

MISDIRECTED UNDERSTANDINGS

NARRATIVE MATRICES IN THE JAPANESE POLITICS OF ALTERITY TOWARD THE WEST¹

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Abstract: This article aims to understand how the politics of alterity in Japan led to a misdirected understanding of the West during the early Tokugawa period and the interwar periods. By means of two specific narrative matrices *shinkoku* [land of the gods] and *kokutai* [national polity essence], conceptual frameworks that operate with powerful begetting capabilities, it is shown how parallel structurations are at work in two distinct, but decisive, confrontations with the West. *Shinkoku* and *kokutai* discourses were specific self-understandings/representations promoted by ruling elites, which combined internal and external elements, and which developed the notion of a group and a related process of identification. Originating in medieval times, the *shinkoku* discourse was used during the early modern period to confront alternative self-understandings/representations, perceived as seditious and pernicious; in particular, Christianity. Within the country, *shinkoku* discourse contributed to the design of the Tokugawa's knowledge and moral spaces, in which a Japanese national identity was to be situated. The *kokutai* discourse, although essentially "spiritual" in the first half of the nineteenth century, rapidly became the same kind of knowledge and moral-spaces marker as the *shinkoku* discourse. This became more evident and dramatic during the Shōwa era when *kokutai* became a legal tool, in the 1925 Peace Preservation Law, to counter the perceived threat of what was described as either *modanizumu* [modernism] or *Amerikanizumu* [Americanism]. By means of these two narrative matrices, it will be shown that the constant aim of the Japanese ruling elites was to develop and implement a politics of alterity. The aim was therefore to unify, homogenize and naturalize a specific self-understanding/representation for the Japanese people that eradicated diversity and difference. Thus, orthodoxy and normalcy in Japan should be seen as misdirected understandings of the West, aimed at constructing a Japanese national identity.

The history of Japanese relations with the West began like many others involving non-Western and Western people: through an encounter and a discovery. At the time of its discovery by Portuguese merchants, Japan was known as a fabled place called "Cipango," the consciousness of which

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was embedded in thirteenth-century indirect accounts reported in Marco Polo's *Travels* (Polo 1998 [1298]: 375–385). The imaginary representation² conveyed in Marco Polo's *Travels* is known to have motivated Christopher Columbus' expedition, in view of the large quantity of gold purported to be found on this mythical island off the coast of mainland Asia. Columbus is even reported to have announced that he had discovered the island when he returned to Lisbon in March 1493 (Garcia 1993: 7). For a land which – since at least the seventh century and prince Shōtoku's "Constitution" (De Bary et al. 2001: 40–62) – has continuously defined its overall aim as a quest for internal harmony against the evils that regularly plagued it, the Western impact was a revealing development unveiling the mechanisms of the Japanese politics of alterity through a *refiguration* of a particular medieval discourse: the discourse of the "land of the *kami*" (*shinkoku shisō*). This particular discourse is considered here as a narrative matrix offering grounds for a rhetoric of alterity and the establishment of practices of alterity designed to re-establish a specific self-understanding/representation, defined by political and cultural elites as the core of a "national identity."

The first part of this essay considers *shinkoku* [land of the gods] as a "discursive field" (Rambelli 1996: 388–390) and discusses its explicit or implicit uses in the Japanese politics of alterity with regard to the West in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The second part deals with the notion of *kokutai* ["national essence" polity] as it was articulated during the interwar period. In a manner parallel to the early modern use of *shinkoku*, *kokutai* was used within the Japanese politics of alterity with regard to Western ideologies, such as communism and liberalism, by becoming a legal tool that served to create a knowledge and moral-spaces marker. With the enactment of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law (*chian ijihō*) and its subsequent developments, the Japanese authorities attempted to counter the perceived threat of Western ideas to an officially supported Japanese self-understanding/representation, not only by marking out the alternative, thus alien, self-understandings/representations (alterity), but also by forcing on the unfortunate Japanese people an exercise that had already been used on Japanese Christians some three hundred years before: the act of apostasy. In the light of a dialogical perspective, these aspects of the directed understanding of the West by Japanese "chief narrators" will lead us to several concluding thoughts concerning the politics of alterity and its structuring narratives. These narrative matrices enabled "chief narrators" to outline and control what they considered as the essence of Jap-

² On the slow transformation of the European perception of Asia from a mythological space to a geographical and physical one, see Baumgärtner (1997).

aneseness, or the normalcy of the Japanese character; a quality “mis-understood” by any Japanese persons who became unnaturally attracted to foreign thoughts and behaviors.

MISUNDERSTANDING AND POLITICS OF ALTERITY

At the time of the contact between two cultures emerges from both parts a description of the other allowing its incorporation in one’s own universe, in one’s mythical and familiar body of representations. The other is then domesticated, neutralized through the mediation of one’s culture. By its *controlled difference*, the other thus reinforces or re-supplies one’s system of signification and identity. (Kilani 1994: 68, my emphasis)

Cultural encounters are fundamentally sites of discovery whereby the self unfolds the other to its gaze. The notion of discovery conveys an “implicit sense that what has now been revealed had an existence prior to and independent of the viewer” and thus is to be distinguished from the notion of *inventio*, meaning that the other has been created by the self (Pagden 1993: 5–6). An encounter and a discovery imply the use of practices of representation of *difference* (Greenblatt 1991), since the latter is filled with inherent potentialities and threats. Difference, as a positioning of at least two conceptions and representations of the self and the other, is in effect a “field of possibilities” embedding policy, cultural and sometimes vital implications (Doty 1996: 340–341). A “field of possibilities” is far from being a virginal ground upon which any category or interpretation can be superimposed. There are at least a historical structure and a semiotic context that need to be considered if the model chosen is designed to explain and/or understand the events according to a certain light.

Historical structures and semiotic contexts are elements of a more general approach to the study of the interactions between a self-understanding/representation and alternative selves (alterity/otherness). Dialogism provides such an approach as it considers the interweaving of utterances (e.g. self-understanding/representation) that respond to one another. Utterances are characterized by their expression, context and relations to other utterances (not necessarily present and active). The utterance’s addressivity links “its discursive dimension to its subjective dimension by enabling the discerning of figurations of the other, hence, dialogically, of its own self. In other words, an utterance belongs to a network of signifiers in relation to which it acquires contextual and enunciative meanings.” Figurations of alterity are thus unveiled dialogically, through the location of

specific addressees, henceforth revealing a specific conception of the self (Guillaume 2002: 8). Furthermore, figurations of alterity are often tools used by political regimes and elites to inscribe themselves within society. By means of their political power and cultural authority (Bhabha 1990), as well as their ability to impose themselves as “chief narrators” (Faye 1972) – central and authoritative agents setting up linguistic and performative models –, they define a polity’s environment and its dominating self-understanding/representation.

The conception of misunderstanding that emerges from the above formulation of the intersubjective relations between a self-understanding/representation and otherness is different from a more traditional perspective on intercultural dialogue. The latter usually conceives misunderstanding as the result of a lack of proper tools to understand alterity as another self, as well as the other in its difference. In the context of the Japanese politics of alterity, misunderstanding is not to be seen as the failed ought-to-be (common and fair understanding) resulting from miscommunication between two equal parts. Misunderstanding is not a statement about facts or a situation but a process. In fact, *mis*-understanding is to be conceived according to one specific meaning of the prefix “mis-,” drawn from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (1989, Internet); an articulation that does not necessarily apply to the word “understanding” *per se*, but which shows quite clearly what happens within any politics of alterity. According to the *OED*, “mis-” can be conceived as: “Prefixed to nouns of action, condition, and quality, with the meaning ‘bad,’ ‘wrong,’ ‘erroneous,’ ‘perverse,’ ‘misdirected’.” As a cognitive, sociological and political action, condition and quality, “*mis*understanding” can thus be seen through the lenses of an “erroneous” and “misdirected” understanding. What is important for the purposes of the present article is the manner in which *mis*-understanding operates. In some cases, the holders of political power and cultural authority, the “chief narrators,” translate an other through an understanding geared towards the creation, consolidation or defense of a specific (usually dominating) self-understanding/representation and not towards the fair understanding of this other. “Misdirected understanding” is thus part of a politics of alterity.

The politics of alterity (see Guillaume 2002: 15–17) is an instance of foreign policy defined as a “boundary-producing political performance” (Campbell 1992: 69) which, from a dialogical perspective, provides a way to integrate the domestic and international levels. While the argument developed here focuses on domestic politics, one has to constantly keep in mind this dialogical framework, linking the internal with the external. Any politics of alterity consists of two elements: rhetoric and practice. A rhetoric of alterity is an operation of translation designed to transform oth-

erness into the realm of sameness (Hartog 1991: 249). Homer, to give but one classical example, may be considered as one of the first “chief narrators” (Greek: *histōr*), giving the Greeks the “intellectual framework of their heterology” (Hartog 1996: 87). A rhetoric of alterity is an heterology (De Certeau 1975), a hermeneutic of the other, a translating activity often at the origin of one’s vision of the self and the other. It also provides an intelligibility of the self, as “intelligibility constitutes itself in relationship to the other” (De Certeau 1975: 9). Thus, any type of figuration, in translating alterity into elements allowing a self-understanding/representation to grasp it, fulfills a heuristic function by enabling the understanding, realization, and making sense of an alterity that would have been completely opaque without it.

Practices of alterity represent the conducive component and behavioral impetus of the politics of alterity. To consider these practices is to address the issue of the link between narratives and enactments. Furthermore, such practices “are aimed at concretely establishing the boundaries defining the norms within and beyond” the polity. Consequently, they either reject those norms considered as external to the boundaries enacted, according to criteria that define social acceptability, or integrate those considered as analogous to them (Guillaume 2002: 16). “Chief narrators” have the power to figure alterity and consequently to define the terms of the identity-alterity nexus. Through its performativity, a discourse of alterity can henceforth produce practices of alterity, giving us the conducive and behavioral components of the politics of alterity. They indicate what was chosen for application of the rhetoric and thus offer an extension to the more narrative elements present in such politics. Loyalty tests or legal prosecutions, for instance, are typical examples of these practices, as they allow the dominant discourse about the identity-alterity nexus to control the social fabric, to impose and naturalize the alterity rhetoric and to carry out concrete measures designed to transform, seclude, marginalize or even exterminate alternative or competing self-understandings/representations.

An analysis of the rhetoric and practices of alterity requires conceptual tools through which one can understand the meaning of specific utterances that are participating in them. These conceptual tools, somehow parallel to Reinhart Koselleck’s idea of “concept” (see Koselleck 1990; 1997: 101–119),³ are fundamental and architectonic narrative structures that I call *narrative matrices*.⁴ Narratives matrices are performative frameworks and net-

³ For a convincing example of the use of Koselleck’s theoretical framework to the “concept” of Shinto, see Mark Teeuwen (2002).

⁴ I borrow and adapt here the concept of “narrative matrix” from Alain De Libera (1996).

works that can semiotically encompass the different narrative and behavioral productions evident in the politics of alterity. Furthermore, they are powerful conceptual frameworks from which most of these productions are derived. Thus, they may be considered as the common denominators of different moments or articulations which a self-understanding/representation can espouse, according to the circumstances of its performance or enactment. It is important to stress that narrative matrices are not and should not be teleologically driven, in the sense that the matrices chosen are not and should not be considered or used as the endpoint of a certain political, ideological and/or historical development. On the contrary, they are conceptual prisms participating in the dialogical interaction that a self-understanding/representation is maintaining with the alterity. In the following sections, two narrative matrices – *shinkoku* and *kokutai* – will be used to show how misdirected understanding is at work in either its rhetorical or behavioral dimensions as part of the Japanese politics of alterity toward the West.

ORTHODOXY, *SHINKOKU SHISŌ* AND THE JAPANESE INQUISITION

The first narrative matrix I will explore in this essay is that of the discourse of *shinkoku*. In our search for common features of two politics of alterity separated by about three hundred years, it is important to explain the origin of the notion of *shinkoku* in order to underline its medieval development from which we can draw, through Kuroda Toshio's analysis (1996b; see also Rambelli 1996), the main conceptual elements defining *shinkoku shisō* as a narrative matrix within the Japanese polity during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This will be done by looking at the rhetoric of alterity found, for instance, in Toyotomi Hideyoshi's edicts and letters about Christianity and the practices of alterity against the Christians during the early Tokugawa period.

While the first occurrence of the notion of *shinkoku* is to be found in the mythical heterology of the *Nihonshoki* (see Rocher 1997), its main developments have yet to be seen during the Heian period. They are related to what Kuroda (1996a) has defined as the exo-esoteric system (*kenmitsu taisei*), that is, the Buddhist religious system that provided medieval Japan's ruling elites with an ideological structure through the orthodox definition of the political and social orders. This is very important in the use of *shinkoku* during the early modern period as *shinkoku shisō*, in the words of Kuroda (1996b: 374, 377, my emphasis), "constituted the *kenmitsu taisei*'s reaction to the heterodox/reform movements" and, as such, considering the link between the political and religious spheres, it "had the *potential* to

function on that dimension as a political and social ideology." Even though the notion of *shinkoku* itself has never been clearly defined, it nonetheless possessed a "fundamental structure" and a "certain conceptual standardization." It thus has to be defined, when articulated as a discourse, as a "system of logic with its capacity to serve as political and sociological ideology." It is precisely this "system of logic" which makes *shinkoku shisō* an heuristic narrative matrix allowing us to understand how this discourse was put to use during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in order to face new heterodox self-understandings/representations (Buddhist sects, neo-Confucian movements and Christianity) and justify a regime of words and actions serving the establishment of an orderly and harmonious "Japan."

Furthermore, and in relation to the concept of "Japan," the use of this specific narrative matrix is related to the attempt by political regimes and elites, using their political power and cultural authority, to unify and homogenize the various parts of a territory that would not necessarily have become the Tokugawa realm. As Amino Yoshihiko (1992) remarked, the name "Japan" was adopted in close relation to the systematization of the *tennō* [emperor] institution in the region of Kinai, while both ideas remained external to most "Japanese" societies and political centers. As we will see, the use by the unifiers of the discourse of *shinkoku shisō* perfectly reflects the efforts made at several points in Japanese history to impose a certain reading of history in the sense of a continuous, homogenous, agrarian and imperial polity (Amino 1995, 2001 [1996]). Gavan McCormack (2001 [1996]: 266) sums up nicely what is at stake in studying the ideological constructions of a "Japanese" self-understanding/perception in its history:

The myth of "Japaneseness" as the quality of a monocultural, blood-united, pre-ordained people confronts the historical reality of the emergence of the earliest Japanese states out of a complex of more or less equal communities which traded, contended and communicated across islands and peninsulas of the adjacent continent. The fantasies which were imposed over the people of the archipelago created a gulf between them and their neighbours and, internally, a hierarchical structure in which dissidence and difference were negated.

The "reactivation" of the *shinkoku shisō* was largely a reaction to new differences and forms of dissidence which were felt through the Western/Christian presence, the impact of which was most marked during the late years of the *sengoku jidai* [Age of Civil Wars] and the early years of the Tokugawa rule. Of course, despite this encounter with a truly alien otherness, China remained (and will remain up until the mid-nineteenth

century) the main “other” (alongside India and Korea). They constituted the reference points with which the notion of “Japaneseness” was dialogically measured, in aesthetics, politics, morality or religion (see, for instance, Elisonas 1991a; Jansen 2000; Macé 1994; Pollack 1986; Nakai 1980). Furthermore, Christianity, or the West, were not the only objects of persecution or control by the Tokugawa regime (see Bodart-Bailey 1993). Nevertheless, the influence of the West, initiated by the Portuguese, had a strong impact on religion, technology and economics (interestingly enough, all areas that were to be affected by the “second encounter” with the West in the mid-nineteenth century). In fact, if the Japanese elites were happy to welcome the benefits of trade with the Portuguese, most were also concerned by the religious and social impact that Christianity might have on the Japanese social fabric and, consequently, on the basis upon which an orderly, hierarchical, peaceful and harmonious Japan might have been constructed (Berry 1986; Elisonas 1991b; Garcia 1993: 7–19).

In fact, the Jesuits noticed quickly that, in order to participate fully in Japanese society and, thus, to enhance the process of evangelization, they had to adapt to the social values and hierarchies in place. This process reflected the Jesuits’ strategies of “contextual evangelization” and “cultural accommodation,” leading to their first impulse of dealing with the uppermost echelons of society. On the second and third impulses, however, and under pressure from the newly arrived mendicant orders, some turned their attentions to the lowest ranks and even the outcasts (Fernandes Pinto 2000; Pina 2001). Working with a peculiar mixture of trade, religion and war, the Jesuits came to be tolerated, even welcomed, by some daimyo (sometimes leading to mass conversion of the populace). Nonetheless, the longer the situation of *sengoku jidai* developed, the more toleration began to lose its foundation. The question of the toleration or condemnation of Japanese Christians, as well as the presence of Westerners, became important for at least two reasons, one relating to political power and the other to a certain self-understanding/representation of the Japanese self. As noted by George Elison (1973: 131),

[e]fforts at formal accommodation notwithstanding, the Jesuits were engaged in wholesale destruction of the Japanese tradition. [...] The diffusion of a new religion was permissible in Japan as long as the case was one of attraction to a concordant system of faith and ethics. The introduction of a foreign element was possible to the extent that it did not interfere with the dominant internal secular interests. The forced alienation from tradition was not tolerable. Exclusive claims of loyalty to an external element involved a secular clash.

Contrary to Chinese, Korean or Indian elements, the Christians represented a political and social heterodoxy that could threaten the ability and willingness of either Toyotomi Hideyoshi or Tokugawa Ieyasu to centralize power, on the one hand, and the legitimacy of the emerging orderly and hierarchical polity, on the other. Therefore, the Christians had at least to be managed, as this centralized perspective on power was principally aimed at preventing local daimyo or religious sects (e.g. the Ikkō sect [Single-Minded Sect])⁵ from achieving enough power to disrupt the public peace. As Wakita Osamu (1982: 365) notes, “under both the Toyotomi and the Tokugawa governments, the daimyo were delegated power to govern by the central government” and thus these governments were less and less inclined to let any other power, either religious, political or military, undermine their newly acquired sovereign authority over Japan. Following this development, the Jesuits were increasingly perceived as seditious elements within the Japanese realm. Therefore, on July 24, 1587 – one day after promulgating a notice to the Japanese lords in which he denounced the forced conversions of Japanese people by Christian daimyo and the danger of Christianity (see Elison 1973: 117–118; Elisonas forthcoming) –, Hideyoshi issued an edict of expulsion directed against what he assumed would be the next threat to his authority: the Christian missionaries (Boscaro 1973; Elisonas 1991b: 359–372). Hideyoshi’s decree read as follows (Elisonas forthcoming):

[1]. Japan is the Land of the Gods. That a pernicious doctrine should be diffused here from the Kirishitan Country is most undesirable.

[2]. To approach the people of our provinces and districts, turn them into [Kirishitan] sectarians, and destroy the shrines of the gods and the temples of the Buddhas is something unheard of in previous generations. Whereas provinces, districts, localities, and fiefs are granted to their recipients temporarily, contingent on the incumbent’s observance of the laws of the realm and attention to their intent in all matters, to embroil the common people is miscreant.

[3]. In the judgment of His Highness, it is because the Bateren amass parishioners as they please by means of their clever doctrine that the Law of the Buddhas is being destroyed like this in the Precincts of the Sun. That being miscreant, the Bateren can scarcely be permitted to remain on Japanese soil. Within twenty days from today they shall

⁵ The parallel between the Ikkō sect [Single-Minded Sect] and the Jesuits is explicitly stated in Hideyoshi’s edict prohibiting forced conversions of Japanese people, when he states that “The sectarians of the Bateren [padres] [...] are even more given to conjurations with outsiders than the Single-Minded sect” (see Elisonas forthcoming).

make their preparations and go back to their country. During this time, should anyone among the common people make unwarranted accusations against the Bateren, it shall be considered miscreant.

[4]. The purpose of the Black Ships is trade, and that is a different matter. As years and months pass, trade may be carried on in all sorts of articles.

[5]. From now on hereafter, all those who do not disturb the Law of the Buddhas (merchants, needless to say, and whoever) are free to come here from the Kirishitan Country and return. Be heedful of this.

Four years after this edict and note, Hideyoshi (see Elisonas forthcoming) reaffirmed his position in a letter addressed to the Portuguese viceroy of the Indies:

Our empire is the Land of the Gods. [...] In India, this godlike functioning is called the Law of the Buddhas (*Buppō*); in China, the Way of the Sages (*Jutō*); in these Precincts of the Sun, it is called the Way of the Gods (*Shintō*). To know the Way of the Gods is to know the Law of the Buddhas and to know the Way of the Sages as well.

As long as humans are active in society, humanity will be their basic principle. Were it not for humanity and righteousness, a lord would not act as a lord or a subject as a subject. It is by applying humanity and righteousness that the essential ties between lord and subject, father and son, and husband and wife are perfected, that the Way of these relationships is established. Should you want to learn about the gods and the Buddhas in depth, kindly ask, and I will explain.

In lands such as yours, one doctrine is taught to the exclusion of others, and you are unaware of the Way of humanity and righteousness. You therefore fail to revere the gods and the Buddhas or to distinguish between the lord and the subject. Instead, you seek to destroy the True Law by means of a pernicious doctrine. Hereafter, stop fabricating wild, barbarous nonsense in ignorance of right and wrong!

Some years ago that notorious group, the Bateren, came to this country, seeking to bedevil and cast a spell on religious and lay folk, men and women alike. At that time I only subjected them to some slight punishment. Were they to return to these parts with the intention of proselytizing, however, I shall extirpate them without sparing any of their ilk, and it will then be too late for the gnashing of teeth. Should you have the desire of maintaining friendship with this land, however, the seas have been rid of the pirate menace and merchants are free to come and go anywhere within these borders. Think this over.

For Hideyoshi, both the temporal pretensions of the padres on the Japanese people (and especially its nobility) and their quasi-sovereign presence on Japanese soil in Nagasaki (see Pacheco 1970) represented grounds on which the Japanese and Western Christians might be able to conspire against his own policies. Hideyoshi's motives, however, were not only focused on power politics. Christianity represented a clear threat to what had, in a sense, replaced the exo-esoteric system of medieval times: the balancing of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism as the "pith and core of the Japanese social structure" under the auspices of Shinto beliefs,⁶ which were "seen [by Hideyoshi] as different aspects of a sole reality and praised for their functions as warrenters of social order and peace – order and peace that the 'heresies' (obviously Christianity in particular) could endanger" (Boscaro 1973: 219). Hideyoshi's edicts and letters are fulfilled with a specific discourse on Japanese self-representation (internal and external), such as the *sangoku* [Three Countries] perspective or the idea of harmony and order, and thus contribute to the narrative matrix of *shinkoku shisō*, despite its anachronic use by Hideyoshi (see Rambelli 1996: 389). In effect, drawing a parallel between medieval times and early modern Japan,⁷ the rhetoric of alterity constituted through *shinkoku* was basically an instrument of religious legitimization of political authority, a tool of domination which took the form of a state ideology, both territorial and ideational in its articulations (Kuroda 1996b). Territorially, *shinkoku shisō* characterized Japan as either a land of the gods or a land protected by the gods: a mythical place, preserved in its harmony and peace by the will of the gods. Furthermore, medieval *shinkoku* discourse

functioned as a form of national consciousness within the framework of Japan's relations with other lands. Although essentially religious in nature, the *shinkoku* concept, insofar as it constituted an awareness of Japan as a *kuni* [country] [...], comprised a recognition by the Japanese of "their land" as a part of the actual East Asian world. (Kuroda 1996b: 379)

During the period in question, *shinkoku shisō* was reappropriated by the "chief narrators" of the time in order to develop a more complete sense

⁶ One has to recall the interpenetration of Shinto beliefs with Buddhism and Confucianism during the medieval time, see Kuroda (1981: 9–14; 1996b: 359–371).

⁷ It is to be noted that a thorough synchronic and diachronic analysis of the notion of *shinkoku* in early modern and modern Japan, using its medieval development as a point of departure, is still to be done (see Rambelli 1996: 390).

of belonging to a special, orderly and harmonious place, unified under one ruler – as is hinted in Hideyoshi's edict and letter. It also provided grounds on which a conception of a centralized bureaucratic state, the real power of the Tokugawa, became possible, through the development of a sense of within and without. This sense was grounded in the qualification of Japan as *shinkoku* in its demarcation from East Asian countries (with which relations were reestablished by the *bakufu*), and Western countries (with which relations were at best controlled, for instance, with the Dutch or, at worst, totally closed, as with the Portuguese). In relation to the sphere of ideas, medieval *shinkoku* discourse provided "a regimen of social control" (Rambelli 1996: 404) for determining norms and establishing how people should be situated in a hierarchy in Japanese society. During the Tokugawa period, *shinkoku shisō* provided a basic form on which a more specific rhetoric of alterity could be developed with regard to Christianity, which became associated, by its practices and, more importantly, through Tokugawa propaganda (see Elison 1973: 185–247), with pollution and impurity. In this regard, Christianity was configured as the opposite to Japanese religions (Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism), and related to *shokue shisō* [pollution mindedness] (Elisonas 2000).

The *bateren* [padres], in particular, were associated with *shokue shisō*, insofar as they were involved in handling the poor, the sick and the dying. By not respecting the taboos related to the *hinin* [outcasts, "not human"], and by challenging the established social order, the *bateren* not only exposed themselves to the reprobation and suspicion of the elites for which *shokue shisō* was an instrument of social domination, but were also associated with filth and impurity, in view of the categorization of the *hinin* in Japanese society (Elisonas 2000: 18). It is very important to describe here the relations between certain types of dichotomies within a dominant Japanese self-understanding/representation in order to understand the relations established between a particular group of people and its position in society and the overall perception of the Japanese either of the within or the without (see Ohnuki-Tierney 1984: 34–50). The categories of purity and impurity are cardinal principles in the Japanese world view and ethos (see Geertz 1973: 126–128);⁸ they participate in both rhetorical and behavioral practices that serve as articulations of the Japanese politics of alterity. As

⁸ "World view" stands for the cognitive and existential aspects of a given culture while "ethos" stands for its moral and aesthetic aspects. An early perspective on Japanese culture according to this latter distinction and related to the categories of "purity" and "impurity" can be found pervadingly in the classical work of Ruth Benedict (1946).

explained by Ohnuki-Tierney (1984: 36), the handling of corpses or anything related to illness was linked with impurity. Moreover, impurity was considered to be something that could be passed on from one person to another.

The Jesuits and the mendicant orders, through their contacts with the *hinin* (notably in the hospitals they established) were placed in the category of impurity. As noted by Alison (1973: 85–86), “the intention was most charitable [...] but the results of charity were not what the Padres had hoped. The hospital was popular among the very poor; but persons of quality were reluctant to associate with missionaries who left themselves open to contamination with the most dreadful afflictions.” The fear of this contamination was not so much about catching a disease than about being polluted through the missionaries. In fact, “[...] as long as they permitted the scurvy and the leprosy to flock to them, the Jesuit missionaries would be associated with the apparatus of pollution. At the very least, they would be contaminated in the eyes of their noble patrons; at worst, they would be considered contaminants. They themselves risked becoming orifices that produced filth” (Elisonas 2000: 24). Purity and impurity, as a “dominant system of meaning,” were also represented in at least two other dichotomies – in/out and above/below – which “may not have been identical throughout history, but the structure itself has remained intact” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984: 47).

Thus, *shinkoku shisō* served in early modern Japan as a catalyst, and a performative framework and network, for a rhetoric of alterity, such as *shokue shisō*, the purpose of which was to translate otherness (the West, Christianity, impurity, the outside) into the realm of sameness (*shinkoku*, Shinto/Buddhism/Confucianism, purity, the inside). Furthermore, in a parallel yet different fashion from its medieval articulation, it constituted an heterology for Japanese people, by its structuration as “an active mis-remembering of the history of the Japanese archipelago, in the sense that it selected certain events and certain ideas and framed them within a certain ideological structure in order to produce a distorted vision of the past upon which a cultural identity and a system of domination could be built” (Rambelli 1996: 389–390). This mis-remembering led to a misunderstanding of otherness, orchestrated by those in a position of political power and cultural authority (Amino 1995, 2001 [1996]). While Hideyoshi first started this movement (see Boscaro 1973), the Tokugawa rulers were the primary agents, through their religious and political propaganda, illustrated by the famous *Kirishitan monogatari* [Tale of the Christians] (see Boscaro 1979; Alison 1973: 319–374). This tale, which appeared in 1639, and probably reached a vast audience, ends up on a note belonging to *shinkoku shisō*:

During this reign the Kirishitan religion has been cut down at its root and cast out of our land. [...] But why was the outcome so fortunate? Japan is called the Land of the Gods. But it is also the terrain where Buddha's Law is widely spread. It is traditional in the Three Countries that the Royal Sway, the Way of the Gods, and the Path of Buddha are like unto a tripod's legs: if one of them be broken off, then the sun and moon are fallen from the sky and the lantern is lost which lights up the bloomy night. Barbarians from foreign lands came here, to spread their cursed doctrine and, despising the Buddhas and the Gods, to destroy them and do way with them, determined thereby to make of Japan a domain of devils. [...] But then the Kirishitans were exterminated, without being allowed to grasp an inch of our soil, to stand on a foot of our land. [...] The Empire is at peace, the land in tranquility, the reign of longevity. (Elison 1973: 374)

This excerpt somehow epitomized the Tokugawas' gradual limitation and near termination of the Christian presence in Japan (see Whelan 1992), which they accomplished by issuing and implementing several decrees, roughly during the period 1614 to 1639, forbidding the Japanese people from travelling abroad (or those abroad from returning home), controlling trade relations with foreign lands, expelling foreigners⁹ and, of greater significance for our analysis of Japanese politics of alterity, controlling alternative self-understandings/representations that might have contradicted or endangered the new order of the *bakufu* (Jansen 2000: 75–80). From then on, the Tokugawa applied practices of alterity following a twofold policy towards the Christians. Inside the country, the Tokugawa enforced a rigorous social control policy throughout their realm; outside the country, they decided that the best way to deal with Christianity and to eradicate it from Japanese soil was to isolate the islands from the "source of that contagion" (Elisonas 1991b: 369): the West. As mentioned above, foreigners were expelled or concealed, turning the Tokugawa realm into what was called a "closed country" (*sakoku*, for a critical appraisal of the notion see Katō 1981; Tashiro 1982; Toby 1977), with the Dutch only being accepted as "silent traders" (Tojo 2000). Domestically, Tokugawa Hidetada and Iemitsu, the second and third shogun, respectively, were the first to intensify the actual annihilation of followers of the "pernicious doctrine," either through apostasy, a term which interestingly we will find again during the

⁹ It is worth noting that the 1614 decree known as the "Statement on the Expulsion of the Bateren" started by rehearsing *shinkoku* as a justifying ground to expel the religious orders as they were deemed to "subvert the native Japanese, the Buddhist, and the Confucian foundations of the social order" (Elisonas 1991b: 367).

interwar period, or through physical elimination during several martyrdoms (see Anesaki 1936; Cieslik 1954; Elisonas forthcoming). In order to achieve this, Hidetada ordered all residents within the Tokugawa realm to register as parishioners of Buddhist temples. This policy, which was extended to the whole country in the mid-1680s, was a clear manifestation of practices of alterity, intended to enact and control a self-understanding/representation among the populace and a sense of group belonging between them, through what was chosen by the Tokugawa as the normal essence of a “Japanese” self.

The *danka seido* [affiliation system of temples and households] was an old Buddhist system transformed by the Tokugawa into a national institution in order to secure their political and social control over the country by linking a religious network with individual households to their central administration. In the 1614 edict, this co-optation was made explicit by referring to Christianity as an enemy of both the Tokugawa state and the *Japanese* religions (Elisonas forthcoming). Following this edict, Buddhist priests were entitled and even obliged to check on the presence of Christians or enemies of the state in the area in which their temples were situated (Marcure 1985: 39–42). This was, in a way, the popular counterpart of the *buke shohatto* [Code for the Military Houses], designed as a form of oath of allegiance, or loyalty test, by the daimyo to the regime. Tokugawa Iemitsu further elaborated the *buke shohatto* in order to include specific regulations against the propagation of Christianity (J. W. Hall 1991: 157). The *danka seido* was intended as a form of political and social control over the Japanese population since, from the very first months of 1614, Christians in several provinces were forced to convert back to Buddhism and obliged to enter the *danka* system by which they were recorded as Buddhist practitioners and, from then on, checked every year about their beliefs (Tamura 2001).

These practices of alterity finally reached their peak with the institutionalization of an office for the examination of religious beliefs (*shūmon aratame yaku*) in 1640, whose first head “prosecutor,” Inoue Chikugo no Kami, was already deeply involved in the prosecution of Christians following the Shimabara uprising of 1637–38 (Anesaki 1938; Elison 1973: 195–208). This “inquisition” was aimed at wiping out Christianity from Japan, either by making “sectarians” apostatize Christianity or, more simply, by executing them. The latter became more and more of an extreme measure as the “inquisitors” soon recognized the importance of martyrs in strengthening the Christian faith among Japanese believers. They thus preferred to provoke *korobu* [apostatizing] (Anesaki 1936: 24–25), by means of threats, torture, temptations or disputations, as the value of apostates was greater than that of martyrs to testify the falsehood of the Christian religion. Apos-

tates helped also to weaken its vigor among the Japanese population, who were thus shown the true alien nature of Christianity, in contrast to the natural virtues and truths of the Japanese religions to which the apostates, or “fallen Christians” (*korobi kirishitan*), were “redirected,” and within which they were for the rest of their life, and up to five generations, controlled (Tamamuro 2001: 248).¹⁰ Of particular interest for the “inquisitors” were the *korobi bateren* [“fallen”/apostatized padres] who “served as a living proof of the evil of the forbidden religion,” as they provided the Japanese authority with a “maximum propaganda effect” (Cieslik 1974: 26), the most famous being that of Christovao Ferreira (Cieslik 1974).

One of the main practices of alterity used by local magistrates to establish the religious orthodoxy of the commoners and elites, and to confirm the repudiation of Christianity by the *korobi kirishitan*, was to require them to trample on a Christian image (*ebumi*). This mandatory practice, dating back at least to 1629, was extended to the whole of Japan by 1640, and followed closely the institution of the *shūmon aratame yaku* in those regions, such as Kyushu, where the Christian religion was particularly strong (Whelan 1992: 370). This practice was described as necessary in a contemporary document aiming at outlining the purpose and procedures of the inquisition. It noted its effects on “old wives and women”, who get “agitated and red in the face; they cast off their headdress; their breath comes in rough gasps; sweat pours from them” (as quoted in Elison 1973: 204), conditions and attitudes which consequently designated them as Christians. As it is recorded in some documents (see Marega 1939, Tamamuro 2001), people generally gathered at the house of the *shōya* [village headman] or at the temple once a year in order to process the rite of *ebumi*. At the *shōya*'s house, in an instance related by Marega (1939: 282), people were called by name and each were to set a foot on the image (*fumie*), two officials (*yakunin*) were to scrutinize the movements of the person to see if the image was really trampled and if the person was moved or not by such a gesture. If he/she proved to be moved by the *ebumi* then it was decided that he/she was Christian.

Once the image had been properly trampled, however, the name of the head of a family, along with details of the whole family, would be registered in the *shūmon aratamechō* [registries of religious affiliation]. The same process also took place at the temple during a similar ceremony, held once a year. This ceremony became a cornerstone of the *danka seido*, by enabling registration of most of the population according to their religious affiliation. By fulfilling the orthodox requirement of the Tokugawa regime, household members were allowed to receive a temple certificate (*terauke-*

¹⁰ Apostates who revoked their apostasy (*tachi agaru*) were killed.

jō) which, according to a 1638 edict, “provided that people had to attend certain Buddhist rites, in particular, ceremonies on the anniversary days of ancestors, in order that their temple certificate should retain its validity. The death penalty was prescribed in cases of a lapsed certificate” (Marcure 1985: 43). The *danka seido* provided the Tokugawa regime with a tool of social control, implemented through an inquisitorial system, designed to establish and maintain a state ideology, which gradually matured in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

NORMALCY, *KOKUTAI* AND THE POLICY OF *TENKŌ*¹¹

The second narrative matrix that will be discussed in this essay is that of *kokutai*. This notion came to the forefront of the discussion about the Japanese polity during the transitional period of the nineteenth century. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, *kokutai* can be seen as a narrative matrix with many articulations (see Minear 1970: 57, 64–71), which deeply influenced the Japanese politics of alterity toward the West. As noted by Carol Gluck (1985: 144), in order to assess the importance of this notion, “the precise definition of *kokutai* mattered less than the ideological uses to which it was put.” I will thus concentrate on its use during the interwar period, a period that saw Western ideologies, such as liberalism and communism, portrayed as threatening to the Japanese self-understanding/representation promoted by the Japanese state since the Meiji restoration. The *kokutai* matrix gave rise to both a rhetoric of alterity, enshrined in penal legislation and educational texts such as the *Kokutai no hongī* [Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan] (see R. K. Hall 1949), and practices of alterity, illustrated by the politics of *tenkō* [apostasy]. Before considering these aspects, however, we need to understand the origins of the notion of *kokutai*, in order to appreciate its connection with *shinkoku shisō* and its emphasis on the “emperor system” (*tennōsei*).

The first far-reaching use of *kokutai* in early modern Japan is to be found in Aizawa Seishisai’s *Shinron* [New Theses] (1986 [1825]) that, quite ironically, were inspired by Western learning (*rangaku*) and increasing probes by British and Russian vessels into Japanese waters. During the Tokugawa regime, the *rangakusha* [Western scholar] was the Japanese *histōr* of the West. Western sources were comprised within a “kind of Confucian-type immutable scholarly whole, bits and pieces of which [the Western scholars] were fitting together,” instead of placing this knowledge in its own

¹¹ Some elements of this argument have already been partly developed in Guillaume (2002).

chronology. Therefore the West was relayed through Japanese conceptions of time and change, and Western knowledge was artificially perceived as “material,” departing from the more “spiritual” articulations existing in Confucianism. Western learning was henceforth constrained in a knowledge “made to adhere to the unquestioningly accepted Neo-Confucian theoretical framework of Tokugawa society” (Goodman 1986: 6, 225, 228). Yet, according to Aizawa, if there was one aspect of the West worthy of consideration, it was Christianity: “as civilization steadily progressed, even the barbarians received its blessings; they learned the technique of creating religious injunctions and precepts to guide their people. [...] [T]hose hordes [used to lack] integration and permanence. But now Islam and Christianity have provided their leaders with these two elements and more” (Aizawa 1986 [1825]: 194). It was Christianity that gave the West its strength by offering Western leaders a “state cult” able to unify their subjects and, at the same time, subvert the lands they aimed to conquer. Aizawa named this “popular unity and allegiance” created by the state cult *kokutai*. The notion of *kokutai* thus also came to mean “the unity of religion and government” (*saisei itchi*) which could be “used by a ruler to create spiritual unity and integration among his subjects” (Wakabayashi 1986: 13, 142). This was the methodology through which peoples were transformed into nations.

Furthermore, Aizawa conceptually linked the idea of *shinkoku* to *kokutai* through the idea of an unbroken lineage of emperors (*bansei ikkei*). Aizawa (1986 [1825]: 170) explains:

Though present and past be far removed, His Imperial Majesty is a Descendant of the same Dynastic Line founded by Amaterasu. The masses below are descendants of those masses first blessed by Amaterasu’s loving grace in antiquity. If we establish a set of doctrines for the people in keeping with their indomitable spirit, [...] and if we rectify the loyalty of subject for lord and make warmer still the affection between parent and child, then it will not be difficult to edify the people and achieve spiritual unity.

Shinkoku refers in Aizawa’s conceptualization to the mytho-history of Japan, a form of mis-remembering, which is used to describe the *bakuhau* order. Thus, *kokutai* becomes the warrant of “Japan’s uniqueness as a civilization and eternity as a state” (Harootunian 1970: 91–92, 100). Through mytho-history, the emperor was to be considered the sacred pillar of Japanese society and its political regime, both being symbolically united to the emperor. This link between the people and the emperor evolved during the 1860s and the first thirty years of the Meiji restoration under the influence of “liberal” thinkers. Expanding and distorting Aizawa’s own con-

ceptions, they attempted to use *kokutai* to separate the emperor from the actual government and develop a system of governance. However, the notion of *kokutai* central to the Meiji state formation was one in which “the state appropriated the value inherent in the ‘imperial house’ and ‘*kokutai*’ and then tried to draw the people in by means of ideological fictions like *kunmin ikka* [the ruler and the people as one family] and *kazoku kokka* [the family-state]” (Irokawa 1985 [1970]: 252–254, 259). The Meiji constitution of 1889 established the emperor system as a form of governance, while the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (1958 [1890]) introduced ideas constitutive of *kokutai*, such as the family-state, into the educational system. Increasingly, *kokutai* came to be used as an “amuletic word,” to use Tsurumi Shunsuke’s description, to justify everything that was undertaken (Daniels 1956; Irokawa 1985 [1970]: 250).

The recourse to *kokutai* as an amuletic word in the modern era was paralleled by a growing mechanical modernization that deepened existing social, economic and political discrepancies. Increasingly, such recourse became part of a movement during the late Meiji and subsequent Taishō era aimed at shaping a political community that as yet lacked a clear sense of belonging or a sense of a national community (*kokumin*). The motives underlying this movement were exposed by Kenneth B. Pyle (1973: 53–57) as: “1) averting the social disruption seen in Western industrial societies; 2) absorbing new groups into political processes in a way that would not jeopardize the existing order; and 3) promoting continued rapid economic development.” To do so, *kokutai* evolved to serve as an orthodox argument that was gradually transmitted by way of propaganda, education or through its embodiment in a legal form (see Khan 2000; Mitchell 1973, 1976; Wray 1973). Anti-particularistic tendencies, such as liberalism and socialism, emerged and grew during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods and were perceived as threats to the *kokutai* and the *tennōsei* since they belonged to the “dangerous thoughts” (*kiken shisō*) which threatened to contaminate the population through the diffusion of individualist ways of thinking and behaviors (Hoston 1992; Katō 1999 [1974]; Mitchell 1992: 36–68; Nolte 1984). During the interwar period, these schools of thought in conflict with the Japanese self-understanding/representation promoted by the Taishō and Shōwa regimes were epitomized in what was called *modanizumu* [modernism] or even *Amerikanizumu* [Americanism]. They were considered as thoughts and behaviours presenting a challenge to Japanese social and cultural traditions through their diffusion in Japanese popular culture by different medias. It is worth noting that this diffusion and reception even led to a series of Japanese cultural and ethnographic studies on these phenomena (Harootunian 2000; Sato 1998; Silverberg 1992).

Emperor Taishō shared these fears, as evidenced by a 1923 imperial pre-script in which he ordered the Japanese people to run away from any type of radical thinking and to moderate their social critics (Mitchell 1976: 30–31). In other words he ordered Japanese people to reject alternative self-understandings/representations, originating from the West, which contravened the official orthodoxy (see Najita and Harootunian 1988). Henceforth,

by the end of the Taisho era, a growing sense of national frustration and crisis had created a mood within the government and among the concerned public for new methods to control radical thought. It was obvious that the old methods were becoming less effective, particularly in the face of a rapidly rising level of ideological and political sophistication among the general populace. (Mitchell 1976: 33)

The result was the establishment of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law (Mitchell 1973, 1976), which defined the ideological parameters to which organizations and individuals had to conform. These legal provisions (revised twice in 1928 and 1941) were part of a rhetoric of alterity in which the heterodox behavior and way of thinking of some Japanese people were related to alternative self-understandings/representations threatening the harmony of the political community as a whole. This was done by placing *kokutai* at the center of this alterity rhetoric, criminalizing persons organizing or belonging to “an association with the objective of altering the *kokutai* or the form of government or denying the system of private property,” pursuant to article 1 of the draft law (see Mitchell 1976: 63).¹² In implementing the law, the Ministry of Justice chose to apply a direct approach to the problem of radical thinking. It set up an Office of Thought (*shisōbu*), designed to prosecute, through the supervision of thought prosecutors (*shisō gakari kenji*), any individuals or organizations participating in crimes of thought (*shisōhan*). This alterity rhetoric thus gave rise to a series of practices of alterity, such as the *tenkō* policy (Mitchell 1976: 97–147; Steinhoff 1988, 1991), which will be considered in more detail later on.

A major aspect of the Peace Preservation Law as a rhetoric of alterity was the transformation of *kokutai* into a legal term that allowed very broad interpretations of the law by the judicial and police authorities. Furthermore, the use of *kokutai* had an important symbolic meaning. More than a criminal law, the Peace Preservation Law was also a strong affirmation of the unity and harmony of the nation in a period of political, economic and social crisis. The aim was to appease Japanese society by fighting its prob-

¹² The article was finally adopted with the provision that the mention to *seitai* [form of government] would be deleted (Mitchell 1976: 65).

lems and showing to the people the way to a sound and orthodox social integration. As Richard Mitchell (1976: 67–68) pinpoints:

The use of the enigmatic and highly emotional term *kokutai* reflected a continuation of the government drive to indoctrinate its subjects in the way of reverence for the emperor. [...] [T]he use of *kokutai* in the Peace Preservation Law was [also] a logical extension of this ongoing reaction to modernization and Westernization. By using this phrase, the government informed all the emperor's subjects of its intention to preserve the Japanese way of life in the face of rapid change.

The enshrinement of *kokutai* in a law reinforced its function as an amuletic word and provided grounds for its diffusion into other spheres controlled by the state such as education. In this respect, the most famous moral education textbook of the interwar period, the *Kokutai no hongī* [Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan], published in 1937, represents a perfect example of alterity rhetoric in the field of education. It was initially printed in 300,000 copies and, by the end of the Second World War, almost 2,000,000 had been sold. The book was the work of a committee of professors coming from the most prestigious universities in Japan and who were asked by the Ministry of Education to define what were Japan's "essential truths" and how they could be compared with those of the West. The manual was especially designed to be distributed to the teaching network of both public and private schools from the university to the elementary schools level (R. K. Hall 1949: 3–11). *Kokutai no hongī* could be considered to be what Suzuki Takeshi (2001: 254–259) calls an "ideological pronouncement," a text that "declares the framing story leading to social practices and agreement through the normal process of social existence, interaction, and discourse." *Kokutai no hongī* is furthermore characterized by a "'one-sided communication,' or a sort of imperfect communication designed to ask the audience to stop thinking and to blindly accept the imposed cultural norm or social more."

As a monological volume, *Kokutai no hongī* "employs a variety of rhetorical strategies to distinguish Japanese traditions from their Western counterparts" (Suzuki 2001: 259). Indeed, one of its aims is to see how the latter can be absorbed into the former without destroying it, since Western traditions were inhabited by the inherent contradictions of individualism. The introductory part of the book underscores the origin of the "various ideological and social evils of present-day Japan" in its inability to absorb soundly and orthodoxically foreign elements. It is also pointed out that to *reinstall* harmony in the realm would require an investigation of "the intrinsic nature of Occidental ideologies" and an understanding of "the true meaning of our national entity (*kokutai*)" (see R. K. Hall 1949: 51–55). The

first part of the book (R. K. Hall 1949: 59–102) emphasizes the idea of *ten-nōsei* as the founding and enduring characteristic of *kokutai*, recalling that Japan was “founded on this great principle, all the people, united as one great family nation in heart and obeying the Imperial Will” (R. K. Hall 1949: 59). In view of its divine character, Japan is therefore a unique and sacred nation. Since the Japanese people are the subjects of a deity, they have to respect and follow a number of rules. They also have to be patriotic and loyal, in accordance with the virtue of filial piety in the family-state, and in order to avoid breaking this harmonic relationship. Harmony is the second main theme stressed in the book:

Harmony is a product of the great achievements of the founding of the nation, and is the power behind our historical growth; while it is also a humanitarian Way inseparable from our daily lives. The spirit of harmony is built on the concord of all things. When people determinedly count themselves as masters and assert their egos, there is nothing but contradictions and the setting of one against the other; and harmony is not begotten. [...] Harmony as of our nation is not a mechanical concert of independent individuals of the same level that has its starting point in [cold] knowledge, [but] a great harmony of individuals who, by giving play to their [individual] differences, and through difficulties, toil and labor, converge as one. (R. K. Hall 1949: 93–94)

Henceforth, Western societies are inferior to Japanese society because they are unable to reach this harmony among the people, and between the people and the leadership. Harmony means national unity according to the principles of *kokutai* that, in turn, are to be contrasted with the principles ruling in the West (individualism, self-autonomy, materialism, rationalism) (Suzuki 2001: 260). The Western influence corrupts the ability to reach “a pure and clear state of mind that belong *intrinsically* to us as subjects, and thereby fathom the great principle of loyalty” (R. K. Hall 1949: 82, my emphasis). The Japanese are intrinsically different from the “so-called citizens of Occidental countries,” as their relations to the ruler are not embedded in a disembodied and cold social contract but in a natural unity defining the essence of the *kokutai* (R. K. Hall 1949: 79–80). As the *Kokutai no hongī* points out (R. K. Hall 1949: 93–102), it is the true nature of Japanese people to look after harmony, a harmony threatened by imported and unnatural Western doctrines or perspectives. In a sense, Western countries are the inverted image of Japan and, as such, their ideologies should be imported with caution and carefully monitored in order not to disturb, as was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, what lies at the center of Japan as a national community. This monitoring, as expressed by

the Peace Preservation Law and the policy of *tenkō*, is vividly recalled in the *Kokutai no hongī*, which emphasizes that Western learning should only be integrated in the light of the *kokutai* (R. K. Hall 1949: 175).

Thus, during the interwar period, the Taishō and Shōwa regimes were forced to try to cope with an integrative problem related to the “importation” of foreign ideologies, in particular leftist movements, which spread through a population increasingly aware of its own political role (Mitchell 1976: 21–33). As in many other countries (see Steinhoff 1991: 3–4), the Japanese authorities used a wide range of practices of alterity designed to establish the boundaries of normalcy by delineating self-policing limits. Such laws were designed to confront what were deemed to be deviant behaviors and thoughts, and the related punishments reflected this goal. They were designed either for deterrence, retribution, prevention, or with a normative design, in the case of rehabilitation (see Steinhoff 1991: 49–51). A point worth focusing on here is the implementation by the Ministry of Justice, during the 1930s, of a new policy concerning the thought criminals: the policy of *tenkō*. *Tenkō* [change of heart] is a term that we can also appropriately translate as *apostasy* in the light of the Japanese politics of alterity toward the West (Mitchell 1976: 127–147; Steinhoff 1988, 1991). This policy consisted of dropping any legal charges against a thought criminal, considered as a potential apostate (*tenkōsha*), if he/she publicly rejected the ideology underlying the actions for which he/she was arrested and/or condemned.

The idea of rehabilitation as such was not new in Japanese legislation but it was given greater importance in cases of thought crimes during the interwar period since it was considered to be the optimal outcome of the *tenkō* (Mitchell 1976: 98). Furthermore, *tenkō* was conceived, as Patricia G. Steinhoff (1991: 57, my emphasis) outlines, as “the *natural* resolution of the thought crime” given that “*tenkō* provided the proper ritual expiation required for retribution, and in that process the thought criminal also rehabilitated himself and became fit for social life again.” In other words, *tenkō* was a procedure put in place to rehabilitate Japanese thought criminals to the normalcy of their Japaneseness, and to rid them from the pollution of alien thoughts. These underlying reasons were very clear for someone like Hirata Susumu, a thought prosecutor:

[No] thought criminal was hopeless. [...] Since they were all Japanese, sooner or later they would all come around to realizing that their ideas were wrong (as quoted in Mitchell 1976: 127).

It was important for the authorities not only to break the group morale existing in the type of organizations the Peace Preservation Law was directed against but also to avoid the creation of martyrs by simply executing

thought criminals. During the process that could lead to a *tenkō* statement (*tenkōshō*), a statement proving the act of apostatizing one's beliefs, the police and judicial authorities exercised physical, psychological and social pressure in order to create the favorable conditions for an imprisoned thought criminal to renounce his/her convictions. This procedure is not unlike the one undertaken by the *shūmon aratame yaku*. Pressure was designed to shatter the sense of group belonging usually supporting an individual in an ideology. Consequently, thought criminals were forced to face alone either the falsity of their ideological beliefs toward their country or the idea that their behaviour had disgraced or displeased their family. In parallel or following the process of applying pressure to the thought criminals, each *tenkōsha* went through at least three broad mental steps before committing *tenkō*. A first step was to start to find motives for *tenkō*, that is intellectual and emotional elements that would shake the *tenkōsha*'s beliefs. It is worth noting that *kokutai* and *tennōsei* constituted two important points fostering the emergence or maturation of self-doubt concerning one's own ideology. A second step was to find an excuse, which was often linked to previous *tenkō*, in order to justify what was generally felt as a betrayal of comrades or an ideology. A third step was to accept one's own *tenkō*, an acceptance that led many to either find new grounds, whether religious or ideological, to fill the void following the apostatizing (Mitchell 1992: 78–81, 117–139; Steinhoff 1991: 99–123).

In creating apostates the authorities avoided creating martyrs. Furthermore, in some famous *tenkō* cases such as the one involving the communist leaders Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, the authorities were able to create incentives for other *tenkōsha* to go through the three steps mentioned earlier. More importantly, these cases were used substantially for propaganda purposes to promote the government policy of *kokutai* along with an idea of national harmony, not unlike the cases of *korobi bateren* in the seventeenth century. Once *tenkō* had been achieved, however, the process of social and ideological control and reintegration was only just beginning. The judicial authorities feared that *tenkōsha* would slip back to their former state for two main reasons. Either they would find themselves unable to reintegrate into a society in which they used to be marginalized and thus were perceived as “polluted,” or their *tenkō* had only a fragile basis, forcing the authorities to monitor and control them in order to prevent a relapse. Hence, in 1936, a Thought Criminals' Protection and Supervision Law Bill (*Shisōhan hogo kansatsu hō*) was adopted by parliament. This law was designed to “protect” one “from the danger of again violating the peace law” and to supervise “the thoughts and activities of each person.” As Richard H. Mitchell notes, for the head of the Protection Division, Moriyama Takeichirō, “the law would be used to stimulate their Japanese

spirit and truly understand what it meant to be Japanese; for converted people, the object would be to move their thought further along the proper path. The spirit of the law, said Moriyama, drew upon the historical fact that Japan was one great family" (Mitchell 1992: 103–108; Steinhoff 1991: 200–209).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this essay was to delineate a possible structuration of narratives found in Japanese history along the idea of a Japanese politics of alterity toward the West. These narrative matrices, that of *shinkoku* or *kokutai*, were shown to be performative frameworks and networks through which alterity rhetoric and practices of alterity were applied by chief narrators to alternative self-understandings/representations. By mis-directing the understanding that Japanese people might have had of alternative selves, the various chief narrators attempted to promote a unified and increasingly "national" self which was deemed to represent and constitute the orthodox, normal and natural essence of the Japanese as a collective body and polity. Thus, the underlying rationale behind this politics of alterity was that any Japanese person following Western ideologies or religions (whether Christianity, Communism or Western Liberalism) was actually forcing him-/herself to become a westernized alien and, therefore, a threat to the peace and harmony of the Japanese realm. While early modern Japan saw a complete rejection of any Western elements from its own self-understanding/representation, in modern Japan, as Stefan Tanaka (1993: 18) has noted in relation to modern Japanese historiography, Japanese chief narrators dialogically used "the West and Asia as other(s) to construct their own sense of a Japanese nation as modern and oriental." This transition from the Tokugawa exclusionary policy towards the West to its social monitoring during the Meiji, Taishō and early Shōwa eras is in itself an interesting element illustrating the gradual autonomization of the Japanese people in a centralized state and its integration into a national entity. A change is also discernible in the structuration of the identity-alterity nexus.

Moreover, this essay has shown that parallel alterity rhetoric and practices of alterity were used in Japan despite the evolution of the "national" thrust between the Tokugawa and the Meiji eras. Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2001) has emphasized the movement from a spatial conception of frontier and self-understanding/representation in Japan to a temporal one. This movement is illustrated here, on the one hand, by the reaction against Christianity and the West in the form of a policy of "closed country" (*sa-*

koku), sustained by the narrative matrix of *shinkoku shisō* and the practices designed to eliminate Christianity and, on the other, the evolution of the discourse on *kokutai* and the related practice in the 1930s of *tenkō*, which supported the idea that Japanese people should reach a certain stage of “national evolution.” That the narrative matrix of *shinkoku shisō* was still at work, in parallel with the emergence and the strengthening of *kokutai* during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, by the medium of the conception of *tennōsei*, is an interesting element in the analysis of this temporal development. The constructed memory of a mythical past came to represent a form of naturalization of a specific self-understanding/representation, notably through the naming and typologizing of difference and diversity into categories establishing unity and homogeneity (Amino 1995, 2001 [1996]). In other words, by replacing a spatial conception of self-understanding/representation, that could not integrate fully the “Japanese” realm, by a temporal conception, ruling elites permitted the establishment of a *Japanese* politics of alterity that could fulfill the aim of homogeneity and unity (see also Fujitani 1993).

It is also important to note that either the practices of alterity used by the *shūmon aratame yaku*, through the *danka seido*, from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth or those employed by the judicial authorities of the interwar period were not only directed against the religious, ideological or social margins of Japanese society. They also were aimed at the vast silent majority in an effort to reaffirm the orthodoxy or normalcy and the harmonizing qualities of the chief narrators’ self-understanding/representation (with some success as Amino’s work has shown, see Amino 1995, 2001 [1996]). In effect, a major underlying element in any Japanese politics of alterity, whether in its early modern or modern articulations, was the idea of harmony which is often the ideal background against which the different rhetorics of alterity reviewed in this essay are enunciated. Harmony was the ideal boundary of the within, the referent through which the without was translated, the alternative self-understandings/representations which were most of the time situated in an external realm (but were often echoed within). Either *shinkoku shisō* or *kokutai* provided the narrative matrices for alterity rhetorics that offered ways to control the differences that Japanese society faced at various moments in its history. In that sense, they provided chief narrators with a performative framework that mis-directed the understanding of the other in order to build a system of meaning sanctifying the orthodoxy, normalcy, and naturalness of an exclusive self-understanding/representation.

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