Committee for Education Reform: Relation of School and Religion, July 2, 1948
- 20) W. P. Woodard, op. cit., p.111
- 21) Dr. Yoshiya Abe, GHQ's Religious Policy, *Tenbo*, No197, March 1975, p.56
- 22) W. P. Woodard, op. cit., p.112
- 23) Ibid, p.112
- 24) *Nihon Keizai Chosakai*, The Report on Security of Japan, April, 1972