In the Presence of Gods and Spirits

HIRATA ATSUTANE AND HIS COLLABORATORS

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Acknowledgments

I started this project during the COVID-19 lockdown in California. I'd been working on a paper for Bernhard Scheid and his coeditors on the relations between Hirata Atsutane and shrine priests affiliated with the Shirakawa and Yoshida houses in charge of Shinto affairs at the imperial court and realized that this relationship could bear further exploration. In 2009, I'd made a feeble attempt at juxtaposing material culture, faith, and Atsutane's social networks for a conference organized by Richard Bowring at Cambridge University but gave it up in favor of focusing on Hirata family affairs. In 2020 I decided to return my attention to Atsutane's system of beliefs and how it played out in the lives of his descendants and among his collaborators. If I was ever going to write a book on Atsutane, now was the time to do it while I was prevented from my usual gadding about.

I'd already spent many happy hours in the library of the National Museum of Japanese History reading first microfilm and then digital printouts from the Hirata family archive. I thank Kurushima Hiroshi for sponsoring me for a research fellowship there in 2006 and librarian Seki Hatsumi for facilitating access to documents. For help in deciphering these documents plus early access to scholarship and documents in other collections, I thank first the former director of the museum, Miyachi Masato, who leads a research group on Hirata Japan studies, and its core members—Endō Jun, Matsumoto Hisashi, Yoshida Asako, Nakagawa Kazuaki, and Kumazawa Eriko. The members of Katsura no kai, under the leadership of Shiba Keiko, deciphered letters written by women. Other scholars who aided me in this endeavor are Nakai Yoshiyuki, Saitō Yoshiyuki, and Umezawa Fumiko.

This project would be riddled with errors of meaning and interpretation were it not for Kate Wildman Nakai's profound knowledge of writings on the age of the gods, which she graciously shared with me during countless conversations on FaceTime, and her careful reading of the manuscript. In Irvine, Robert Moeller and Kathryn Ragsdale pushed me to make my arguments more explicit and tried to clean up my prose. Mark Teeuwen and Helen Hardacre shared their professional expertise in Shinto studies in reviewing the manuscript for the Press. Needless to say, none of them can save the book from the errors that remain, for which I take responsibility.

During my early years of finding documents, multi-month stays in Japan facilitated getting help in reading them and attending research group meetings. I had the good fortune to serve as the director of the University of California Education Abroad Program at Meiji Gakuin University (MGU) in 2004, 2007, and 2010. I was also a visiting professor at International Christian University (ICU) in 2005 and at Ochanomizu University in the winter of 2015–16. I thank M. William Steele at ICU and Masako Ishii-Kuntz at Ochanomizu University for inviting me to their institutions. In addition, MGU and ICU provided lodging for me while on grants in 2009 and 2012. I'm grateful to these institutions for the opportunities they afforded me to pursue goals not always in line with my responsibilities to them.

While I was employed at the University of California, Irvine, I received three grants in addition to the research fellowship from the National Museum of Japanese History. In 2009, Professor Kojima Yasunori at ICU agreed to sponsor me for a Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship. I'm grateful to him and to the foundation. In 2012, I received funding from the Northeast Asia Council Japan Studies Program and the UCI Humanities Center for another stay in Japan. In all cases, my time in Japan was supported by sabbaticals provided by the University of California. When COVID-19 restrictions put travel to Japan on hold, I took advantage of the HathiTrust Digital Library to access Hirata Atsutane's complete works and other materials. It is a boon to researchers forced to sit at home.

I've incurred further obligations in preparing my manuscript for publication. Bernhard Scheid, Stefan Köck, and Brigette Pickl-Kolaczia graciously allowed me to include sections from my chapter in their book, *Religion, Power, and the Rise of Shinto in Early Modern Japan*. Kobayashi Takerō generously sent me a photograph of the copy he crafted of the votive tablet that Atsutane presented to the Hisaizu shrine in 1820. Ōta Ayumu at the National Museum of Japanese History gave me images and permission to use them from the museum's collection. Ida Momo at the Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan did the same for its collection. M. William Steele provided

photographs of the Hirata shrine in Tokyo and represented me in dealing with institutions that hold the images I needed in Japan. Brenna Phelan provided artwork and diagrams to illustrate my text. Markus Nornes kindly had the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan provide a subvention to support publishing the images in the text in color. Finally, I'd like to thank the editors at the University of Michigan Press, Katie LaPlant, Marcella Landri, and Kevin Rennells whose encouragement and help got me through the publication process.

Chronology of the Hirata House and Its Times

1776 Atsutane is born in Akita.
1792 Adam Laxman, Russian envoy, arrives in Hokkaido.
1795 Atsutane leaves Akita for Edo.
1800 Atsutane becomes a retainer of Matsuyama domain through adoption by Hirata Tōbee.
1801 Atsutane marries Orise.
1804 Atsutane opens a school he calls Masugenoya.
1805 Atsutane's daughter is born.
1806 Atsutane writes *New Essay on the Spirits*.
1808 The British ship *Phaeton* intrudes into Nagasaki Harbor.
1812 Orise dies.
1813 Atsutane publishes *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*.
1816 Atsutane finds the heavenly stone horn; he changes his school's name to Ibukinoya.
1818 Atsutane marries Orise II.
1820 Atsutane meets Torakichi and learns about the quasi-immortals.
1823 Atsutane resigns from Matsuyama domain and presents his treatises to the emperor in Kyoto.
1824 Kanetane marries Atsutane's daughter and becomes his adopted son-in-law a year later.
1825 A wooden statue of Taira no Masakado arrives at the Hirata house.
1828 Grandson Nobutane is born.
1830 Atsutane receives a stipend from Owari domain.
1833 The first Tenpo famine occurs.

1834 The shogunate forces Owari to revoke Atsutane's stipend.
1837 The second Tenpo famine occurs; Ikuta Yorozu leads an uprising in Echigo.
1838 Atsutane is instated as an Akita domain retainer.
1841 Atsutane is exiled to Akita and forbidden to publish new works.
1842 The shogunate's reforms target religious organizations; the Hirata family moves into Akita domain barracks.
1843 Atsutane dies in Akita. Last grandson Taneo is born.
1845 Atsutane is deified as "Divine Scholar of the Sacred Pillar of the Soul."
1846 Orise II dies; Atsutane's daughter becomes Orise III.
1849 Atsutane is pardoned, and the ban on new publications is lifted.
1853 Commodore Perry arrives in Japan with demand for a treaty of amity.
1858 Townshend Harris forces the shogun to sign a commercial treaty.
1862 Akita domain sends first Nobutane and then Kanetane to Kyoto to collect information.
1863 The shogun visits Kyoto for the first time since 1626.
1864 Chōshū domain tries vainly to seize control of the emperor; Akita domain dismisses Nobutane from office.
1866 The shogunate's second expedition against Chōshū fails; Akita domain reinstates Nobutane.
1867 The shogun resigns.
1868 The imperial army marches on Edo; Hirata family moves to Kyoto. Kanetane and Nobutane both get positions in new central government.
1869 Nobutane follows emperor to Tokyo; Kanetane stays in Kyoto.
1871 Offense against national affairs incident occurs; Kanetane and Orise III return to Tokyo.
1872 Nobutane dies.
1876 Kanetane closes down Ibukinoya.
1878 Hirata shrine receives government license; Taneo establishes Honkyō church.
1880 Kanetane dies; Pantheon dispute (to 1881).
1886 Taneo dies; Nobutane's daughter Ishi marries Moritane, the fourth family head.
1888 Orise III dies.
1897 Ishi dies.

A Note on Japanese Names and Dates

I follow the East Asian convention of putting the family name before the personal name. Most of the dates given in the text are based on the lunar calendar that was used in Japan before it switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1873. "I" refers to an intercalary month, inserted when a year contained 13 lunar cycles.

In the Presence of Gods and Spirits

Introduction

The Hirata Community and the Meaning of Materials

In the late eighteenth century, Japan confronted a new foreign threat. For almost two centuries, the Tokugawa military regime had largely succeeded in restricting direct foreign contact with Dutch and Chinese confined to Nagasaki and allowing communications with Koreans only through the island of Tsushima. But beginning with a mission in 1792 to return castaways and request trade, now the Russians were coming. Although Tokugawa officials sought to forestall them, sporadic encounters between Japanese and Russians on Hokkaido and islands to the north sparked alarmed responses within Japan. These involved issues not only of politics and defense but also of identity. Among key thinkers of the era who turned to the native Japanese tradition for evidence that Japan was unique and special, the one to offer the most transformative formulations was Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843). He understood the need to counter Christianity by bringing order to indigenous beliefs, strengthening the Japanese sense of self, and offering reassurance regarding what happens after death. Starting in the 1850s, the legacy of his writings and practices, which located Japan's superiority in an emperor descended from the sun goddess, resonated with men seeking new ways to bring the Japanese people together when the Tokugawa regime proved incapable of dealing with domestic turmoil and Western warships. Men turned to him again in the 1940s in seeking to justify a holy war to bring the eight corners of the world under a Japanese roof. Today people study his writings on the occult.

Atsutane believed that the ancient Way created by the gods came to him through texts that originated with the gods. He saw himself as both student

and teacher of this ancient Way and sought throughout his life to deepen his understanding of what the gods had done and what this meant for the people of his day. For him and his descendants, it was important to practice what he preached, a practice that emerges out of a wider range of sources than historians writing in English have heretofore considered, for example, the Hirata house diary and correspondence between him and his acolytes. From these we learn that scholars and colleagues were crucial collaborators with him in his practice, which extended beyond writings to objects, images, and rituals.

Atsutane is justly famous for his writings on the unseen world, from the text-based cosmology in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* to oral information on other realms found in *Strange Tidings from the Realm of the Immortals*. He drew his materials from histories and essays, but he also derived inspiration from folk religion and pictures, portraits, images, and diagrams that visualized what was (no longer) in the visible world, as well as divinely inspired objects. His sources were thus books plus what could be perceived tangibly, visually, and aurally. Along with the written word, these media in turn conveyed his ideas to his disciples—for example, what he deemed a heavenly stone horn bestowed on him by the gods with its unearthly resonance that reverberated in the hearts of its listeners. Atsutane's intellectual predecessors and competitors likewise collected images and artifacts, but few scholars have analyzed how the study of these items might enhance the understanding of ideas and beliefs.

The study of ritual practice and objects is a well-developed field in religious studies, in Japan and around the world. Whether a pilgrimage to a specific site in Europe (e.g., Lourdes or Santiago de Compostela) or a circuit in Japan (e.g., the eighty-eight temples of Shikoku), both the journey and the destination have meaning for the devout that is open to interpretation. For art historians, the same is true of Japan's Buddhist icons while the anthropologically minded among religious specialists observe Shinto festivals. They understand that for most people, it has been enough to know that the shrine houses a god, that the ancestors need to be remembered on death anniversaries and at the midsummer festival, and that prayer ought to bring this-worldly benefits. For Atsutane and his followers, textual explication, doctrine, material objects, and practice all mattered, yet previous research on him has tended to focus on the texts published in his collected works without giving much heed to these other dimensions. The men who contributed to his project and constituted his audience read his works because they had an intellectual interest in what it meant to be Japanese living under

the protection of the Japanese gods as well as a desire to seek consolation for the fact of human mortality and to worship the appropriate gods at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way. My aim is to zigzag between objects, treatises, and collaborators, but first let me introduce Atsutane and his times and explain how I came upon this project.

A Short Introduction to Atsutane's Life and Times

Before Atsutane became known for his ideas, he suffered brutal poverty during an era of increasing prosperity. He was born into a family of samurai retainers to the Satake family, lords of Akita domain located high on the coast facing the Japan Sea. There he studied Chinese philosophy, medicine, and the martial arts. Even when he praised agrarian life, he always put the military Way first. Nonetheless, as the fourth son, he would not inherit his father's position; Akita was too much of a backwater to contain his ambition, and so he ran away to try his luck in Edo, now Tokyo, in 1795.

By the time of Atsutane's arrival in Edo, decades of peace had turned the shogun's capital into a lively intellectual center, boasting men whose reputations rested on their learning rather than on their prowess with a sword. In earlier decades it was Kyoto, home to the emperor who reigned supreme while untroubled by day-to-day administration, and the merchant city of Osaka that had attracted scholars, most of whom developed ideas about society and economy couched in terms derived from China. Edo, in contrast, became known for its eclectic mix of scholars, poets, essayists, and novelists—some playful, others didactic—and for Kabuki.

During most of Atsutane's time in Edo, from when he acquired his first disciple in 1804 to 1841, he scraped by with little institutional support, all the while hoping for a stable position as a retainer to one of the big domains, if not the shogunate, the regime that ruled over Japan. While he shared the complaint of samurai on fixed incomes that farm folk in the Edo hinterland spent too much money on entertainments and the scholarly pursuits once monopolized by their betters,[1] rural entrepreneurs proved a key source of financial support. It was they who together with merchants, samurai, and shrine priests paid the entrance fee to Atsutane's school, financed his publication projects, and bought his books. During the famines of 1833 and 1837 that dried up financing for the Hirata house's publications, wealthy men

1. Teeuwen, *Lust, Commerce, and Corruption*, 96.

from the provinces northeast of Edo gave Atsutane and his family money to keep food on the table.[2]

The 1830s were hard on Atsutane in another way. In 1831, the shogunate questioned him regarding reports that he slandered Confucius. In 1835, the head of the shogun's Confucian school reported that Atsutane denigrated Confucianism, Buddhism, and the other schools of Japan studies. "In setting up his own unique ideas, he deludes the world and confuses people."[3] In 1837, one of his disciples named Ikuta Yorozu led a rebellion against the shogunate in the name of starving farmers. Increasingly suspicious of the way his texts might be interpreted, the shogunate banned the publication of Atsutane's books and exiled him to Akita at the beginning of 1841. Atsutane died there two years later.

Atsutane's Intellectual Milieu

The way that scholars in Japan analyzed, annotated, and wrote their history, literature, and language was not a unified field of study or practice before and during Atsutane's lifetime, and it remained fractured after his death.[4] The man he called his teacher, Motoori Norinaga (1730–1802), did seminal work in fields from classical literature to poetry to philology to history. He argued that the Japanese people possessed an innate sensibility that made them better than the Chinese, who had to rely on morality and laws to keep them honest, and that indeed Japan and its people were superior to all others.[5] He had disciples in prose, poetry, and studies of the age of the gods, and he encouraged research into ancient bureaucracies, law, customs, and the histories of early kingship.[6] Although Norinaga is seen today as an unparalleled scholar for his deciphering of *Record of Ancient Matters* and his insights into the distinctive features of Japanese culture, Endō Jun has recently suggested that the persistence of rival schools suggests that Norinaga's dominance has been exaggerated.[7] Nonetheless, his are the works that started Atsutane on his chosen path.

Diverse schools competed viciously in the fight to dominate studies of

2. Tasaki, "Hirata-ke kara Hatano Takao ate," 200–201.
3. Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane*, 214.
4. See Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; Burns, *Before the Nation*; McNally, *Proving the Way*.
5. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*.
6. Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 73.
7. Endō, "Norinaga-gaku no keishō," 131.

Japan.[8] Just as Atsutane asserted that he was the one who followed in Norinaga's footsteps, so too did other men.[9] Today the term most often used to define this enterprise is *kokugaku*—literally, "national learning," what I translate as Japan studies. As Susan Burns has stated, "It was only the judgment of what kokugaku meant in the modern period that allowed historians to decide which works were significant and which were not."[10] Jason Ānanda Josephson translates the term as "National Science" to emphasize its foundation in "objective evidential research."[11] Other English-language scholars either leave it untranslated or use terms such as "nativism," "exclusivism," or "exceptionalism."[12] Atsutane seldom spoke of *kokugaku*. Instead, he called his method *kogaku* (Ancient studies). He despised the Edo school founded by Murata Harumi (1746–1811) and Norinaga's disciples in Kyoto for having abandoned a historical study of the Way of the gods in favor of literary pursuits. Each of these schools claimed that it alone best understood how to approach the Way of the gods through literature or poetry.[13] Whether in Kyoto or Edo, they criticized Atsutane for his sloppy scholarship, and he mocked them as effeminate. His school eventually triumphed, more than twenty years after his death, in the 1860s when its robust definition of national identity acted as a spur to activists who were determined to mold a nation capable of standing up to Western gunboats. His grandson preferred the term *kōgaku* (imperial studies), which focused attention on the emperor as Japan's political and religious center.

The Origins of This Book

I stumbled on this project when I saw a 2004 exhibition on the Hirata school of Japan studies at the National Museum of Japanese History curated by Miyachi Masato. The basis of the exhibition was the family archive that had been donated to the museum by Atsutane's descendants in 2001. This ample archive contains Atsutane's manuscripts, the house diary, correspondence, and essays by men associated with the Hirata school, apparently every scrap of writing addressed to men that came through the door so long as Atsu-

8. Teeuwen, "Poetry, Sake, and Acrimony."
9. Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*, 199–200.
10. Burns, *Before the Nation*, 11.
11. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, 295–97.
12. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; McNally, *Proving the Way*; McNally, *Like No Other*.
13. Burns, *Before the Nation*, 158.

tane's adopted son-in-law, Kanetane, was alive, as well as records of funerals and memorial services performed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the fourth family head, Moritane.

Beginning in the early years of this century, a group of scholars led by Miyachi prepared an inventory of the archive's items and produced an annotated catalog.[14] The museum has published four volumes drawn from the catalog—the house diary from 1830 to 1871; travel diaries by Atsutane and Kanetane; letters from Atsutane's grandson Nobutane, then in Tokyo, to his parents in Kyoto right after the Meiji Restoration;[15] a record that his daughter kept of income from the time Atsutane was forced into exile until 1874 (see chap. 8);[16] and an invaluable index.[17] These resources have opened new doors on Atsutane and his descendants' lives, practices, politics, beliefs, friends, and enemies.

The archive transformed the way that Miyachi and his colleagues approached Atsutane, his concerns and ideas. In plowing through its documents, Miyachi was struck by Atsutane's obsession with foreign countries, notably Russia, and the 2004 exhibition opened with Atsutane's copybook in Cyrillic and his maps of northeast Asia. Atsutane even acquired a biography of Catherine the Great.[18] Thanks to his friends in the shogunate, Atsutane received copies of secret documents disclosing the negotiations with the Russian officer Adam Laxman and evidence of Russian incursions into the northwest Pacific.[19] Miyachi argues that, as a samurai, Atsutane understood the need to preserve Japan's independence; as a Confucian-trained scholar fearful of Christianity and bowled over by Western science, he felt it imperative to systemize Japan's indigenous faith before he had ever heard of Norinaga.[20] Miyachi's discovery that Atsutane was cognizant of the foreign threat decades before the 1840 Opium War in China has had a decisive impact on the study of Atsutane in Japan and is beginning to be felt in the West.[21]

Also utilizing recently discovered materials are three scholars whose work

14. Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, ed., *Meiji Ishin to Hirata Kokugaku*.
15. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," vols. 1 and 2.
16. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," vol. 3.
17. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," vol. 4.
18. Sasshi 84, HAKS.
19. Hirata Atsutane, "Chishima no shiranami," 1–335.
20. Miyachi has repeatedly explained how the archive changed his understanding of Atsutane's worldview and problem consciousness. See, for example, Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no bakumatsu ishin"; Miyachi, "Hirata Atsutane to taigai kiki: Bunkado no Ezochi mondai," 16.
21. Zhong, *The Origin of Modern Shinto in Japan*, 108, 139.

has had a profound impact on the way I have construed this project. Nakagawa Kazuaki's painstaking bibliographic work and transcriptions of correspondence have corrected previous assumptions regarding the authorship of texts associated with Atsutane.[22] Endō Jun's magisterial work focuses on the nexus between Atsutane's thought and religious practice, placing both in the context of social history.[23] Endō is the first scholar to have examined in depth the Hirata family's connections to the religious establishments of its day. Unlike previous scholars, he denies that Hirata's adopted son-in-law, Kanetane, or grandson Nobutane represented a marked change in the Hirata family's practice or beliefs. While the two men played political roles in the turmoil leading up to the Meiji Restoration, they continued to promote the importance of prayer to Japan's native gods and due attention to their wishes. Endō has subsequently expanded his inquiries to include the question of how men in the Hirata school sought evidence for the reality of the gods.

Yoshida Asako was the first recent scholar to delve into the Hirata archive when she visited the Hirata shrine in 1999 in search of Atsutane's 1816 travel diaries. These had not been published in Atsutane's collected works, but they provide unparalleled insight into his pilgrimage to the three great shrines located to the northeast of Edo, how he collected local lore and combined it with his work on ancient texts, and the way he constructed a sacred landscape throughout his journey (see chap. 4). As Sarah Thal has pointed out, stories about the miraculous power of gods pervaded popular culture. Stories came first. Then came scholars. Atsutane was thus a forerunner of the Japanese ethnographers in the early twentieth century who copied down these stories and sought explanations for them in written histories and documents.[24]

The Meaning of Materials

The 2004 exhibition at the National Museum of Japanese History displayed Atsutane's things—his writing desk with its corner cut out for his left arm and his writing brushes, the portraits of people and images of otherworldly beings that he treasured, and the objects that conveyed the doings of the gods. These material possessions fascinated me.

Objects are good to think with. Depending on what they are, plus how

22. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*.

23. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku to kinsei shakai*.

24. Thal, *Recreating the Landscape of the Gods*, 115; see also Christy, *A Discipline on Foot*, 17.

they are viewed and used, they can give form to thoughts, they can give substance to what would otherwise remain amorphous—spirits, for example—and they can illustrate issues of identity. Objects convey a sense of the ineffable. Whether sacred portraits of scholarly ancestors, simple cosmological diagrams, or stones, they connect this world to the invisible world. They bring people here and now into the presence of gods and spirits.

Atsutane selected objects that had meaning for him. He could have chosen other objects and images, and more of them, but he did not. He devoted lengthy treatises to annotating the deeds of the gods and explicating their names, but he refrained from depicting them. Not for him were the popular oracle pictures of the sun goddess flanked by Kasuga, the progenitor of the noble Fujiwara family, and Hachiman, the god of war.[25] Instead, he produced divine genealogies in which the written name of each god was imbued with magic. Without documentary evidence, depicting the divine was a mistake, "a confusion of a human invention with what is invisible and immaterial."[26] Only on rare occasions did he bring in artists to paint pictures of the unseen world. One of these depicts a dream, as we see in chapter 2; others show the world of the immortals, derived not from ancient histories but from local lore. In the image of the lascivious dance that enticed the sun goddess out of her cave, the sun goddess is represented by rays of light; the dancer is depicted as she is described in ancient history. It is significant, I think, that he commissioned these images to be portrayed in color. Despite his poverty and the time-honored tradition of grayscale ink brush painting in East Asia, so far as he was concerned, the other world must be depicted as being as colorful as his own. At the same time, he also made black and white drawings of the all-knowing god Kuebiko (analyzed in chap. 5) based on an ancient description of this god as a scarecrow and medium. He was thus an iconoclast except when he wasn't, making the rare appearances of the invisible particularly meaningful and worthy of note.

Also notable are two objects that Atsutane imbued with special meaning, as we see in chapter 4. Using the materials available to him, he produced receptacles for the immaterial, procuring a statue, for example, that was made to be sacred—the embodiment of his distant ancestor's spirit.[27] Another was the heavenly stone horn found under mysterious circumstances

25. Bocking, "Images of Shinto," 180. I am indebted to Helen Hardacre for this reference.

26. Morgan, *The Thing about Religion*, 30–31, 209n10.

27. Laurel Kendall discusses how people use material objects to produce the immaterial in "Things Fall Apart," 864.

that bestowed it with magic. The circumstances of its discovery contributed to its aura, and its aura then acted on him and its hearers to open a way for them to approach the unseen world of the gods.[28]

The study of material religion is a vibrant and well-trodden field, but it tends to downplay the doctrinal context that renders specific materials significant. Jørn Borup and Fabio Rambelli, for example, assert that "ritual paraphernalia and sacred objects have always been part of religious life [in Japan], and probably with greater significance for lived religion than religious doctrines."[29] I have trouble understanding what objects mean without context and explanation. When looking at pictures in a museum, I value the information on the placards beside them. While an object can point toward a text that would have otherwise gone unnoticed or illuminate a text's message in unexpected ways, so too does the text reveal what the object means. Without the accounts of how Atsutane found the heavenly stone horn or texts providing him with a point of reference for it, it would be just a souvenir.

For the portraits of his scholarly ancestors, the statue, the stone horn, and pictures of the unseen world, an assemblage of circumstances made them into sacred objects. Atsutane did not discover them in isolation; rather, he uncovered them within "an ecology of other objects, places, text, lore, and people."[30] For the statue, he started with genealogy; for the horn, he prepared himself through pilgrimage, visiting sacred sites and excavating texts. For the immortals, he began by listening and asking questions. He singled out two gods from ancient history for special emphasis; why them and not others can only be surmised by reading what he wrote about them. In the case of Kuebiko, the omniscient scarecrow, it seems that he distilled the essence of popular belief in the rice god that watches over the fields, then buffered it with his interpretation of the ancient history of the gods. Therefore, whenever possible, I try to analyze objects and texts together, the aim being to understand how Atsutane tried to put himself in the presence of the gods.

Treatises and objects, pilgrimages and rituals, speak to Atsutane's understanding that gods and spirits actually existed. I do not read these things as representations of something else; they were not simply symbols standing in for attitudes or assumptions about how the world works, nor did they expose

28. Morgan, *The Thing about Religion*, is helpful in thinking about the relationship between objects and things.

29. Borup and Rambelli, "The Materiality of Japanese Religions."

30. Morgan, *The Thing about Religion*, 2.

some sort of false consciousness.[31] Atsutane focused on understanding the unseen world; I deal with what he left behind in the visible world. If, for example, Catholic history "pivots around the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist," then I think it is possible by reading Atsutane's writings, examining his objects, describing his practices, and following him as he interacted with others to show how, for him and his collaborators, gods became real.[32]

The Hirata Community

Another discovery that followed from the gift of the Hirata family papers to the National Museum of Japanese History is how Atsutane and his descendants collaborated with friends and disciples. Endō Jun has uncovered records of Atsutane's relations with shrine priests and their organization while Yoshida Asako's and Nakagawa Kazuaki's findings emphasize how Atsutane and Kanetane worked with other people in developing his ideas and, on a practical level, getting his works published.[33] Their research has brought new depth to the study of the interactions between the Hirata family and the people with whom it came in contact and illuminates the business side of Atsutane's scholarly enterprise.[34] Thanks to the archive's accessibility, it is possible to trace how Atsutane and Kanetane engaged with people in the provinces and what local people did with the news and ideas they received. Several Japanese scholars have taken advantage of this access while an excellent study in English is Gideon Fujiwara's book on the Hirata disciples in Tsugaru, on the northern tip of Japan's main island, and how they incorporated what they got from Atsutane into their understanding of their locality.[35]

Insights into the Hirata family's interactions with others provide further evidence of how collaboration was the name of the game in early modern Japan. In her book on Edo networks, for example, Tanaka Yūko examines collaboration in artistic pursuits. Linked verse, a form of poetic expression centuries old, serves as the model because a single verse by one individual has little meaning in isolation. Other circles were devoted to prose genres or

31. Here I am following the distinction that Robert Orsi makes between representation and presence in *History and Presence*, 38.

32. Orsi, *History and Presence*, 16.

33. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*; *Hirata Atsutane*.

34. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*.

35. Fujiwara, *From Country to Nation*.

the study of Dutch (European) medicine. Tanaka emphasizes that membership in such circles was not a matter of simply receiving what a leader had to offer; instead, people participated in collective efforts that changed the nature of genres and led to new techniques, new ways of presenting ideas and information.[36] Like other students of early modern salons, she focuses on aesthetically oriented gatherings, but what she has to say about them can be applied equally well to the scholarly meetings that Atsutane attended early in his career and led later.

Atsutane needed collaborators. On a practical level they paid for his publications, they introduced him to potential disciples, and they brought him evidence of the unseen world. They also helped him develop his ideas, provided sounding boards for his lectures, validated his experiences, and participated with him in rituals. The network of relations that Atsutane developed with his collaborators encompassed not only them but the gods and spirits as well. They all depended on each other: without the gods, Atsutane would not have had a community of believers. Similarly, without people to worship at them, shrines to the gods would fall into disrepair and the gods would not exist. Belief is a collective experience.[37]

Atsutane wanted his message to reach as many people as possible. He started by lecturing in rented rooms. In 1804 he chose a name for his school and began registering disciples. His school was not a religious institution, at least not up to his grandson's death, nor was it the sort of organization for which its heads could become designated shrine personnel. Instead, Atsutane strove to bring shrine priests into his orbit, knowing that through them he had the best chance of reaching the larger audience of their parishioners.[38] In order to do this, he went beyond trying to recruit priests as individuals to cooperating with the umbrella institutions for shrine priests—the Yoshida and the Shirakawa.

I've long been interested in the ways that people connect with each other, whether within the family or through common problems, interests, or institutions. In this study, I focus on the ways that matters of faith brought people together. It is my hope that by focusing on what faith meant for Atsutane, how it was expressed through images and objects, how it was put into practice to bring him into the presence of the gods, and how he collaborated with others in a dynamic that had an impact both on him and

36. Tanaka Yūko, *Edo wa nettowāku*, 9–27.

37. I derive this paragraph from Morgan, *The Thing about Religion*, 60, 68, 74; Orsi, *History and Presence*, 7–8 passim.

38. Endō, "Shūkyō-shi kara mita bakumatsu," 131–32.

on them, I can get closer to "what past experience might have been like for those who lived through it."[39]

The Book in Outline

Rather than limit our grasp of Atsutane's thought to an analysis of his collected works, my aim is to enlarge our understanding of Atsutane's belief in the gods, his practice in service to the gods, and the accounts of his experiences and those of his descendants in their interactions with the gods and spirits. My organizing principle centers on the actuality of the gods, as understood by Atsutane, manifested in images, objects, and texts. There is considerable overlap among these three categories, especially since it is precisely texts that provide the clues to how to read objects and images. Making this kind of analytical distinction also means doing violence to chronology. In the chapters that follow, I begin by addressing something in Atsutane's life: his connections with bibliophiles when he first arrived in Edo (chap. 1); the sacred portraits of his scholarly ancestors that point to his early writings (chap. 2); the scholarly collaboration in a guise that has been called plagiarism in his single most important work, *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* (chap. 3); his 1816 pilgrimage to the great shrines northeast of Edo and his respectful attendance on an embodied spirit (chap. 4); his paintings of the unseen world (chap. 5); his relations with the priests and shrine organizations of his day and their importance for spreading his word (chaps. 6 and 7); and, finally, the women behind the Hirata men (chap. 8). Each chapter carries the story beyond Atsutane to show how these themes figured in the lives of his adopted son-in-law, Kanetane (1799–1880), and his grandson Nobutane (1828–72).

For modern researchers and even his contemporaries, some of Atsutane's ideas seem far-fetched, especially when it comes to writing in the age of the gods (see chap. 2) or the world of the immortals (see chap. 5). I don't think he came up with these ideas because he was mentally ill, was trying to score points against his competitors, or was a charlatan.[40] I also refrain from using the term "supernatural." It's fine for horror films, but when it appears in a religious studies context, it is derogatory. In Atsutane's world, gods, spirits, immortals, and various invisible creatures could not normally be seen, but

39. Hunt, "From the Local to the Global," 24.

40. For mental illness, see Kamata, "The Disfiguring of Nativism"; for scoring points see McNally, *Proving the Way*; for questions regarding Atsutane's sincerity, see Hansen, *When Tengu Talk*.

they were still part of the natural world. They interacted with it, and they possessed certain powers over it according to their nature.[41] Ghost stories transmitted credible news of the hidden world; they were not mere entertainment.[42] I ask my readers to take it on faith that so far as Atsutane was concerned, spirits existed. In short, while I don't believe in his gods, or any gods, I am willing to entertain the possibility that he was sincere in seeking to bring himself into the presence of the gods.

41. See Morgan, *The Thing about Religion*, 57.
42. Imai Hidekazu, "Kinsei chishikijin no kaii ninshiki," 98.

CHAPTER 1

The Creation of the Hirata House

Like ambitious young men the world over, the man now known to us as Hirata Atsutane left home to make his name in the big city. In his case, he sought knowledge because he wanted to gain fame as a scholar. Although he had yet to decide on a field of study, he knew that the quantity and quality of books in Akita paled in comparison to those available in Edo. So off to Edo (now Tokyo) he walked, some 380 miles, in the year 1795.

Atsutane's early decades in the city are poorly documented, and the stories told about them emphasize odd jobs, serving in the household of a Kabuki instructor or tending a cooking fire with one hand while reading a book with the other. Somehow, he met men who gave him access to contemporary thought by putting their libraries at his disposal and directing his scholarship. Although he never considered making the West his focus, he appropriated Western science when it fitted his agenda, for example, the concept that the earth revolved around the sun. In 1803 he began reading works by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), the great eighteenth-century philologist and student of Japanese classics. In 1804, less than ten years after his arrival in the city, he opened a school on ancient Japanese texts and acquired the first of what would become 525 disciples over the course of his lifetime.

At the core of Atsutane's school remained Atsutane and his descendants in what became a family enterprise. It grew out of the social and economic conditions that nurtured Atsutane's scholarship and faith in the gods and spirits. It expanded and went in new directions when Atsutane's son and grandson adapted his ideas to the crises of their times, first in debates over how to handle demands by Americans and Europeans for trade and treaties in the 1850s and then over how to develop a robust response to the challenges

posed by Western powers in the 1860s that ultimately required placing the emperor at the center of Japan's national identity.

In setting the stage for what follows, this chapter focuses on connections—the situations and individuals that provided the means for disseminating Atsutane's teachings through the end of the Tokugawa period. I begin with the networks that had developed in Edo in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for fostering the spread of knowledge. Next, I turn to Kanetane's publication projects that transformed into information collecting in the 1860s when the shogunate and the imperial court found themselves increasingly at odds over what to do about the Western powers. Finally, I consider how Nobutane's efforts to bring his grandfather's ideas into Japan's new world of international relations also disclosed how boundaries had shifted between the public world of politics and the private world of faith.

Book Collectors in Edo, a Patron in the Countryside

Following the devastating famines and unrest of the 1780s, most of Japan enjoyed a period of relative prosperity until the early 1830s, precisely the period when Atsutane was struggling to establish himself. In the Edo hinterland, rural entrepreneurs bemoaned abandoned farms when impoverished tenants left for the city, but these same men had the wherewithal to educate themselves in Chinese and Japanese classics and support Atsutane and other scholars such as Tachibana Moribe, likewise an early nineteenth-century student of ancient studies.[1] While Atsutane had a samurai background and made the military Way equal to the Way of the gods, scholars today emphasize how having so many rural supporters also led him to incorporate local lore into his ideas. But before these supporters appeared on the scene, a significant source of inspiration for him were the Edo book collectors who introduced him to the wide range of ancient histories that informed the bulk of his textual scholarship. It was they who also introduced him to his primary informant on the unseen world.

How Atsutane met these bibliophiles is unknown, but through them he gained access to their collections and the latest scholarly trends. They amassed what was for the time immense libraries, some sixty thousand volumes for Hanawa Hokiichi (1746–1821) and fifty thousand volumes each for

1. See the relationship between the nativist scholar Tachibana Moribe and his patron in the silk market town of Kiryū named Yoshida Seisuke, in Takai, *Tenpō-ki shōnen shōjo*. For Moribe's thought, see Burns, *Before the Nation*, 158–86.

Yashiro Hirokata (1758–1841) and Oyamada Tomokiyo (1783–1847). These men had a firm foundation in the Chinese classics and used Chinese phrases to name their libraries. They wrote poetry in Chinese. Nonetheless, they promoted the study of Japan, past and present.[2] Their collections included divine texts, histories, administrative codes, legal texts, accounts of the political operations and ceremonies of the eighth- through twelfth-century imperial courts, plus poetry and prose, all written in a variety of languages far from the vernacular of the Edo period. One of these book collectors likely introduced Atsutane to the works of Motoori Norinaga, which were to have a profound impact on the eventual direction of his scholarship.

As Eiko Ikegami showed in *Bonds of Civility*, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Japan saw informational and aesthetic networks spider across social statuses.[3] Not only did these networks bring together people of diverse backgrounds, but they also opened up avenues for the pursuit of knowledge that had not existed before. Like most scholars today, she focuses on the collective practices of poetry and tea ceremony, to which she adds etiquette, but bibliophiles too had circles of like-minded associates whose common interests superseded differences in background. At their meetings, they showed off their latest treasures and compared manuscript copies of ancient texts. Particularly noteworthy was the enormous project led by the blind Hanawa Hokiichi, the son of a farmer near Edo, to incorporate accurate and complete copies of the Japanese historical and literary canon into the *Classification of a Multitude of Texts* (*Gunsho ruijū*). He succeeded in acquiring government backing to fund the publication costs: the first compilation of some 1,273 works appeared in 1819, and a sequel credited to Hokiichi's son came out in 1822. The series is still used by scholars today.[4] Atsutane contributed an edited copy of *Gazetteer for Hitachi Province* (*Hitachi no kuni no fudoki*) first produced in the early eighth century. He also borrowed books from Hanawa's library.[5]

Hanawa's associates were determined to systematize and circulate knowledge. A central figure in the Edo circle of book collectors was Oyamada Tomokiyo, originally from Niigata. He kept a diary that showed how his library was not just for his own research but was premised on the circulation and use of materials by others through a system for keeping track of who borrowed what. Building a collection took a lot of effort, not just in searching for books to purchase but in making copies of volumes in other librar-

2. Okamura, *Edo no zōshokatachi*, 8, 10, 15.
3. Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility*, esp. 127–220; 239–359.
4. Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils, and Patrons*, 61–62.
5. Hirata Atsutane, *Koshichō kaidaiki*, 247, 256.

ies, remembering what one already had, comparing different versions of the same text, and exchanging information on other holdings. Bibliophiles made catalogs of their libraries that they circulated among their friends. They worked together to compare, classify, collate, and edit texts in order to prepare authoritative editions. Tomokiyo even tried to prepare an index of words that recurred across his sources, a monumental task left unfinished at his death.[6] Although Atsutane did not follow Tomokiyo's painstaking practice of evidential research, the trustworthy texts produced by Tomokiyo and his friends underpinned Atsutane's pursuit of ancient studies.

Atsutane continued to associate with the book collectors throughout his years in Edo. According to the Hirata house diary, Tomokiyo sometimes visited Atsutane, and in 1839 he wrote a preface to a calendar that Atsutane constructed based on the centrality of the imperial lineage (*Tenchō mukyūreki*).[7] Tomokiyo's reputation rested on his brilliance as a bibliographer, but he admired the way that Atsutane pulled meaning from ancient texts by juxtaposing one with another. As he told one of his disciples:

> Once a decade has passed after Atsutane and I have died, Atsutane's name alone will be remembered, after another ten years, his name will reverberate throughout the realm, and once thirty years have passed, he will be worshipped as a god. What is sad for me is that by then I will have been forgotten. The text to which I have devoted my life, *Catalog of Investigations into Myriad Books* (*Gunsho sōsaku mokuroku*), cannot be compared to the text he has recently compiled titled *An Account of Opening Up the Subject* (*Kaidaiki*).[8]

Opening Up the Subject took the form of an annotated bibliography, but Atsutane went beyond that to make a sustained argument regarding the age of the gods and ancient Japanese history. Tomokiyo also prepared a summary of Atsutane's essay on how the gods had created script for use in divination before Japan imported Chinese characters. Okamura Keiji points out that what bound Atsutane and Tomokiyo together was their belief that each character, each syllable, had a soul and partook of the universe; in short, they shared a reverence for the word.[9] Tomokiyo never joined Atsutane's school, but his understanding of how the sacred saturated the world shows how Atsutane's ideas resonated within the community of bibliophiles.

6. Okamura, *Edo no zōshokatatachi*, 176, 205, 206.
7. Oyamada Tomokiyo, "Tenchō mukyūreki jo," Sōkō 1–60, HAKS, 1839.1.
8. Okamura, *Edo no zōshokatatachi*, 175.
9. Okamura, *Edo no zōshokatatachi*, 176–78.

A major figure in Tomokiyo's circle and the man with whom Atsutane had the most intense relationship was Yashiro Hirokata. Hirokata worked as a scribe and later as an accountant in the shogun's quarters, receiving the right of audience with the shogun in 1824. His position opened the door to the latest news on domestic and foreign affairs—he served as calligrapher for official documents sent to Russia (1805) and Korea (1811). His reputation as a bibliophile and antiquarian gave him unparalleled access to literary circles across Edo, and he was involved in so many compilation projects, including Hanawa's, that it is easy to wonder when he had time for his day job.[10] Sometime before 1813, he and another man prepared a questionnaire on local customs that they sent to friends and colleagues across Japan. This was the first time that scholars tried to conduct "ethnographic research in Japan through standardized questions."[11]

Yashiro's interests allied closely with Atsutane's, and Yashiro frequently sought the younger man's company. He scrimped on personal expenses in order to spend his money on books, but he lent 3 *ryō* to Atsutane.[12] At times he visited the Hirata house nearly every day, especially after 1820.3.5, when Atsutane moved to quarters below Yushima Tenmangū, located between Yashiro's residence and the storehouses where he kept his books near Shinobazu pond.[13] It was in these storehouses that Atsutane found the copy of *Gazetteer for Hitachi Province* that he edited for Hanawa's collection, a compendium on medicinal herbs written in 918, and a copy of *Sugawara no Michizane's Last Injunctions* (*Kanke ikai*), an apocryphal text that contains the famous slogan "Japanese spirit, Chinese learning" (*wakon kansai*).[14] According to a hanging scroll, now an Akita prefectural treasure, Atsutane interpreted this to mean that the student must first solidify his Japanese identity (spirit) through the study of the ancient Way and then open up his mind and expand his knowledge through extensive reading in Chinese texts.[15] Later the slogan was expanded to incorporate Western learning, primarily Western science and medicine but also philosophy, literature, and

10. Okamura, *Edo no zōshokatatachi*, 35–40; Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils, and Patrons*, 160–61.

11. Winkel, *Discovering Different Dimensions*, 330–31.

12. Shokan 3-28-3, HAKS.

13. See the Hirata house diary in Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:17–392 passim; and Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 913–1097 passim. For the date of the move, see Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 955–56.

14. Shokan 13-4-76, HAKS; Hanpon 2–105, HAKS; Wasō 2–8, HAKS, copied by Atsutane in 1816.

15. Saitō Juin, "Hirata Atsutane shokan," 11.

culture. In 1813 Atsutane compiled *White Waves of the Kuriles* (*Chishima no shiranami*) about the British ship *Phaeton*'s intrusion into Nagasaki harbor in 1808 and early nineteenth-century Russian incursions into Hokkaido (then called Ezo). Yashiro used his position to procure government documents for him going as far back as 1736.[16] He helped Atsutane find evidence for divine script from the age of the gods before the sun goddess sent her imperial grandson to rule over Japan, and he wrote a preface in Sino-Japanese for Atsutane's essay on that topic.[17] It was Yashiro who first introduced Atsutane to Torakichi, who became Atsutane's informant on the world of the immortals, a world normally hidden to human eyes that existed in the present.

Yashiro so believed in Atsutane's genius that he repeatedly recommended him and his work to high-ranking domain lords and the shogunate. He urged the Owari domain lord to offer Atsutane a regular position in his retainer band, and when that fell through, he tried to get Atsutane an appointment in the Mito domain historiographical institute.[18] He had Atsutane prepare a historical survey of weights and measures for presentation to the shogunate.[19] When the lunar calendar needed to be revised in 1839, Yashiro urged Atsutane to take on that task as well. Senior counselor Mizuno Tadakuni praised Atsutane's work, but nothing came of these efforts before Mizuno's colleague Ōta Shigeharu sent Atsutane into exile back to Akita at the beginning of 1841 without giving a reason.[20] When Yashiro died shortly thereafter, Atsutane lost his most enthusiastic advocate in the government.

Yashiro and other members in the book collectors' circle provided essential support for Atsutane's scholarship, but they could not clothe him or feed his family. Atsutane acquired samurai status through adoption by a low-ranking retainer in the Bitchū-Matsuyama domain in 1800, but the stipend hardly sufficed for his needs. In 1813 he wrote a long letter bemoaning his troubles to Ban Nobutomo (1773–1846), another scholar of the ancient Way. He complained that the domain had borrowed back even more of his meager stipend than usual but still expected him to continue to appear with the firefighting brigade to which he had been assigned as a doctor even though

16. Sōkō 1-196-1~3, HAKS; see Hirata Atsutane, *Chijima no shiranami*.

17. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:167–68; Shokan 14–2; 20–6, HAKS.

18. Shokan 6-1-11; 8-49-9; 9–1~12; 9-1-23; 9-1-23-3; 9-3-3; 13-2-16; 13-3-1~28; 14–2, HAKS.

19. Wasō 4-66-1~3, HAKS. The three-volume text on weights and measures compiled at Yashiro's request and dated 1834.8.15 was edited by three disciples. Dated 1835, Shokan 13-3-1, HAKS, recommends the text to the shogunate.

20. Shokan 24-1-1; 24-4-1; 24-5-1~4, HAKS.

he had no medicine chest. To fulfill his duty, he had to wear the right clothing, but he had pawned it and his children's clothing as well. He had put his books in pawn to cover the expenses for his wife's illness and death the previous year, and since he had exceeded the time limit for the loan, he was in danger of losing them. He had borrowed money to raise chickens but had to give them up when he couldn't make the payments. His daughter cried at their loss, making him feel terrible. He had no money to go to a bathhouse. Without the appropriate attire, he couldn't go to the bibliophiles' meetings. He couldn't even go to Hanawa or Yashiro to borrow books. Nevertheless, he was determined to persevere with his studies.[21]

Not until 1816 when Yamazaki Atsutoshi joined his school did Atsutane find a patron with the financial resources to rescue him from poverty. Atsutoshi first learned of Atsutane at third hand—through a cloth merchant from Matsudo who had been recruited by a shrine priest in Funabashi who was introduced to Atsutane by another priest while Atsutane was on his pilgrimage to the Kashima and Katori shrines (see chap. 4).[22] Ten years older than Atsutane, Atsutoshi venerated his teacher. He even asked Atsutane for permission to use a character from his name. As the adopted head of the Yamazaki family of rapeseed oil sellers, Atsutoshi had access to its fortune, although he complained to Atsutane that because the money wasn't really his, he shouldn't squander it on his personal interests. Like most of Atsutane's financial backers, he lived outside of Edo, in his case in Koshigaya, a post station and commercial center located upriver on the highway between Edo and Nikkō, making communication and transportation quick and easy.

The relationship between Atsutoshi and Atsutane went beyond that of teacher and disciple. In 1818 Atsutoshi adopted the daughter of a Koshigaya tofu seller and married her to Atsutane, thus becoming Atsutane's father-in-law. According to Fujii Takanao, a shrine priest from western Japan who lived with Atsutane for many months, Atsutoshi had promised to cover Atsutane's expenses related to scholarship, no matter how great they were, if Atsutane would agree to this marriage. Thereafter Atsutane had not the slightest problem when it came to finances, and Atsutoshi probably helped Atsutane move to the spacious quarters where Takanao stayed. The house was so large that when Atsutane was quietly engrossed in his writing, Takanao had no idea where he was. There were two male and two female servants, plus two to three live-in students who performed household chores in return

21. Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 105–7.
22. Satō Hisao, "Ibukinoya gaku to sōmō monjin," 91–92.

for room and board.[23] The house was located at the bottom of the steep slope to Yushima Tenmangū, the shrine dedicated to Sugawara no Michizane. Less than two months after moving in, Atsutane had students transcribe his lectures on Michizane's life, from his career at court, to his exile, to the revenge by his angry spirit, to his apotheosis as the god of scholarship. The students paid the publication costs and wrote the preface and postscript. Adorned with lively illustrations, the volume became one of Atsutane's bestsellers.[24]

Atsutoshi helped Atsutane in many other ways as well. Letters and the Hirata house diary record how the Yamazaki family sent goods and food items, in particular rice for both everyday consumption and ceremonies. Big as the Edo house was, it did not have storage space, so the Hirata family sent winter clothes to Koshigaya to be stored through the summer and exchanged for summer clothes in the autumn. Then there was the matter of woodblocks. Atsutane published his works himself, meaning that he contracted with a carver to prepare blocks for printing, a paper manufacturer for the paper, and other men to print and bind the volumes. He retained ownership of the blocks, which were heavy and took up lots of space. His biographer Watanabe Kinzō thinks that Atsutane sent the blocks to Atsutoshi as collateral for a large loan of 296 *ryō*, but Satō Hisao argues that they might just as well have been sent to Koshigaya for the sake of convenience. Furthermore, the loan did not come all at once but over a period from 1817 to 1818, with the promissory note created after the fact to specify how the loan would be repaid through book sales.[25] After Atsutane died and Kanetane was trying to make sense of his affairs, he discovered that of the 1,466 *ryō* Atsutane had borrowed to cover publication costs for various texts, Atsutoshi had contributed 681 *ryō*, by far the most of any of his creditors.[26]

Atsutane was always careful to honor his patron. He mentioned Atsutoshi in one of his most famous texts, *The Sacred Sleeve Cord* (*Tamadasuki*), because Atsutoshi had caught a vulgarity that would have embarrassed Atsutane had it appeared in print. In thanking Atsutoshi for his perspicacity, Atsutane went on to say, "I am but a humble scholar, and in truth I have the understanding of a child. I most certainly don't want to damage the reputation of my respected elder on whom I rely as my patron/parent."[27] When he published *Clarifying Ancient History* (*Koshichō*) in 1819, followed by *Opening*

23. Hirata Kanetane, "Kiyo sōhansho," 401–3.

24. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 161. For the illustrations, see Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane*, 292–93, 302–3, 312–13, 316–17, 322–21, 332–33.

25. Satō Hisao, "Ibukinoya gaku," 97–98.

26. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 155–57.

27. *Koshigaya shishi*, 940.

Up the Subject a year later, he had Atsutoshi write prefaces for each of the four sections to make his name known to later generations. Watanabe and other scholars think that Atsutane ghostwrote prefaces and postscripts supposedly by Atsutoshi and others, but Yoshida Asako disagrees. She points out that in many cases Atsutane relied on men for prefaces who were too poor to help him financially but whom he respected as scholars and editors. If he didn't respect someone, would he want the name associated with his work? Not all financial supporters were given the opportunity to write prefaces, and with his heavy workload, Atsutane didn't have time to be writing under other people's names.[28]

Atsutane also kept Atsutoshi informed of his achievements. In his letters to Atsutoshi, he reported on the high and mighty lords who had sought his presence, read his writings, or praised him by saying that no scholar was his equal. He had heard that within a year or two, he would have an audience with the shogun. (The audience never materialized.) "Every time something good happens, I'll let you know." When he went to Kyoto in 1823, the emperor read his work and said he was pleased with it. The emperor even urged Tominokōji, the court noble responsible for introducing the retired emperor to Atsutane's work, to write a preface to *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* (*Koshi seibun*), "a mark of exceptional favor." Atsutane reiterated that he had received these accolades thanks to Atsutoshi's help. "Not a day goes by that I don't think of how all this is entirely owing to your kindness."[29]

Atsutane's relationship with Atsutoshi was not mediated strictly through money, although money was an important consideration. A fascination with the Way of the gods brought Atsutoshi to Atsutane, and thanks to their pseudo-familial connection, they became friends. Atsutane inquired after Atsutoshi's health, he confided his troubles, he promised more visits than he or later his adopted son Kanetane would make, and he occasionally sent gifts, expensive tooth powder, for example. Atsutoshi must have mentioned that his neighbors thought little of his interest in ancient studies for Atsutane wrote a long letter to encourage him. In it he slightly misquoted a fable from *Tales Ancient and Modern* (*Konjaku monogatari*) about ninety-nine monkeys without noses who laughed at the one monkey with a satisfactory nose for being different. But "let them laugh. Ordinary people will always mock those of serious purpose." He reminded Atsutoshi of Norinaga, who stated that he had to speak of the Way regardless of what other people

28. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 147–61.
29. *Koshigaya shishi*, 945, 947–48.

thought. Finally, he commiserated with Atsutoshi, who was forced to spend his time making money.[30]

Although Atsutane gained a reputation and an audience for captivating lectures in rented rooms before he had a proper house,[31] he would not have had a career as a scholar were it not for men like Yashiro and Yamazaki Atsutoshi. The one gave him access to textual resources in Edo; the other provided financial support drawn from the growing economy in the Edo hinterland. Each of them was also embedded in one or more groups that collaborated on their own aesthetic, intellectual, economic, and faith-based projects. In some cases, the membership of these groups overlapped with Atsutane's list of disciples, but they were never entirely congruent. Some contributed directly to Atsutane's endeavors, and they all participated in the web of relationships that sustained Edo's intellectual life.

Kanetane: Successor and Promoter

Kanetane is often seen as a caretaker—someone who helped Atsutane while he was alive, kept the Hirata school going after Atsutane's death, and fathered the son who was to lead the school into the modern period. He wrote almost nothing in the way of scholarly treatises, instead expanding, editing, and publishing his adoptive father's writings. Yet he also launched new initiatives. He moved the family and its archives into the Akita domain compound near Asakusa close to the Edo headquarters for the Shirakawa shrine organization and developed close ties with it. His network of informants grew exponentially during the last years of the Tokugawa regime. Most significantly, after the emperor became the titular head of a new centralized government, Kanetane proposed new educational and religious policies.

Before he became Atsutane's adopted son, Kanetane was heir to the Midorigawa family of samurai retainers in Niiya domain, a subdomain in Shikoku so small that it didn't even boast a castle. Born in 1799, Kanetane moved to Edo as a child. There his father educated him in the Chinese classics. As a teenager, he studied etiquette and ceremony as well as Nō chanting, with prowess in aesthetic pursuits being one of the few ways a samurai might advance in the domain bureaucracy. In his ample free time, he liked to fish and catch birds, play *shōgi* (Japanese chess) or *gō*, and write light, humorous verse. In 1818, about the time that the domain started employing him as a

30. *Koshigaya shishi*, 949; Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 858.
31. Iyanaga Nobumi, "<Nise mikkyō / Shintō giki>," 232.

facilitator in its audience chamber and as a messenger, he settled down to serious study, reading classical poetry and the works of Motoori Norinaga. When his father died the next year, he became responsible not only to Niiya domain as a retainer but also to the Midorigawa house as its head.

Despite his obligations to domain and family, Kanetane shucked both off after he met Atsutane. A bookseller introduced him to *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* and other works in the summer of 1820, and by 1823 he had so proven his commitment to Atsutane's scholarship that Atsutane began talking to him about his need for an heir—someone to marry his daughter and disseminate his writings. This was much more appealing to Kanetane than his boring job and meager pay. Unbeknownst to his domain, early in 1824 Kanetane married Atsutane's daughter and was soon spending a few days each month at the Hirata house. At the end of the year, he used the standard excuse of illness to stop working for the domain and, at the beginning of 1825, petitioned to retire and turn the family headship over to his younger brother. Four months later, he left the Niiya domain compound for life with Atsutane.[32]

Kanetane quickly became Atsutane's surrogate. After he arrived, Atsutane no longer traveled outside of Edo. In 1826 it was Kanetane who made two trips, one to Kazusa, a province northeast of Edo across the bay, and the other to Tatebayashi, a domain north of Edo. Although he visited disciples on each trip, he made no converts. Like his father had done ten years earlier (see chap. 4), Kanetane visited the three great shrines northeast of Edo—Katori, Kashima, and Ikisu—taking the opportunity to introduce himself to disciples and to worship the gods. On his second trip, he spent ten days in Tatebayashi, spending time with the domain retainer Ikuta Yorozu and his friend Arai Shinjirō, writing poetry and discussing recondite matters such as the bells that gave Motoori Norinaga's school its name. As a gift he brought Ikuta a copy of Norinaga's portrait that Atsutane had received from Norinaga's heirs.[33] Neither of these trips appears to have been made for the sake of profit. Instead, they knitted Kanetane into Atsutane's network of disciples.

In 1828 Kanetane made a much more arduous journey when he crossed the mountainous spine of Japan in rain, sleet, and snow to represent Atsutane in Echigo, a province on the Japan Sea. The lord of Yoita domain had decided to build a new shrine to the Spirit of Happiness (Kōreisha). One of his house elders, a Hirata disciple, had gone through Atsutane to get

32. Shokan 21–2, HAKS, untitled account by Kanetane of his early life. See also Walthall, "Social Norms versus Individual Desire," 199.

33. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:37–40.

recognition from the Yoshida shrine organization for it, and Kanetane went to attend the roof-raising ceremony. He also enjoyed banquets, sometimes enlivened with entertainers, and met government officials as well as powerful landowners and shrine priests. Ten men joined Atsutane's school on the spot. Kanetane lectured on Atsutane's texts and sold a considerable number of books and broadsheets, such as the list of morning prayers, thus extending Atsutane's message beyond the men who paid the fee to become disciples. He visited significant shrines and viewed their treasures, among them an arrow shaft that had belonged to Minamoto no Tameyoshi (1139–1170), who supported Emperor Sutoku before he was sent into exile. Kanetane recorded local lore, viewed traces of the gods in phallic symbols, and observed sacred dances as well as village festivals, all in the service of Atsutane's desire to collect data on the presence of the gods in everyday life.[34]

Two months after Kanetane returned to Edo, he set out again, this time going to villages northeast of Edo, which boasted Atsutane's largest number of disciples. He made his usual pilgrimages to the major shrines, met with supporters, sold Atsutane's writings, and gave lectures. On 7.5, he lectured in the morning on *Exegesis on Ancient History* (*Koshiden*), in the afternoon he lectured to fifty or sixty people on *The Sacred Sleeve Cord* (*Tamadasuki*) in the presence of the Matsuzawa tutelary deity, and in the evening he lectured again. He collected stories of strange happenings—a sick man who when fed garlic vomited insects and died, a woman who returned to life after having drowned, and a fox woman whose husband insisted that she raise their children even after her true nature had been discovered and she had returned to her den. The children were in good health and resembled foxes. The people who related these tales insisted that they really happened, that they were true.[35] By taking these trips, Kanetane both strengthened connections with disciples and gathered information on local lore for Atsutane to incorporate into his work on the gods and spirits.

Kanetane made four more short trips to the region northeast of Edo between 1829 and 1831, but he had other responsibilities as well. He fulfilled his conjugal duties, doing his part to give Atsutane seven grandchildren (one died as a child). He took over the house diary, listing visitors, correspondents, Atsutane's activities, his own outings, marriages, births, and deaths among their relatives and associates; the occasional disputes between neighbors; and the family's difficulties with the authorities. Cryptic notes refer to

34. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:40–48. For Yoshida Asako's description and analysis of this trip, see *Chi no kyōmei*, 84–95.

35. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:48–54.

woodblock carvers and booksellers. He recorded the yearly round of seasonal observances, some generic, such as pounding mochi to celebrate the winter solstice, and others specific to the Hirata house, such as the ceremony on 3.13 for the immortal Takane, introduced to Atsutane by the boy Torakichi. While Atsutane crafted his essays, lectured to disciples, tried to gain favor with the high and mighty, and played with his grandchildren, Kanetane wrote letters, thousands of them.

The bulk of Kanetane's vast correspondence relates to publishing and selling Atsutane's works. This theme remained constant from the 1820s through the 1860s, with books being a major source of income for the family as well as a means for disseminating Atsutane's ideas. As Kanetane stated to one disciple in 1833, "Writing books is my father's task, but he has not attended to getting them published. It is my duty to publish, sell, and distribute them."[36] Most of Atsutane's texts remained in manuscript during his lifetime and beyond. That form did not preclude circulation because, as Nakagawa Kazuaki has shown, Kanetane edited them, hired copyists, and supervised the production of clean, accurate copies. Sometimes he added chapters and in at least one case changed the title.[37] "Starting with *Exegesis on Ancient History* (*Koshiden*), there has been no limit to the suggestions that everyone has offered, so for the sake of future generations I'm going to have to add extra volumes," he reported to HatanoTakao in an undated letter.[38] Even printed texts provided many opportunities for changes to creep in after Atsutane had finished with them.

When the shogunate exiled Atsutane to Akita at the beginning of 1841, it also banned publication of his works. Atsutane surmised animosity on the part of the neo-Confucian scholars who served the shogun because the popularity of his teachings overshadowed theirs.[39] According to rumors reported by Iseki Takako on 1842.3.18, by engaging in calendrical studies, crafting his own calendar, and then publishing it, Atsutane had infringed on the prerogatives of rulers, although she also believed that he deserved punishment for his arrogance, for the way he had plagiarized the scholarship of others, and for his writings on ancient history that deceived the untutored.[40] Kanetane got around this ban by having blocks carved secretly, not advertising, selling only through disciples, and circulating copies of manuscripts rather than printed texts. An exception was *Thoughts on Bewitchments Past and Present*

36. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 83.
37. Nakagawa, *Hirata Kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*.
38. Tasaki, "Hirata-ke kara Hatano Takao ate shokan," 202.
39. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 133.
40. Iseki Takako, *Iseki Takako nikki*, 2:296–97.

(*Kokin yōmi-kō*), published in 1845 but with a preface dated 1831. After the shogunate lifted the ban on Atsutane's publications in 1849 in the general amnesty for shogun Ienari's seventh death anniversary, Kanetane sent the volume to booksellers and openly advertised it.[41] Even today the only publication date listed by the National Diet Library is for the preface.[42]

Thoughts on Bewitchments is notable not just for the gap between when Kanetane published the volume and when he started advertising it but also for why it got published at all. Suzuki Shigetane joined the Hirata school in 1832 through the mail. In 1843 he traveled to Akita, hoping to meet Atsutane, only to learn that Atsutane had just died. Kanetane allowed Shigetane to study manuscripts there and back in Edo, but Kanetane kept some hidden, and the rest were not to leave the premises. Desperate to get access to secret texts and impressed with *Thoughts on Bewitchments*, which he had read in Akita, Shigetane urged the Katsura, a family of rural entrepreneurs in Echigo, to put up the money to get it into print: "This is a book that will really sell, and I want to take charge of getting it published and distributed before I return to Kyoto next spring" (1844.10.1). In return for the loan provided by the Katsura, Kanetane allowed them to see secret transmissions that he refused Shigetane. "I'm afraid that Kanetane doesn't trust me, he is tight with the manuscripts, and he doesn't want to show them to me," Shigetane complained a month later. In another letter from 1845.9.2, he stated that Kanetane would only let him borrow manuscripts for one or two days, not enough time to copy the long ones. He got so fed up with Kanetane's restrictions that he decided to cut off contact. But a year later he was back again, this time with new plans to borrow Katsura money to publish two more volumes of *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*.[43] His enthusiasm thus overrode Kanetane's desire to restrict access to texts to disciples whom he trusted.

Yoshida Asako uses Shigetane as evidence for how disciples took the initiative in disseminating Atsutane's work. In Kai, a province west of Edo, Tanaka Teiji wrote to Kanetane sometime before 1855 asking for permission to sell Atsutane's treatises. He must have already been selling them without authorization because he stated that he had run out of several popular texts. Unlike the aim of a conventional bookseller, his goal was not profit but a missionary effort to spread Atsutane's teachings. He promised not to let people make crude copies of the texts and not to allow copies to be made of essays on divination, even though people often asked for them. Yoshida thinks that

41. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 245–46.
42. See https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2562849, accessed October 21, 2021.
43. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 247–55. The quotations are on 248 and 251.

this may have been to prevent piracy, and indeed Atsutane's works appeared in pirated editions. In Osaka in 1850, Sakura Azumao insisted on publishing *A Mocking Discourse upon Emerging from Meditation* (*Shutsujō shōgo*). It had heretofore circulated only in manuscript because Kanetane saw its attack on Buddhism as politically dangerous. When Kanetane discovered what Sakura was up to, he demanded that the printing blocks be sent to Edo. In other regions, disciples acted as intermediaries to print and facilitate the sale of books, usually in coordination with Kanetane but sometimes not.[44] In short, because Kanetane lacked his own funding sources or publisher, he could not always control how Atsutane's works found their way into the public eye, and Atsutane's disciples had their own ideas about which texts they wanted to see in print.

Kanetane came to play an increasing role in guiding Atsutane's disciples. Once he took over Atsutane's correspondence, disciples turned to him to answer questions of doctrine. In 1831, a shrine priest from Kisarazu near Edo Bay named Yatsurugi Ise asked about the difference between souls (*reikon*) and spirits (*ki*). After consulting with Atsutane, Kanetane replied:

> People and the myriad beings have souls, and as for the mountains, rivers, the land (*kuni*), soil, grasses, trees, each has its soul too. Since this is something that has always been true, there can be no doubt about it. Vessels or furnishings do not have souls, but they do contain a spirit. They contain the spirit of the person who manufactures them plus their original nature [derived from] the five elements [wood, fire, earth, metal, water]. When one of [these manufactured objects] is broken, the spirit in its pieces is destroyed. In contrast, the human spirit is not something that ends up on a garbage dump.[45]

In other words, since broken pottery is to be discarded, its spirit must disappear; otherwise, the soul of the person who made it would just be thrown away. The idea that objects contain an animating spirit that needs to be treated respectfully is basic to Japanese folk religion. Atsutane built on that notion to contrast it with the perduring soul that in his view went to the hidden world after a person died.

As Atsutane's amanuensis, Kanetane explained doctrinal matters even to men who never joined the school. Kurosawa Kyūzō was a retainer from Oshi domain located just southwest of Tatebayashi, the home of Ikuta Yorozu,

44. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 213, 230–37.
45. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata kokugaku to Kisarazu no Yatsurugi Ise," 8.

and it was probably through Ikuta that he learned about Atsutane's teachings. He visited the family three times and exchanged a few letters.[46] Kanetane responded to one in 1832 in which he summarized Atsutane's thoughts on the nature of evil and explained how they differed from Norinaga's. In his seminal text *Exegesis on the Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojikiden*), Norinaga had stated that Magatsuhi no kami was the source of calamity, but no, according to Atsutane, he is a splendid god who hates calamity and pollution (see chap. 2). There are nine gods who arose when the creator god Izanagi purified himself after he traveled to the underworld in search of his wife, and they are called *magakami*. They cause disease, famine, and bloodshed. Magatsuhi was created to expel them because he hates everything that is unclean. "To be sure, Magatsuhi gets extremely angry any time there is filth, and he can cause great distress." Kanetane understood that, because the names of the gods whose deeds are evil and the god who expels evils as well as the consequences for the unlucky person who gets in their path are similar, it was easy to confuse the two, but if Kurosawa would read Atsutane's writings (and he listed several), then he would understand his mistake.[47]

The letters to Yatsuragi Ise and Kurosawa Kyūzō testify to how Atsutane and Kanetane worked together to promote Atsutane's doctrine, building upon but distinguishing it from Norinaga's and popular beliefs. In addition to lectures, sometimes recorded by disciples, and texts both published and left in manuscript, Atsutane's doctrine thus spread in the ephemera of letters. Kanetane kept up such correspondence throughout his life, explicating Atsutane's ideas, selling clean copies of his manuscripts, and raising money to publish his works.

Following Atsutane's exile to Akita, Kanetane continued to act as his representative in Edo while expanding the school's networks in new directions. At first the family struggled with the loss of a chief source of revenue from new publications. Months after Atsutane arrived in Akita, conditions improved when the domain bestowed him with position and stipend. Even though the stipend was tiny compared to what Kanetane had been led to expect, the family celebrated this appointment on the date it was made, 1841.11.24, almost every year for the next twenty-five years.[48] Atsutane and his descendants turned all auspicious occasions into opportunities to thank the gods. This celebration also speaks to their status consciousness as members of the Akita retainer band. Amano Masashi argues that what made

46. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:27, 28, 48, 49, 51, 224, 255.

47. Watanabe Kinzō Monjo 6797, Tōkyō Chūō Toshokan.

48. See, for example, Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:174. Page numbers in the text refer to this diary.

it possible for Kanetane to continue the Hirata school at all was Akita's protection.[49]

Atsutane's appointment meant that his descendants would henceforth serve Akita domain. Many of their duties were purely ceremonial—Kanetane usually attended the annual New Year's audience with the lord, while starting in 1852, his son Nobutane took his place. To mark the transition, Nobutane received a congratulatory cup of sake in the lord's presence (p. 263). There were also ad hoc celebrations, for example when the lord's daughter recovered from smallpox (p. 211). Buddhist memorial services for the lord's ancestors required either Kanetane or Nobutane, and sometimes both, to attend.

Such ceremonies had their origins in observances designed to solidify the bonds between lord and retainer and focused the retainers' attention upward to the lord while becoming so formalized that some could be performed whether the lord was present or not. Nonetheless, they structured the Hirata family's inclusion in the Akita retainer band. Even while the shogunate teetered as forces mobilizing in the name of the emperor swelled in 1867, the Hirata diary still recorded three occasions when Kanetane was invited to ceremonies marking special events for the domain (pp. 357, 359). The shogun returned his powers to the throne on 10.14, but the Satake family expected its retainers to continue to celebrate its milestones (p. 369). These obligations ended in 1868 when Kanetane and Nobutane found new positions serving the emperor, who was now to head a centralized government.

Belonging to the Akita retainer band brought perquisites and constraints. The domain had its own messenger service for communications between officials in Edo and those in Akita, a service the Hirata family utilized to maintain contact with Atsutane's relatives and disciples, ship crates of books, exchange gifts, and receive cash. The family also had heavy items carried in domain officials' baggage (p. 326). The domain provided lodging in the barracks that lined the walls of its lower compound near Asakusa. Atsutane's widow, the married couple, and six children lived in a ninety-eight-square-foot apartment (p. 211). In 1849, the domain allowed Kanetane to build an earthen storehouse in a back garden to store woodblocks, documents, and items for sale (pp. 226–29). Kanetane raised the money to pay for it from wealthy disciples.[50] With living quarters and workspace so closely aligned, the family interacted regularly with other members of the retainer band, disciples, relatives, and powerful figures in the domain bureaucracy. However,

49. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 37, 38.
50. Aichi Kenshi Hensan Iikai, *Aichi kenshi shiryōhen 20*, 508.

Kanetane was no longer allowed to travel outside of Edo without permission, and except for two trips to Akita, one to watch over Atsutane's dying moments in 1843 and the other in 1850 to erect a gravestone, his visits to the provinces stopped. He also had to get approval for his children's marriages, although this was largely pro forma.

Kanetane continued to run the Hirata school from the barracks. When he had to go to a woodblock carver, a printer, a binder, or a bookseller, he might be gone all day. Sometimes he used his younger sons as messengers, but most interactions took place face-to-face. Hardly a day passes in the diary unmarked by the arrival of visitors, relatives, or tradesmen; disciples came from domains as far-flung as Satsuma on the island of Kyushu or Tosa in Shikoku. Kanetane held lectures on Atsutane's works that attracted more and more listeners in the 1860s as the shogunate proved unable to obey the emperor by repelling the Western barbarians and as Atsutane's message that everyone in Japan, even the shogun, must respect the emperor resonated with increasing numbers of activists. From around the time of the Namamugi incident of 1862, when Satsuma samurai cut down the Englishman Richardson, who had ignored orders to stay clear of their lord's path, Kanetane became so obsessed with foreign affairs that he left the business of inducting members into the school to whichever disciples happened to be around.[51] In short, the family's ninety-eight square feet must have often been quite noisy. These living quarters also gave Akita men new chances to interact with men from other domains despite bans on fraternizing by both domains and the shogunate. The domain allowed these extra-domain activities because no domain expected the lower-ranking members of its retainer band to live on the stipend it provided. For the Hirata family, that meant mining the horde of Atsutane's ideas and beliefs found in his manuscripts and books.

Akita domain took advantage of the prestige it accrued through its connection to Atsutane. On 1857.8.14, the American counsel Townsend Harris arrived in Edo hoping for an unprecedented audience with the shogun. With the barbarian at the gate, the Mito lord Tokugawa Nariaki sent a request to Akita officials to borrow texts written by Atsutane. Kanetane immediately set to work preparing suitably elegant copies. At the end of the year, Mito sent a further request to allow Kanetane to talk to its officials: "Your retainer Hirata is deeply versed in scholarship with a knowledge of old texts. Consequently, officials in charge of the compilation of *The History of Great Japan* (*Dai Nihonshi*) want to consult with him. If you have no objection, please let

51. Takagi, "Bakumatsu seijō to gōnō," 254.

him know this informally." Nobutane noted with pleasure that news of this request had reached the ears of the Akita domain lord. Thereafter, Kanetane went to see the officials in charge of the Mito Academy, and on 12.18 its director returned the visit (p. 322). Mito had become famous for its scholarship on Japanese history, and its emphasis on Japan's unique national essence had a major impact on the Meiji state after 1868. It was thus a signal honor for Mito to single out one of Akita's retainers for his erudition.

In 1862 the domain took advantage of Kanetane's information-sharing network to send him as an observer/spy to Kyoto. This was because for the imperial court and shogunate to unite in supporting the emperor's opposition to opening up Japan's ports to trade and allowing foreigners to reside on Japan's sacred soil, court officials had demanded and shogunal officials had agreed that the shogun should go to Kyoto to meet with him. One of the daimyo in the shogun's train was the Akita lord Satake Yoshitaka, who had never been farther west than Edo. Like other daimyo, he wanted to know what he could expect and where other daimyo stood on the issues. How convenient to have among his retainers a man with Kanetane's nationwide connections and sterling reputation at court. When the court noble Ōhara Shigetomi had gone to Edo in 1862.6 with the emperor's demand to expel the foreigners, he had accepted Kanetane's request to submit a new edition of Atsutane's works to the school for nobles, Gakushūin, established in 1847. As the Akita domain elder Utsunomiya Mōkō explained in his diary on 1862.11.16:

> When Hirata Kanetane came to work today, I told him the following: "earlier this year dozens of volumes of your deceased father's scholarship on the ancient Way and the imperial court were viewed by the emperor, and we think this is grand. You have inherited your father's intent and devoted yourself day and night to serving the imperial court. With so many disciples in every province, ancient studies fill our country. We are completely satisfied with the fruits of yours and your father's research over the years."[52]

For Utsunomiya, the ancient studies taught in the Hirata school, with its emphasis on respect for the emperor, was just what Japan needed in dealing with the foreign threat. Since Akita domain housed the school, it stood to benefit by both reflecting its glory and relying on its sources of information. Kanetane stayed in Kyoto until 1863.3, using his access to people across the political spectrum to gather information for the domain.

52. Kikuchi Yasuo, "Hirata 'monjinchō' ni tsuite," 13.

Kanetane had not wanted to go to Kyoto, lest the Hirata school get swept up in trouble caused by unruly advocates of "Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians." He was horrified when nine of his disciples decapitated the statues of the first three Ashikaga shoguns (r. 1338–94) and displayed the heads with a placard promising the gods' punishment on traitors to the throne, a veiled threat against the current Tokugawa shogun for not respecting the emperor's wishes to rid Japan of foreigners.[53] Although the shogunate rounded up as many of the perpetrators as it could and chased the rest out of Kyoto, Kanetane was able to return to Edo under Akita's protection. There he remained for the next four years while the number of Hirata disciples grew to over four thousand. He wrote letters to his friends in Akita bemoaning the shogun's inability to confront the barbarians and worried about his sons, who wanted the domain to act. Once the shogun returned his title and office to the emperor at the end of 1867, Kanetane returned to Kyoto, followed by his wife and the rest of his family, expecting that the ancient capital would soon return to its former glory. It did not. The emperor moved to Edo, now called Tokyo. Kanetane's hopes to head a new national university for Japan studies proved unrealistic when the leaders of the new Meiji state turned to Western science and technology.

Nobutane: The Hirata Family's Hoped-For Heir

Nobutane had a brief but eventful career. He died young, at the age of forty-three, and while he wrote several essays, only one was published—in an obscure journal before World War II. Like his father, he served two masters before the Meiji Restoration—Akita domain and the Hirata school; afterward he lasted such a brief time in the new central government that his impact was minimal. Yet throughout his short life he tried to act politically and engage with a changing world while maintaining his grandfather's sense of awe in the presence of the gods.

Nobutane began his career as a bureaucrat in 1847 at age nineteen. That was when he started receiving a salary after he had made himself useful around government offices and attended the lord on special occasions, such as watching ancient-style Japanese polo. For a young man whose immediate family had only recently been inducted into the Akita retainer band, he rose quickly. In 1852 he noted with pride that he had served as the domain's messenger for the first time, a duty that brought him into proximity to high-

53. Walthall, "Off with Their Heads!" 158, 160.

ranking officials as well as opportunities to serve as the domain's public face when delivering gifts and greetings to other domains (p. 267).

Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in 1853 with demands for a treaty of friendship that would eventually place Japan in a new international order had a huge impact on Japan and Nobutane's career. In a 1854 letter to one of his disciples, Kanetane commented on how rudely the Americans had behaved and lamented Japan's lack of preparedness. His sons had been ordered into the warriors' ranks, where they were practicing armor wearing, archery, horseback riding, sword and spear fighting, and gunnery, and there was great commotion every day.[54] Despite these distractions, Nobutane continued to perform his regular duties for the domain as record keeper, messenger, and attendant. Following the lord's sudden death in 1857, Nobutane accompanied his successor on his first audience with the shogun (p. 307). In 1858, presenting gifts to the shogun became one of his official responsibilities (p. 327). His duties were varied, but they were never so onerous as to keep him from thinking about contemporary issues in the light of his training as Atsutane's intellectual heir.

Amano Masashi's research on Nobutane highlights how he started to reevaluate Atsutane's understanding of who should and how to handle Japan's foreign relations when the shogun ignored the emperor's wishes by signing treaties with foreign powers. Should it be the shogun, and could Japan rely on the gods to get rid of foreigners?[55] Officials in the shogunate signed a treaty of friendship with Commodore Perry in 1854 and a commercial treaty with Townshend Harris in 1858. They then purged the shogunate's critics in 1859, the lord of Mito among them. This led Mito and Satsuma samurai to take revenge by assassinating the shogun's chief counselor, Ii Naosuke, the following year. In response, the shogunate tried to buttress its authority with imperial prestige by marrying the emperor's sister to the shogun in 1861. The chorus of complaints against the shogun's actions convinced Nobutane that in such unsettled times it was too dangerous to keep a record of family activities. Instead, he began compiling two secret dossiers, one containing documents produced by higher authorities and the other containing reports by disciples and other informants.[56] He also started to think politically. In an 1859 letter to a Hirata disciple, Nobutane pointed out that when evil-minded foreigners had attacked Japan in the past (the Mongol invasions of

54. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 45–46.

55. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 45.

56. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 63–65. One record, titled *Fūun himitsu tantei roku*, started in 1860 and continuing to 1868, fills four fat volumes. Akita komonjokan. AH/312/276.

1274 and 1281), they had been driven off not by the gods, as Atsutane promised in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* (see chap. 3), but by force of arms. Men could not wait for the gods to act for them.[57]

In the middle of 1862, Akita officials ordered Nobutane to go to Kyoto to investigate conditions there before the lord arrived at the end of the year. Nobutane stayed for approximately a month, meeting Hirata disciples in touch with radicals already plotting to overthrow the shogunate, such as Maki Izumi, as well as men willing to leak information regarding the intentions of the major southwestern domains, particularly Satsuma and Chōshū.[58] He even met the court noble, Iwakura Tomomi, who was to play a leading role in the early Meiji state. At that time, Iwakura was trying to persuade the domains to support the shogun, so long as the shogun demonstrated his sincere commitment to follow the emperor's wishes, to unify court and military but with the court in ascendance. Impressed with Nobutane's eloquence and passion, Iwakura urged him to get his superiors in Akita to promote his plan. Nobutane agreed, taking a more active political stance than approved by his domain. He justified his position on the basis that Atsutane had insisted that everyone, lords and shogun, as well as their retainers, owed allegiance to the emperor.

Kanetane had restricted his activities in Kyoto to collecting information, but his sons wanted more. The second son, Kaneya, stayed in Kyoto after the lord left in 1863 and had a wonderful time as guard, informant for his father and elder brother, and liaison with men from other domains.[59] The shogun told the domains to ignore his promise to the emperor to expel the barbarians on 1863.5.10, thus proposing a course of nonaction that was followed by the Akita lord. Disgusted, Nobutane wrote a memorial urging his lord to obey the emperor, not the shogun. "The Tokugawa house is a traitor to the court and a rebel. I think that we must immediately raise the righteous flag of service to the ruler, punish the rebellious retainers in Kanto, and ease the imperial mind. . . . If you do this, the great authority of the barbarian subduing generalissimo will fall into your hands. If instead you obey the shogun, the stigma of traitor will remain for generations."[60] In Atsutane's eyes, Tokugawa Ieyasu and his descendants had deserved the office of shogun because they treated the emperor with respect, but he had also written, "In our imperial country, in speaking of the lord, the emperor is the sole mainstay and all else

57. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 51–52.

58. For Maki Izumi's 1859 "Record of a Great Dream," see Walthall and Steele, *Politics and Society in Japan's Meiji Restoration*, 73–76.

59. See Walthall, "Good Older Brother, Bad Younger Brother."

60. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 91.

are retainers."[61] Unlike Nobutane, Atsutane never confronted a situation in which the shogunate disobeyed the emperor. Amano thinks that Nobutane was responding to the calls for action that he was receiving from disciples in Kyoto, grassroots activists, and networks based in Akita's private academies.[62] Still, the domain did nothing. On 1864.7.19, troops from Chōshū attacked the imperial palace in a vain attempt to free the emperor from his punctilious advisers, only to be routed by forces loyal to the shogun. Akita's leaders then purged the activists because their demands were getting out of hand, dismissed Nobutane from office, and ordered him to keep his mouth shut. In the spring of 1866 he was reinstated, but he continued to be frustrated by his domain's refusal to act.

Nobutane put politics to work in the service of the gods. When Akita domain sent him to Kyoto in the middle of 1862, he drafted an appeal to have the imperial court take measures to "restore the past" (*fukko*), a slogan usually read to mean bringing the emperor back to a central position in the government, but it also encompassed a return to earlier cultural and faith-based practices drawing on Atsutane's ideas. On his way to Kyoto, Nobutane had been shocked to see the dilapidated state of Atsuta shrine near Nagoya. Since it enshrined a sword, one of the three imperial regalia, it really ought to be as imposing as the great shrine at Ise, where another item in the regalia, the mirror, was housed. Then "as a matter of course the imperial majesty would radiate ever more throughout the realm, and the four barbarians and the eight barbarians too would prostrate themselves in awe at the court's power and authority." Alas, imperial authority had been declining since the Middle Ages, and for this Nobutane blamed Emperor Sutoku's curse. So long as he continued to rage, emperors would remain under the control of military regimes. For the emperor to be restored to his rightful place, Sutoku needed to be pacified.[63]

In *Thoughts on Bewitchments Past and Present*, Atsutane asserted that Sutoku's angry spirit became a malevolent *tengu*—a creature half man and half raptor—and brought military dominance over the imperial court.[64] Sutoku's time as emperor began when he was four years old in 1123, when his official grandfather, the retired emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129), forced his father, Emperor Toba, into retirement. In 1141 Toba in turn forced Sutoku into retirement and installed his own choice as emperor, excluding Sutoku's

61. Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, quoting from *Daidō wakumon* (Questions on the Great Way), 234.

62. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 94.

63. Shokan 9-4-1, HAKS, 1862.6.12.

64. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Atsutane shuyō sakuhin kaidai," 77.

heir from the imperial line of succession and leaving Sutoku powerless. In 1156 Sutoku and some disaffected warriors who had similarly fallen out of their lines of succession rebelled against their families.[65] With his forces crushed within hours, Sutoku was exiled to Sanuki province on the island of Shikoku. Despite his pleas to return home, that was where he died.[66]

In a supplement to *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*, listed under his famous grandfather's name, Nobutane highlighted the significance of Sutoku's response to exile.[67] "Here he was, a descendant of Amaterasu who had achieved the rank of son of heaven and retired emperor, yet all had passed like a dream. What karma from a previous life could have resulted in this?" In despair, Sutoku neglected his hair and let his nails grow long. He wrote a sutra using his own blood and sent it to the court as a token of his regret for having raised an army against his brother, but the court rejected it. Driven mad with fury, Sutoku made a vow to become the most evil of Japan's demons. "I will vent my rage by making the ruler into the subject; the subject into the ruler." He bit off the tip of his tongue and wrote this vow on the back of the sutra, again in his own blood. Calling on the heavenly host and earthly creatures to aid him, he threw the sutra into the sea. When he died, smoke from his funeral pyre drifted to the capital, where several of his enemies died unexpectedly.[68] These events portended the advent of the middle ages in Japanese history when the military controlled the country in contrast to ancient Japan when emperors ruled.

The Sutoku emperor's rage at the imperial court stands out even among the many angry spirits who cursed their enemies in the course of Japanese history. Nobutane noted that the founder of the Kamakura regime, Minamoto no Yoritomo, well understood that Sutoku's spirit made it possible for him to gain power over Japan by fulfilling Sutoku's vow that the emperor would become subject to a new ruler. It was thanks to Sutoku that attempts at restoring the imperial court's rightful place at the center of government failed in the fourteenth century. Now the court needed to perform ceremonies correctly for it to flourish as in ancient days.[69]

Nobutane was not the only one to advocate pacifying Emperor Sutoku. In 1861, the shogunate asked the court to prepare a ceremony to mark Sutoku's seven hundredth death anniversary as part of its efforts to keep the court on its side in dealing with its critics. Two years later, appropriate rituals

65. Kamata, *Myth and Deity in Japan*, 194.
66. See Hurst, *Insei* 155–63, 166–77.
67. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Atsutane shuyō sakuhin kaidai," 71.
68. Hirata Atsutane, *Tamadasuki sōron tsuika*, 1–8.
69. Hirata Atsutane, *Tamadasuki sōron tsuika*, 9–11.

were performed at Sutoku's grave on Mount Shiramine.[70] There was also a push from below. That same year, a Japan studies scholar named Naka Zuiunsai made a pilgrimage to Sutoku's grave. Thereafter he appealed repeatedly to the court, arguing that the foreign threat had enraged the gods of calamity and especially their leader, Sutoku. To suppress them and pacify Sutoku, he had to be brought back to Kyoto. Doing so would restore the military and cultural authority that the court had lost in 1156.[71]

Prompted by activists like Nobutane and Zuiunsai to restore the centrality of the emperor in Japanese culture and faith, the emperor Kōmei approved measures to rediscover and designate imperial tombs and planned to bring Sutoku's spirit back to the capital. In a letter written on 1866.9.4 to his paper supplier, Kanetane wrote: "Like you, I am overjoyed that there will soon be a special grand ceremony to return the emperor Sutoku to the capital."[72] Alas, Kōmei died unexpectedly at the end of the year. In obedience to his father's wishes, Emperor Meiji then finished the construction of a suitable structure. On the anniversary of Sutoku's death in 1868, sacred items associated with him were ceremoniously placed on a palanquin used to carry divine objects and transported from Mount Shiramine to Kyoto. There, on 9.6, with Zuiunsai in attendance, Emperor Meiji went to the shrine to witness Sutoku's installation at his new home. As one of the emperor's tutors, Nobutane was also supposed to accompany Meiji, but Nobutane was ill. Shortly after Meiji left for Tokyo in 1869, and before he too moved to the new capital, Nobutane attended what were to become annual services for Sutoku's death anniversary.[73] Previously, when Atsutane or Nobutane had invoked the past, they had done so as a matter of private faith. Now boundaries had shifted, and memorializing an emperor who had been dead for over seven hundred years took on public, political significance.

It is ironic that Sutoku returned to Kyoto just as the imperial court was in the process of moving to Tokyo. Kyoto's Shiramine shrine became an official government shrine and ranked among Japan's top shrines, but Sutoku never became a popular deity in the manner of other formerly vengeful spirits. Today's notice boards scarcely mention that people once thought Sutoku's vengeful spirit was responsible for famine and war, the emphasis being instead on what a great ruler he had been, governing wisely and helping the poor. He conformed to the correct way of respecting the gods and

70. Tanigawa, "Sutoku jōkō," 161.

71. Terawaki, "Sonnō jōi undo no shisō," 19–25; Stockdale, *Imagining Exile in Heian Japan*, 118.

72. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 363.

73. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:375, 393.

worshipping the ancestors and exemplified proper marital relations. The site chosen for the shrine had previously served as the residence of the Asukai family, credited with originating the ancient game of *kemari*, the Japanese version of hacky sack. Their protective deity is now worshipped as the god of soccer.

The three generations of Hirata men contributed each in his own way to making and propagating the Hirata school. Atsutane forged the original connections that gained him access to the scholarly and economic capital that he used to develop his ideas and propagate his beliefs. Kanetane is often seen as the one who kept the school going and conserved Atsutane's achievements, but in response to the foreign and domestic crises sparked by Commodore Perry's rude arrival in 1853, he transformed his network of correspondents from one focusing on interpreting Atsutane's writings and getting them published to one that also served as a clearing house for information and advocated a response to the West that drew on Atsutane's ideas. His vision of a return to the past, seemingly heralded by the restoration of the emperor to direct rule in 1868, meant reviving ancient court practices, placing Japan studies front and center in government-sponsored education, and keeping foreigners out of the sacred land. When the new government, although centralized under the emperor, started importing foreign ways, he became increasingly marginalized. While taking advantage of the family's position in the Akita domain's retainer band for career advancement and continuing its tradition of imbibing Atsutane's teachings as the gospel truth, Nobutane struck out in new directions. He got much more involved in politics than his father or grandfather ever had, but not always successfully. He tried to maintain the essence of Atsutane's teachings while also accommodating them to the reality of nineteenth-century gunboat diplomacy.

Working in the shadows were the Hirata women. To the extent that the documents allow, they will become the focus of my final chapter. They too contributed to keeping and disseminating Atsutane's writings, practicing his beliefs, and preserving the material objects that underlie the study that follows. Without them, it is doubtful that the house would have survived into the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 2

Portraits Worth a Thousand Words

In the early eleventh century, the Fujiwara family of court nobles began the tradition of periodically commissioning a portrait of the seventh-century poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro and presenting offerings to it, turning the portrait into a poetic icon and Hitomaro into a god.[1] Atsutane was thus emulating a long-performed practice when he collected portraits of men he deemed his forefathers in ancient studies who illuminated the divine age of the gods and the Way of the spirits. A close look at these portraits and the poems inscribed above them offers insights into his thought and the intellectual lineage to which he belonged. They embedded him in a tradition of scholarship on Japan, validated his position in that tradition, and attested to his self-image as worthy successor. They also testified to his faith in the native Japanese deities, for he revered the men in these portraits as gods.

Each portrait preserved a likeness of the person portrayed and functioned as an icon—a sign that stands in for the deceased person's spirit and hence becomes an object of veneration. Yet the portraits cannot be separated from their inscriptions. The men portrayed on hanging scrolls spoke to Atsutane through the poems written above their portraits, words that served to convey their characters and to condition the viewer's response.[2] These men also spoke to Atsutane through their treatises. He valued their words, words that attested to the existence of the gods and the possibility of studying the traces

1. In the first part of the eleventh century, Fujiwara no Kanefusa dreamed of Hitomaro, commissioned his portrait, and made it an object of worship. See Gerhart, "Visions of the Dead," 3; Commons, *Hitomaro*, 91.

2. Peter Burke emphasizes the way words can influence the viewers of pictures in *Eyewitnessing*, 182–83.

of the gods in ancient histories. Their ideas inspired his own. Juxtaposing images and texts is thus one way to unpack Atsutane's ideas and intellectual investments.

Up to now, historians who studied Atsutane's texts have overlooked portraits and the poems that accompany them. Yet from the beginning of his career, Atsutane acquired images that illustrate his belief in the spirit of the dead's continued existence and his communion with it. The well-known painting of his meeting with Motoori Norinaga in a dream proved, at least in his own mind, that Norinaga accepted him as a disciple. He also commissioned a portrait of the early eighteenth-century neo-Confucian scholar and politician Arai Hakuseki. Later he acquired the portraits of the men whom he considered to be his most significant predecessors in the study of the ancient Way. In so doing, he defined a lineage of which he was the culmination. After Atsutane's death, Kanetane had copies made of Atsutane's portrait for his disciples to venerate. In this fashion, Atsutane's followers engaged with him through images and texts, the one reinforcing the other, each acquiring a deeper significance in the process. Exploring the meaning of these portraits thus reveals one way that Atsutane affirmed his faith in the gods and spirits and situated himself as a scholar. They didn't just represent how men looked; they staked a claim to scholarly kinship.

Painting a Dream

A famous painting in the Hirata shrine collection depicts a dream. It shows Atsutane on his knees before Motoori Norinaga, asking to become his disciple. The painting's material existence substantiates Atsutane's claim that Norinaga invited him into his school. Yet this claim is valid only if you, like Atsutane, believe that to dream of a dead person means that the dead person's spirit has appeared before you.

Why did Atsutane think he needed to claim that he had met Norinaga, even if only in a dream? He later asserted that he had read Norinaga and had even met the man before the latter's death in 1801, although he acknowledged in an 1805 letter that he first encountered Norinaga's works in 1803. He took to them immediately, so quickly in fact that he wrote his first essay drawing on his understanding of them that same year and began enrolling his own students in 1804, all the while calling Norinaga his teacher. But how to substantiate this claim? Norinaga had two heirs: his son, Haruniwa, who had become blind at a young age, and Ōhira, whom Norinaga had adopted, thus splitting his legacy in two. They were both then living in Norinaga's

hometown of Matsusaka, where they kept the records of their disciples who wanted to follow Norinaga's path into poetry and philology. Atsutane too signed up with Haruniwa, but that left him at one remove from Norinaga. Only by meeting Norinaga could he achieve direct contact with the man he revered as a god.

Dreaming offered Atsutane a way out of his predicament. On 1805.3.5, he wrote an ingratiating letter to Haruniwa in which he described how and why he considered himself Norinaga's disciple.[3] He admitted that in his youth he had devoted himself to the study of the Chinese classics, believing wrongly that nothing else was worthy of study. Then, two years earlier in 1803, he had come across Norinaga's *Words of Lament in Subduing the Barbarians* (*Gyojū gaigen*), a treatise on Japan's foreign relations from the first to the end of the sixteenth centuries, and *Later Commentary on the Great Purification Liturgy* (*Ōharae no kotoba goshaku*). Norinaga's history of how Japanese intellectuals and government had earlier failed in their dealing with barbarians correlated with Atsutane's own anxiety about the foreign threat then posed by Russia.[4] The second text, a compilation of Norinaga's annotations and corrections to Kamo no Mabuchi's 1768 commentary on the ancient liturgies recorded in the *Procedures of the Engi Era* (905–22; *Engishiki norito-kō*), appealed to Atsutane's burgeoning interest in Japan's historical record.[5] Atsutane described how he threw away the books he had been reading and devoted himself to studying Norinaga's writings day and night in the deep and boundless faith that they surpassed everything ever written since the world began. Learning that Norinaga was already dead left him with bitter regret and sorrow. Then, in the third month of 1804, Norinaga appeared to him in a dream and in this dream accepted him as a disciple. How thankful he was that Norinaga's spirit had seen what he had been pining for in the depths of his soul. As proof of his dream, Atsutane had Saitō Hikomaro (1768–1854)—a Norinaga disciple known to be skillful at depicting his teacher—paint a picture of it. Describing all this in his letter, Atsutane concluded that it would do him great honor as a scholar for Haruniwa to take him on as a disciple, and he begged for Haruniwa's understanding.

Haruniwa soon sent a polite reply. He praised Atsutane for having found the true Way of the Japanese Empire through Norinaga's writings and lauded Atsutane's deep faith. The messenger who delivered Atsutane's letter, himself

3. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 36–38.
4. For a modern Japanese translation of the former, see Motoori, *Gyojū gaigen*.
5. For Mabuchi's commentary, see Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 118–21.

a Norinaga disciple, spoke favorably about the dream, and the shrine priests in Haruniwa's area also accepted it. Haruniwa therefore agreed that, having received the standard entry fee, he would admit Atsutane into his school. In the future, he would respond to Atsutane's letters as best he could. Thereafter, Haruniwa and Ōhira treated Atsutane as their disciple, but Atsutane called Norinaga his teacher.

Having secured his position as Haruniwa's disciple, Atsutane next sought affirmation of his dream. The scholar Miki Shōtarō suggests that after Haruniwa responded to his first letter, Atsutane must have written another, describing what he had dreamed in more detail and asking Haruniwa to affirm it in a statement to be placed above a new depiction of the scene. At least this is Miki's interpretation of Haruniwa's poetry record, which puts a date of 1805 on his caption.[6] Since such a letter no longer exists, there is no way to know whether Haruniwa acted on his own or at Atsutane's behest. In any event, he composed poetic words of praise for Atsutane's devotion to the Way, his commitment to scholarship, his desire to meet Norinaga in person, and a detailed account of the dream, which now appeared across the top of the scroll depicting the scene.[7]

At the end of his caption, Haruniwa placed two poems attesting to what had happened in allusive language:

Watatsumi no	Along the seashore
fukaki kokoro no	was someone with a deep desire
kayoite ya	going to and fro?
soko ni wa mieshi	what he glimpsed there
hito no omokage	was the face of another
Yume nite mo	It must be the sea in spring
kakaru miru me wo	where a heartfelt pledge
kazukitsuru	has plunged so deeply
chigiri wa fukaki	for eyes to have seen such a sight
haru no umi tsura	even in a dream[8]

The first poem is straightforward, describing Atsutane's mad dash to the place where he encountered Norinaga. It uses the language of classical poetry,

6. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 42.

7. For a partial translation of Haruniwa's caption, see McNally, *Proving the Way*, 166.

8. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:161.

especially "the face of another," which evokes the image of a figure who has appeared in a dream. The second situates the meeting along the seashore and acknowledges Atsutane's sincerity. Both poems speak to Haruniwa's understanding that Atsutane indeed saw Norinaga and they exchanged a pledge that made them disciple and teacher.

Atsutane's exchanges with Haruniwa ultimately resulted in two paintings of his dream. Saitō Hikomaro, a retainer resident in Edo who served the Hamada domain lord, did the first. Hikomaro was a dilettante who wrote "mad verse" (*kyōka*), enjoyed a rich social life with the noted writers of his day, authored essays on Shinto, and named his third son for the sacred sake (Mikisaburō) offered to the gods. Even his biographer admits that his writings lack depth.[9] In an 1850 letter, he praised Atsutane and denigrated him at the same time: "He was a formidable man with wide knowledge and great talent. Had he lived longer, he would have cast ancient studies into a Dutch studies mold."[10] (By this, I assume he disapproved of Atsutane's willingness to use citations from the Bible and other Western sources to buttress his arguments.) The second painting was done by a professional painter, Watanabe Kiyoshi (1778–1861), who except for three years in Kyoto spent his entire career in Nagoya. McNally states that Haruniwa "merely indulged his new student" by writing the caption because he had "an amicable disposition."[11] However, it is more probable that Watanabe was known to Haruniwa rather than to Atsutane, making it likely that Haruniwa commissioned the painting, composed the caption, and then sent it to Atsutane. In other words, Haruniwa believed that Atsutane's dream told the truth.

The painting by Watanabe has been a prized possession of the Hirata family ever since. It is a large rectangle, 46 × 27.5 inches, on silk bordered in brocade, with the painter's name and seal in the lower right-hand corner. Across the top is Haruniwa's description of what happened crafted in beautiful calligraphy by his sister Mino, who handled his correspondence. Below is the scene of Atsutane's meeting with Norinaga.

Haruniwa describes a dream full of otherworldly portents. First, someone suddenly materialized before Atsutane to report that the venerable Norinaga has come to Edo and that right now he is on his way home. This someone thus acted as a mediator between Atsutane the man and Norinaga the god. This mediator would have been of the same substance as Norinaga, that is, a spirit that remains after the body has died; by becoming visible to Atsutane,

9. Ueda and Haga, *Kokugaku denki shūsei*, 2:1356–63.
10. *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 142.
11. McNally, *Proving the Way*, 167.

Fig. 1. The meeting in a dream between Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane, painted by [Watanabe] Kiyoshi with inscription composed by Motoori Haruniwa (1805). (Held at Hirata shrine.)

the mediator must already have had a deep connection to him.[12] Surprised and flustered, Atsutane ran out of the house with just a servant to accompany him and searched for Norinaga everywhere. Finally, at Shinagawa, he saw Norinaga's back, called to him, respectfully knelt before him, and poured out his heart to the man whom he had long wanted to meet. When he appealed for permission to join his school, Norinaga assented immediately. Delighted that his heartfelt desire had been achieved, Atsutane awoke.

The setting is significant. Shinagawa was the last stop on the eastern highway before a traveler entered the city. It thus marked the boundary between Edo and the hinterland and called to mind the boundary between the seen and unseen worlds. The painting depicts not the bustling post station but an empty road, another indication of the otherworldly setting, while the endless waves fading into the distance symbolize the teacher-disciple relationship that lasts for all eternity. Haruniwa's first poem speaks to a place like this as being precisely where Atsutane could have encountered Norinaga.

Four figures are positioned along the shore. In the painting's center is a figure representing Atsutane who kneels and looks up at Norinaga. Behind each of the principals crouches an attendant because no respectable man would be seen in public without one. All wear swords, although the ones carried by Norinaga and his companion are the more visible. Oddly for travelers, they are not wearing hats, but then Norinaga was never depicted as being other than indoors. His is the only recognizable face, with its distinctive unshaven pate of a physician, hair tied neatly in a topknot, neck and jaw thrust slightly forward, and a slight shadow along his cheek. The other three faces, including Atsutane's, are generic.

The painting does not appear today exactly as it would have when new, but it is still noteworthy for depicting an otherworldly dream in this-worldly tones. The blue wash for the sky and sea have faded to brown while the blue remaining on the clothing on the figures in the foreground probably owes to a different pigment.[13] The men, and especially Norinaga, appear as they did in life, the spirit made flesh in living color.

From a modern perspective, it is easy to mock Atsutane's dream as self-serving, which indeed it was. On the other hand, from ancient through premodern times, accounts of dreams appear in memoirs and diaries, and by the early modern period, commoners too were writing about them. To

12. For this interpretation, see Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 50.
13. See Smith, "Hokusai and the Blue Revolution."

have a dream was to summon the other who caused the dream or to be summoned by that other. Lovers often appeared in dreams, and so did gods and Buddhas. People took seriously whatever their dreams revealed.[14]

It was believed, moreover, that dreams provided a portal between the seen and unseen worlds as well as a mechanism for people in the past to communicate with—and validate—people in the present. Such thick connections made possible the most solemn of interactions.[15] The third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu famously dreamed repeatedly of his grandfather Ieyasu and had his court painter replicate ten dreams showing Ieyasu in human form but also marked as a deity. As Karen Gerhart explains, "Iemitsu deemed his dreams to be important, even sacred messages from the Tokugawa founder."[16] Arai Hakuseki recorded dreams in his diary, especially those that foretold success for him and power for his lord.[17] Atsutane's contemporary and fellow student of the ancient Way Tachibana Moribe (1781–1849) had two dreams in 1828 in which his predecessors appeared at his pillow and promised to judge poetry contests for him. The first group consisted of recognized leaders in ancient studies: Keichū, Kamo no Mabuchi, and Motoori Norinaga; the second two were the obscure eccentric poet Shimokawabe Nagaru (1624–86)[18] and the shrine priest Kada no Azumamaro (1669–1736), who promoted Japan studies. These visitations led Moribe to construct a scholarly lineage that placed him right after and on the same footing as Mabuchi and Norinaga.[19] In its historical context, Atsutane's dream thus provides proof of his personal, unmediated relationship with Norinaga.

Atsutane's claims did not go unchallenged among his contemporaries. Although little known today, Kido Chidate (1778–1845), who specialized in classical poetry, considered himself one of Norinaga's chief disciples. When Atsutane traveled to Kyoto to present his works to the emperor in 1823, he hoped to use Chidate's academy, Nudenoya, as a venue for giving lectures on ancient history. In letters to Ōhira, Chidate waxed indignant: he had been too busy to pay much attention to Atsutane, but rumors reported him to be boorish, ill-versed in the things that matter, and not worth his time. When

14. Screech, *Obtaining Images*, 186.
15. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 54–55.
16. Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power*, 138, 185. See also Gerhart, "Visions of the Dead."
17. Nakai, *Shogunal Power*, 86.
18. For Shimokawabe, see Ueda and Haga, *Kokugakusha denki shūsei*, 1:73–77.
19. Takai, *Tenpō-ki, shōnen shōjo no kyōiku*, 278–79.

he declined to invite Atsutane to Nudenoya, Hattori Nakatsune annoyed him further by calling him a weak-kneed coward. Chidate took particular umbrage at the notion that Norinaga had visited Atsutane in a dream. "If he really had received the deceased teacher's permission in a dream, then I too should have received word from Norinaga in a dream that Hirata is undoubtedly his disciple." In a later letter, Chidate contended that no one in Kyoto believed Atsutane's claim of having met Norinaga in a dream.[20]

Chidate did not deny the possibility of a deceased person appearing in a dream; he simply doubted whether Norinaga had appeared to Atsutane. After all, he only had Atsutane's word for it. His skepticism underlines the importance of the painting with Haruniwa's commendation, which offered compelling proof of Atsutane's interaction with the unseen world. For Chidate, the issue ultimately revolved around whose scholarship entitled claim to Norinaga's legacy—his pursuit of classical poetry or Atsutane's historical studies into the age of the gods and ancient Japan.

Portraits of Forefathers

Among the Hirata shrine's treasures are hanging scrolls depicting Atsutane's predecessors in following the ancient Way. Each displays a seated figure at the bottom and a poem written by the subject in either Chinese or Japanese at the top. The portraits are sufficiently accurate that their subjects are readily identifiable, and they largely follow the conventions of portraiture for their time and place, making them, as Peter Burke has phrased it, a "symbolic form."[21] The sitter often commissioned the manner of presentation, including the poem, to make a statement about what was most important to him and how he wanted to be remembered. In some cases, his heirs passed out copies to students and fellow travelers. The copies functioned as sacred memorial images (*shinzō*), objects to be venerated that might serve as a source for inspiration. Three of Atsutane's scrolls were copies he had been given, and, in turn, Atsutane's disciples received copies of his portrait from Kanetane. As Timon Screech noted, portraits were to be treated with the same respect that would have been shown to their subject.[22] They were most frequently hung in an alcove behind a stand on which devotees placed poems, prayers, or flowers on important occasions.

20. Hirata Kanetane, *Kiyo sōhansho*, 383, 385, 386. See also McNally, *Proving the Way*, 170–71.

21. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 25.

22. Screech, *Obtaining Images*, 165, 174.

Arai Hakuseki

Hakuseki's portrait is the outlier in Atsutane's collection. It is not a copy made for distribution by his heirs, intellectual or otherwise. Instead, Atsutane commissioned it from a man who styled himself Kyūrin Keishin and had Itō Yūin inscribe Hakuseki's poem, written in Sino-Japanese. Translatable as "dormant [dragon] scales," Kyūrin is a pseudonym. Yūin also provided the calligraphy for the Sino-Japanese preface to *A New Essay on the Spirits* (*Kishin Shinron*), which Atsutane first completed in 1806.[23] While personal acquaintance may have brought Yūin to Atsutane, it appears that Atsutane's commercial relationship with Kyūrin did not extend beyond this one portrait. Neither man appears in biographical dictionaries, nor did they become Atsutane's disciples. How Atsutane found a portrait of Hakuseki to copy likewise remains a mystery. But this portrait was important to him because Hakuseki showed him a way to write about the spirits and Hakuseki was willing to entertain the notion that a native script attributable to the gods existed in Japan before the introduction of Chinese characters.

Hakuseki's portrait is in color. It depicts a relatively smooth-faced man with a heavy jowl and intense, intelligent eyes. He is dressed formally in an outer robe called a *suikan* (referring to a type of watered silk) that had a long history dating back to the everyday dress worn by the nobility at the Heian court, and its light brown color places him in the middle of the court ranking system. It is distinguished from other styles of court dress by a collar fastened with a cord tied in a large bow and two small chrysanthemum-shaped circles arranged vertically on his chest.[24] His cap, with a horizontal rather than a vertical tail, also marks his middling status in the shogun's bureaucracy.[25] The hilt of a sword sticks out behind him, and in his right hand he carries a white fan for use in ceremonies. Above him is the poem in Chinese that he wrote for his portrait.

The Japanese transliteration of the poem with my translation is as follows:

Sōgan tetsu no gotoku bin gin no gotoshi	A face iron gray with age—silver sideburns
shiseki ryōryō inazuma hito o iru	flashing eyes that pierce like lightning
goshaku no shōshin subete kore tan	for a small man of five feet, it is all a matter of pluck.

23. The text was revised in 1820, and this is the version published in 1865. The Ōzu-shi Toshokan has two copies with Itō Yūin's calligraphy dated 1806 in its Yano Harumichi collection, https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/286215/ (accessed October 21, 2024).

24. My thanks to Maki Nakai for this insight.

25. Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 191.

Fig. 2. Portrait of Arai Hakuseki, painted by Kyūrin Keishin with inscription by Itō Yūin (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

meiji nanzo mochiin kirin ni	During this era of peace, what can I do for
egakaruru o[26]	my likeness to be hung in the Hero's Hall?

The third line—size has nothing to do with valor—is well known and often appears by itself on calligraphic hangings. It reminds the viewer of Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a hero of small stature, and perhaps even the diminutive god Sukunabikona (see chap. 5). The last line refers to the western Han dynasty in China, when men who had rendered meritorious service to the emperor would be honored by having their portraits hung in the Kirin Pavilion beside the imperial palace. Hakuseki thus performs the customary gesture to his advancing years but turns immediately to what he saw as his obvious capacity for great deeds—his superior intelligence shining in his piercing gaze and his refusal to accept defeat. Alas, he was overqualified for, and perhaps underappreciated by, the age in which he lived.

Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725) had a checkered career before he landed a position as an adviser to the sixth shogun Ienobu. A Confucian scholar, Hakuseki asserted that the Tokugawa had earned the mandate of heaven to rule Japan, regardless of the emperor. Like Hayashi Razan, another Confucian scholar in residence to four shoguns, he even cast doubt on the imperial family's divine origins. Instead, the figures who populated the so-called age of the gods were highborn men (in Japanese, "above" and "gods" are homonyms), and the ancient histories—*Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki*) and *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*)—disclosed dynastic changes between different ruling lines. Nakai calls Hakuseki's approach "the most euhemerist interpretation of the [age of the gods] myths formulated prior to the Meiji period," while Isomae deems it rational.[27] It hardly seems likely that Atsutane would have approved of it.

On the other hand, Hakuseki was a Japan chauvinist, and in this regard he and Atsutane were kindred spirits. In Hakuseki's eyes, Japan was superior geographically to China in that, situated to the east, it was closer to where the earth began. Indeed, it was superior to all other nations, a sentiment with which Atsutane agreed. Like Korean Confucians following the Manchu conquest who saw their country as being more Confucian than China,

26. See Ikkai and Ikezawa, *Edo kanshisen* 2:100–102. My thanks to Matthew Fraleigh for this reference. For a dramatic reading of the poem, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4VjkwJAhSw (accessed October 7, 2020).

27. Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 236, 242, 243, 245; Isomae, *Japanese Mythology*, 84, 87. "Euhemerism" refers to the theory that what are now seen as myths about gods were originally stories about historical personages.

Hakuseki argued that Japan had done a better job of preserving China's ancient rites and ceremonies than had China itself.[28] Furthermore, Hakuseki broke with medieval allegorical approaches that interpreted Japan's ancient texts through the lens of Buddhist and Confucian morals and metaphysics and instead read them as histories of actual events. He also saw value in synthesis, in piecing together what he deemed the most plausible elements from different texts.[29] Hakuseki thus modeled an approach to scholarship that Atsutane later followed.

The Hirata family archive contains texts by Hakuseki that shed additional light on his appeal. *Thoughts on Japanese Military Equipment* (*Honcho gunki-kō*), published in 1736–37 in twelve volumes, and *Illustrations of Japanese Military Equipment* (*Honchō gunki-zushiki*), published in two volumes (1734, 1740), speak to Atsutane's and his descendants' passion for martial arts and weaponry.[30] Atsutane also pursued research into the history of the imperial court, and a good source for that was *Arai-Nonomiya Dialogue* (*Arai Nonomiya mondō*), the answers that Nonomiya Sadamoto (1669–1711) gave to questions posed by Hakuseki in 1710 concerning court practices.[31] Nonomiya discusses court ranks and clothing, legal matters, and sumo, which had begun as an entertainment for the gods performed in front of the emperor. In 1850, several years after Atsutane's death, Kanetane received a copy of a new year's greeting that Hakuseki had sent to the botanist and herbalist Inō Jakusui (1655–1715) describing how he had questioned the Dutch regarding Dutch flowers, flowering trees, and Western cherry blossoms.[32] Kanetane abhorred the Westerners' presence in Japan once they started arriving in numbers, but like Hakuseki, he was not averse to Western knowledge so long as it remained subordinate to the Japanese spirit.[33]

Evidence of Atsutane's affinity for Hakuseki can be found in a text Atsutane wrote in 1805, *A New Essay on the Spirits* (*Shinkishinron*, retitled *Kishin Shinron* the next year).[34] Why a "new essay"? Because Hakuseki had written his essay on the spirits (*Kishinron*) a century earlier. According to Hakuseki,

28. Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 303, 327–28.

29. Nakai, *Shogunal Politics*, 254; private communication, April 19, 2022.

30. Hanpon 157–1-157.10; Hanpon 158–1-158–2, HAKS.

31. Wasō 1–42, HAKS.

32. Shokan 15-1-19, HAKS.

33. In 1860 Kanetane participated in raising a monument to *wakon kansai* (Japanese spirit, foreign knowledge) at the Tenmangū in Dazaifu. Katō, *Wakon kansai setsu*, 70, 252.

34. See Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 442–43.

the term "spirits" (*kishin*) encompassed the heavenly spirits, earthly spirits, and human spirits—the souls of the dead.[35] Hakuseki's work was not published until 1800, but it had previously circulated in manuscript form.[36] When Atsutane composed his first draft, he had encountered Motoori Norinaga's teachings on Japan's ancient Way and the actuality of the spirits just two years earlier. This followed his first attempt at applying a Japan-centered approach to intellectual debate in his 1803 *Derision of Deceitful Writing* (*Waramōsho*), in which he criticized the early eighteenth-century thinker Dazai Shundai (1680–1747) for his Sinocentric view of the gods.[37] In *A New Essay*, Atsutane took on the entire Chinese tradition and its iteration in Japan.

I see *A New Essay* as a bridge between Atsutane's previous immersion in Chinese learning and what would become the theme of his scholarship going forward—the age of the gods and the gods' actions in the here and now—for which Hakuseki provided a model. Like Hakuseki, Atsutane began with Confucius, whom he saw as superior to all other Chinese philosophers. Alas, poor Confucius. In Atsutane's view, without access to the ancient Japanese histories, Confucius could never attain an understanding of who the gods were and what they were capable of doing. Nonetheless, Confucius's words and deeds reflected his appreciation for the spirits that arose from his pure heart, something that other Chinese people lack.[38]

Like Hakuseki, Atsutane then mined every Chinese text he could find that mentioned the spirits. These included the Four Books and Five Classics that constituted the core of Chinese learning, the Daoists from Laozi to Zhuangzi, the works of the Song dynasty neo-Confucians, and Ming scholars. He plundered dynastic histories as well as literary texts and collections of folktales and did not neglect Buddhist sources. *A New Essay* can be seen as an early opportunity for Atsutane to show off his erudition, but it was more than that. As Yoshida Asako points out, Atsutane valued the world's religious sensibilities, whether Confucian, Buddhist, or Christian, because they all attested to some sort of encounter with spirits, what Koyasu Nobukuni calls Atsutane's "pan-Shinto-ism." Iyanaga Nobumi sees him as the ultimate

35. Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 8.

36. Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 40.

37. For an analysis and summary of this text but with a different reading for the first character, see McNally, *Proving the Way*, 78–81. I follow the pronunciation provided by Nakagawa, "Hirata kokugaku to Kisarazu no Yatsurugi Ise," 2.

38. Asano, *Kishinron*, 153, 158, 220. Asano's annotations and translation of *Kishin Shinron* into modern Japanese can be found on 115–268.

universalist.[39] At the same time, Atsutane found that these systems of religious belief were all misguided in one way or another, in part because their proponents did not have access to Japanese sources, in part because all too often they were short-sighted and ignorant.

Atsutane took special umbrage at what he saw as the neo-Confucians' garbled logic. They questioned whether spirits existed, but they emphasized ancestral rites, and were these not predicated on human souls surviving after death? Furthermore, they restricted the rites to direct descendants, though only for a few generations before they dissipated, with highborn spirits enduring the longest. Zhu Xi argued that it was useless for adopted sons to worship ancestors or for outsiders to worship family gods, points with which Hakuseki agreed.[40] On the other hand, Zhu Xi supported the worship of Confucius in schools.[41] One of Zhu Xi's followers was Nam Hyoon (1454–92), a prominent figure in the political and literary history of Korea, whose essay on the gods was issued in Japan under the title *Kishinron* in 1643.[42] Nam posited an analogy between mothers as soil and fathers as seed: a father's line is thus considered ancestral; a mother's is not. Atsutane was shocked: "People who believe these words are sometimes so foolish as to neglect their mothers."[43]

Atsutane noted that despite doubting that the spirits of the dead lingered long, Zhu Xi believed in vengeful spirits. Spirits of the dead without descendants to worship them might cause trouble for the living, sometimes generations later. (For this reason the founders of Korea's Yi dynasty protected the sole survivor of the previous Wang dynasty qualified to perform the ancestral rites for their erstwhile enemies.[44]) Drawing on Hakuseki (whom he neglected to cite), Atsutane assumed that Zhu Xi was talking about people whose souls couldn't accept death, perhaps because they died on the battlefield, were executed as criminals, committed suicide, or resented being killed. Buddhist monks and Daoist ascetics who focused on nurturing their souls were also unlikely to have them dissipate upon death.[45]

According to Atsutane, actual practice contradicted Zhu Xi. In both China and Japan men were venerated after their deaths by people not their descendants. For example, the Chinese god of war was originally a general

39. Yoshida, *Hirata Atsutane*, 28; Koyasu, *Hirata Atsutane*, 169; Iyanaga, "<Nise—mikkyō / Shintō giki>," 237. Asano, *Kishinron*, 188–91, 194–95.
40. Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 7, 15–16.
41. Asano, *Kishinron*, 206.
42. Asano, *Kishinron*, 207.
43. Asano, *Kishinron*, 207–8.
44. Park, *A Genealogy of Dissent*.
45. Asano, *Kishinron*, 229–30; Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 22–23.

during the Three Kingdoms era (220–80 CE). Across Japan are shrines to the court noble Sugawara no Michizane where ordinary people pray for scholastic success.[46] And what about Amaterasu, the sun goddess? If one is not allowed to worship ancestors not one's own, is her shrine at Ise off-limits to all but her descendants in the imperial family? Atsutane admitted that in antiquity it was forbidden to make private offerings to her, but pilgrimages were never prohibited. In his day everyone understood that all living things received her blessings, and it was therefore appropriate for each house to respectfully offer her prayers in accordance with correct practice.[47]

Atsutane agreed with much about what Hakuseki had to say about how Chinese philosophers had misunderstood the spirits, but in the end, he saw Hakuseki too as being wrong. A century earlier, Hakuseki had begun his essay with the statement: "It is truly difficult to speak about the spirits . . . for how can one speak properly about spirits if one does not understand them?"[48] Atsutane quoted Hakuseki's query at the end of his essay, but he rejected Hakuseki's view of the spirits as being composed of *ki* (active force) that acted according to principle.[49] Instead, he tried to define their nature by using an analogy. It was best to see the spirits as having the pure, unsullied, guileless nature of children, but it would never do to infantilize them. Because they are innocent and trusting, they should be approached with an open heart, the original heart with which one is born. They bestow people with an innate propensity to believe in them and honor them, making worship both natural and crucial. Hakuseki argued that "the spirits of heaven and earth respond to rites because they have an affinity of hierarchical correspondence with the performer of the rite"—only emperors perform rites for heavenly and earthly spirits, only nobles perform rites for earthly spirits, and ordinary people are allowed rites for no more than the kitchen god.[50] Atsutane rejected this hierarchy. "Why would any god spurn worship by commoners if performed with a sincere heart?"[51] Because the spirits enjoy being entertained, people should hold festivals for them in their locality, whether the mountain god, rice goddess, or god of the sea, to soothe them and to ask for blessings. Spirits appreciate gifts. Making offerings is no more

46. Asano, *Kishinron*, 205–6, 226–34.

47. Asano, *Kishinron*, 198–201.

48. Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 1 (modified).

49. For a discussion of how Hakuseki departed from Confucius in discussing principle and spirit in *Kishinron*, see Kracht, *Studien zur Geschichte des denkens im Japan*. I am indebted to Mark Teeuwen for this citation.

50. Nakai, "Hakuseki on Spirits," 9, 14.

51. Asano, *Kishinron*, 204.

a bribe than is presenting a customary gift to a superior.[52] Sometimes the spirits respond to human pleas; sometimes they don't. Since people have no way to determine whether the spirits will grant requests, they must make them regardless of the consequences. In many ways the spirits are just like people, only, it would seem, more capricious.

It was one thing to perform rites to beg favors of the spirits, but wouldn't it be sacrilegious to make wood, stone, or metal objects to embody the spirits? No, in fact Atsutane favored icons. To deny their efficacy was a stupid argument made by ignorant people. Atsutane explained that the reason why objects respond to people's prayers is because the person offering the prayer has focused his mind and therefore the gods gather. Whether a stone or a piece of wood, if a person prays to it with all his heart, its divine spirit will become a true god. If no one prays to it, it returns to being an inert object. In both Japan and China, people have been known to achieve miraculous benefit from worshipping mundane things—such as a sardine's head or a heap of straw sandals. After all, even fish and sandals have spirits, just like the legless scarecrow who is in fact the god (Kuebiko) and knows everything that happens in the realm (see chap. 5).[53]

Atsutane called Norinaga his teacher, but unlike Norinaga, he believed that gods could have more than one attribute. Evil gods (*magakami*) who arose out of the pollution of *yomi* were sinister, ill-omened spirits, but except for them, the gods had many sides to their personalities, just like a fundamentally bad person might do good or a gentle person might explode in rage. Norinaga believed that Ōmagatsuhi no kami was the source of calamity and governed all the bad things that happen in this world.[54] Atsutane acknowledged that Ōmagatsuhi was a fierce god enraged by pollution and that his violence caused misfortune. However, when Ōmagatsuhi was not angry, he brought blessings. Ōnaobi was a beneficient deity who expelled and purified calamity and restored good fortune, but good gods occasionally did bad things. In sum, Atsutane posited that the gods are mercurial; it's therefore difficult for people to understand what makes them do what they do.[55] Or, to bring the argument back to Norinaga, why the gods do what they do is unknowable. People should respect and worship them but not question them.[56]

The world of the spirits envelops the human world, but the two worlds are not entirely congruent. The unseen world contains a vast and mysteri-

52. Asano, *Kishinron*, 178–81
53. Asano, *Kishinron*, 251–56.
54. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 190.
55. Asano, *Kishinron*, 159–60, 162; Yoshida, *Hirata Atsutane*, 36–37.
56. Asano, *Kishinron*, 174, 187–88.

ous energy beyond the power and ken of human beings. The spirits know what people do, to the extent that they care, but not the reverse. Humans have their norms and their logic of good and evil, but in the world of the spirits, morality is irrelevant. There is no way to know in advance whether the gods or the souls of the dead will bring blessings or curses. While living in the visible world, people must remain conscious of the world of the spirits that's everywhere around them and worship unseen forces with that understanding.

Atsutane weighed the evidence for and against the existence of the gods across a range of intellectual, even scientific, traditions to reach an a priori conclusion. Whether in China, Japan, or the Netherlands, there were heavenly gods, earthly spirits, and human souls. Not everyone was impressed by his arguments. His friend Ban Nobutomo wrote to Motoori Ōhira saying that *A New Essay* was worthless because it only tried to prove that even in ancient China people knew about the gods. It would give comfort to scholars of China without doing anything to spread the Way.[57]

Ban was proved wrong. Atsutane found men willing to write prefaces for *A New Essay* among his and Norinaga's disciples. He sent a copy to Ōhira in 1807, and an error-prone copy derived from it was circulated and reproduced. In 1820 Atsutane added additional material and made revisions. For the payment of a fee in the 1850s, Kanetane could arrange to have the revised version copied, but he refrained from publishing it because he feared that its attacks on the Confucian tradition would offend the Confucian scholars who staffed the shogunate's official school. Not until the shogunate was so beset by foreign demands for indemnities and by domestic criticism of the way it mismanaged foreign affairs that activists in the public sphere no longer feared its reach did Kanetane put *A New Essay* into print. What is remarkable is that the author of the postscript, Atsutane's posthumous disciple Kameyama Yoshiharu, a rural entrepreneur, wrote it while he was on the run with a band of rebel samurai from Mito. At age twenty-five, Kameyama was among those beheaded in Tsuruga in the second month of 1865. Even though the shogunate had executed Kameyama as a traitor, Kanetane issued 1,050 copies of *A New Essay* with Kameyama's postscript a month later, an additional 300 in 1867, and 250 in 1868.[58] Not bad for a treatise Atsutane wrote so early in his career.

Besides Hakuseki's essay on the spirits, Atsutane also praised his willingness to trace writing to the age of the gods. In *The Understanding of Ancient*

57. Koyasu, *Hirata Atsutane*, 166.
58. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 237–38, 411–13; Hanpon 3–8, HAKS.

History (*Koshitsū*), Hakuseki stated, "In very early antiquity, writing itself did not exist."[59] Yet shortly thereafter he wrote *Thoughts on Shared Forms of Writing* (*Dōbun tsūkō*), in which he entertained the possibility that script existed in Japan before the introduction of Chinese characters.[60] This made it easy for Atsutane to ignore the way that Hakuseki had interpreted the term *kami*, which can mean "highborn men" or "gods," and to assume that Hakuseki meant "gods" when in fact he did not. Eventually Atsutane stated categorically, "In recent times the first person to argue for writing in the age of the gods was Arai Hakuseki."[61]

In *An Account of Opening up the Subject* (*Kaidaiki*), written as an appendix to his earlier work that reconstructed ancient history, Atsutane summarized all the texts known to him that dealt with the age of the gods.[62] He retraced Hakuseki's steps in outlining previous scholars' positions, pointing out that in the 807 text, *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*, Inbe Hironari stated that every utterance from the age of the gods was handed down orally. The first person to argue the opposite was late thirteenth-century scholar-official Urabe Kanekata, from a branch of the diviner lineage descended from the god Ame no Koyane. Kanekata surveyed an array of old texts, some of which he claimed predated *Chronicles of Japan*, but he based his main contention on the divination rites recorded in the same canonical texts that Inbe used. If the creator gods Izanagi and Izanami performed divination using a deer's shoulder bone to find out why their first child was born deformed, they must have written something on the bone, and that something must have been divine script.[63]

Atsutane then followed Hakuseki in seeking contemporary evidence for traces of divine script and distinguishing it from Chinese characters, Hangul, and Sanskrit. In a letter to the painter and Confucian scholar Sakuma Dōgan that Atsutane cited, Hakuseki listed several places in Japan where the divine script might be found.[64] Atsutane also quoted Hakuseki as arguing that in the canonical texts *Chronicles of Japan* and *Record of Ancient Matters*, there are characters that look like Chinese but are not found in China. They too must be divine script.

The question then becomes, How did the Japanese syllabary evolve? In

59. Quoted in Isomae, *Japanese Mythology*, 87.

60. Ichijima, *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, 4:437. I owe profound gratitude to Kate Wildman Nakai for bringing this text and its place in Atsutane's writing to my attention.

61. Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, 4.

62. Hirata Atsutane, *Koshichō kaidaiki*. The preface is on 25–27.

63. *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, 4:437–39; *Kochichō kaidaiki*, 48–49, 53–54. The child was born deformed because the female god had spoken first.

64. *Arai Hakuseki zenshū*, 5:468; Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, 5.

his commentary on *Chronicles of Japan*, the fifteenth-century regent, scholar, and poet Ichijō Kaneyoshi asserted that the famous monk Kūkai (774–835), who established the esoteric school of Shingon Buddhism in Japan, derived the syllabary from Chinese characters, but Hakuseki rejected this hypothesis for lack of concrete evidence. He contended that Kūkai must have taken script that circulated in Japan even before his time and assigned phonetic values to it. Atsutane built on Hakuseki's circumspect suggestion that Kūkai took advantage of an ancient writing system to argue that Kūkai had revised the form used for grass writing in the Chinese style to fit the mode of divine script. Kūkai did so because he recognized that stiff Chinese characters did not fit the way Japanese people naturally expressed themselves through the fluid beauty of their cursive syllables.[65]

By Atsutane's day, various scripts had appeared that some people claimed were divine. Atsutane surveyed as many of these as he could, trying to decide which were the real deal. He urged shrine priests to ransack their storehouses for ancient scripts, and people sent him copies of what they had found. His trusted disciple and student of natural science Satō Nobuhiro brought him one text in both cursive and block writing. The block writing looked a lot like Hangul or maybe Sanskrit. He consulted his friend Gyōchi, a monk who was an expert on Sanskrit, and borrowed books on Hangul to learn for himself how it was written. Finally, he decided that not all script that looked like Hangul was Hangul. In any case, why did people assume that anything not Chinese had to be either Hangul or Sanskrit when there was another possibility?[66]

Atsutane took the argument for the existence of writing in Japan prior to the arrival of Chinese characters one step further in *Exegesis on Divine Letters in Japanese Script* (*Kanna hifumi den*). First, he summarized the debates between previous scholars that he had elucidated in *Opening up the Subject* and added new ones. Above all, he had to counter Norinaga, the man he called his teacher, and Kamo no Mabuchi, Norinaga's scholarly predecessor, both of whom had stated that there was no writing during the age of the gods. He also explained why, if divine script had once existed in Japan, it had since died out: new writing systems drive out old.[67] In the second half of *Exegesis on Divine Letters*, Atsutane and three of his disciples recorded the various scripts that Atsutane had decided were indeed handed down from the age of the gods. (For examples, see fig. 6, this chapter, and fig. 21, chap. 5.) In an appendix, the disciples laid out the scripts that Atsutane deemed fake.

Atsutane's work on the scripts handed down from the age of the gods res-

65. *Kaidaiki*, 60, 64; Kate Wildman Nakai, private communication, April 19, 2022.
66. Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, 3–4, 25.
67. Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, 10–11.

onated with his disciples. Six of them helped him with editing and revisions. *Exegesis on Divine Letters* acquired two prefaces, one from 1824 by Atsutane's patron Yashiro Hirokata, who claimed that thanks to *Divine Letters*, "the study of facts found in old transmissions will flourish for the sake of people with Japanese spirit and Chinese learning." The second was written by Iwasaki Nagayo, who joined Atsutane's school in 1839 and proselytized for it in the 1850s and 1860s. Iwasaki celebrated the burgeoning practice of using sacred characters written on flags placed reverently before the gods. "This is indeed a sign that we are returning to the beautiful age of the past [when] the most revered writing of the gods will become the world's foundation."[68] In 1852 a shrine priest in Mikawa, Hatano Takao, did the calligraphy for the festival flag at a nearby shrine, replacing what had been Sanskrit with divine script. He also wrote the name of the progenitor god of carpenters in divine script on a scroll for a family in the construction business that still displays it for a yearly ceremony.[69] In the late 1850s, Nobutane wrote to a supporter in Akita who had expressed concern about the foreign threat, urging him to study *Divine Letters* and sending him a portion of the text.[70] Still other scrolls and flags that remain in local museums and family storehouses speak to Iwasaki's belief that spreading the use of divine script would help bring about a return to the ancient days of imperial rule, a political goal to be achieved through faith.

Other scholars took claims for divine script even further. In 1857, an early disciple, Ōkuni Takamasa (1791–1871), proposed that these scripts constituted the origin of all writing systems from Chinese to Sanskrit to Dutch. As proof, he showed how they developed into the hexagrams in the ancient Chinese divination classic, the *I Ching*, and from there into Chinese characters.[71] In the late 1930s, the Christian scholar Sakai Katsutoki (1874–1940) announced that divine script was the original perfect language, traces of which could be found in Hebrew.[72]

We can't understand why Atsutane wanted Hakuseki's portrait without knowing about Atsutane's texts that owe him an intellectual debt; by the same token, the portrait's existence highlights Hakuseki's place in Atsutane's thought. Without the portrait, Hakuseki becomes just one of several eighteenth-century scholars whose work Atsutane cited, especially since Hakuseki is not usually associated with Japan studies. It thus points us toward Hakuseki's ideas that

68. Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, unpaginated preface.

69. Hatano, *Bakumatsu Mikawa-kuni kannushi nikki*, 246, 516.

70. Amano, *Bakumatsu no gakumon*, 73.

71. Ng, "The *I Ching* in the Shinto Thought of Tokugawa Japan," 581–82; Tahara, *Hirata Atsutane, Ban Nobutomo, Ōkuni Takamasa*, 488–90.

72. Yoshida Yui, "Hirata Atsutane to Sakai Katsutoki," 315.

Atsutane incorporated into his work and the topics with which both men engaged: the nature of spirits and the possibility of a divine script.

Establishing a Lineage: Atsutane's Forefathers on the Way of the Gods

If, as art historian Robert Singer states, "portraits of a master were often given to students and lay believers [in Edo Japan] as evidence of a bond between master and follower,"[73] it is telling that besides Arai Hakuseki's portrait, Atsutane collected only three. Some important seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars pursued the study of Japan's past, engaged in debates over the Way of the gods, and wrote poetry in the classical style of the Heian court.[74] Atsutane cited them to back up his arguments on a range of topics. Yet, when it came to positioning himself in a scholarly lineage, he chose to exclude the Buddhist monk Keichū (1640–1701), whose annotations of early poetry collections had started Norinaga on his scholarly journey. The Hirata family archive contains only a single miscellany of Keichū's writings, and Atsutane did not include Keichū in his prayers.[75] Instead, he placed himself as the successor to Kada no Azumamaro, Kamo no Mabuchi, and Motoori Norinaga. By excluding Keichū, he defined what became the dominant lineage in Japan studies, though not one that his teacher Norinaga would have recognized.

Pedigree was important to early modern scholars. Motoori Norinaga proclaimed his position as heir to the achievements of his predecessors in a portrait of himself with Kamo no Mabuchi and Keichū.[76] Having spent one memorable evening with Mabuchi, corresponded with him during the last years of Mabuchi's life, and registered as his disciple, Norinaga felt justified in claiming that as his teacher Mabuchi had approved his intent to study the *Record of Ancient Matters*.[77] Few of Norinaga's disciples followed him into this project, devoting themselves instead to classical poetry and prose. In his later years, Norinaga established rules for people wishing to join his school and kept a record of his disciples. After his death, people who wished to claim him as their teacher had to register with either Haruniwa or Ōhira.

73. Singer, "Old Worlds, New Visions," 237.

74. See Burns, *Before the Nation*, for men who went in idiosyncratic directions.

75. Wasō 1–69, HAKS. The archive also includes Keichū's *Waka Fuji hyakashū*, published in 1892. For the most thorough study of Keichū in English, see Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 49–67.

76. *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 127.

77. For an insightful analysis of the complicated relationship between Norinaga and Mabuchi, see Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 174–77.

In the years after Atsutane received Haruniwa's approval to claim a direct link to Norinaga, he developed a complex relationship with the Motoori brothers. When he published two of his major works on the age of the gods, *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* (*Koshiseibun*) and *Evidence for Ancient History* (*Koshichō*) in 1818, Atsutane sent copies to Haruniwa in Matsusaka and to Ōhira who had moved to Wakayama. Ōhira did not respond. Haruniwa sent him portraits of Kada no Azumamaro and Kamo no Mabuchi in 1820, implying that Atsutane was heir not only to Norinaga but also through him to Norinaga's predecessors in ancient studies. Atsutane revered the portraits and included the two men in his morning prayers, begging them to help him fulfill his scholarly aspirations.[78]

Kada no Azumamaro (1669–1736) came from a respected line of Shinto priests who served at the splendid Fushimi Inari shrine south of Kyoto. As the second son and thus ineligible to inherit his family's position, he was free to spend much of his life in Edo, where his scholarship and knowledge of legal matters made him useful to the eighth shogun Yoshimune. Like his near contemporary Arai Hakuseki, Azumamaro practiced empirical research, in his case an analysis of *Chronicles of Japan*. He was also noted for his philological work on the eighth-century poetry collection the *Man'yōshū*, written in Chinese characters, some used for meaning, others for the sound of syllables. The inscription for his portrait uses Chinese characters in just such a way.

Atsutane, Kanetane, and Nobutane each venerated the portrait by ceremoniously making his own copy of the poem inscribed above it. In the poem, Azumamaro charges that Japanese Confucians unconsciously promote Chinese studies rather than the study of their own country and implies that Confucianism is in fact heretical.

Fumi wake yo	Be discriminating in your studies
Yamato ni wa aranu	how can it be for the Way of a student
karatori no	to follow nothing but
ato wo miru nomi	a Chinese bird
hito no michi ka wa	that does not exist in Japan?[79]

Atsutane praised this poem for showing how a scholar should treat his disciples, without being boastful or condescending.[80]

78. Aramata and Maita, *Yomigaeru karisuma Hirata Atsutane*, 88; Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 139.

79. Jikumono 23-2, HAKS.

80. *Kokugakusha denki shūsei*, 1:282–83.

At the beginning of the last chapter of *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*, his exegesis on the prayers to be offered to the gods, Atsutane placed a prayer for the gods of scholarship, chief among them Azumamaro, Mabuchi, and Norinaga.[81] In the biographical assessment that followed, Atsutane lauded Azumamaro for being the first to devote himself to the task of clarifying the great cause of reviving the imperial Way by investigating the ancient histories, the first legal codes, ancient prose and poetry, and genealogies. Azumamaro even wrote a petition to the shogun proposing the establishment of a school for Japan studies.[82] (In 1870 Nobutane incorporated Azumamaro's proposal into a petition to the Meiji government for a Japan studies school.[83]) Alas, Atsutane exclaimed, poets pretending to study the ancient Way were as common as ants. They claimed a scholarly pedigree that skipped Azumamaro in favor of Keichū, even though Azumamaro had the greater impact on ancient studies.[84]

Next on Atsutane's list of the gods of scholarship was Kamo no Mabuchi (1697–1769). He studied with Azumamaro before setting up his own school that attracted many disciples. Mabuchi researched the classics, tried to revive the ancient Way, and sought to recapture the simple rhythms of ancient poetry by studying Japan's oldest extant poetry collection, the *Man'yōshū*, compiled in the late eighth century. He found a patron in Yoshimune's well-educated second son, Tayasu Munetake (1715–71), who appointed him to an official post as a scholar of Japan studies. In his later years, Mabuchi founded an academy in Edo where he wrote his most important treatises and taught pupils who later became important figures in promoting Japan studies, most devoting themselves to the Way of poetry.[85]

Like Azumamaro's portrait, the one for Kamo no Mabuchi is inscribed with a poem. The calligraphy is the same as that on the portrait for Azumamaro, as is the signature next to it. It's thus likely that Haruniwa commissioned multiple copies of these portraits for distribution to followers of the ancient Way. In *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*, Atsutane noted that Haruniwa and Ōhira had selected the poems to be placed above these portraits from the sitters' respective poetry collections.[86]

As they had for Azumamaro, Atsutane, Kanetane, and Nobutane each ceremoniously copied the poem on Mabuchi's portrait.

81. Muromatsu Iwao, *Hirata Atsutane zenshū*, vol. 4, Hirata Gakkai, 1912, 347.
82. *Kokugakusha denki shūsei*, 1:280–85.
83. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:85, 92, 96, 105.
84. *Kokugakusha denki shūsei*, 1:290.
85. *Tamadasuki*, 371–72.
86. *Tamadasuki*, 379.

Hida akumi	Like the straight wood in this pillar
homete tsukureru	shaped by the famous
maki hashira	carpenters from Hida
tateshi kokoro wa	my heart has made a pledge
ugokasarazaru (mashi)[87]	from which it cannot be moved.

In ancient times, the Hida carpenters in central Japan were so famous for their craftsmanship that they were summoned to the imperial court in Kyoto. Mabuchi is alluding to a pillar in the room where he held a poetry meeting in 1755 to render poems in a simple, classical style. At the same time, he is pledging never to deviate from his study of philology, ancient studies, and classical poetry.

Mabuchi was a more significant figure for Atsutane than was Azumamaro. Atsutane procured his works, especially those on topics that he pursued himself, for example, Mabuchi's edition of the first chapter in *Chronicles of Japan*, which deals with the age of the gods, and Mabuchi's commentary on liturgies from the Engi era.[88] Atsutane criticized scholars who devoted themselves to studying and composing according to the artifices of classical poetry, but he put Mabuchi's three commentaries on the *Man'yōshū* in a separate category.[89] Atsutane respected the Way of poetry, for it too was divinely inspired, and *Man'yōshū* had a deep connection to the ancient world. In his hagiography of Mabuchi, Atsutane asserted that by reading and pondering these poems, Mabuchi was able to gain insight into their ancient meaning, making his commentaries a foundational text. Norinaga famously declared that he wanted to meet Mabuchi after reading Mabuchi's commentary on epithets (*Kanji-kō*), the pillow words that beautify nouns in classical poetry, and Atsutane procured this commentary as well. Nonetheless, Atsutane argued that poetry was merely practice for Mabuchi, not his goal. According to Atsutane, Mabuchi lamented to Norinaga that he planned to study the *Man'yōshū* as a bridge to understanding ancient Japan and then to turn to prose, but alas, he was already too old to do so. Norinaga should rid his thought of Chinese impurities and study the *Record of Ancient Matters* to approach the truth of ancient times.[90] In his commentary on epithets, Mabuchi stated, "When the same subject is described in both *Record*

87. Jikumono 23–1, HAKS.
88. Wasō 3–18, HAKS; Hanpon 2–74, HAKS.
89. Wasō 3–8, Wasō 4-58-1-8, Hanpon 1–21, HAKS.
90. *Kokugakusha denki shūsei*, 1:385, 388–89.

of Ancient Matters and *Chronicles of Japan*, I use *Record of Ancient Matters*. It is the true book."[91]

Norinaga took these words to heart, and Atsutane followed his example. Norinaga is justifiably renowned for his commentary on *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kokijiden*), and Atsutane too valued its account of the gods, although he layered it with selections from other texts. Atsutane praised Mabuchi and Norinaga for being unparalleled throughout the world, but too many people saw them just as teachers of poetry or philologists. In Atsutane's opinion, that was like loving the leaves and branches of the cherry tree and overlooking its glorious blossoms.[92] Norinaga had written a biography of Mabuchi; Atsutane likewise believed that he owed it to his forefathers to incorporate their life histories into *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*. By reciting the prayers that he created in this text before the portraits of Azamamaro and Mabuchi that stood in for their spirits, he brought himself into their presence.

Atsutane was by no means the first of Norinaga's disciples to want his portrait for an icon. Norinaga painted several self-portraits, but he selected the one that he did in 1790 for his sixty-first year to be displayed on his death anniversaries. Yoshikawa Yoshinobu (1763–1837), a painter in Nagoya, copied the portrait two years later and had Norinaga inscribe a poem on it. Haruniwa then had an engraver make sixty-one copies for distribution to disciples.[93] Later it even became a commercial product.[94] In this way Norinaga's portrait circulated openly just as Norinaga had argued that Japan's classical texts and the scholarship devoted to them should not be hidden in secret traditions.

Like any disciple, Atsutane was expected to venerate the Norinaga portrait that he acquired from Haruniwa. It is a hanging scroll that depicts Norinaga as though floating in space. His hair is arranged in the scholarly style with unshaven pate and a neatly tied topknot. He is sitting in a relaxed cross-legged pose rather than formally on his knees, his hands in his sleeves, and he wears a plain tan kimono covered with a loose black coat. His clothing appears unremarkable, except for a fold at the back that discloses a colorful flowered lining. Above his head is his most famous poem, written in his characteristic delicate strokes using a fine brush and signed with his name. Although he selected it for this portrait, it does not appear elsewhere in his poetry collections.

91. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 157; Hanpon 2–114, HAKS.
92. *Kokugaku denki shūsei*, 1:392.
93. *Tamadasuki*, 379.
94. *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 76, 176–77.

Fig. 3. Motoori Norinaga's self-portrait at age sixty-one with inscription verifying his handwriting (1790). (Courtesy of the Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan.)

Shikishima no	If someone asks about
Yamato kokoro wo	the heart of Japan
hito towaba	found in Japanese poetry
asahi ni niou	It's the flower of the mountain cherry
yamazakura hana	fragrant in the morning sun.

In several of Norinaga's self-portraits, he is seated behind a low writing desk, his knees up against his chest with books and papers spread before him while he contemplates the mountain cherry, his favorite flower. When the Japanese government instituted a monopoly on the sale of cigarettes in 1904, it created four brands, from Shikishima, the most expensive, to Yamazakura, the cheapest.[95]

Unlike most disciples, Atsutane acquired not one but two portraits of Norinaga. In 1823 he traveled to Kyoto, where he gained the honor of presenting his most important texts to the emperor, the retired emperor, and the empress dowager.[96] He proudly reported this achievement to Ōhira in Wakayama, attributed his success to the Way laid out by his teacher, and asked Ōhira if they could meet on his way back to Edo. During their talks, Atsutane mentioned that he would like to see Norinaga's last portrait, one painted by Kamogawa Seitoku in 1801 for Norinaga's seventy-second birthday. Ōhira had two. Impressed with Atsutane's sincerity and dedication to the study of the ancient Way, Ōhira gave one of them to him. Norinaga's clothing resembles the previous portrait but with a more subdued lining as befits an elderly man. The face is wrinkled above a wizened neck, the hair still black but the hairline receding. Above a prominent nose, the eyes remain alert.[97] Overwhelmed with gratitude, Atsutane accepted the portrait for the sake of the Way and for the sake of scholarship.[98]

Unlike the portrait that Haruniwa distributed to disciples, the one that Atsutane received from Ōhira lacks an inscription, nor did copies of it circulate widely. Rather than serving as an object of veneration, the gift more likely conveyed Ōhira's approval for Atsutane's promotion of Japan studies, even if Ōhira didn't always agree with him.

The portraits received from the Motoori brothers led to changes in *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*. Within a year after his return to Edo, Atsutane revised

95. *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 144.
96. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 78–79.
97. Hirata Kanetane, *Kiyo sōhansho*, 432–33; *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 20, 141.
98. *Kiyo sōhansho*, 433.

Fig. 4. Portrait of Motoori Norinaga, age seventy-two, by Kamogawa Seitoku from Kyoto (1801). (Courtesy of the Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan.)

and corrected his previous exegesis on prayers, expanding the text from the original three chapters to nine. The prayer to be offered before the god of knowledge, Kuebiko, named Atsutane's three predecessors plus the ninth-century courtier and poet Sugawara no Michizane. In later years, Atsutane regretted that he never had the volume published. His disciples too urged Kanetane to bring it out. In 1859, Kanetane asked Hatano Takao and another disciple in Mikawa to correct the section on Mabuchi, especially the genealogy, which was full of mistakes. The work appeared in print that year.[99]

By acquiring portraits of his three predecessors, Atsutane both paid them homage and emphasized their importance for his scholarship. In naming them as the men whom he deemed to be his forefathers, he defined the lineage for the study of the ancient Way as he saw it. In some sense, the lineage was determined for him—once he claimed Norinaga as his teacher, he had to accept Norinaga's valuation of Mabuchi and through him Azumamaro. Unlike Norinaga, he rejected Keichū, perhaps because he was a Buddhist monk or perhaps because the study of classical verse dominated Keichū's oeuvre. The selection of the portraits tells us whom Atsutane venerated, his accounts of their lives tell us why, and the prayers that he offered tell us that he hoped their spirits would continue to foster and protect the Way of the gods.

Portraits of Atsutane

Once Atsutane died, he too became a forefather of the ancient Way, and his disciples venerated his portrait. Several other portraits exist, some as drafts, while others are no more than sketches. They all show him as a mature man, and copies of them were not disseminated.

The Hirata family preserved the sketches as private mementoes of their famous ancestor. One signed simply "Naitō" depicts a face in color against a lightly drawn kimono. Atsutane appears haggard, with sunken cheeks and deep lines from nose to mouth, his thin lips pursed together, giving him an expression both adamant and determined. Atsutane also drew a self-portrait. The head, dated 1840.4.22, is full face, in contrast to the characteristic three-quarters design favored by artists. Notable are his enormous ears and thick brows as well as his unshaven pate. The chief feature is his eyes, which chal-

99. *Tamadasuki*, 399; *Kokugaku denki shūsei*, 1:416.

lenge the viewer.[100] These drawings are lifelike, but they are too informal to suit the conventions of the time for veneration.

Kanetane had two full-body portraits of Atsutane mounted on hanging scrolls. The first shows Atsutane in a crested kimono. It is signed by someone who styled himself Chūkei from a scholarly rice paddy in Kyoto (Gakuden Heian Chūkei), possibly a samurai retainer with time on his hands and a way with the brush. The Hirata family crest on the black jacket over a brown kimono is a twisted ten (十). In *Divine Letters of the Japanese Script*, Atsutane found profound significance in how this character means that above and below, left and right, are equal in expressing the will of the gods.[101] The samurai status to which he aspired is indicated by the way he sits formally on his knees, the blue pleated trousers, and the sword laid by his side. Thinning hair is neatly tied, and he looks freshly shaven. Clasped hands and tight lips make him appear stern and perhaps thoughtful. His daughter thought that this portrait most closely captured her father's demeanor.[102] Unlike the portraits of his predecessors, it originally had no inscription.[103] I argue below that inscription turns images of an individual into sacred portraits. By omitting them from those he kept, Kanetane may have meant to use them as models for paintings for distribution, or he may have felt that since they were family portraits, they needed nothing more to become objects of worship.

The second portrait of Atsutane shows him looking to the left. Here he is more ceremoniously dressed in a *suikan*, the same type of dress worn by Hakuseki. This *suikan* is dark green with flowing sleeves, two chrysanthemum-like elements arranged vertically on the chest, wide pleated pants over a dark blue kimono, and a white underkimono. On his head is a lacquered silk hat tied around his chin. In his right hand he holds a ceremonial fan; a sword is stuck into his belt to the left. As he proudly pointed out in his application for a position presented to the Akita domain in 1841, he had received a license from the Shirakawa head of worship at the imperial court to wear these garments when lecturing at noble houses or worshipping the spirits of his scholarly ancestors.[104] Large ears being a sign of wisdom, his are particularly prominent. His chin and nose are smaller than in the formal

100. Sasshi 189, 194, HAKS. For reproductions, see Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata Kokugaku*, 6, 12.

101. Hirata Atsutane, *Kanna hifumi den*, 17.

102. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 15.

103. Maita and Aramata, *Hirata Atsutane*, 58; Jikumono 37, HAKS.

104. Akita ken Komonjokan 7.237, "Hirata Daikaku go meshitate no setsu kakiage no kiroku."

Fig. 5. Portrait of Hirata Atsutane in crested kimono, copied by Gakuden Heian Chūkei (no date). (Held at Hirata shrine.)

Fig. 6. Hirata Atsutane's crest. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

Fig. 7. Portrait of Hirata Atsutane in green court robes and cap (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

portrait, his mouth fuller. In short, this portrait appears more staged and less lifelike.[105] Like the other full-length portrait, it too lacks an inscription.

Why did Kanetane commission these portraits of Atsutane without poems? We know that he disseminated copies to disciples. In 1850, for example, Misawa Akira, who joined the school in 1840 with an introduction by Ōhira, asked Kanetane to send him a portrait, either in formal or ceremo-

105. Maita and Aramatsu, *Hirata Atsutane*, 8. Jikumono 5, HAKS.

nial wear; he would be happy with either.[106] In the first letter that Kanetane wrote to the Tsugaru domain disciple Tsuruya Ariyo in 1856, he stated: "It is most proper that you also conduct worship for his deceased spirit, using a portrait."[107] The Fushimi Inari shrine in Kyoto has a portrait of Atsutane in formal wear; the Waseda University library has one in ceremonial garb signed by Watanabe Kinzō using the pen name "Tōsui."[108] Both of the latter portraits have the same poem by him for their inscription. In the late nineteenth century, Atsutane's great-grandson inscribed the one at Fushimi shrine; Watanabe Ikarimaro, a samurai from Nakatsu domain in Kyushu who joined the school in 1867, did the same for the one in the Waseda collection.

Kumo to nari	Whether it turns cloudy
aruwa ame to mo	or I get drenched
furishikite	with rain,
kamiyo no michi ni	still, I will devote myself
mi wo ya tsukusamu	to the Way in the age of the gods.

Although not great poetry, the poem expresses Atsutane's central idea about himself. He draws on an expression in Japanese that emphasizes changeability in the weather and implies that things can easily vanish. Atsutane is thus contrasting the instability all around him and the evanescence of existence with the one constant in his life—his determination to live according to the ancient Way of the gods.

Writing an inscription on a portrait was a way for the subject of the portrait to gain a voice, to speak to his followers. Anyone who acquired a portrait from the Hirata family could thus add the appropriate poem. That would give it sacred value, and then, when it became an object of worship, it achieved magical power. By interpreting the addition of a poem in this way, portraits can be compared to Buddhist statues, which come alive when their eyes are opened.[109]

Today when publishers issue books on men who lived before the age of photography, they reproduce portraits of the kind described above. The inscriptions are omitted because they are difficult to read, and poetry conveys less meaning than it did in the past. Portraits become detached from

106. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:179.

107. Fujiwara, *From Country to Nation*, 100.

108. *21 seiki no Motoori Norinaga*, 139; https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/nu06/nu06_05121, accessed November 18, 2020.

109. See, for example, Sharf, "Visualization and Mandala," 189.

their context, the interplay between image and text disappears, and the significance of scholarly lineage fades from view. At the same time, it is worth remembering that the purpose of a book cover or illustration is different from that of a hanging scroll meant to be displayed for a study group meeting or a memorial service. Unlike the paintings of Atsutane that his descendants prepared for worthy disciples, they lack magic. In Atsutane's case, the portraits that he acquired show how he chose the scholars whom he deemed worthy of being his predecessors. He built on what he got from Hakuseki and Norinaga throughout his career, making his thought not only complex and eclectic but a continuous work in progress.

CHAPTER 3

Collaborators and *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*

The most productive period in Atsutane's life came in 1811, thanks to help from his disciples. Learning that Atsutane had much to say but little time to write, the merchant Shibazaki Naokichi, who had just joined his school, invited him to his home in Sunpu (now Shizuoka city) west of Edo, where he could work free from distractions. Shibazaki also sponsored Shinjō Michio as a disciple, and Shinjō described what happened next. For twenty-five days at the end of the year, Atsutane wrote continuously, taking only brief naps except for one break when he slept for a day and a half. He claimed that a god and two spirits helped him: Yagokoro omoikane, who figured out how to lure the sun goddess from her cave and thus was seen as the god who promoted thoughtful consideration; Inbe no Hironari, a specialist in ritual whose 807 text gave a different account of some key events during the age of the gods than were found in the canonical *Record of Ancient Matters* (712) and *Chronicles of Japan* (720); and Sugawara no Michizane, the court noble who died in exile in 903, returned as a vengeful spirit to punish his enemies, and became the patron of scholarship. Whenever Atsutane reached an impasse, he would put down his brush, pray to them, and receive enlightenment. He worked as one possessed until he heard temple bells toll at midnight on New Year's Eve. At dawn, he purified himself and greeted the six new disciples whom Shibazaki had recruited. His face beaming, he told them that with divine help, he had fulfilled a vow to the gods.[1]

During his stay in Sunpu, Atsutane drafted three major essays that became

1. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 156–58; Hirata Atsutane, *Koshichō kaidaiki*, 28–32.

the bedrock of his teaching. The first two, *Doubts Regarding Ancient Histories* (*Koshi wakumon*), later titled *Evidence for Ancient History* (*Koshichō*), and *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* (*Koshiseibun*) analyzed and compared Atsutane's preferred sources on the age of the gods, weaving a path between their contradictions, to tease out what he deemed to be a valid history, for he held that the sources were not myths but testimony to events that had actually occurred. His most significant essay, one that took this history and related it to questions concerning life, death, and cosmology, was *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* (*Tama no mihashira*).

Intellectual historians have pored over *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, some seeking a modern, universal message of salvation, others analyzing its narrative structure. My aim is more concrete—to highlight both Atsutane's dialogue with his predecessors, which displayed his erudition, and his desire to offer reassurance regarding death to people who might not have the education to follow his scholarly exegesis. Although he developed a highly original, if not idiosyncratic, explanation for what it means to be Japanese and where the soul goes after death, he grounded it in ancient histories that collectively shed light on the creation of the cosmos and juxtaposed his ideas with Motoori Norinaga's magnum opus, *Exegesis of a Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojikiden*), and its appendix, "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms" (*Sandaikō*) by Hattori Nakatsune. Atsutane quoted liberally from these sources, not to mention his own work, with and without attribution, so much so that it is easy to accuse him of plagiarism. But to his way of thinking, citing sources that agreed with him or pointing out their errors demonstrated the validity of his ideas. In this sense, he aimed at interacting with his predecessors as well as his contemporaries, a conversation with the living and the dead.

Atsutane attributed his success in writing *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* to the will of the gods, but it and his other works would never have achieved renown without the help of his collaborators. They joined his school as disciples, they introduced others to his work, they penned prefaces and postscripts to his writings, they wrote their own treatises that took his ideas into new fields, and they became his friends. They placed him at the center of an enormous network, stretching from members of the imperial court and shogunate to villagers. Some offered prestige; others provided intellectual stimulation, financial support, or help with mundane chores. Who they were, what he did for them, and what they did for him as they worked together through knotty issues of textual exegesis and finance provide the subtext for understanding how and why *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* mattered.

The Sacred Pillar of the Soul

Atsutane centered *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* on the diagrams he found in Hattori Nakatsune's "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms," but he went beyond Nakatsune in his range of sources. Nakatsune had relied chiefly on Norinaga's *Exegesis* supplemented by direct observation. Atsutane drew from multiple texts, but his and Nakatsune's goals were the same. Both men explained and clarified how what could be seen with the eye—heaven, earth, and the moon—came into being, how the Japanese people became who they were, what the meaning of life was, and what happens after death. In addition, Atsutane criticized Chinese and Indian religious thought, and he cited Western theology and science, notably the fact that the earth revolves around the sun, a concept introduced into Japan in 1798.[2] This heliocentric view of the universe provided excellent evidence for centering the sun goddess Amaterasu, the progenitor of the imperial line. Although he sought to define a sense of Japanese identity and argued for Japan's superiority to all other countries, he was not xenophobic. While he feared Western imperialism, his attitude toward Western culture was one of curiosity.

Like scholars and religious figures before him, Atsutane wanted to answer the question of what happens to the soul after we die.[3] Does it simply fade away, does it go through an endless cycle of reincarnation, or does it end up in heaven or hell? From Atsutane's perspective, all these foreign theories, whether Chinese or Indian, were wrong because they lacked a basis in Japan's ancient texts that had been handed down from the age of the gods and recorded in the eighth century. The problem was that Japan's ancient texts sometimes contradicted each other, and they could be interpreted in more than one way. Instead, as Harootunian noted, Atsutane developed a method that allowed him to select concepts from whichever text made the most sense to him in order to ascertain the principle that underlay them all.[4] By using a different method, what Peter Nosco calls a "fundamentalist approach" to the study of a single text, *Record of Ancient Matters*, Norinaga determined that everyone after she or he dies rots away in *yomi*, a dark, filthy,

2. Hirata Atsutane, *Tama no mihashira*, 15. Page numbers in the text refer to this source.

3. McNally discusses *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* in the context of Atsutane's relations with the Norinaga school in *Proving the Way*, 116–24.

4. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 145–47.

place.[5] Atsutane found this notion abhorrent. How could people strengthen their identity as Japanese and know the true Way if they believed that was where they would end up?

Atsutane took a three-pronged approach to countering Norinaga's conclusion. First, he modified the set of ten diagrams that illustrated everything from the origin of the universe to the division of heaven, earth, and *yomi* that Nakatsune had produced in "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms" to argue that it was physically impossible for souls to get from earth to *yomi*. Second, he challenged Norinaga's reading of *Record of Ancient Matters* in the light of other texts to argue that sometimes Norinaga was simply wrong. Third, he took Norinaga's deeds and poems as evidence that Norinaga didn't really believe he would go to *yomi*. Atsutane never succeeded in convincing Norinaga's heir or his disciples who had already rejected Nakatsune's thesis that *yomi* was in the moon, not under the earth, but he had great success with newcomers to the study of antiquity.[6]

Illustrating the creation of heaven, earth, and *yomi* with diagrams was crucial for Atsutane's cosmology because they gave him a concrete way to visualize how these elements of the universe came into being, how the relationship between them changed, and how these changes resulted in *yomi*'s separation from earth. Diagram 1 shows a circle with three gods, the god at the center of the universe and the two generative gods.[7] In the next, a blob appears. The blob then takes on the form of a gourd and is joined by two new gods. In diagram 4, the top of the blob swells to contain the five gods residing in what is now labeled heaven, the middle swells and is labeled earth, and there is a dark protuberance at the bottom labeled *yomi*. As these entities take form, more gods appear. Atsutane sometimes disagreed with Nakatsune on who they were or how they were related, though he agreed with him that the final pair consisted of Izanagi (male) and Izanami (female), the first gods to have sex.

Izanagi and Izanami

As the original procreative deities, Izanagi and Izanami modeled and made possible human life with its joys and sorrows. But they first had to find

5. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, 215–16.

6. For a discussion on how Motoori Ōhira struggled with Norinaga's praise for "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms," see Nakamura Kazuki, "Motoori Ōhira no ketsudan."

7. Hattori Nakatsune, "Sandaikō."

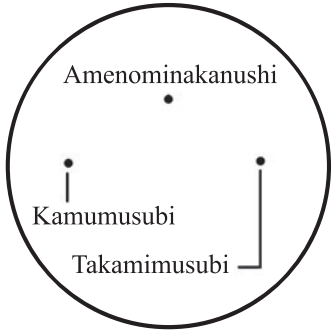


Diagram 1

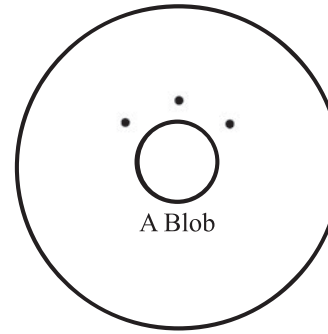


Diagram 2

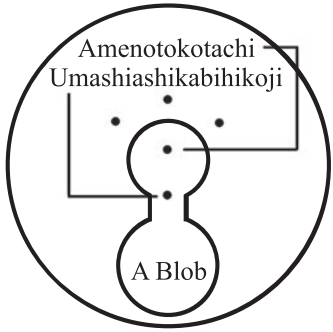


Diagram 3

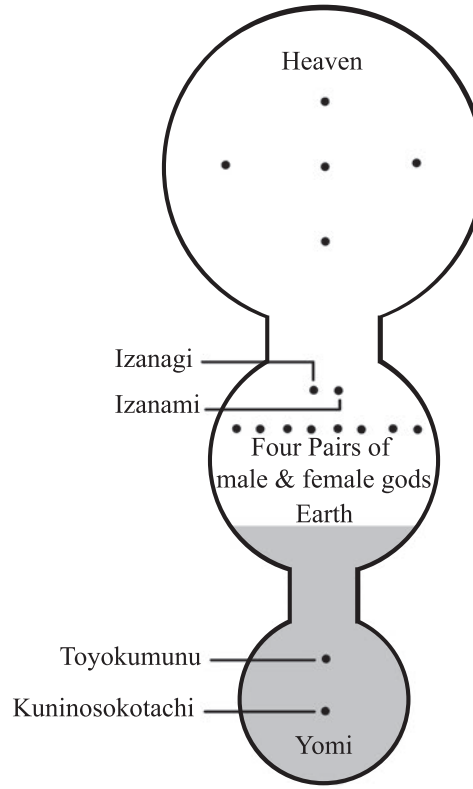


Diagram 4

Fig. 8. Diagrams 1–4 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawings by Brenna Phelan.)

solid ground, for when they looked down on earth, they saw none. The crucial instrument in resolving their dilemma was a sacred spear that they had received from the generative gods. They used it to stir up the ocean below, and when a drop from the spear hardened into an island, they descended to it. There they erected the spear as the pillar for the country and built a palace with the spear at its center. As Atsutane pointed out, it manifested and symbolized the exalted spiritual power that produced all things. It ordered the world and fixed the earth. Without it, neither Japan as a whole nor the small world of the household could begin or function, and thus the sacred pillar became the central axis for individuals in living their lives from day to day while receiving blessings from the gods. It was also how Japanese people could access the mysterious power of the gods.[8]

Atsutane took issue with Nakatsune over where Izanagi and Izanami stood to create land, with implications for how easily the gods could travel between heaven and earth. In diagram 5, Atsutane showed that heaven had separated from earth, and he argued that the two gods stood on the floating bridge of heaven (p. 27). Nakatsune's diagram 5 shows heaven and earth still connected by what looks like a ladder by which the gods descended and by which they could ascend, as Izanagi later does (p. 259). Both men agreed that the two gods went down to this land where they had sex and Izanami gave birth to the eight major islands of Japan (not including Hokkaido). The fact that other countries were not likewise created by the sexual intercourse of the gods proves that Japan is honored and beautiful whereas foreign countries are base and bad. To demonstrate that foreigners, too, recognized this, Atsutane quoted the German physician Engelbert Kaempfer (in Japan 1690–92), who praised Japan for its salubrious climate and fine people (p. 33).[9]

The stakes rose when Izanami gave birth to the fire god. According to Norinaga's reading of *Record of Ancient Matters*, the fire god so burned her that she died and went to *yomi*. Izanagi sought her there, only to turn away in horror at her putrefying body. In diagram 6, Nakatsune tried to figure out the path that Izanagi took; it must have been straight through the center of the earth (p. 261). Atsutane argued that Izanami hid herself for seven days and gave birth to the metal gods, the earth gods, and the water gods from vomit and feces, but she did not die. In contrast to Norinaga, Atsutane thought that both canonical histories were wrong on this point. Instead, he preferred the liturgy (*norito*) for the pacification of fire, seeing it as having been handed down undistorted from the age of the gods, and interpreted

8. This interpretation comes from Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 57–62.
9. For an English translation, see Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan*.

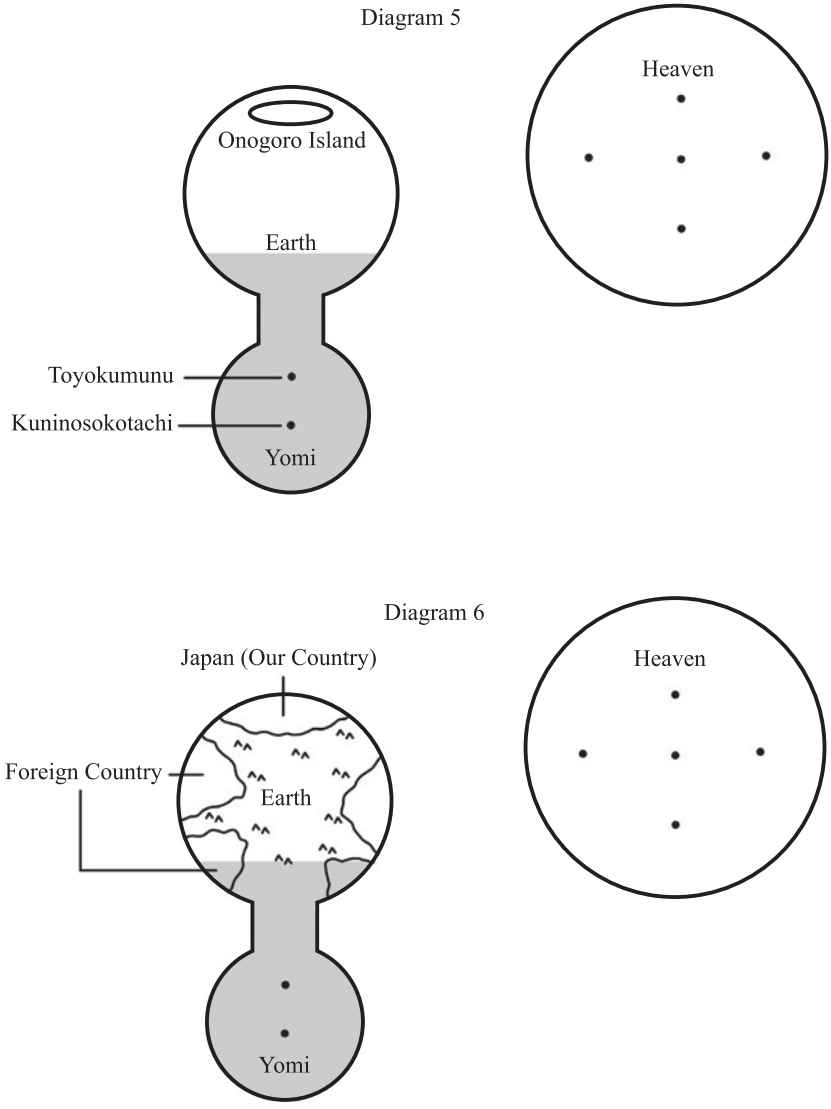


Fig. 9. Diagrams 5 and 6 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawings by Brenna Phelan.)

it to mean that she was so embarrassed at her changed appearance that she hid herself.[10] For additional proof Atsutane cited one of the texts he had just completed, *Evidence for Ancient History* (p. 37). If Izanami didn't die and go to *yomi*, then it could not be expected that ordinary people would either.

According to Yoshida Masaki, by basing his account on an ancient liturgy, Atsutane was able to interpret Izanami's actions as showing love for this last child plus love for her husband by not letting him see her suffer. To keep her suffering to herself, she had to separate from her husband in carrying out the sacred charge of giving birth.[11] In other words, Atsutane's awe at Izanami's willingness to bear the extraordinary pain of birthing fire can be read as his appreciation of the virtue of female suffering that underpins the mystery of life from a male perspective. In terms of the overall message conveyed by *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, by rejecting the idea that Izanagi had to die to go to *yomi*, Atsutane also affirmed the possibility of an afterlife.

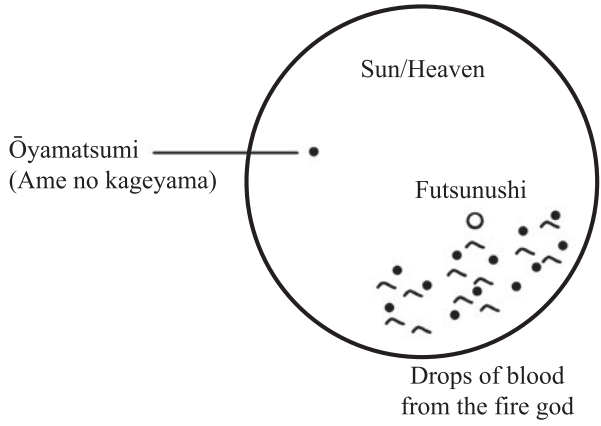
With diagram 7, Nakatsune and Atsutane parted ways. Nakatsune described how Izanagi purified himself after escaping from *yomi*. He abbreviated the account of how Izanagi produced the sun goddess Amaterasu from his left eye and her brother Susano-o from his right, and he placed the sun goddess in heaven along with her father. In contrast, Atsutane's diagram 7 deals with the problem of evil and Izanami as the agent responsible for fire. The gods' hatred of pollution is the chief reason for evil, and the primary source of pollution is *yomi*. Not until diagram 8 does Atsutane place Amaterasu as the sun goddess in heaven, where she resides with the gentle purification gods Kamu naobi and Ōnaobi, her father, and the original generative gods, all one extended family (pp. 50–53).

The Obverse of Heaven: Susano-o, Ōkuninushi, and the Afterlife

Nakatsune's diagram 8 and Atsutane's diagram 9 focus on two important gods, Susano-o and his son Ōkuninushi. Susano-o is a troublemaker who resents his sister Amaterasu's higher position. He ends up with Izanami and several other gods in *yomi*, which Nakatsune and Atsutane both declare will become the moon. In the final diagram 10 (p. 71), the moon splits off from earth, it loses its blackness, and Susano-o receives a new name, Tsukiyomi, one that combines the character for moon with two characters, "night" and

10. For the importance of *norito* to Atsutane, see Yamashita Hideo, "*Koshiden* no jindaizō," 26–27.

11. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 188–89.



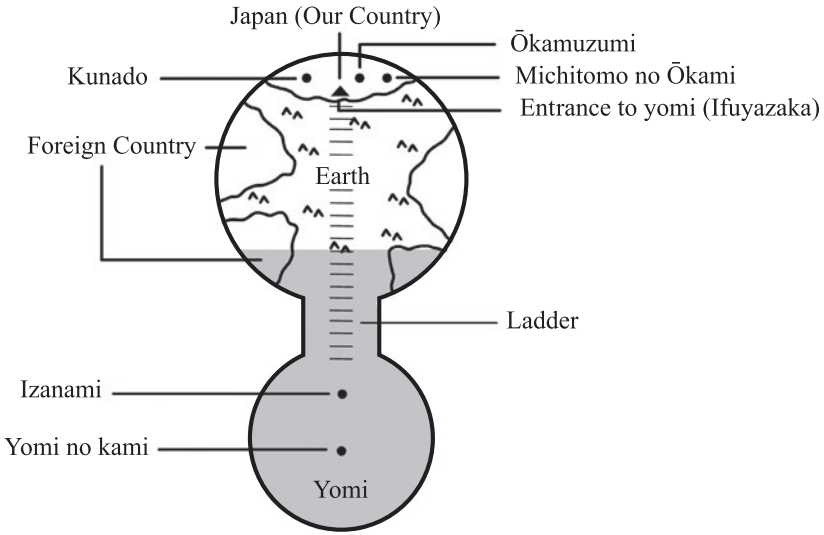


Fig. 10. Diagram 7 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

"see," for "*yomi*"—"the moon seen at night." Atsutane thus used some creative etymology to associate *yomi* with the moon, and in so doing he provided more evidence for his main argument that people's spirits don't go to *yomi* after they die. He went on to argue: "Think about it. It is mysterious and miraculous that Amaterasu is a female god who resides with Izanagi and governs the sun in heaven while Susano-o is a male god who resides with

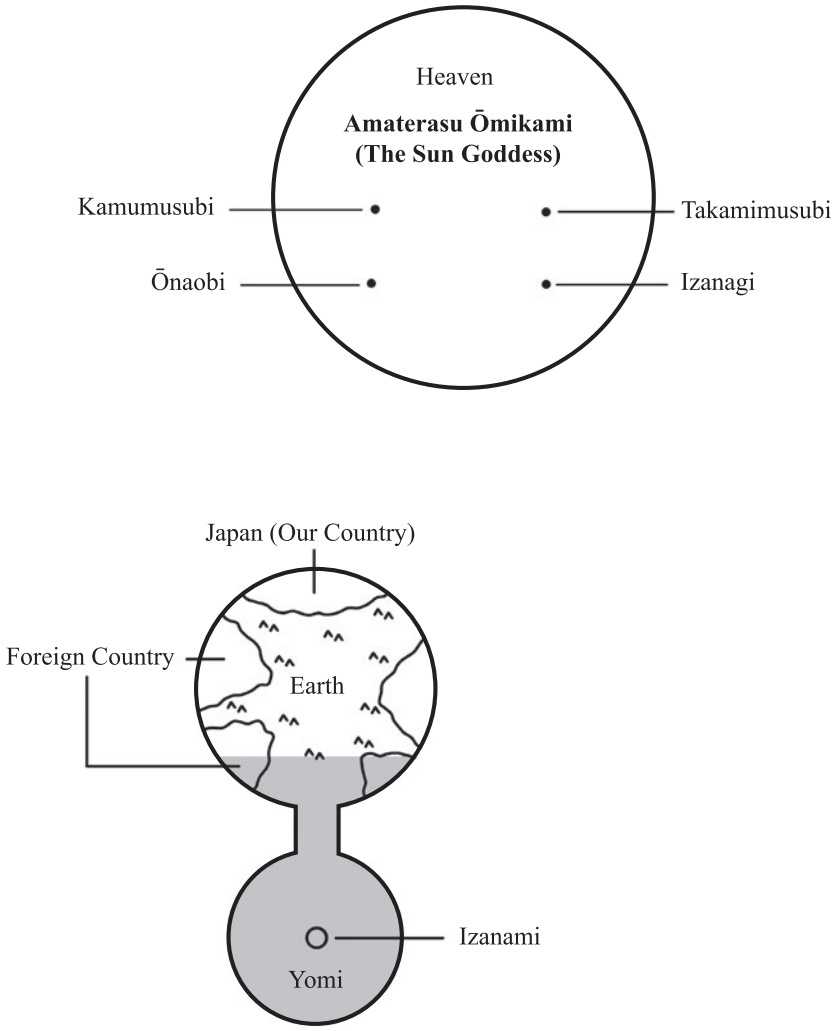


Fig. 11. Diagram 8 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

Izanami and governs the moon" (p. 57). Atsutane agreed with Norinaga that in the case of the children born between Amaterasu and her brother, she acts like her father and he acts like his mother—a sex change or perhaps an example of what today we would call gender fluidity. Specifying that Izanami was Susano-o's mother was first proposed by a scholar named Tanigawa Kotosuga (1709–76) and picked up by Norinaga (p. 73).[12] To build an

12. For Kotosuga as a philologist, see Burns, *Before the Nation*, 63–66.

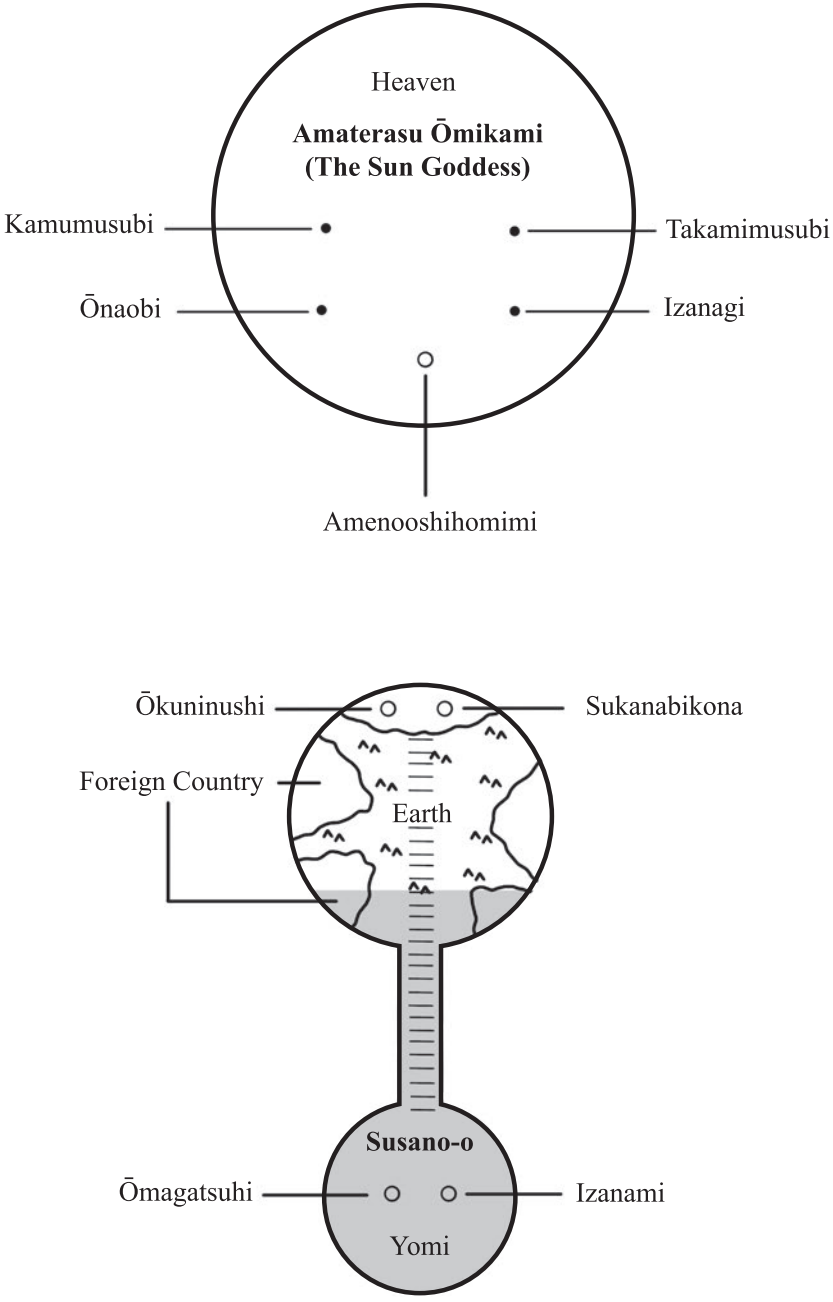


Fig. 12. Diagram 9 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

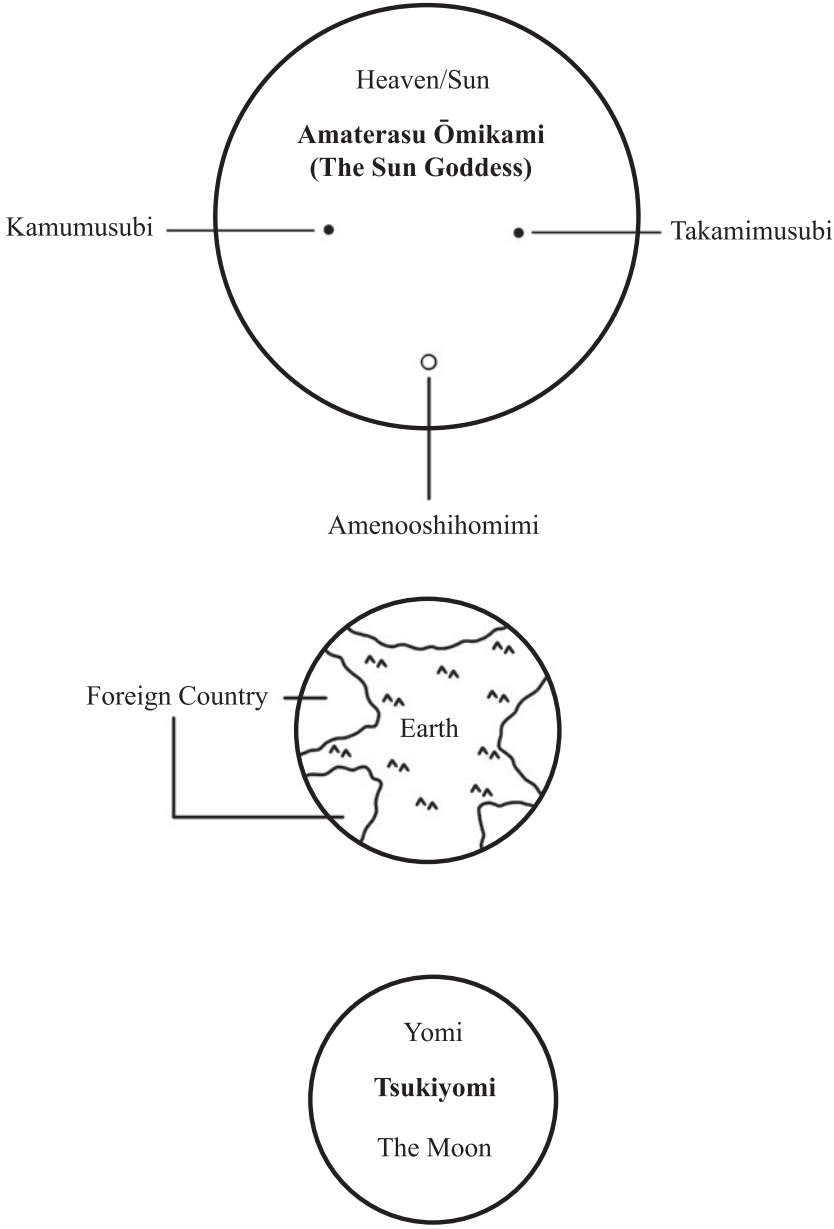


Fig. 13. Diagram 10 from *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

argument for the location of *yomi*, Atsutane had to figure out where to place the gods in the cosmos. To prove his point, he demonstrated how he had sifted through a variety of contradictory texts to understand where the gods came from, what they did, and what this meant for humankind.

Ōkuninushi turned out to be the most problematic in the pantheon of gods. At first, he ruled the earth. But then Amaterasu decided that she wanted her descendants to take over Ōkuninushi's dominion. Because she was a heavenly god and he was a mere earth god, he had to agree. The new ruler handled visible matters; Ōkuninushi became invisible and governed the unseen world. Zhong calls their relationship mutually constitutive and dynamic. It later led to dispute over which was more important for ordinary people (see chap. 7 and the epilogue).[13] Both Nakatsune's diagram 9 and Atsutane's diagram 10 show separate spheres for heaven, earth, and moon, but whereas Nakatsune put Ōkuninushi on the moon in accordance with Norinaga's declaration that he resided in *yomi* with his father, Atsutane rejected this possibility (pp. 71, 75, 265). Instead, he had Ōkuninushi take up residence at the great shrine at Izumo along with his wife. "While people are alive in this world, they pertain to the emperor; when they die, their spirit returns to the unseen world where they pertain to Ōkuninushi. From there they can bring blessings to their parents and children just as Ōkuninushi brings blessings to the world" (pp. 76, 108–9).

Toward the end of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane challenges Norinaga again by arguing that Norinaga contradicted himself regarding where the soul goes after death. Atsutane took this step to justify his vision of the afterlife. Part of Norinaga's problem, in Atsutane's view, was that Norinaga had relied too much on texts that were infected with Buddhist ideas such as poems from the *Man'yōshū*, the *Tale of Genji*, and the *Tale of Flowering Fortunes* (*Eiga monogatari*). Based on this evidence, Norinaga stated: "People and gods, good and bad, all go to *yomi* when they die" (p. 99). But, Atsutane asked, if Norinaga had been so sure that he would end up in *yomi*, why did he select a grave for himself on a nearby mountain? Norinaga even wrote a poem celebrating his choice:

Yamamuro ni	Making my home
chitose no haru no	at Yamamuro
yado shimete	for all the springs of eternity
kaze ni shirarenu	I will gaze at cherry blossoms
hana wo koso mime	untouched by wind

13. Zhong, *The Origin of Modern Shinto in Japan*, 16.

The way Atsutane read this poem, it speaks to Norinaga's understanding that his spirit would reside at Yamamuro. "How could his pure spirit fragrant in the morning sun go to filthy *yomi*?" (p. 120) And how could Atsutane have met Norinaga in a dream if Norinaga had been trapped in *yomi*?[14]

Atsutane had remarkable plans for his afterlife and that of his wife. First, he proclaimed that he had decided where his spirit would go after he died:

Nakigara wa	No matter
izuko no tsuchi ni	the soil
narinutomo	that holds my corpse,
tama wa okina no	my spirit will go
moto ni yukanamu	to where my teacher is (p. 121)

He knew he was unlikely to be buried near Norinaga's grave. Nonetheless, he was determined to join Norinaga in death, and his wife would come with him. He admitted that mentioning his wife in a text meant for the public was unheard of, but before she died, she had supported him in his studies of the ancient Way. He planned to serve Norinaga and study poetry under his tutelage. He would help Norinaga with spring planting and take pleasure in his company while enjoying the changing of the seasons. Should enemies from foreign lands approach Japan, Atsutane would beg a temporary leave of Norinaga, arm himself with spear, bow, and sword, and join the army of the gods. Once the enemy had been defeated, he would rejoin his teacher (pp. 121–22).

The Sacred Pillar of the Soul is a long text that can be mined for various perspectives on Atsutane's thought. It sheds light on how he accessed foreign sources to buttress his argument in ways that his predecessors in Japan studies had not. He read the story of Noah's ark and the flood as testimony to Japan's superiority, with no such disaster having been recorded in Japan's ancient histories (p. 93). Izanami and Izanagi had given birth to earth, water, fire, and wind as the building blocks of life. For evidence that these elements were universally recognized, Atsutane noted that a philosopher in the West (Aristotle) too had so identified them. Death comes with the split between body and soul, the body decaying into its constituents of water and earth while death freed the soul made of fire and wind to fly off and disappear. Alas, poor Aristotle had erred in explaining the elements' origin because he did not have access to Japan's ancient histories (p. 40).[15] Not all things

14. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 232.
15. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 193.

Western were inferior. Atsutane gave the measurements for the circumferences of the sun, moon, and earth as well as the distances separating them by using calculations made with Western instruments (p. 71). Historian Muraoka Tsunetsugu early identified elements of Christianity in Atsutane's thought; Jason Ānanda Josephson emphasizes his scientific interests.[16] In fact, he appropriated whatever Western ideas suited his purpose.

The Sacred Pillar of the Soul foreshadows themes found in Atsutane's subsequent work. He noted that much of Buddhism came from earlier Brahman ideas regarding reincarnation, and he traced a brief history of Sakyamuni, drawing from a work he completed around the same time, *A Mocking Discourse upon Emerging from Meditation* (*Shutsujō shōgo*) (pp. 114–15). Despite Atsutane's habitual invective against Buddhism and its proponents in Japan, Micah Auerback calls him the first critical biographer of the Buddha and the most important. Atsutane expanded his textual critique of the Buddha and Buddhism in *Compendium of Indian Records* (*Indo zōshi*), composed in 1826 but never finished.[17] Another text that he had already begun but likewise never completed was *Exegesis on Ancient History* (*Koshiden*), a massive commentary on the narrative in *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History*, and it also went into the arguments that he put forth in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. Praise for an idealized agrarian way of life constituted another theme (p. 145), and it provided the seed for later work by him and his disciple Miyaoi Yasuo. Atsutane also made claims in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* that he proved only later, for example: "In this world there are people who die and many days later return to life" (p. 108). The story of Katsugorō tells of a man who did just that.[18]

Atsutane's efforts to see into the hidden realm have captured the gaze of modern historians who sometimes mock him for his naivete. Because he wrote on encounters with spirits in the 1820s, they detect a shift in his scholarship from his earlier textual exegesis to a stab at ethnology. I do not deny that he pursued traces of the gods and spirits wherever he could find them, but I follow the lead of Yoshida Asako, who argues that he initiated a two-pronged approach, one that combined both text-based knowledge and local lore. Atsutane continued research into ancient history throughout his career, and he encouraged his disciples to do likewise.

In *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane admitted that he was ambitious, but it was the Way of people to make their accomplishments known to the

16. Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 29, 216; Josephson, *The Invention of Religion*, 111–12.

17. Auerback, *A Storied Sage*, 119–64.

18. See Hirata Atsutane, "Katsugorō saisei kibun."

world (p. 121). What gave meaning to life was to strengthen and expand one's spirit in accordance with the Way of the gods, the spirit that was a gift from the gods. As a scholar, Atsutane was determined to do this through acquiring and disseminating knowledge. But as heir to Japan's military tradition, he never lost the thirst to prove himself through military valor, even if it meant waiting until after he had died. As we see in chapter 6, he sometimes equated the Way of the gods with the Way of the military.

Hattori Nakatsune: Bridge to the Past

Without the visual aid provided by the diagrams taken from "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms," there would have been no *Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, a fact recognized by both Atsutane and Nakatsune.[19] Nakatsune's interest in Japanese history rather than poetry distinguished him from Norinaga's other disciples but, according to his own account, endeared him to his teacher. Raised in Matsusaka, where he served as senior staff officer to the domain governor, Nakatsune studied at the feet of the master. Following the deaths of his wife and Norinaga and in failing health, Nakatsune retired in 1808, shaved his head, and moved to Kyoto. There he met Atsutane some fifteen years later and proclaimed him the worthiest successor to Norinaga's research into the ancient Way.

In a series of letters that Nakatsune wrote to Ōhira from Kyoto in 1823, he sang Atsutane's praises beginning with their first meeting:

> We started debating matters concerning the great Way, and his eloquence was like the flow of a waterfall. His powers of perception and the breadth of his abilities surpass those of most men. Truly I have neither heard nor seen anyone like him since our teacher died. Your disciples plus those of Haruniwa's total over 500 men, but not one of them is Atsutane's equal.[20]

Many disciples disagreed with Nakatsune, and they let Ōhira know it. The dispute revolved around who was worthy of calling himself Norinaga's successor, the cosmologically minded Nakatsune and Atsutane versus Kido Chidate and his fellow poets. Ōhira saved the letters from Nakatsune and

19. Nakatsune's diagrams can be found in Bentley, *An Anthology of Kokugaku Scholars*, 454–60.

20. Hirata Kanetane, "Kiyo sōhansho," 366.

his opponents, had them copied, and sent them to his disciples with his replies. Atsutane and Kanetane, who got them in a roundabout way through Hatano Takao in Mikawa, decided that they reflected more favorably on Atsutane than on his critics and published them in a pamphlet in 1834, a few months after Ōhira's death. In his letters, Nakatsune crowed that Atsutane, by getting his works presented at court, had done something his enemies could not. He poured scorn on men who believed that as disciples of Norinaga they should stick to the study of classical poetry, calling their treatises on poetry no better than farting in water. Atsutane and Kanetane accused them of having the faces of humans with the hearts of beasts.[21]

At the end of the pamphlet, Kanetane appended a long liturgy written by Nakatsune for Norinaga's twenty-third memorial service on 1823.9.29. Nakatsune personally introduced Atsutane to Norinaga's deified spirit, and the two pledged sworn brotherhood.[22] McNally sees this liturgy as vindicating Atsutane's claim to "sole, orthodox succession."[23] It contains a précis of who said what to whom when Atsutane arrived in Kyoto and of the dirty tricks played by Nakatsune's rivals during Atsutane's visit. Nakatsune prayed, "May the angry spirit of our deified great teacher punish these degenerates." Once the god of the wind has blown away the insect children who swarm like buzzing flies, "Atsutane's scholarship will ever more protect the legitimate line of our great teacher's ancient studies. . . . Please aid and guide us as we rely on your blessings." Nakatsune died on 1824.3.14, having used the prayer to promote his vision of Japan studies, praise Atsutane, and demonize his enemies.

The Collaborators on *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*

In the years before Atsutane met Nakatsune in 1823, he relied on collaborators to help him refine and disseminate *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. As was the custom for writers of his time and later, Atsutane had others write prefaces and postscripts. Since *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* was the first manuscript that he put into print, it necessarily became a group effort.

No writer sent his ideas out naked into the world, and Atsutane was no exception. Even when a text remained in manuscript, he always wrapped it in citations from his predecessors before ensconcing it between prefaces and

21. Hirata Kanetane, "Kiyo sōhansho," 361–64; 421–28.
22. Hirata Kanetane, "Kiyo sōhansho," 454–72; quotations are on 470.
23. McNally, *Proving the Way*, 167.

postscripts written by people who could vouch for its quality. For *A New Essay on the Spirits*, for example, he had two of Norinaga's disciples write prefaces. In the first, written in Sino-Japanese, an instructor in the Owari domain school named Suzuki Akira described how he met Atsutane on a trip to Edo and they took to visiting back and forth as though they had known each other for years, finding themselves in complete harmony regarding the relations between gods and men. When Atsutane sent a copy of *A New Essay* to Akira, asking him for a preface, Akira was happy to oblige. The second preface, written in literary Japanese, was by Fujii Takanao, the chief priest of the ancient Kibitsu shrine in western Japan.[24] It related how, when Takanao had visited Edo, Atsutane came to his lodgings to meet him because they both studied in the same school. Atsutane sincerely mourned the death of their teacher, and Takanao admired the profundity of his scholarship. Takanao put service to the gods above all else, but compared to Atsutane, he was embarrassed at his shallow understanding and angry with himself for not having listened to everything Atsutane had to say.[25] Both Akira and Takanao were higher in status and older than Atsutane. They never became his disciples, but they attested to the value of his work and enjoyed his hospitality.

The men from whom Atsutane solicited prefaces for *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* held even loftier positions. The first preface, written in literary Japanese with classical flourishes, was by Tsutsumi Asakaze (1765–1834), a provisioner for the shogunate. He had already written a preface for one of Atsutane's earlier texts, allowed Atsutane to use his library, sometimes provided financial support, and stayed in Atsutane's network to his death. His preface makes clear that he had a strong interest in the unseen world.[26] Furthermore, the basis for all study had to be the great age of the gods and their miraculous power. Alas, even though Mabuchi and Norinaga had shown the way, all too many of their disciples instead immersed themselves in the enjoyment of poetry and classical literature. It was fortunate, he observed, that scholars in Mito were compiling texts worth reading (a monumental history of Japan), and now his older brother in scholarship had written *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, which should be read over and over for its insight into what could not be seen with the eye. "This remarkable and painstaking work will delight the spirits of the myriad gods and bring solace to people." Reading the text so moved Tsutsumi that he burst into poetry:

24. For a sketch of Takanao's intellectual interests, see McNally, *Proving the Way*, 60–63.

25. Asano, *Kishinron*, 103–8.

26. Nakagawa, *Hirata Atsutane*, 120–21.

Ame no shita	In our realm
Taira no asozo	how diligently indeed
Isoshikumo	has a descendant of the Taira
Tama no mihashira	strengthened
tsukikatamekeru	the sacred pillar of the soul

Atsutane claimed descent from the Taira, the storied military family descended in turn from the Kanmu emperor (737–806). Tsutsumi tied Atsutane's work on the unseen world to the imperial court, and in the last line of his preface, he stated that in faraway Edo, he too served the court.[27] He thus reminded the reader that while he functioned officially as one of the shogun's retainers, like every loyal subject in Japan, he had a duty to serve the emperor—the august descendant of the sun goddess.

The court noble Tominokōji Sadanao (1761–1837) contributed the second preface.[28] He was one of the key people promoting ancient studies at court and later wrote a preface to *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History*. He also helped Atsutane get his essays presented to the imperial family when Atsutane went to Kyoto in 1823. It is unclear how or when Atsutane developed a connection with Tominokōji, although it was probably through the emperor's adopted son Shunnin (1789–1843), who had been sent to Edo in 1809 to serve as imperial abbot at Rinnōji, the temple that supervised Tokugawa Ieyasu's mausoleum at Nikkō. Tominokōji wrote in the *man'yō* style, an archaic form of Japanese popular at the time in which Chinese characters can be used for their sound (phonetic value) instead of their meaning. He repeated many phrases, making his preface sound like an incantation. To summarize his argument: the Way of our great empire has existed for all time in heaven and earth, but, alas, people in western Japan had not made much progress in their understanding. Now a man from eastern Japan, Hirata Atsutane, has written a work, *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, that explains with the help of diagrams how heaven, earth, and *yomi* separated and where the soul goes after death. Without giving in to plagiarism or self-interest, he has discarded the theories of predecessors that needed to be discarded. From the capital to the outer reaches of the earth, people who pursue ancient studies

27. Hirata Atsutane, *Tama no mihashira*, 90–91.

28. According to the database for the Nishio city Iwase archive, its copy of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* with Tominokōji's preface is dated 1813. https://trc-adeac.trc.co.jp/WJ11F0/WJJS07U/2321315100/2321315100100010/mp00515300/?Word=%e3%81%9f%e3%81%be%e3%81%ae%e3%81%bf%e3%81%af%e3%81%97%e3%82%89, accessed January 24, 2021.

should keep this text with them always to strengthen their Japanese spirit.[29] Tominokōji thus validated Atsutane's arguments and bestowed on them the imprimatur of the imperial court.

For postscripts to his manuscripts, Atsutane looked to his disciples. For *A New Essay*, written in 1806, his fourth disciple, Suzuki Noritsune, from the domain with which Atsutane was then affiliated, talked about himself. Having been born a samurai, he had devoted himself to the Way of the sword all his life and was embarrassed to admit that he had avoided the literary arts. He was now old, and his teacher Hirata had asked him to make a copy of this text, thus forcing him to study it in depth. For the first time, he was enlightened about the awesome mysterious majesty of the spirits, and he felt as though he had awakened from a dream. Henceforth, he wanted to do what he could to propagate his teacher's ancient Way despite his lack of skill compared to other scholars. While doing his best to make the copy, he was so moved that he burst into tears.[30]

For the postscript to *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane chose a more recent addition to his school. This was Ōno Hironori, a samurai from a domain in Hitachi who had joined in 1811 at the instigation of an Edo shrine priest. In his postscript, Ōno stated that Atsutane had asked him to edit a rough draft of the manuscript, and in so doing, Ōno had achieved a deeper understanding of what Atsutane meant to say than he would have acquired by simply reading it. Nakagawa Kazuaki thinks there is a strong possibility that Ōno added something of his own to the text.[31] At first Ōno had declined the task because he lacked confidence in his abilities, but Atsutane encouraged him to make the effort: "I know your hand is clumsy, but you have heart. Give it a try and write the best you can."[32]

Atsutane relied on collaborators not only for prefaces and postscripts but also for funds to publish his work. In contrast to most of his works that circulated in manuscript, sometimes for decades after he had composed them, *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* meant so much to him that he wanted to get it printed as soon as it was finished. To do so cost money, which he didn't have. At the end of 1812, he wrote to Natsume Mikamaro (1773–1822), one of Norinaga's disciples, lamenting that twenty pages remained to be carved, plus the prefaces and postscript, but he was stuck because he couldn't cover the costs. He wanted to distribute the work as widely as possible, and he could think of nothing else. "I know that I'll eventually receive the blessings

29. Hirata Atsutane, *Tama no mihashira*, 91–92.
30. Asano, *Kishinron*, 293–94.
31. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*, 137.
32. Hirata Atsutane, *Tama no mihashira*, 190–91.

of the gods, but this one matter distresses me to no end."[33] He raised money from twenty men, some disciples, many not. This was self-publishing: professional artisans made the books, but Atsutane and his supporters negotiated each step in the process, including distribution and sales.[34] *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* became one of the Hirata school's bestsellers, selling over ten thousand copies between its first printing in 1813 and 1875.[35]

Atsutane knew from the outset that *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* would prove difficult for people with scant background in textual exegesis. Unlike texts that appeared as lectures written in a conversational style, such as *Great Meaning of the Imperial Way* (*Kōdō taiʼi*), *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* contained long, dense, and repetitious citations that attested to his erudition. Mitsumatsu Makoto argues that Atsutane had two contradictory goals. One was to offer consolation to people's spirits by promising they would not go to filthy *yomi*; the other was to insert himself into the scholarly lineage that ran from Norinaga through Nakatsune to bring him renown in rarified intellectual circles. Atsutane later started a manuscript that aimed at walking readers through *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, but he gave it up. Instead, one of his early and most enthusiastic disciples, a shrine priest living in Edo named Uchino Tsunemasa, took over the task, writing "Change of Lodgings for the Spirit" (*Tama no yadogoe*). To get his message across, Uchino supplemented the text with pictures and humorous verse. Atsutane wrote a postscript praising it, and Kanetane too encouraged beginners to study it.[36] In 1856, the disciple Misawa Akira produced a version of *The Sacred Pillar* that incorporated pictures of a tutelary god guiding departed spirits to the lord of the other world who comes to greet them riding on a cloud. It looks just like prints of Amida Buddha that show him welcoming souls to the Pure Land.[37]

From start to finish, Atsutane developed the ideas that went into *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* through collaboration with others. He usually acknowledged his debt to his predecessors, and he rewarded his collaborators with opportunities to see their names in print, to achieve the honor of becoming publicly associated with his texts. Their work in helping to prepare the manuscript suggests that they also had an impact on its content. They affirmed what they believed text and diagrams to prove: the souls of the dead ended up in a hidden parallel universe; they could not and would not go to *yomi*.

33. Nakagawa, *Hirata Atsutane*, 122.
34. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 152.
35. Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata kokugaku*, 39.
36. Mitsumatsu, "Gakusha to kōshakushi no aida."
37. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Atsutane shuyō sakuhin kaidai," 72.

Tending Disciples

Toward the end of his life when Atsutane applied to Akita domain to be taken on as a full-fledged retainer with stipend, he listed his achievements, enumerated the great and powerful who had befriended him, and boasted about the number of his disciples. "I have several hundred disciples who've paid fees and over two thousand followers. Ever since I received gifts from Norinaga's descendants, the number of followers has continued to increase. Now I have followers of followers, and I have no idea how many there are. There is not one province without them."[38]

Just as Norinaga and other scholars had done, Atsutane and Kanetane kept track of the many men and few women who joined their school. Beginning in 1804 with three men from Matsuyama domain, the same domain with which Atsutane was then affiliated, they wrote down the names of people who paid a small fee and took an oath to become his pupils. The ledgers list individuals by the date they joined, their status (domain retainer, shrine priest, etc.) and address, their names (sometimes indicating from which ancient noble family they claimed descent), their signatures, their age, occasionally their death date, and often the person who introduced them. Another ledger annotated by the Meiji period enthusiast Inoue Yorikuni (1839–1914) shows to which of Atsutane's works each contributed, either financially or otherwise.[39] The ledgers testify to how the school spread from samurai in Atsutane's immediate neighborhood to shrine priests to townsmen to the rural elite and from the provinces adjacent to Edo to those to the north and west. By the time Kanetane closed its doors in 1876, a total of 4,398 had joined the school, making it the largest nongovernmental organization in Japan aside from the major Buddhist sects.[40]

When would-be disciples took the oath to join the school, they wrote it out in the archaic *man'yō* style. Their goal was to pursue study into the ancient Way, and by following Japanese word order, the *man'yō* style felt closer to the age of the gods than the stilted Sino-Japanese:

> I earnestly appeal to receive the teacher's guidance on the ancient Way of our great Empire. Therefore, I am putting my name to the registry, and I will accept his teachings and abide by the Way. In accordance with the instructions that I receive from now on, I will

38. Hirata Atsutane, "Hirata Daikaku o-meshitate no setsu kakiage no kiroku," Akita ken Komonjokan 7.237.

39. *Ibukinoya monjinchō*.

40. For a breakdown by province, see Ichimura, *Ina sonnō shisōshi*, 187–92.

> study diligently, learn the Way of the gods, not break the law, do nothing disagreeable to my teacher, or think heretical thoughts. If I betray this vow, may the awesome heavenly and earthly gods see it and punish me.[41]

People who signed oaths in this period commonly called on the gods to punish wrong actions and evil thoughts. Equally noteworthy is the promise to obey secular authority. Scholars have debated the extent to which Atsutane's ideas regarding equal access to the unseen world—everyone, no matter what their status, ends up there after death—challenged the hierarchical status quo, but so far as he was concerned, the status system was not to be questioned.

Just as major artists have established studios where students learn by filling in background or popular historians hire research assistants to provide copy, so too did Atsutane turn to disciples to collaborate on his works. As we have seen, they edited texts, they wrote prefaces and postscripts, and they made clean copies of manuscripts. In a letter to Ban Nobutomo written in 1815, Atsutane praised Ōno Hironori:

> My explanation of lineage names is based on reports selected from ancient history with the intent of tracing the lineage of the gods and showing how the names are derived. A young man named Ōno Hironori has been my righthand man in this, and he is the one who is carrying out the plan. The disciples can do this because it is based on the ancient histories. Since I'm able to get the young men to help out, my mind is at ease, and I can afford to be a little lazy. I think that for me to read as many books as I can and complete as many great works as I can in the time I have left, I need to find a means of producing good disciples and have them finish whatever I leave behind, and that will be in accordance with the ancient Way.[42]

Ōno once said that he was glad to be of help because he learned a lot. He and other disciples may have seen editing as an opportunity to advance their study of Atsutane's teachings. Yoshida Asako emphasizes how statements by both disciples and Atsutane indicate that the Hirata school was not a place where students passively listened to Atsutane's lectures and read his books. Instead, they put scholarship into practice.[43]

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41. *Ibukinoya monjinchō*, 14.
42. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 163.
43. Yoshida Asako, *Chi no kyōmei*, 164, 171.

At the end of each treatise that Atsutane completed, he advertised his other works and works by his disciples.[44] In 1834, Ikuta Yorozu from Tatebayashi domain north of Edo and Kawachi Moriyuki from Kaga domain on the Japan Sea compiled a catalog of Atsutane's works with a preface by Yorozu and a postscript by Moriyuki.[45] Four years later, Moriyuki, along with a retainer from Yamagata domain in northeastern Japan, prepared another catalog. The two wrote a brief postscript explaining that Atsutane had written over one hundred treatises, but some were not yet finished, and others were not to be shown outside the school. At the end they attached a list of his disciples' writings, but only those that he had approved or commissioned. The subjects ranged from biography to divination, astronomy, geography, history, the description of an 1829 fire in Edo, interactions with Atsutane, a defense of "Thoughts on the Three Great Realms," attacks on Atsutane's enemies, and a plethora of texts on agronomy.[46] Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion of Miyaoi Yasuo's 1828 one-page broadsheet on how to select plants based on what he had determined to be their sex, whether male or female, female seeds being the more fecund.[47] In the list of bestsellers compiled by Kanetane, it ranked third, even ahead of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. These disciples, including Miyaoi, had also helped Atsutane with his essays, editing them, completing them, or preparing clean copies.

Of the fifteen men on the list of disciples' writings, eight were domain retainers, a number disproportionate to the percentage of samurai in the population (6 percent) or to their percentage in the Hirata school. (Two others were Edo residents, three were from towns or villages, and two were shrine priests.) Samurai tended to have better access to higher learning than commoners; they also had more free time, being underemployed with a small but regular salary. Collaborating with Atsutane also gave them opportunities for unsanctioned informal interactions with men from other domains.

One such samurai was Kawachi Moriyuki. On 1834.7.23 at the age of twenty-two, he appeared at the Hirata house for the first time and promptly became a disciple. Before he went back to his domain eight months later, he found the time to pay the school thirty-seven visits. He came to Edo almost every year thereafter for similarly extended stays. He attended the meetings

44. "Nyūgaku mondō," https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100238991/viewer/30, accessed February 1, 2021.

45. Sōkō 3-2-8; Wasō 3–22, HAKS.

46. "Catalog of disciples' works" (Monjin chosho rui), https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100238991/viewer/43, accessed February 1, 2021.

47. For a translation and analysis of this text, *Somoku senjuroku*, see Robertson, "Sexy Rice," 242–45.

that Atsutane held approximately three times a month, but he also showed up on other days as well. At some point he borrowed 3 gold *ryō*, a significant sum, which he repaid after Atsutane's death in 1843. Atsutane liked Moriyuki and relied on him to make clean copies of his manuscripts.[48] In an 1870 letter, Kanetane later praised Moriyuki for his enthusiasm. He never made a mistake in writing characters, nor did he ever omit one, a desirable trait in a scribe.[49] Early in 1845 Moriyuki was back in Edo when Kanetane paid him a sick call. He died ten days later at age thirty-three.[50] His work as Atsutane's amanuensis had brought him friendship, a degree of renown, and perhaps a welcome meaning to his life.

Moriyuki's collaborator in preparing the 1834 catalog of Atsutane's work was Ikuta Yorozu, whose inability to keep away from politics later posed a threat to the Hirata enterprise.[51] In 1824 he joined the school through the mail. Thereafter he corresponded regularly with Atsutane, borrowed his texts, stayed with the Hirata family on his trips to Edo, and entertained Kanetane when he visited Tatebayashi. At Atsutane's instigation, he wrote *Ancient Studies in Two Thousand Phrases* (*Kogaku nisenbun*), which explained everything from the beginning of heaven and earth to the age of the gods, human history down to the seventeenth century, the rise of ancient studies, Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and divination, plus military, medical, and legal matters, all in a manner suitable for children.[52] This text too became one of the Hirata house's bestsellers. A prolific writer, Yorozu expanded on Atsutane's ideas regarding the unseen world and studied divination. He also emphasized the primacy of agriculture because it recapitulated the work of the creator gods and offered a means to repay the gods for their bounty. He especially revered the god of agriculture, Toyouke no kami, who resided in the outer shrine at Ise. In 1828, he proposed a reform of domain policies that included taking samurai out of the castle town and settling them on the land.[53] He was not the only would-be reformer to think that samurai would be better employed were they to be sent down to the countryside, and his was not the only plan to be rejected by the urban bureaucrats the samurai had become. Having been exiled for his proposal, Yorozu landed with

48. *Ibukinoya monjinchō*, 272.

49. Shokan 19-1-39-1, HAKS.

50. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:84–95, 192–93 passim.

51. Information on Yorozu is also in Anne Walthall, "Social Norms versus Individual Choice," 203–4.

52. "Catalog of disciples' works."

53. For insights into Yorozu's thought, see Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 276–93.

his family on Atsutane's doorstep on 1828.10.7. Atsutane was so impressed with the young man's brilliance that he adopted him as Kanetane's younger brother, though without reporting it to the authorities. Yorozu became the Hirata school's chief of studies, a roaming ambassador who traveled eastern Japan giving lectures and recruiting disciples.[54]

The co-residence was brief. Although Yorozu and his family moved out in the third month of 1829, Yorozu continued to attend Atsutane's lectures, sometimes staying the night or several nights. He wrote texts validated by Atsutane's prefaces, he lectured on divination at Atsutane's urging, and when he traveled, he corresponded with Atsutane and Kanetane. The Hirata family archive contains copies of his works in both manuscript and published versions, many printed and distributed decades after his death.[55]

Adopting Yorozu even informally eventually got the Hirata family into trouble. In late 1836, Yorozu moved to Kashiwazaki in Echigo province on the Japan Sea, where he established a school to propagate Atsutane's teachings. Like much of the country, Echigo was then suffering the effects of famine exacerbated by hoarding by merchants and a decision by domain officials to export rice. Yorozu appealed repeatedly to the authorities for relief but to no avail. Meanwhile, reports of Ōshio Heihachirō's rebellion in Osaka in 1837.2 provided a model for direct action. Supported by approximately thirty followers, Yorozu attacked the local deputy's office on 1837.6.1. Government troops dispersed the rebels and shot Yorozu (some reports say he committed suicide). The Hirata family soon learned that Yorozu's wife and two children had hanged themselves in prison or maybe she strangled the children and bit off her tongue. Three months later, the magistrate in charge of temples and shrines questioned Kanetane as to whether Ikuta Yorozu was listed on the Hirata family registry. To avoid being implicated in the rebellion, Kanetane returned two days later with a signed declaration that he was not.[56]

Yorozu's untimely end worried Atsutane's disciples who knew about his connection to the Hirata school and the Hirata family. Some visited the school; others made inquiries through the mail. As Kanetane wrote in a letter to the shrine priest Hatano Takao in Mikawa:

> I'm sure you've heard about Yorozu's violent death. Some disciples have fretted that this has caused trouble for my house owing to the

54. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:39–40; Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane Kenkyū*, 154–55. Yorozu recruited three disciples in Izu at the end of 1828. *Ibukinoya monjinchō*, 32.

55. *Hirata Atsutane kankei shiryō mokuroku*, 342, 357, 362, 374, 378, 379, 411, 413, 426, 429, 437, 446, 455, 510.

56. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:110–21.

> preface Yorozu wrote for *Thoughts on the Great Land of the Cherry Tree* (*Daifusōkoku-kō*) [a text by Atsutane published the previous year].[57] Since I have received letters from the most unexpected places asking about us, I thought I should let you know. Really this has not caused any trouble for me at all, so please don't worry. But it is truly regrettable, a development with which I cannot agree, and all I can do is sigh.[58]

Although Kanetane tried to make light of the incident, it had consequences for the Hirata school in Echigo. The disciples he had cultivated during his arduous trip there in 1828 dropped away, and no new ones joined until 1858. According to Yoshida Asako, had the informal adoption come to light, this revolt by a close connection might well have threatened the continued existence of the Hirata school.[59] So far as Kanetane was concerned, nothing was more important than preserving his father's enterprise, even if it meant jettisoning a disciple or two.

Most disciples took Atsutane's reassurance that their souls would remain in the invisible world after death to pursue research into the ancient Way and bring Atsutane's message to their friends and neighbors. Some disciples also relied on that reassurance for their own purposes. For example, Miyaoi Yasuo built a program for revitalizing farm villages. He continued to collaborate with Atsutane and then Kanetane by recruiting disciples and exchanging information about the crises that roiled Japan from the famines of the 1830s to the coming of the West in the 1850s, but to the extent that men like him participated in the fall of the shogunate, it was through propaganda that promoted the centrality of the emperor as the ultimate authority in the Japanese state whose wishes had to be obeyed.

The network that Atsutane and Kanetane constructed through incorporating disciples into their school and making them collaborators served multiple overlapping purposes for both sides. Constructing the network or joining it can be seen as instrumental, pursued for backing, income, and access to information. The network provided a venue to forge common bonds through a shared interest in the ancient Way. It brought followers and supporters to the Hirata school who developed a sense of identity as disciples

57. *Thoughts on the Great Land of the Cherry Tree* states that in ancient Chinese texts there is mention of a land to the east called Fusōkoku, a sacred and pure land of the gods, the origin of rulers and teachers. The first rulers of China, the so-called three sages and five emperors, all came from Fusōkoku. *Fusō* means cherry tree, and when this cherry tree withered, it changed into Mount Fuji. Itō, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane*, 189.

58. Yoshida, *Chi no kyōmei,* 102.

59. Yoshida, *Chi no kyōmei,* 103.

while giving the school what eventually became nationwide contacts. Some disciples later came up with ideas on the age of the gods that contradicted Atsutane's, leading to factional infighting after the fall of the shogunate (see chap. 7 and the epilogue), but before that happened, they had first connected with the Hirata school and signed its oath. Disciples assumed that once they had joined the school, Atsutane and Kanetane would dispense favors, introductions, and occasionally even loans, a sort of noblesse oblige, so long as the disciples did nothing that threatened the school. The community thus constituted bonded over a common set of beliefs in the afterlife and in Japan as being uniquely blessed by the gods, especially the sun goddess, whose descendants ruled over it.

CHAPTER 4

Sacred Objects

What's in a name? When Atsutane first opened a school to propagate his teachings in 1804, he called it Masugenoya, the "House of true sedge." While sedge (*suge*) is a rush or grasslike plant suitable for making hats, *suge* is also the first character in the name of the famous Sugawara no Michizane, a man whom Atsutane admired not just because he later became the god of education but also because of his reputed respect for the heavenly gods and earthly deities. This was typical of Atsutane's efforts to situate himself in a scholarly lineage. At the time, Atsutane styled himself "Taigaku," meaning "great sea," a term that he derived from *Zhuangzi*, one of the foundational texts in Daoism. No matter how much water you put into it, the sea is never full; no matter how much water you take out, the sea is never empty.[1] Then, in 1816, he changed the name of his school to Ibukinoya, which depending on the first character can mean either "House of purifying wind" or "House of the sage's breath who brought harmony to the world." He also changed his name to Daikaku by replacing "great sea" with "horn."[2] Why?

Intellectual historians have not troubled much over this question. Tahara Tsuguo contended that 1816 was the year that the number of Atsutane's disciples increased from 87 to 166, so the name changes must have celebrated

1. Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 19–20.

2. Masugenoya (真菅乃屋), Taigaku (大壑), Ibukinoya (気吹屋), or (伊吹屋), Daikaku (大角). The term appears in the title of "Ibuki oroshi," begun in 1811 but not published until 1862. It records Atsutane's lectures in the vernacular as an introductory text for his disciples and asserts that he encouraged the expulsion of foreigners. Nakagawa Kazuaki, *Hirata kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*, 306–7.

that achievement, but he did not pursue the matter further.[3] Miki Shōtarō, H. D. Harootunian, and Mark McNally paid the changes no heed. Scholars attuned to Atsutane's beliefs and practice find this question more worthy of pursuit, in part because they have uncovered texts that address it. I find it compelling because it speaks to Atsutane's 1816 pilgrimage, a sacred journey that brought him into the presence of the gods.

Two documents record Atsutane's pilgrimage. *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn* (*Ame no ishibue no ki*) is not in Atsutane's collected works because it was written not by him but about him at his request. In 1999 Itasaka Yōko read it as a travelogue for its descriptions of landscapes and people while reflecting Atsutane's passion and excitement upon venturing outside of Edo and acquiring unexpected evidence of the gods and the unseen world.[4] The second record likewise omitted from the collected works is *Kagushima nikki*, Atsutane's personal diary of his 1816 trip to Shimōsa.[5] In his study of popular religion and travel, Hatakama Kazuhiro cites this text to show how Atsutane sought firsthand knowledge of famous shrines and how his expertise in divination and ancient texts attracted priests and commoners through already existing provincial scholarly networks.[6] Yoshida Asako points out that Atsutane was not alone in seeking traces of the gods and the ancient world in local legends and objects handed down from the past. What made him unique was the way he tied these stories to his cosmology explained in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. Unlike Norinaga, Atsutane tried to discern the unseen world, the subject of so much of his scholarship, in legends and artifacts that remained in situ.[7] Both of these accounts disclose how Atsutane worked and how he involved local people in his project. His adventures on his journey enhanced his scholarship by revealing tokens left by denizens of the unseen world for him to find. As attested to by his name change, they bolstered his confidence in his authority.

Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn shows Atsutane's modus operandi as a teacher and as a seeker, but more than that, it testifies to the divinity inherent in the horn itself. *Kagushima nikki* situates finding the horn in Atsutane's pilgrimage to the major shrines east of Edo, Katori and Kashima, what can be called "sites of power."[8] ("Kagushima" is another term for Kashima derived from the name for the fire god, Kagutsuchi, from whose blood came

3. Tahara, *Hirata Atsutane*, 152.
4. Itasaka, "*Ame no ishibue no ki*," 31.
5. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:4–10 (page numbers in my text refer to this source).
6. Hatakama, "Tabi kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 3–42.
7. Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 77.
8. Cf. Orsi, *History and Presence*, 21.

the two deities worshipped at these shrines.) Without texts that illuminate its provenance, the horn is simply a lava tube. Rendered sacred through the written word, the horn becomes a material object in the service of belief. In this, Atsutane's practice is like that of Catholics who find ways to experience God's presence in the material world.[9] It also explains why Atsutane changed his name and that of his school. But can it therefore be said that the horn as object thus had agency because it had "an impact on the people [it] came into contact with through the value and values ascribed to [it]"?[10] I think not. The horn acquired its power to have an impact on Atsutane's identity only through his interpretation of how he acquired it, as crafted and recorded by his disciples.

The heavenly stone horn is the best documented of the sacred objects that Atsutane collected and his family preserved. Other objects include a lingam that manifests the generative power of the creator gods, a statue that embodies the spirit of the tenth-century hero and rebel Taira no Masakado, and wooden utensils certified as having been used by Motoori Norinaga. In all cases, they come with a pedigree, with statements that attest to their potency. They speak to how Atsutane sought evidence for the invisible world of the gods not only in texts or in shrines dedicated to specific gods but also in things that he could keep close at hand as daily reminders that gods existed all around him. In other words, studying his engagement with objects can expand our understanding of Atsutane's beliefs, his ability to communicate with a broad audience, and popular religion more generally.

Prelude

Atsutane's personal account of his trip makes it easy for historians to assume that his goal was to trawl for disciples, but in fact he had multiple motives. On the diary's inside cover, he listed a marvelous cure for bruises because he sometimes practiced medicine to make ends meet. On the first page, he announced that he was planning to go to Kashima shrine, that he was making a pilgrimage. Atsutane did not start out in search of the heavenly stone horn. He was seeking knowledge of and contact with the divine through travel, not objects. Hatakama emphasizes that this was a spiritual journey as well as a form of religious solicitation.[11]

On this, his first trip outside of Edo since his arrival in 1795, Atsutane

9. Orsi, *History and Presence*.
10. Pitelka, *Spectacular Accumulation*, 114.
11. Hatakama, "Tabi kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 27.

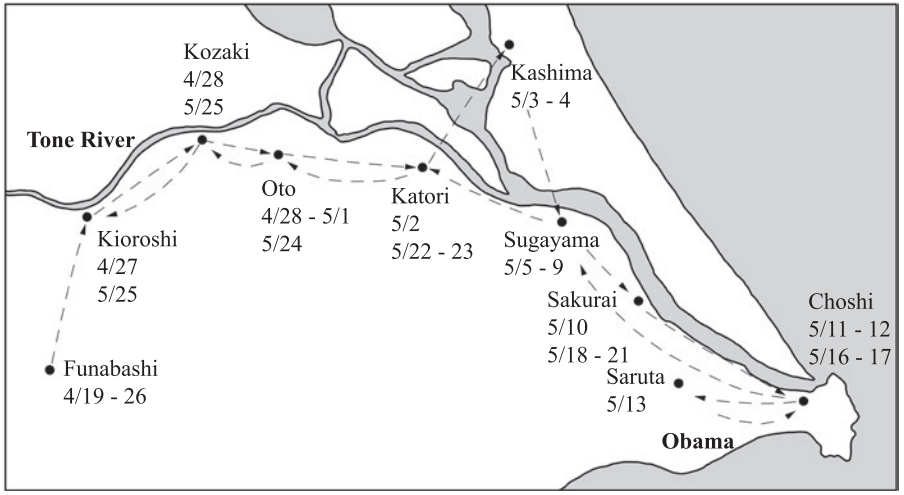

Fig. 14. Sketch map of Hirata Atsutane's pilgrimage to shrines in eastern Shimōsa, 1816. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

lectured on his most popular texts, recruited disciples, visited shrines, and collected local lore. On 1816.4.19, he took a boat from Nihonbashi in downtown Edo to Gyōtoku and then walked to Funabashi. For the next five days he lectured and led discussions on *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*. He even allowed his host, a priest at Funabashi shrine, to make a copy of his lecture notes (which Atsutane then corrected). According to Hatakama, such copies were a special favor granted to important disciples, and the text with Atsutane's annotations would become a sacred object.[12] Atsutane also made a pilgrimage to Moro shrine, a shrine so ancient that it appears in the *Procedures of the Engi Era* (*Engishiki*) of 927. At the end of his stay, he signed up three disciples, two of them shrine personnel, and performed a divination for one of them. He visited two shrines on 4.28, one the Ōto shrine, where he worshipped the great god responsible for the heavenly curved jewel (*amagatama*), one of the three imperial regalia. He spent the next few days in Ōto village giving lectures. The Yamaguchi family of shrine priests were so taken with his message that the retired grandfather, his son Inaba no kami, who was the current priest, and the seven-year-old grandson all became disciples. The grandfather wrote a poem lamenting Atsutane's departure on 5.2, and Inaba no kami accompanied him as far as Katori, where the Yamaguchi had relatives (p. 5).

12. This is Hatakama's interpretation for a cryptic passage in *Kagushima nikki*, 5 (1816.4.26); "Tabi kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 28.

Katori shrine is one of the two most important shrines in eastern Japan, the other being Kashima. They and the Ise shrines are the only shrines dignified with the appellation *gū* in *Procedures of the Engi Era* and have a history of receiving imperial tribute stretching back to the ancient period. Leaders of the later military regimes patronized them as well, with the Tokugawa shoguns bestowing them with the largest landholdings of any shrine in eastern Japan.[13] Separated by the Tone River and a long narrow lake, the Katori and Kashima shrines enjoy majestic settings even today when so many shrine precincts are sadly reduced in size. Long stone paths lined with stone lanterns donated by the faithful, towering cedar forests, and immense gates are designed to strike awe in the pilgrim before she reaches the worship hall and subsidiary buildings. Each enshrines a warrior god, Futsunushi at Katori and Takamikazuchi at Kashima. These gods were sent down from the high plain of heaven to subdue the earthly gods in preparation for the descent to Japan by the sun goddess Amaterasu's heavenly grandson, Ninigi, and the shrines are said to have been built during the reign of his great-grandson, the first emperor, Jinmu.

During Atsutane's stays at Katori and a day later at Kashima, he interviewed shrine priests, visited the shrines to make offerings and pray, copied documents on the shrines' history, and recorded what he learned regarding local legends.[14] His notes are cryptic and have largely to do with place names, word games, and interactions between gods and humans. According to one gazetteer, the main line of the Chiba family had its residence in a village near Ōdo. This was important to Atsutane because he traced the Hirata family genealogy to the Chiba line, as did many notable families in Shimōsa. "Reeds (*ashi* 葦) should be seen as the feet (*ashi* 足) of heaven." "The Mime shining deity facing the beach is called the tsugekami (signaling deity). He is said to report to the Kashima god when an evil demon approaches" (p. 5). Atsutane also praised Oku no miya as the best of the outlying shrines where it is said Amaterasu appears (p. 5).[15] He wrote poems expressing his delight at having achieved his long-cherished desire to worship at these sacred sites that figured so prominently in his long hours of study of the ancient histories.

For the next six days, Atsutane continued his trip down the Tone River, visiting shrines along the way, staying with men interested in ancient studies, recruiting disciples, and collecting information. He worshipped at Ikisu shrine, said to have been founded during the reign of the emperor Ōjin

13. My thanks to Helen Hardacre for pointing this out.

14. Wasō C49, HAKS. "Kashima daijingū shaden kirui."

15. Oku no miya was built at Tokugawa Ieyasu's command to be Kashima's main hall in 1605. When his son Hidetada built a larger main hall, this structure was moved into the forest.

(270–310). A poem written in 1687 by Matsuo Bashō refers to the god worshipped there. Note that his name for the god is close to the name that Atsutane later chose for his school:

Kono sato wa	Here in this village
Ibukido-nushi no	the master of the spirit wind
kaze samushi	blows cold[16]

Ibukido-nushi ("Lord of the portal of blowing air") figures in the "Ritual of Great Purification" recorded in *Proceedings of the Engi Era* as one of four deities who cooperate in the process of removing pollutants. As a mighty wind, he blows pollution, calamity, and distress away from body and soul.[17] Atsutane wrote no poetry at Ikisu shrine, but he described this god in *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* (*Koshiseibun*) and *Exegesis on Ancient History* (*Koshiden*).[18]

After his pilgrimage to Ikisu shrine, Atsutane stopped at Sasagawa for more lectures and conversation. There he must have talked to ancient studies scholars because he took notes on etymology, topics in ancient history that required more exploration, and texts to examine when he returned home, including Nishimura Tōsato's (1718–87) major work on calendrical reform, *Essentials for Studying the Heavens* (*Tengaku shiyō*). As Hatakama points out, during his travels, Atsutane didn't just show off his erudition; he also acquired new knowledge about local legends and origin tales as well as suggestions for further reading.[19] Everywhere he went, he combined what he learned in person with what he was getting from books. Toward the end of his career, Atsutane prepared his own reform of the lunar calendar. This note suggests that the topic had attracted him much earlier.

For the remainder of his journey, Atsutane continued to record the places where he spent the night, the shrines he visited, the topics for the lectures

16. http://urawa0328.babymilk.jp/basyoukuhi/ikisu.html, accessed July 30, 2020.

17. Bock, *Engi-shiki: Procedures of the Engi Era*, 87. Her translation differs slightly from Karl Florenz, who states that the "breath blowing place" (Ibukido) is where one of Izanagi's offspring uses his breath to blow away "all sins and pollution into Hades." "Ancient Japanese Ritual," 163n79. According to Mark Teeuwen: "Pollution is taken away from the islands of Japan and transferred to the 'netherworld' by way of the rivers, the sea, and the wind, and each of these realms is said to be inhabited by a deity who takes special care of the transportation of pollution." *Watarai Shintō*, 89.

18. Hirata Atsutane, *Koshiseibun*, 29, passage 27; *Koshiden*, 347 (SHAz). My thanks to Kate Wildman Nakai for this reference.

19. Hatakama, "Tabi kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 29.

he gave, recipes for medicines, and the bits and pieces of local lore that he learned from the people he met. It is by no means the sort of polished travel diary that constitutes a genre of Japanese literature. Instead, it reads more like disjointed field notes, perhaps the raw materials for future essays or a way to remember people who either became disciples upon meeting him or might become disciples in the future. The diary thus shows how he absorbed what Inoue calls "the fundamentals of popular belief."[20] He mentioned that he had acquired the heavenly stone horn at Hachimangū in Obama village, but he did not relate the mysterious episodes leading up to its discovery. For that we must turn to the account written by his disciples.

Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn

Atsutane entrusted two men from Chōshi with the task of telling the tale of how he came to acquire the heavenly stone horn. Miyauchi Kachō was the chief priest at the town's shrine to the sun goddess Amaterasu (Shinmeigū). Ichigami Jinbee was the second son of a wealthy merchant. They had heard of Atsutane and read at least some of his work before he arrived, but they did not enroll as disciples until his stay in their town. In the early nineteenth century, such men—local intellectuals and local notables—took advantage of prosperity and peace to better their family's fortunes and their minds, the one through expanding trade and moneylending, the other through scholarship and aesthetic practices, from poetry writing to martial arts. They supported competition with other villages to make village festivals more elaborate, and they underwrote performances by traveling Kabuki troupes. They had the wherewithal in money and time to pursue diverse interests, and they welcomed scholars from the city who brought intellectual stimulation.[21]

As soon as Kachō and Jinbee learned that Atsutane had arrived, they hurried to meet the boat, "more delighted than we could say."[22] They spread the word among his students, and that night at least fifty people gathered to hear him talk about his work. Day and night they came to discuss their reading and ask about matters (unspecified) that had perplexed them for some time (p. 766). Twenty-seven men joined his school, the largest number from any one place on his trip, and an indication of the enthusiasm with which they welcomed his ideas. Not all listeners joined, perhaps because

20. Inoue Nobutaka, "Hirata Atsutane to minshū kisō shinkō," 31.
21. Sugi, "Kaseiki no shakai to bunka."
22. *Asahi shishi*, 2:766 (page numbers in the text hereafter refer to this source).

they were unwilling to make the commitment or couldn't spare the modest entrance fee. This disparity between the number who came to hear Atsutane speak and the number who joined his school illustrates how simply counting disciples does not exhaust the range of people who encountered his ideas.

Yoshida Asako argues that Atsutane's visit excited people in Chōshi for two reasons. First, his lecturing style combined a vernacular easy for ordinary people to understand with a deep knowledge of ancient texts and commentaries that appealed to the educated. Second, he connected instances of the strange or unearthly (*fushigi*) with which his listeners were familiar to the cosmos, the gods who governed the cosmos, and the world where people go after death. Local tales of marvelous happenings thus became proof that the other, unseen world, the subject of so much of his work, actually existed.[23] Hatakama notes that the early nineteenth century was the great age of *kōshaku*—lecture and exposition—but what distinguished Atsutane's presentation, at least that night in Chōshi, was how he engaged his audience in dialogue. Information thus flowed both ways, with Atsutane garnering new perceptions and insights by interacting with his students.[24]

When Atsutane started on the pilgrimage that led to the stone horn, he had no idea of what he would find. Leading as it did to unexpected encounters with the gods, the trip was an adventure, one that filled him with joy. It all began with dreams that he had during the nights he spent in Chōshi about two shrines in the vicinity. Even more so than the dream in which he met Norinaga, dreams that repeated themselves were likely to convey messages from the unseen world of gods and spirits. Mark Teeuwen calls such dreams divine oracles.[25] Atsutane's hosts agreed to guide him, along with Watanabe Nobumochi, his traveling companion from Edo, and two attendants.

According to *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn*, their first destination, and the site of the first miracle, was Saruta shrine, where two gods are enshrined: the husband-and-wife pair of Sarutahiko and Ame no Uzume. Atsutane later had her image painted on a votive tablet, approved a popular essay about her, and distributed another image as a woodblock print (see chap. 5). Sarutahiko abhorred pollution; if anything defiled his shrine, he cursed the village below. For this reason, the shrine precincts were meticulously cleaned every morning, leaving not even a single fallen leaf. Atsutane went to the main hall, where he worshipped for some time and recited a prayer. The rest of the party followed his example. They then went around to the back, where Nobumochi caught

23. Yoshida, *Hirata Atsutane*, 81–82.
24. Hatakama, "Tabi kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 28.
25. Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, 234.

sight of a bleached deer bone that looked like it had just that moment been deposited on top of the ceremonial hall.

"This looks like the shoulder bone of a deer that you have at your house," he said.

"Indeed, it does," our teacher replied, and he picked it up.

The local people were horrified. Touching such a dirty, disgusting object? What could he be thinking of, and how would the terrifying Sarutahiko react?

"This is an essential object for use in ascertaining the gods' will through divination. The technique of firing the shoulder bone of a deer has fallen out of favor and no one today knows about it," Atsutane explained with a smile of delight. "The god gave me this out of the goodness of his heart." He returned to the main hall where he knelt and recounted what had happened. To celebrate this auspicious occasion, he wrote a poem:

Saoshika wa	The young buck says,
wasure mo yasemu	revive it in this world
to iishi	the divination technique
futomani no	using scapulimancy
urae no waza wo	that today has been
yo ni okose to ya	completely forgotten

Down in the village, Atsutane uncovered more local lore that further attested to the wondrous nature of his discovery. People in the area so abhorred meat and so feared Sarutahiko that animals killed by hunters in the mountains were never brought into the village. The whole affair appeared stranger and stranger, and Atsutane became ever more excited (p. 767).

Some of the earliest examples of proto-Chinese characters appear on deer shoulder oracle bones. Archeologists have found such bones in Japan in sites dating from the late Yayoi to the Nara periods (approximately the beginning of the Common Era to 794). Scapulimancy also figures in *Record of Ancient Matters* when the gods are trying to devise a way to lure the sun goddess Amaterasu out of her cave, as well as in other early texts that Atsutane drew on to prove that divine script existed in Japan before the introduction of Chinese (see chap. 2). As Atsutane acknowledged when he explained the bone's significance to his comrades, the first person to study and revive this type of divination, which had later been eclipsed by using turtle shells, was his friend Ban Nobutomo, who wrote *Thoughts on True Divination* (*Shōboku-kō*).[26]

Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn next places Atsutane and his compan-

26. *Kokushi daijiten*, 6:664–65.

Fig. 15. Woodblock print of Hirata Kanetane's drawing of the husband and wife trees in *Ame no ishibue-ki* (1886). (Courtesy National Diet Library Digital Collection.)

ions at Tamagasaki myōjin shrine in Iioka village. Its god is Tamayorihime, the mother of the emperor Jinmu. Sometimes this goddess takes on human form and appears to the children who play in her garden. She looks like a beautiful princess dressed in a twelve-layered garment, according to a man whose mother saw her as a child. Behind the shrine is a tall mound with two trees, a camphor and a pine, intertwined together, as though husband and wife. Worried that the pine was leaning on the shrine's ridgepole, the shrine priest ordered it cut down in 1763. A woodcutter complied, but he became dizzy and left the branches lying on the ground. The next morning, they had attached themselves to the camphor tree's roots. The woodcut-

ter was so frightened of the god's curse that he gave up his profession and moved to Chōshi, where he had died just three years earlier. Seeing these trees thus devoted to one another gave Atsutane another chance to experience the world of the gods erupting into his world, an experience that was unlikely to come to him as a scholar sitting in his study. Again, he wrote a poem, this one celebrating the spirits that animate trees and speak to the gods' awesome power (p. 768).

That night Atsutane heard more tales of mysterious happenings. According to *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn*, he learned about Genbee, who took home a girl he found by the seashore. When she grew up, she became a goddess and returned to the sea. The house was still standing, and the household head was always called Genbee. On the beach at Tamagasaki could be found rocks tossed up by the sea that originally belonged to Tamayorihime. The intendant for the shrine to her daughter, Myōkengū, had taken charge of them, but for six days each year local people were allowed to haul off as many as they needed to hold down their roofs or to repair stone walls. During the rest of the year, waves that were whipped up by a strong wind gradually replenished the rock supply. All agreed that the gods had done these awe-inspiring deeds.

In a presentiment of what would come later, Atsutane learned that among the rocks blown onto shore could occasionally be found what were called "conch shell rocks," that is, rocks with holes in them that sounded like a conch shell horn when blown. The Myōken deity treasured these rocks, so they had to be collected separately and donated to the shrine. Atsutane listened carefully to all he heard about these marvelous rocks and other matters. The next morning on the beach with the rocks, he wrote two poems about them and the protection they offered the people. At Myōken shrine at the top of a long stone staircase, he wrote two more poems in praise of the sea god. The entire party took turns blowing on the conch shell rocks enshrined in the main hall.

But according to *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn*, the best was yet to come. Having visited the two shrines that appeared in Atsutane's dreams, the party turned back toward Chōshi. It began to rain, and no one had raingear. Slipping and sliding in the mud, they pushed on to a village called Obama. At a teashop in front of the Hachiman shrine they wrung out their wet clothes. The wind came up, driving harder rain. Jinbee and Kachō thought they knew a path through the shrine precincts that would put them on the road back to Chōshi. Atsutane and Nobumochi followed reluctantly. While praying in front of the shrine, Atsutane became separated from his companions. When they found him, he was carrying a large mud-covered stone.

Fig. 16. The heavenly stone horn. Held at Hirata shrine. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

"His delight showed on his face as he rushed toward us and urged us to get away as quickly as possible" (p. 771).

Only after they were well away from the shrine did Atsutane agree to stop and offer an explanation: "I think this is the heavenly stone horn found in texts from long ago. . . . Kotoshironushi made it as an offering to the imperial grandson Ninigi when he descended from heaven." He offered a chain of etymological correspondences to make his point: "The term for horn (*fue*) has the connotation of 'to blow'" (*fuku*). Offering a horn made of stone to signal Ninigi's auspicious descent has profound significance. The term for celebration (*iwai*) is comparable to the term for stone (*iwa*). It is often associated with everlasting rocks (*tokiwa*) or hard rocks (*kakiwa*) as in the old poem that everyone knows." Atsutane then recited a version of what is now Japan's national anthem, with lines about pebbles becoming rock covered with moss. "This horn is played at celebrations or to summon warriors to battle, starting when the empress dowager Jingū, with the future emperor Ōjin still in her belly, subjugated Korea." He reminded his companions that he had verified other instances of a stone horn associated with propitious events during the age of the gods in his *Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* and *Exegesis on Ancient History*. "I don't know whether this particular horn is the one made by Kotoshironushi but based on the texts I've seen regarding ancient times, all references to stone horns are to those made by the gods" (p. 771).

It's evident that the discovery of the horn delighted Atsutane. In *Things Seen and Unseen*, H. D. Harootunian contrasts the way Norinaga talked about the emotions in terms of aesthetic responses by people of refined tempera-

ment who appreciated the subtleties of classical poetry with the way Atsutane praised the pleasures to be found in the context of everyday life. Both men, each in his own way, valorized emotional responses, whether limited to the select few or available to ordinary people. "Desire, for Hirata, moved people to act by fixing a relationship between themselves and the things of quotidian life that established the condition of their humanity."[27] Although Harootunian was writing about the way Atsutane saw his audience, I think the lens can be reversed to focus on Atsutane himself. If, "rather than a passive reception of the power of things," emotionality required "an involvement in the mediation of things—doing with its promise of gratification," then Atsutane's delight in finding the stone horn as recounted by his disciples was of a piece with his emphasis on a spontaneous response to the world around him and justified his search for traces of the gods in material objects.

In a heavily overdetermined narrative with resonances of myth, what followed in *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn* was Atsutane's report to his companions on how he had found the stone horn and carried it away:

> While you went searching for a path behind the shrine, I returned to worship before the god. When I looked in front of the door, I saw three or four of those conch shell rocks, just like the ones at Myōken shrine, and they were not that unusual. Then my eyes fixed on this horn, covered with mud, buried in the grass, lying next to the shrine's stone foundation. My heart started pounding. If this is indeed the heavenly stone horn, I thought, I must let people know about it. I picked it up and tried blowing through it. It made an extremely auspicious sound, nothing like that produced by the conch shell rocks. I felt like I should take it home because the god had granted it to me. (p. 771)

But how could he be sure that the god had given him permission to take away an object that had been donated to a shrine? Somehow it came to him that he should perform scapulimancy divination using the deer bone that had so fortuitously appeared earlier at Saruta shrine. Sarutahiko must have given him the bone for that very purpose. Yet the wind and rain made it impossible to build a fire to heat the bone. At last, he was struck with the idea that he could use water divination:

> He took off his hat, bowed to the ground in the direction of the Hachiman shrine, and took out the shoulder bone. Holding it aloft

27. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 140. The other quotation is on the same page.

> in his left hand while touching the ground with his right, he pledged to respect the god's decision. If the god really intended to grant him the stone horn while he was asking for it through divination, the shoulder bone would stay dry. If the god wanted to keep the horn, the rain would wet the bone. He shut his eyes and prayed for some time. When he opened them again, the section that had been the focus of his appeal was still dry. (p. 772)

Then Atsutane thought of another problem. He didn't doubt that the god had granted him this gift, but outsiders might think that he'd stolen it. The shrine was too small and insignificant to have a resident priest (and it doesn't have one today), so Atsutane went to a nearby temple in search of someone with jurisdiction over it. This decrepit temple had not a single tatami mat and only a solitary statue of the Buddha. An old priest was sitting by the hearth making straw sandals, the very picture of poverty. Atsutane chose his words carefully: "In front of the shrine that you guard are some rocks with holes in them. If you let me have one of them, I'll shower it with devotion" (p. 772). The priest had his doubts, but he allowed himself to be persuaded when Atsutane offered him all the money he had with him. Atsutane was not entirely honest with the priest. The conch shell rocks are rare; the stone horn is seemingly unique and weighs considerably more, approximately thirty-seven pounds.[28]

That night back in Chōshi, after a hot bath, a change of clothes, and dinner, with due attention paid to removing the mud from the horn, Jinbee and Kanchō invited the pupils to a gathering. When all were seated, Atsutane made a dramatic appearance blowing the horn. All were spellbound by the beauty of its tone, which reverberated in their hearts. Atsutane likened it to the lofty sound made by the thunder god (Narukami) on the eternal rocks and hard rocks that together with the spirits of the gods existing yesterday and today come to us to celebrate good fortune. According to *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn*, after he returned to Edo, he blew it daily upon completing his morning prayers (p. 774). In other words, this gift from the gods may be seen as having opened a sonic channel of communication by wafting his prayers to their ears.[29]

Atsutane didn't rush back to Edo after acquiring the stone horn. Instead, he sent it on ahead while he retraced his steps up the Tone River, stopping to collect local lore, visiting people he had met before, and worshipping again at the Katori and Kashima shrines. *Kagushima nikki* continues with a jumble

28. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:7.
29. Helen Hardacre made this suggestion.

of notes for medicines, topics to be explored, and copies of letters to thank people who had helped him. Since Jinbee and Kachō said farewell to him outside of Chōshi, they mention none of this. Instead, *Record of the Heavenly Stone Horn* takes up the story in the tenth month when Kachō visited Edo and again in 1817.2 when Jinbee paid a visit.

Both Kachō and Jinbee were delighted to see the stone horn and relive its discovery. Kachō got to tell the story to Atsutane's friend and patron, the book collector and official Yashiro Hirokata. Hirokata too was impressed by the stone's full, rich tone. Before he left, he recited a poem:

Ikifuki no	This horn's sound
oto iyataka ni	while being blown
hibiki sae	resonates so loftily
ietaru fue wa	perhaps it can be said
ikeru fue kamo	to be a living horn (p. 774)

When Jinbee showed up at Atsutane's house, Atsutane asked him to get together with Kachō to record what had happened. "There are so many things we wanted to say, but it's difficult to express them all," they wrote (p. 775).

The existence of two accounts of finding the heavenly stone horn suggests just how important the experience was for Atsutane. During his pilgrimage, he combined his scholarly inquiry into the age of the gods with his faith-inspired search for evidence of the gods' presence in his own time. Whereas the shrine where he found the horn was to all appearances insignificant, Atsutane's knowledge of ancient history taught him otherwise. As a shrine to Hachiman, the god of war, it incorporated Jingū and her son the emperor Ōjin, making it a suitable place for him to find an instrument that they were said to have carried into battle. He took two other trips to the provinces northeast of Edo, but what made this first trip unique was discovering and gaining possession of this sacred object. According to the now deceased head of the Hirata family, Maita Katsuyasu, finding it was an unexpected shock that enhanced Atsutane's spiritual life, and thereafter its inspiration increased his confidence in the truth of his beliefs.[30] Hatakama too emphasizes the significance of this journey. In his view, the process of travel as well as the discovery of the stone horn gave Atsutane the opportunity to experience with his entire body how his country was saturated with the presence of the gods. The impact on his identity impelled him to change his name and that of his school.[31]

30. Aramata and Maita, *Yomigaeru karisuma Hirata Atsutane*, 85.
31. Hatakama, "Tabe kara miru kinsei shūkyō," 4, 32.

Postlude

Not everyone accepted Atsutane's assertion that what he had found was a gift from the gods. His friend and later enemy Ban Nobutomo claimed that such a thing wasn't possible.[32] Some people mocked Atsutane behind his back, saying that he'd changed his name to "great horn" because he was trying to outdo En no Ozunu, the seventh-century ascetic and legendary founder of Shugendō (the characters for Ozunu mean "small horn").[33] Shugendō practitioners believed that mountains offered gateways to the other world, and knowledge of the other world was one of Atsutane's chief goals.

Within Atsutane's school, now called Ibukinoya, the stone horn was treated with reverence. It's mentioned occasionally in the house diary, for example on 1820.7.19, when Satō Jinnosuke and a friend came to request that a poem be written on a fan. They tried blowing the horn and drank sake. Another man came to see the horn on 1826.5.26.[34] When Atsutane was exiled to Akita in 1841, he wrote many letters back to Kanetane in Edo with requests for goods and manuscripts. One was for a copy of *Account of the Heavenly Stone Horn* to be presented to a domain elder. A couple of months later, Atsutane reported that one of his Akita patrons was supposed to show a hanging scroll depicting the stone horn to the elder. The patron forgot to do so but kept the scroll.[35] In 1858, a posthumous disciple, Miyazaki Mototane, wrote to Kaneya, Atsutane's grandson, reminiscing about a pilgrimage that they had taken the previous year to the Katori and Kashima shrines and enclosing a poem celebrating the stone horn.

Takadaka ni	May the sound
kimi ga ibukeru	from the stone horn
ishibue no	that you blow
oto koso chiyo no	resound far and wide
katami narikere	As a keepsake for all time[36]

Atsutane valued his stone horn because, he claimed, human hands did not make it. Rather than track its history back to an era when people walked

32. Ishii, "Izuen sawa," 125–26.

33. Itō Hiroshi, *Daigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 113. Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, 144.

34. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:29; Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 972.

35. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 567, 577.

36. Shokan 19-2-24, HAKS. Printed in Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata-ke ate Chikuzen kuni Hirata monjin shokanshū," 193.

the earth, he leaped immediately to the age of the gods. Not only did the gods craft the instrument, he asserted, but they also prepared the way for him and him alone to find it and discern its significance. He was, of course, complicit in this arrangement. His pilgrimage to the Kashima, Katori, and other shrines, his search for local lore that recounted miracles, and his desire to experience the gods up close and in person sensitized him to receive this gift from the unseen world. Rather than focus exclusively on texts, as did the practitioners of poetry who claimed Norinaga's mantle, Atsutane also found meaning in objects, travel, and ethnography.

More Sacred Objects

Atsutane acquired other material objects that like the heavenly stone horn manifested the gods and their works. In this he was not alone. Yamashita Hisao has uncovered an early modern boom in excavating traces of the age of the gods, from trees to rocks to divine script to gold seals to tomb mounds.[37] Atsutane's objects figured in the family's personal history and shed light on the different media through which family members expressed belief. Like the stone horn, they attest to the importance Atsutane placed on discerning the divine in things.

Stones can have multiple properties. In 1834, Atsutane acquired a stone lingam from Tōtōmi province, measuring some two feet and weighing approximately forty-four pounds.[38] In his study of ancient Indian traditions (*Indo zōshi*), Atsutane argued that the presence of lingams in the countryside meant that they were neither natural nor manmade but crafted by the gods in the shape of a phallus to manifest the power of the generative deities (*musubi no kami*). In his view, "a lingam is the most appropriate object to contain the actual spirit of the gods."[39] Given this tight connection to specifically Japanese deities, it's not surprising that in his opinion, the worship of phallic stone symbols began in Japan and then was transmitted to

37. Yamashita Hisao, "*Koshiden* no jindaizō," 39.

38. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 87.

39. Cited in Ichimura, *Ina sonnō shisō shi*, 273. On his trip to Echigo in 1828, Kanetane viewed a lingam near Nakayama said to cure female ailments. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:41; Kate Nakai reports that Takamimusubi is represented by a huge phallus-shaped stone hidden behind the Asukaniimasu shrine near Nara. Email communication, March 19, 2002. See http://asukaniimasujinja.jp (accessed June 14, 2022).

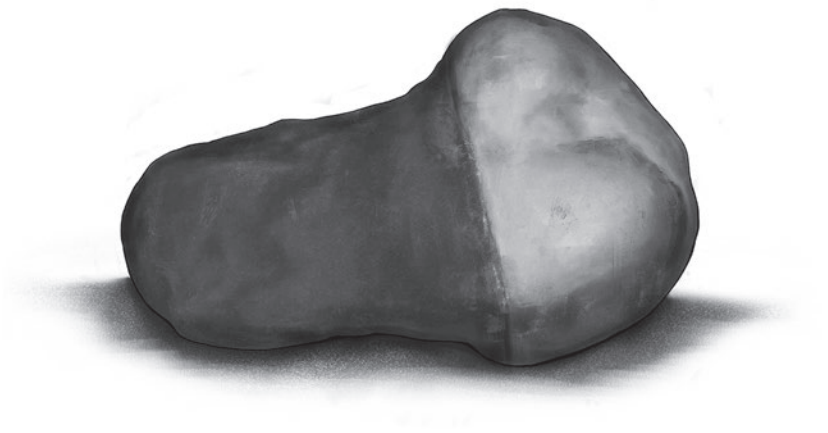

Fig. 17. Hirata Atsutane's stone lingam. Held at Takamori Rekishi Minzoku Shiryōkan. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

India, where it formed the basis for the Indian belief in the creator god.[40] When some of his posthumous followers in the Ina valley built a shrine to the four great Japan studies teachers called Hongaku shrine (shrine to foundational learning), they asked Kanetane to give them this lingam to contain Atsutane's spirit. Kanetane refused. He figured that descendants of the other three teachers would send smaller, more conventional objects and might consider such a large object to be insulting. He also thought it might prove injurious to public morals. By promising to house it in a separate shrine, the Ina valley disciples persuaded him to part with it.[41]

Other stones served to denote the border between the seen and unseen worlds. When Kanetane refused to let the Ina valley disciples use a lingam as a divine object for Atsutane's spirit in the shrine's main building, he offered as a substitute a translucent quartz crystal encircled by blue stones. Such crystals are neither opaque nor transparent; they almost but not quite allow a person to peer into their depths as though through a glass darkly. Along with the divine objects for the other three teachers that were enshrined at Hongaku shrine, the quartz crystal is now housed in the Takamori local history museum along with smaller, more modest lingam. When I visited the museum twenty years ago, the curator allowed me to take pictures of

40. Ichimura, *Ina sonnō shisō shi*, 240–42.

41. Walthall, "Nativism as a Social Movement," 223. Today the lingam is hidden in the storeroom for Takamori rekishi minzoku shiryōkan in the Ina valley.

Atsutane's lingam and the crystal. Today, photographing these objects is forbidden, in the crystal's case because it's sacred, an object of veneration by believers, and photographs of the divine objects for all four teachers have disappeared from the museum's website.[42]

In 1894, a man in Akita discovered similar rocks. He decided that they had been created during the age of the gods and sent them together with a letter and a map to Masaki Yūsuke (1841–1917), an antiquarian with a specialty in rocks and a Hirata family associate. Masaki made a sketch of them on the letter and noted that the third was white, banded lightly with pale blue, and translucent with a fine luster, in other words, a crystal.[43] Like Atsutane and his descendants, the men in Akita tried to approach the gods through the artifacts they left behind. For them as well, the gods were to be found not just in any rock but only in those with qualities that either in terms of shape or substance could be deemed divine.

The stones collected by Atsutane, his descendants, his followers, and his fellow travelers represented eternity. It thus made sense to trace them back to the age of the gods. Atsutane also acquired objects made of wood, a medium shaped by human hands, that stood for men who had died and that, like the portraits he collected, encapsulated their spirits (see chap. 2).

In 1825, Atsutane procured a wooden statue with moveable arms and legs approximately three to four feet tall containing Taira no Masakado's spirit. As a Taira, he was descended from Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806), the founder of Kyoto. Taira no Masakado died in 940, having led an insurrection against the imperial court and its officials in eastern Japan.[44] After his death, his severed head was buried in what later became Edo. Fearing his retribution and admiring his bravery, local people enshrined him in the already existing Kanda shrine. Some notable families claimed him as their ancestor, the Chiba, for example, from whom Atsutane's adoptive Hirata family had branched, as well as Atsutane's natal family, the Ōwada. Based on research into these family histories, Atsutane liked to style himself Taira no ason Atsutane (*ason* indicating his noble pedigree), or simply Taira no Atsutane, and crafted a genealogy showing himself to be Masakado's thirty-first-generation descendant.[45]

Masakado became an illustrious presence in the Hirata household. Atsu-

42. https://takamori-tokinoeki.com/?page_id=87; email communication from Shiosawa Motohiro, the museum director, January 31, 2024.

43. Walthall, "Rock of Ages," 102–4.

44. Friday, *The First Samurai*. His story is told in the first battle tale, Rabinovitch, *Shōmonki*.

45. Aramata and Maita, "Chi no nettowāku," 52.

Fig. 18. Clothed wooden statue of Taira no Masakado. Held at Kanda Myōjin shrine. (Drawing by Brenna Phelan.)

tane first sought permission to privately enshrine his spirit from the temple priest who supervised Kanda shrine. Two months later a shrine priest from Hitachi, the site of Masakado's stronghold and the Ōwada family's original home, brought clothing for the statue. Seven months after the first request, Atsutane received word that Masakado had arrived on the other side of the Sumida River. The next day, Atsutane sent his newly adopted son Kanetane with two attendants to welcome Masakado and escort him to the Hirata house. Atsutane held a banquet for him three weeks later with food delivered

from a restaurant, and Masakado received more new clothes. Thereafter, he appeared intermittently in the family diary, most often when he was seated as the guest of honor at cherry blossom viewing parties. As late as 1870, Nobutane thanked his parents for sending Masakado a set of court robes.[46] The statue remained in the Hirata family until 1984, when the head priest for Kanda shrine asked for it with the aim of putting it on yearly display for his parishioners.[47]

The Hirata family treated this statue as a living god. Unlike the wooden statues of warlords who are depicted seated with voluminous court robes billowing around them, Masakado can stand erect. His body is made of wood, but in his right hand he carries a metal sword. His clothing is cloth, a black brocade signifying his royal status, which means it can be changed and renewed just like clothing for statues of the Virgin Mary and saints found on the Iberian Peninsula and in Latin America. His face has a prominent chin, a mustache above a slightly open mouth, a broad nose, and bulging eyes. Instead of hair tied neatly on top of his head, his hangs loose under a small court cap tied under his chin and needs to be combed. His appearance more closely resembles that of festival puppets than the dignified classical nobility.

In Atsutane's warrior lineage, Taira no Masakado was his most famous ancestor; in his scholarly genealogy, he traced his descent from Motoori Norinaga. In neither instance did he proclaim his pedigree on his own. A Buddhist priest granted his connection to Masakado based on documents that Atsutane had delivered to him. Motoori Haruniwa, Norinaga's son, and Motoori Ōhira, Norinaga's designated heir, confirmed their previous approval of his work by bestowing wooden objects on him that testified to their recognition of his claim. They presented these accolades in 1823 when he visited them on his way home from Kyoto.

Both Ōhira and Haruniwa gave Atsutane objects that connected him to Norinaga. Following a convivial night of poetry exchanges, Ōhira brought out a *shaku* (scepter) that Norinaga had crafted and on which Ōhira had written Norinaga's spirit name. Atsutane was so moved that he asked Ōhira to make a scepter of the same cherry wood with the same inscription. Ōhira gave him a scepter, but with the hour being late and the lighting poor, he wrote the inscription on a piece of paper, saying that Atsutane should copy it himself later. As we have seen, Ōhira also gave Atsutane a copy of Norinaga's

46. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 939, 942, 953–954; Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:21, 116, 227, 265, 296, 312, 325, 430.

47. Aramata and Maita, "Chi no nettowāku," 52.

portrait. From Haruniwa, Atsutane received three brushes that Norinaga had used. On both occasions Atsutane shed tears of gratitude.[48]

Kanetane points to the magic that inheres in objects when he states that Atsutane always used one of Norinaga's brushes to initiate a clean copy of each chapter of the *Exegesis of Ancient History* text for publication. In this way he developed his own ritual for Norinaga's objects. Together with the *shaku* carved by Ōhira in the likeness of those made by Norinaga, they constituted signifiers of Norinaga's spirit that Atsutane treasured to the end of his days.[49] McNally places these items in the context of Atsutane's pursuit of recognition by his peers, arguing that the artifacts "served as the proof of Atsutane's orthodox succession of Norinaga."[50] Watanabe Kinzō notes that Atsutane placed them inside a sacred alcove where he paid them reverence.[51] It's possible that both men were right: Atsutane wanted these treasures both to channel Norinaga's spirit and to impress visitors.

Atsutane's journey through the sacred landscape of eastern Shimōsa culminated in his discovery of the heavenly stone horn. The process was important: it got him out of the city and into the countryside where he could connect what he had learned in his study with the ways that people experienced the divine in the moment. It prepared him to recognize that a relic from the ancient past could turn up in his own time. It thus reinforced what he had already learned from books—the very durability of stones, whether small crystals or large lingams, spoke to the everlasting presence of the gods. Scholars such as H. D. Harootunian have emphasized how Atsutane's valuation of the generative power of the creator gods struck a responsive chord with farmers who saw themselves producing crops through that power. But Atsutane didn't just write about the gods. His extended pilgrimage to shrines great and small brought him into contact with the educated elite in provincial society and the specific gods who inhabited their locales. It's difficult to overstate the importance of this trip for solidifying his connection with people outside of Edo. It gave him new insights into mysterious movements in the other world and bolstered his confidence in his mission to expound on and spread the teachings of the ancient Way.

Atsutane collected material objects, and his descendants preserved them because in their eyes and according to the records they kept, these things were sacred; they were repositories of divine presence. Some were made of

48. Hirata Kanetane, *Kiyo sōhansho*, 431; Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 85; Itō, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 174.

49. Hirata Kanetane, *Kiyo sōhansho*, 486.

50. McNally, *Proving the Way*, 170.

51. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 90.

stone by the gods and embodied the gods; others were wooden and crafted by men to serve as receptacles for the infinitely divisible spirits of other men (although stones could serve as divine objects for men as well). They incorporated the divine in ways that became legible to men who had the sensitivity to grasp what was otherwise obscure. There is a clear social function to this kind of magical thinking in that it validates the position of the scholar and the teacher, but it also contains theological implications and spiritual repercussions. It brought the gods and spirits close to hand, making them impossible if not dangerous to ignore. For both Atsutane and his audience, objects became good for thinking and talking about the unseen world because the aura surrounding them spoke to the actuality of the gods.

CHAPTER 5

Denizens of the Unseen World

Gods, Spirits, Immortals

Scholars today differ on whether to explain Atsutane's ideas by placing them within an overarching belief system. Matsumoto Sannosuke and H. D. Harootunian posit that by connecting his teachings to the everyday life lived by farmers, Atsutane turned the nativist discourse he had inherited from Norinaga into a religion.[1] Koyasu Nobukuni claims that beginning with *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane put the salvation of souls into the structure of his cosmology. Yoshida Masaki disagrees, seeing salvation as a modern concept because it's universalistic and derived from Christianity.[2] Endō Jun argues that the foundation for Atsutane's intellectual work wasn't religious in that it didn't represent the divine with abstract symbols, nor did Atsutane claim universal truths. Instead, he based his scholarship on faith in the reality of Japan's ancient gods and sought to grasp this reality in various ways, from cosmology to genealogy to vicarious encounters with the unseen world.[3] In short, Endō's argument can be read as contending that Atsutane's aim was to put himself into the presence of gods and spirits.

I agree with Endō that Atsutane's scholarship was directed not at turning the gods into symbols but at identifying who they were and what they did in the seen and unseen worlds. This was his goal in writing his commentaries. It was also his goal in compiling *Strange Tidings from the Land of the Immortals* (*Senkyō ibun*), based not on historical documents but on interviews with an

1. Matsumoto Sannosuke, cited in Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 177.
2. Koyasu, *Hirata Atsutane no sekai*, 195–96; Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 153.
3. Endō, "The Reality of Ancient Kami in Hirata Kokugaku."

unlettered boy. Identifying the denizens of the unseen world thus underpins and brings together the two sides of his research—text and popular belief.

From his first encounter with Norinaga's writings to the end of his life, and regardless of his other interests, Atsutane studied the gods and tried to approach them through worship. So far as he was concerned, the age of the gods both was ancient history and existed in his own time. In 1816 he published a folding book of morning prayers to the gods that he and his descendants eventually expanded to twenty-eight gods and spirits, from the sun goddess to the toilet spirit, from the emperor to the ancestors.[4] He drew up a genealogical chart of the gods. Both became bestsellers. He called on the gods to aid him in his scholarship as well as in the vicissitudes of everyday life. He sought traces of the gods in the world around him. Every time he passed a shrine he prayed to its gods. Yet for the most part, he did not try to imagine what individual gods looked like. Not for him were the widely circulated pictures of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Perhaps this was because he stood so much in awe of their mighty power that he dared not presume that they took any form at all. Perhaps too, because his sources did not describe what they wore or how they looked, he did not want to be accused of making things up. Or perhaps he wanted nothing to do with an image of the sun goddess that depicted her as man with Buddhist accouterments.[5]

Unlike his predecessors who studied the age of the gods, Atsutane sought evidence for the unseen world beyond what he could find in ancient texts. He interviewed a man named Katsugorō, who claimed to have returned from the dead, collected illustrated books of ghost stories, and spent days interviewing a boy who hobnobbed with Japanese immortals. His disciples responded by passing around accounts of people who had seen the gods in one guise or another, much like people today who collect and share sightings of UFOs.

In the previous chapter, I showed how objects signaled the presence of gods and spirits; here the focus is on how Atsutane pictured three specific denizens in the unseen world and what he, his contemporaries, and men later had to say about them. Atsutane wove an elaborate tale around the two faces of Ame no Uzume. The unique rituals he created for Kuebiko, the scarecrow god, resulted long after his death in replacing Confucius with Kuebiko in an institute for higher learning's inaugural rites. Depicting the dance of the immortals drew its viewers into one corner of the unseen world.

4. Hirata Atsutane, *Maiasa jinpai shiki*, 1881. For an analysis of the first edition, see Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 102–6.

5. Brian Bocking, "Images of Shinto," 180.

In all three cases, Atsutane plundered early histories and popular beliefs to construct his narrative. He also appropriated Buddhist and Confucian icons and texts to enhance his images and provide content for ceremonies.

Ame no Uzume

Atsutane valued female goddesses and spirits because of the crucial roles they played in creation and procreation in all its forms, from the Japanese islands to life itself, to language, to arts, to culture, but there was one to whom he was particularly devoted. Ame no Uzume appeared in both *The Sacred Sleeve Cord* and *Exegesis on Ancient History* along with myriad other gods. Uniquely among the gods, Atsutane gave her a biography based on his favored sources on the age of the gods. He also commissioned two different images.

Atsutane prepared his first image of Ame no Uzume (hereafter Uzume) in 1820. On 7.9 he dedicated a votive plaque painted on wood to Hisaizu shrine in Koshigaya, a thriving market town. According to the inscription, Atsutane came up with the design based on his research into old texts and had an otherwise obscure artisan named Yamasato Teiyu make the finished product. It depicts the famous scene when the sun goddess, Amaterasu, is lured from a cave on the high plain of heaven where she had hidden out of pique at her rambunctious brother. Although several gods worked together to get her to come out, for this plaque, Atsutane focused chiefly on Uzume because she played an essential role in the ritual that brought the sun goddess back into the society of the gods. She faces the viewer, and as Atsutane related in *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*, "with heavenly shade vine (*hikage*) wrapped round her hair, her sleeves bound up with heavenly jasmine vine (*masaki*), a bunch of heavenly bamboo grass in her left hand while her right held a spear with bells attached, she stomped on an overturned tub, dancing and singing as though possessed, her breasts bare."[6] Note her upraised knee, exposing considerably more leg than usually seen in classical Japanese dance. Behind her, light streams from the cave as the Great Strong God (Tajikara) forces open its stone door.

Uzume and the stone cave where the sun goddess hid herself have remained famous down to the present. The story of why the sun goddess concealed herself and how the other gods enticed her to come out shows how a myth from the classical aristocratic canon percolated into popular culture and how locations on the high plain of heaven could have earthly

6. Hirata Atsutane, *Tamadasuki*, 7:288, HAz.

Fig. 19. Votive tablet depicting Ame no Uzume's dance before the Heavenly Cave, painted for Hirata Atsutane by Yamasato Teiyū (*shown is a modern copy of the original painting* [1820]). (Courtesy of Hisaizu shrine.)

equivalents. By the early nineteenth century, depictions of Uzume were appearing in woodblock prints and in sacred dances to entertain the gods.[7] The most famous was performed for the thousands of pilgrims to the Ise shrines who would see a short play enacting the sun goddess's seclusion in the cave and Uzume's dance that lured her out.[8] The cave is said to be located at Takachiho in Kyushu, on the outskirts of Miyazaki city, also in Kyushu, at Togakushi in the mountains of central Japan and at two spots near Ise, each marked with a shrine. Yet none of them is anywhere near the shrine where Atsutane dedicated his votive plaque, and Hisaizu shrine itself houses

7. See Bernhard Scheid's website: https://religion-in-japan.univie.ac.at/Handbuch/Mythen/Goetter_des_Himmels/Uzume (accessed September 24, 2024).

8. My thanks to Helen Hardacre for pointing this out.

Ōkuninushi, lord of the unseen world, his son, his daughter, his son's wife, and the sun goddess's second son, none of them connected with the incident at the stone cave.

Scholars have not speculated nor do the Hirata family records provide any clues as to why Atsutane dedicated a votive plaque depicting this scene to Hisaizu shrine. A possible explanation comes from considering Atsutane's circumstances at the time. Koshigaya was important to him because, as we have seen, his chief financial backer, the oil merchant Yamazaki Atsutoshi, lived there. Just four months before the date on the plaque, Atsutoshi had provided the wherewithal for Atsutane to move to a house below Yushima Tenmangū shrine. The Hirata family diary records nothing for the period between 1820.6.28 and 7.10, most likely because Atsutane spent those days in Koshigaya.[9] (There is now a marker inside the Hisaizu shrine precincts noting this fact.) It could be that gratitude for the financial security and social stability provided by Atsutoshi plus his respect for a shrine that housed Ōkuninushi led Atsutane to thank the gods for the blessings he had received by offering an image of the sun's rays spreading across the darkness just as he hoped his message would enlighten Japan.

Atsutane began compiling a complicated account about Uzume years before he had her picture painted. Starting in 1815 with a chapter in *Exegesis on Ancient History*, over time he added details to her story drawn from medieval Shinto texts and earlier texts such as *Gleanings from Ancient Stories* that carried her achievements beyond the age of the gods. He found it strange that no text mentioned her parentage and that no shrine was dedicated to her worship. According to *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*, she got her name because she was strong and brave. She created entertainment as seen in the dance and song that she performed before the heavenly stone cave, the myriad gods repeating the song while she danced. It was a counting song, from one to ten, then one hundred, one thousand, and ten thousand, and the climax came when she exposed herself, at least according to *Record of Ancient Matters*. As Atsutane noted, at this, the gods burst out laughing.[10]

In *Exegesis on Ancient History*, Atsutane again takes up Uzume's story.

9. There are two versions of the house diary for this crucial period in 1820, one copied by Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 923, and one in Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:28. They don't agree. Watanabe states that starting on 6.26, Orise kept the diary, so it is possible that Kanetane omitted it from the copy he made, incorporating only the date 7.3, when the gods gave Atsutane's daughter the name of Chō.

10. Hirata Atsutane, *Koshiden*, 11:23–25, 41, HAz. For the texts on which Atsutane drew, see Aston, *Nihongi*, 42–45; Philippi, *Kojiki*, 81–85; Katō, *Kogoshūi*, 19–22.

When the sun goddess sent her august grandson Ninigi down to earth at Takachiho, she ordered Uzume, along with four other gods, to accompany him. But how can they land when someone (Sarutahiko) is standing in their path? Only Uzume has the courage to confront him, showing, as Atsutane emphasizes, no deference at all.[11] He also notes that according to *Chronicles of Japan* and *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*, this is when she exposed her breasts and belly button in a bold display of female charms.[12] It turned out that Sarutahiko was not a threat. He came to welcome Ninigi and guide him to Takachiho. Atsutane argues that Uzume took part of his name, and she had already received another name, that of Palace Woman (Ōmiya no me), because she served the sun goddess once the goddess moved into her new palace/shrine upon leaving the stone cave. In *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History* (*Koshiseibun*), Atsutane comes up with the idea of combining these two female gods and criticizes the canonical histories for ignoring Palace Woman. By fabricating a role for Uzume in serving Amaterasu, he then assimilates Palace Woman's shrines, activities, and generally soothing functions to her.[13] As Palace Woman, she is the ancestress of attendants who harmonize relations between ruler and courtiers and comfort the ruler. As Sarume, she is the progenitor of court entertainers. Following a government reform in 808, one line of her Sarume descendants took charge of the sewing rooms for the emperor's garments.[14]

It is worth noting that Uzume's relations with Sarutahiko challenge the male-female hierarchy that colors the canonical texts from the moment the procreative goddess Izanami is admonished for speaking out of turn in *Record of Ancient Matters*. Did Uzume marry Sarutahiko, or did she not? She was a heavenly god and he but an earth spirit, and an ugly one at that. Besides, she had already appeared by herself in the prior episode of the stone cave. Despite this evidence of her autonomy, in a fourteenth-century commentary on the age of the gods (*Jindai no maki kuketsu*), a possible descendant of the man who wrote *Gleanings from Ancient Stories* named Inbe no Masamichi tried to domesticate her.[15] In the early nineteenth-century *Snow Country Tales*, Suzuki Bokushi described the "Blossom Water festival," a fertility celebration for newly married couples, featuring performers dressed as Uzume and Sarutahiko who wave depictions of sex organs.[16] Following Norinaga,

11. Hirata Atsutane, *Miyabi no kami godenki*. 365.
12. *Koshiden*, 11:42, HAz.
13. *Koshiseibun*, 1:75, SHAz; *Koshiden*, vol. 12, HAz, vol. 8, 12.
14. *Koshiden*, 28:14, HAz.
15. Shibata, "Sarutahiko-kō," 37, 42.
16. Suzuki, *Snow Country Tales*, 82.

Atsutane had doubts. Even if the stalwart Uzume took a husband, he could claim no achievements to rival hers. "In human lineages as well, when a woman succeeds to the family business, she is called Sarume no kimi and becomes the ancestral god." Furthermore, in houses with female chiefs, the woman is the head, and the man is like the wife.[17] This remarkable switching of gender roles was unknown in the ruling class of Atsutane's day, because a samurai house without a male head would be abolished. Commoner households were a different matter, but even there it was a rare occurrence for a woman to run the family business as Tatsu'uma Kiyo did for much of the last half of the nineteenth century.[18] All this is to say that under certain circumstances, Atsutane was willing to acknowledge, indeed praise, a woman's role in maintaining the household.

In 1825, Atsutane added to his previous account of Uzume in volume 7 of *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*. He pointed out that exposing herself was a sign that she had become possessed; she deliberately acted as though crazed to make the gods laugh and the sun goddess curious. The counting song, both strange and mystical, is a happy song, just as dance too is a way of expressing joy. Performed during the spirit pacification ceremony, song and dance can bring the dead back to life just as they brought the sun goddess out of her cave. Song and dance also calm spirits that had become dispersed. Atsutane found one text that traced the supervision of sake brewing back to Uzume, now called Palace Woman, because sake works in mysterious ways to ease the imperial mind and harmonize relations between ruler and subject. In a further etymological declension, he took to calling her Miyabi no kami, "bi" being short for "buri," meaning "in the style of" or "in the manner of."[19] Behaving in the true palace style, according to Atsutane, means that your manners are naturally dignified and refined while you are straightforward, determined, honorable, and wise. Indeed, Miyabi models and epitomizes the virtues for both men and women that enable social relations to function smoothly, those that had for centuries constituted the core of Confucian teachings. "By learning from this god, you will naturally follow the way of parent and child, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, friendship, and, it goes without saying, ruler and subject. Your descendants will prosper, your house will flourish, and this is the true Way of being human."[20]

17. *Koshiden*, 28:12, 15, HAz.

18. Lebra, "Women in an All-Male Industry," 131–48.

19. Atsutane first identified Miyabi no kami as an alternative name for Ame no Uzume in *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History*.

20. *Tamadasuki*, 7:288–303, HAz; the quotation is on 303.

What makes Uzume unique compared to other gods for Atsutane is the treatise that he penned on her achievements and hers alone. Composed in 1829 and titled *Biography of the Goddess Miyabi* (*Miyabi no kami go-denki*), it also recast her image. Like some of Atsutane's other works, it was not written by him. Instead, a disciple who took the name Ishikawa Atsunori recorded Atsutane's lectures and proposed that his transcription be published. Atsutane agreed, Kanetane made a few corrections, and to Atsunori's delight, it appeared in print.[21] It ranks thirteenth in the list of the Hirata house best-sellers, and as Miyabi no kami, her image ranks twentieth.[22]

The first part of the treatise on Miyabi no kami interprets the scene before the heavenly stone cave. Musical instruments originated at this time, as did women's hair ornaments and sacred dance. When, according to the treatise, Miyabi no kami began to dance as one possessed by the gods, she pulled out her breasts and exposed her private parts with none of the shame expected of a goddess. As Atsutane said, "To go so far as to expose this place, the most important part of her body for a woman, by slovenly loosening her skirt string is really the epitome of unconstrained behavior." In *Sand and Pebbles* (*Shasekishū*), a collection of anecdotes, some didactic, some humorous, written by the itinerant Buddhist monk Mujū Ichien around 1279, Atsutane uncovered evidence that shrine maidens had continued this ancient practice. The renowned poetess Izumi Shikibu once went to Kibune shrine with a heartfelt request (she wasn't getting along with her lover). An aged priestess appeared beating a drum. She circled the prayer hall three times with her skirt lifted and urged Izumi Shikibu to do the same. Her face red with embarrassment, Izumi Shikibu instead wrote a poem and got her lover back.[23] Atsutane put this story together with his earlier claim that Miyabi no kami was the progenitor of seamstresses to come up with the idea that if a woman loses her sewing needle, she should pray to this goddess, raise her skirt three times, and clap her hands three times. Then the needle will reappear. To thank the goddess, she should flap her skirt three times again.[24]

Atsutane used the information that he found in earlier texts about Uzume to tell people how to lead their lives. Pray to her and perform the spirit pacification ceremony so that she will grant you long life. Sing the counting song in front of good gods and they will give you manifold benefits; sing it

21. "Miyabi no kami godenki," 363.

22. Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata kokugaku*, 39.

23. See Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū)*, 260–61. My thanks to Susan B. Klein for this reference.

24. Hirata Atsutane, "Miyabi no kami," 365.

in front of evil gods and they won't cause calamities. But to Atsutane's mind, what made this goddess so important was the way she modeled appropriate behavior for men and women who serve in palaces as well as those who work in business. No matter whom you serve, always figure out what he or she wants and act accordingly. Show no fear in confronting ghosts or ruffians. If the situation requires it, do not hesitate to do crazy things that might appear shameful to others and cause them to laugh. Men have their manner of being; women have theirs. Nobles act like nobles, and the base have their way too. The conventions of behavior appropriate to each station in life can be taught in schools of etiquette, and they all originate in Miyabi no kami. Even the emperor recites a prayer to her during major court festivals. By saying her name, he can ascertain who is good and who is bad among those who appear before him and thus maintain harmony.

Atsutane also connected her story to practices popular in his own day.[25] Without her performance, he maintained, there would be no Kabuki, and we know from other texts that he was an avid amateur performer. The names of the numbers originate in her counting song, and what would life be without numbers to keep track of everything from the days to cups of sake? The hierarchy of offices for female officials derives from her service to the sun goddess. Atsutane found evidence of how this goddess was once worshipped from Ise to the homes of artisans. Alas, in his time, people had forgotten her, making it his duty to promote the tradition of worshipping her and remembering her achievements, for she is the god of harmonious relations who blesses the people who believe in her with the love and respect of their contemporaries.

Having preached on why this god is so important in lubricating human relations, Atsutane added an appendix that outlined how to worship her. Every morning you should sit facing the goddess's image, clap your hands twice, bow, and recite a prayer. You should list all the names by which she is known, then ask that you get along with superiors and parents and not make any mistakes, that the house be peaceful with friends and relatives living in harmony, and that under the goddess's constant protection you be granted long life with a good reputation and worldly success. When you are finished, you should raise your head, again clap your hands twice, and bow. Whenever you have a chance, you should repeat the counting song. Atsutane then outlined how to perform the same ceremony for this goddess that was done twice a year in ancient times with altar and offerings, a master of ceremonies, a banquet, song, and dance. "Having a good time and making

25. See my discussion of this text in *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, 125–27.

people laugh entertains and encourages the gods." At the end of this text is a woodblock print of women preparing for the ceremony. It shows an alcove crowded with branches from the sacred sakaki tree, offerings of rice balls and sake, plus wrappers of cloth and the fruits of land and sea. The mistress of ceremonies, her hair streaming down her back, sits facing another woman similarly attired, while the hair wrapped around combs on the other two women suggests that they are of lower rank, even though they are equally elegantly attired.[26]

At the same time that the Hirata school published *Biography of the Goddess Miyabi*, it started selling prints designed by Atsutane and suitable for worship. The first were stone rubbings; later Kanetane turned to woodblocks. The image is crudely made, but it shows her adorned with items like those on the votive plaque (see fig. 20). She is no longer a shrine maiden dancing wildly but a goddess in all her finery. Unlike on the plaque, the swirl of her robes conceals her legs except for her feet while ribbons circle her head much like they do for some Buddhist images. She also wears a necklace with a single jewel at her throat that resembles those found on the ancient Haniwa figurines of shamans.

Atsutane urged both men and women to take Miyabi no kami as their role model in human relations. She shows how laughing together brings people into harmony, and she lends her strength to protecting the community that makes life possible. During everyday interactions, the most important virtue for both sexes is a feminine flexibility that allows an attendant to fit the mood of her superior and work with others. In 1849, a group of men in Akita followed his advice by forming a "Miyabi confraternity."[27] As Yoshida Asako has pointed out, Atsutane's emphasis on what are considered feminine traits went hand in hand with his understanding that every living thing comes in male-female pairs and the only way for people to succeed in this life is to work well with others. Nevertheless, he was unique among the scholars of his day in emphasizing that womanly qualities, which he traced back to Miyabi no kami, were applicable to all.[28]

The 1829 print later became the model for a much more elaborate depiction of the goddess. The inscription at the top announces that this is the likeness of Miyabi no kami. Below is the counting song arranged in four columns of six glyphs each, said to be in divine script from the age of the

26. Hirata Atsutane, "Miyabi no kami," 375–78. The quotation is on 377.

27. Shokan 15-1-22, HAKS. The letter is from Murai Kyūshirō, who then joined the Hirata school when Kanetane went to Akita in 1850.

28. Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 153–57.

Fig. 20. Woodblock print depicting ceremony for Miyabi no kami in *Miyabi no kami godenki* (1829). (Courtesy of Hathitrust.)

gods.[29] Her hair continues to be decorated with vines and her left hand holds a bunch of bamboo grass, but her right hand now holds a branch of the hiragi tree, decorated with bells, whose spiky leaves were said to ward off demons. The swirling robes and ribbons provide a sense of movement. Her kimono covers everything except for her feet, the curvature of her breast, and her arms. With her long hair streaming down robes that cover her legs, she presents a much more genteel air than on the votive plaque that Atsutane dedicated to Hisaizu shrine or in popular woodblock prints of the time. What is most remarkable about her finery are the multistranded necklace and bracelets that hark back to the descriptions in ancient texts of items crafted to help lure the sun goddess out of her cave. They feature curved *magatama* jewels that had fallen out of favor as ornaments a thousand years earlier before being rediscovered by antiquarians in the early nineteenth century, here colored in the bright red pigment that entered Japan in 1869. In the folk culture of the day, red was "a material source of both potency and protection."[30] Shibuya Masahiko, from a village near Ōmiya who joined the school in 1834, made the drawing for the print. While he claimed to have based it on Atsutane's 1829 image, adding color and the jewels suggests that he combined the work that antiquarians were doing to retrieve ancient objects with imported pigments, turning the image into an example of how this collaborator took Atsutane's work in a unique new direction.[31]

The plaque commissioned by Atsutane in 1820 for Hisaizu shrine has become so weathered that it is no longer on display. Instead, the shrine's current priest, Kobayashi Takerō, has had a new one painted that replicates the old except for switching the date for the inscription from right to left and adding jewelry à la Masahiko. Kobayashi has also prepared copies on small blocks of wood for worshippers to write prayers on the back and leave at the shrine. I kept mine.

The Scarecrow Kuebiko

The god Kuebiko had an extraordinary career in nineteenth-century Japan. He plays a minor role in *Record of Ancient Matters*, yet he rose to chief deity

29. There is also a large hanging scroll of this counting song, again in the glyphs from the age of the gods inscribed in 1825 by Atsutane for Yuge Haruhiko, a shrine priest from Kazusa who joined the Hirata school in 1819. Akita Shiritsu Akarenga Kyōdokan, *Akita no senjin*, 29.

30. Smith, "The True Colors of Meiji Prints," 145.

31. Hirata-ke monjo, Jikumono 6–3, HAKS.

Fig. 21. Miyabi no kami with divine script by Shibuya Masahiko (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

at the opening of the newly established university (*daigaku*) in 1869 before vanishing into obscurity for all but the Hirata faithful. When Atsutane named three gods and spirits to credit with his success in writing *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* and other texts in 1811, Kuebiko was not among them. He first shows up in the eighteenth chapter of *Exegesis on Ancient History* (*Koshiden*) drafted in 1818.[32] Five years later, in Atsutane's diary of his 1823 trip to Kyoto, he notes that on his way home, "having bathed, washed my hands, and prayed to the gods, I had two bowls of red bean rice gruel and then made a drawing of Kuebiko with inscription."[33]

What made Kuebiko important to Atsutane? In *Record of Ancient Matters*, Kuebiko appears in response to a summons by Ōkuninushi to identify a god who came bounding across the waves in a seedpod boat. None of Ōkuninushi's attendants recognized the tiny god, but Kuebiko stated: "This is Kamimusubi no kami's child named Sukunabikona." Sukunabikona went on to help Ōkuninushi create and solidify the lands beyond Japan. Kuebito "is now called the scarecrow of the mountain paddies. Although his feet do not walk, he is a deity who knows all things under heaven."[34] This omniscience is what attracted Atsutane.

In *Exegesis on Ancient History*, Atsutane synthesizes multiple texts to squeeze a meaning out of this brief passage that unexpectedly highlights women's unique capabilities. In contrast to *Record of Ancient Matters*, Kuebiko does not appear in *Chronicles of Japan*, the other canonical history of the age of the gods. Instead, Takamimusubi no kami identifies Sukunabikona as one of his fifteen hundred children, a wicked child who "slipped through my fingers and fell."[35] In combining the two canonical texts, Atsutane first attributes Sukunabikona's parentage to both generative gods, male and female. Once Kamimusubi confirms Sukunabikona's identity, Atsutane states that as a woman, Kamimusubi oversees internal matters. Women thus play an essential and joint role in reproduction, and he values them for managing the household. Furthermore, in the immediately preceding passage in *Exegesis on Ancient History*, he asserts that because children are born in the mother's house, they are more intimate with her than with the father, and in some cases only the mother is known, not the father. At a time when descent was reckoned through the male line, Atsutane came to a remarkable conclusion: "That is why in speaking of parents, the mother comes first."[36]

32. Nakagawa Kazuaki, *Hirata kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*, 142.
33. Miyachi. "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 3:387.
34. Philippi, *Kojiki*, 116–17.
35. Aston, *Nihongi*, 62–63.
36. *Koshiden*, vol. 17, HAz vol. 8, 13.

Because etymology was important to Atsutane, he analyzed Kuebiko's name at length, drawing on classical texts such as the fourteenth-century *Essays in Idleness* plus local lore. As with other gods, Kuebiko's name had so many variants that it required considerable intellectual prowess to conclude that its derivation remained mysterious. One name stuck, however, and that was scarecrow (*sohodo* or *kakashi*).[37]

How could a weathered, broken-down scarecrow, an inanimate object, become an omniscient deity? Surely with no means of locomotion it could not have appeared at Ōkuninushi's command. Atsutane resolved this conundrum by drawing on shamanistic practice. In the age of the gods, as in the present, a shaman would employ a medium, pray for the souls of gods or people to possess it, and then ask it questions. In other words, in this case "to summon" means to call on the spirits to possess the scarecrow. Once animated, the scarecrow becomes the god Kuebiko, who channels all the knowledge held by the gods of heaven and earth, making it possible for him to answer Ōkuninushi's question.[38] As a seeker of knowledge about the age of the gods, Atsutane created an invocation to the gods of scholarship in *The Sacred Sleeve Cord* that added Kuebiko to the three to whom he had prayed when writing *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*:

> We pay respect to the presence of the spirit of Kuebiko, making obeisance after obeisance [and praying]: "Please deign to advance us ever more, with understanding ever deeper, in the task of learning, and lacking feet though you do, permit us to know the affairs of the realm."[39]

Why did Atsutane decide that an obscure god like the scarecrow Kuebiko deserved such attention? Farmers dressed gods of the rice paddies in straw hat and raincoat and armed them with the catalpa bow, at least according to a woodblock print made by Hokusai in 1815.[40] The early twentieth-century ethnographer Orikuchi Shinobu reported that they guarded the fields even in his own time, their apparel signifying that they came from far away and endured all kinds of weather.[41] Carmen Blacker famously identified the

37. *Koshiden*, vol. 18, 1, 5–6, 8–9, HAz.
38. *Koshiden*, vol. 18, 11, HAz.
39. McMullen, *The Worship of Confucius in Japan*, 417.
40. Katsushika Hokusai, *Hokusai manga*, vol. 3, "rice growing."
41. Orikuchi Shinobu Zenshū Kankōkai, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, 1:20–22; Li, *Ambiguous Bodies*, 160.

catalpa bow with shamanism.[42] By combining local lore—the figure of the scarecrow and his bow—with historical texts that assimilated Kuebiko—a medium that channeled divine knowledge—to scarecrows, Atsutane found a way to represent this all-knowing god, who then superseded Michizane, the god of scholarship, and Yagokoro omoikane, who promoted thoughtful consideration, in his pantheon of personal gods.

What is most remarkable about Atsutane's engagement with Kuebiko is how his thirst for knowledge led him to mine esoteric Buddhism for a method to become one with the god. Seen in isolation, his attempt to take practices from a religion he habitually denigrated and transform them into secret teachings for his school appears bizarre. Placed in the context of knowledge for sale to his disciples, it becomes meaningful.

Iyanaga Nobumi found Atsutane's secret practice aimed at becoming one with Kuebiko at the end of a voluminous assortment of fragments that Atsutane copied from esoteric Buddhist texts.[43] Given the title "Method for Kuebiko Practice" (*Kuebiko gyōhō*) and probably written around 1829, it contains excerpts from these fragments rewritten to replace all mention of Buddhas with Shinto deities. Iyanaga claims that so far as Atsutane was concerned, the Buddha was just another name for *kami* (gods). Both refer to the ultimate, and Atsutane was the ultimate universalist.[44] In other words, there is just one absolute truth, and all roads lead not to Rome but from Japan.

"Method for Kuebiko Practice" begins like other Shinto rituals with the purification of space, body, and clothing. The practitioner is to meditate on the gods until a strong light illuminates all corners of the room and enters the head. Next, repent of all sins and beg the gods to expiate them. Repeat three times. This is followed by a series of promises to devote oneself to the gods, each repeated three times. In the mind's eye, the practitioner looks at the sky, the earth, and the heavenly pillar. "Because the emperor's ancestral gods erected the heavenly pillar, . . . the heavenly way is carried out" (p. 242). Look at the pillar of the country; look at your body. "Our body is the same as heaven and earth and we are gods and spirits. . . . That being the case, our body contains a portion of Kuebiko" (p. 243). A breathing exercise leads to meditating on entering a space of nothingness filled with all the gods who enter the body (p. 244). In other words, this practice leads not just to com-

42. See Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*.

43. Hirata Atsutane, *Mippō shūji burui-kō*. Hansen discusses this text in *When Tengu Talk*, 152–54.

44. Iyanaga Nobumi, "<Nise—mikkyō / Shintō giki>," 236–37, 259n33. Page numbers in the text refer to this essay.

ing into the presence of the gods but to becoming one with the gods, in particular, one with Kuebiko.

In addition to unity with the gods, the practitioner can also achieve this-worldly benefits. This is done through meditation and through the recitation of a spell so secret that it is transmitted orally. Repeating it one hundred thousand times delights the heavenly gods, repeating it two hundred thousand times delights the earthly gods, and so forth, for hundreds of thousands of repetitions that must continue over three days and three nights. Eat a simple meal and make offerings to Kuebiko's image. If all has been done correctly, light from Kuebiko's head illuminates the practice space, music sounds, the earth shakes, the five types of knowledge (*komyō*—literary, medical, etc.) fill the four quarters, and the practitioner can live for thousands of years (p. 247). Atsutane lays out such an elaborate meditation practice that Iyanaga thinks that he was just playing with notions derived from esoteric Buddhism (pp. 255–56). "Method for Kuebiko Practice" can also be seen as Atsutane's creation of a secret ritual to acquire knowledge, and like other secrets associated with the aesthetic and martial arts, it was for sale to initiates.

Atsutane's fixation with Kuebiko led him into some strange byways, but he did not follow them strictly for his own amusement. In 1836, the Hirata house created a flyer listing prices for what it termed "orthodox teachings." Among these was the "Kuebiko rite," one of five ceremonies for initiates who had completed the full course of lectures on the ancient age of the gods (see chap. 7).[45] It was thus a secret transmission that contained a method for transcending the conscious self through spells, in other words a way for Atsutane and his followers to become gods through identifying with Kuebiko that went beyond the prayer for knowledge found in *The Sacred Sleeve Cord*. It remained secret until it was published in the twentieth century. At its beginning is a statement by Kanetane: "The remainder of this text consists of Atsutane's secret ideas. Do not recklessly divulge them."[46]

Atsutane created ink-brush paintings of Kuebiko and hung one beside his desk, where he could pray to it whenever he needed inspiration. He even sketched Kuebiko on a fan to hold in his hand. Kuebiko is represented metonymically as a broad-brimmed straw hat and a straw raincoat. He has no face. To his left, as though held by an unseen hand, is a bow and arrow, signifying his purpose as a scarecrow to intimidate birds and vermin and perhaps

45. Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata kokugaku*, 14.

46. Hirata Atsutane, *Mippō shūji burui-kō*, 154.

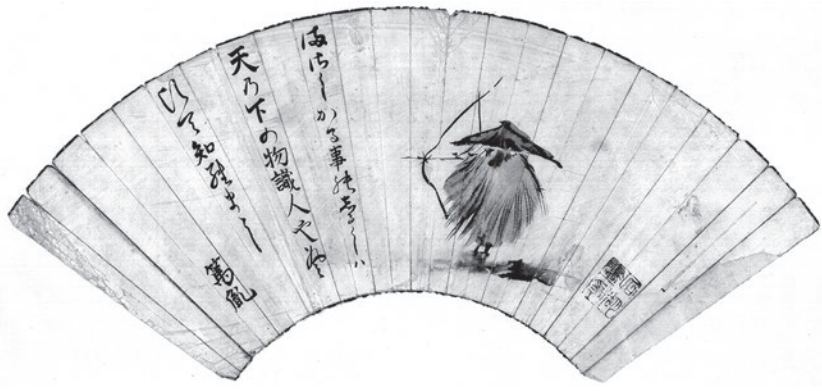

Fig. 22. Fan with image of Kuebiko drawn by Hirata Atsutane with poem by Atsutane (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

even Japan's enemies, and the catalpa bow, strummed by shamans to draw spirits into a medium. Below are grasses laden with the seeds of autumn. The hanging scroll inscription reads first in Sino-Japanese: "According to *[Gleanings in] Old Words*, this god has feet but cannot walk yet he is the god who knows everything in the realm." This is followed by a poem in Japanese that is also on the fan:

Masashikaru	As for the sign for things
koto no shirushi wa	that are true
ame no shita no	if you ask the one who knows
mono shiru hito ya	everything in the realm
toite shiramashi	you too will come to know it

Besides his own drawings of Kuebiko, Atsutane sometimes added his inscription to drawings done by others. He also wrote several poems featuring Kuebiko as a desolate figure standing alone in the harvested fields of autumn.[47] In 1842, after he had been exiled to Akita, he was summoned to treat an illness suffered by the domain lord. When the lord miraculously recovered, Atsutane wrote a poem to Kuebiko celebrating this achievement.[48]

Atsutane's depiction of Kuebiko proved popular with his disciples and other supporters of the ancient Way who wished to gain divine knowledge. When Kanetane traveled through the provinces near Edo between 1828 and

47. Hako 7-21-5, HAKS; Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata kokugaku*, 54.

48. Yamazaki, *Hirata Atsutane to Yamazaki Atsutoshi*, 48.

1831 to lecture to the faithful, raise money for publications, and recruit disciples, he distributed ten copies of the Kuebiko scroll over the course of four trips.[49] After Atsutane died, posthumous disciples requested scrolls, preferably by the master himself, and Kanetane wrote a number of letters attesting to their authenticity.[50] See, for example, an 1872 letter to Hayashi Kyūsei, who joined the school in 1868:

> Atsutane himself drew this image of Kuebiko, wrote the poem and gave it to Midorigawa Yoshinao [Kanetane's brother]. He made just three or four drawings of Kuebiko, and they are only to be bestowed on people deeply devoted to our way. . . . When Yoshinao became fatally ill in 1857, he said that the image should be returned to me. Mr. Hayashi is devoted to the way . . . and he has done many services for our house. Moreover, I know that he will redouble his efforts in the future, and consequently it is appropriate for him to receive this scroll. We pray that Atsutane's spirit will reside in this scroll throughout the years, it will of course recall Yoshinao's spirit, and it will not be far from my heart.[51]

In fact, Kuebiko's image proliferated, with a woodblock print appearing in 1871. After Nobutane moved to Tokyo with the emperor in 1868, he promised his parents that he would prepare a portrait of Atsutane and images of Kuebiko and Miyabi no kami. He made two drawings of Kuebiko himself.[52]

Promoted by Atsutane as the god of knowledge, Kuebiko enjoyed momentary popularity just after the restoration of the emperor to direct rule. In making things new, one target became formal education, which for approximately twelve hundred years had been dominated by Chinese learning. Following Chinese convention, the school year began with a sacrifice to Confucius. Even though Atsutane was thoroughly versed in Chinese studies, as were most of his disciples, as Japan chauvinists they deplored this worship of a foreign god. Shortly after the emperor moved to Edo, the disciples got permission to open a new school in what was now Tokyo, and the inaugural ceremony on 1869.8.2 augured well for the Hirata school. It featured just two gods: Yagokoro omoikane (one of the gods who helped Atsutane write *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*) and Kuebiko as his correlate, the deities of wis-

49. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:47, 54, 58, 64.

50. Shokan 13-2-31; Shokan 13-4-30; Shokan 13-4-52; Shokan 13-4-77; Shokan 21-3-4, HAKS.

51. Shokan 13-4-20, HAKS. Transcription by Kumazawa Eriko.

52. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:440, 493.

dom and learning.[53] According to James McMullen, by doing away with the sacrifices to Confucius, the Tokyo ceremony represented a triumph for the Hirata family and its disciples. The account below of how Kanetane greeted the emperor's emissary and what followed is by an unsympathetic observer who had witnessed previous ceremonies to Confucius:

> Doctor Hirata, his white hair flowing long, wearing court robe and cap, welcomed him [the emissary sent by the imperial court] with a very jubilant air. All the teachers were wearing long-sleeved robes of blue-green silk. Those of senior and junior controller . . . status or above stood gravely forth to offer oblations piled on footed trays. While they did so, they all covered their mouths with white paper and, moving around on their knees, passed [the oblations] to and fro; their manner in so doing seemed outlandish. In front of the gods of learning, coarse matting had been spread, and up above a spirit rope had been suspended. In this way, the old Chinese school had become like a Shinto shrine office.[54]

The ascendency of Yagokoro omoikane and Kuebiko did not last. In comparison to Confucius, they were of recent origin, and the closing of the Tokyo school in 1870 took away their base. The coterie of Hirata disciples led by Kanetane had many competitors—proponents of Western studies, men who believed that Chinese studies still had more to offer the educated mind, and rival factions within the Hirata school. One of Atsutane's first disciples, Ōkuni Takamasa (1792–1871), and his disciple Fukuba Bisei (1831–1907) took their cue from *Chronicles of Japan* and privileged Kunitokotachi (Eternal spirit of the land) and the sun goddess as the imperial progenitors. Rather than promote heretofore obscure gods, they encouraged the citizens of the new Meiji state to demonstrate filial piety to their parents, respect for elders, and loyalty to the emperor. These goals fit much better with the men who held power in the new Meiji government and who were determined to compete with the West by building a rich country and a strong army.

Torakichi in the Realm of the Japanese Immortals

Atsutane found Uzume and Kuebiko in the ancient texts from which he derived his vision of an unseen world populated by gods and spirits, but as

53. Wachutka, *Kokugaku in Meiji-Period Japan*, 84.
54. McMullen, *Worship of Confucius in Japan*, 430, 432.

Yoshida Masaki has stated, they did not suffice to prove what lay beyond human ken in the reality of the present.[55] Fortunately for Atsutane, he lived in an age in which belief in ghosts flourished. Demons, monsters, and spirits of all kinds who refused to stay dead populated the enchanted world of early nineteenth-century Japan.[56] Many were women who died unjustly and came back to torment their oppressors, as Ueda Akinari recounted in *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, but others brought tidings of great joy. Wilbur Hansen accuses Atsutane of performing as a "carnival sideshow barker" for promoting the story I am about to relate.[57] I think it represents yet another approach to proving that Atsutane's intuition was correct. In *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane had asserted that some people have entered the unseen world while still living; others have invisible attendants.[58] As we have seen in Atsutane's depiction of Uzume's lascivious dance before the cave where the sun goddess had hidden herself and in his meditations on Kuebiko, he believed in spirit possession, and spirits possessed Torakichi, a boy living in Edo, twice. For these reasons, I think that Atsutane and his collaborators sincerely believed what Torakichi had to say.

On 1820.10.1, Atsutane's friend, the bibliophile and shogunal official Yashiro Hirokata, came to tell him that a youth named Torakichi, who had spent years in the unseen world, was then staying with the essayist and pharmacist Yamazaki Yoshishige. Yashiro had already met Torakichi and realized that what he had to say coincided with Atsutane's teachings. He urged Atsutane to question Torakichi thoroughly and record everything he said. Atsutane was delighted. He had met or heard about abductees to the unseen world before, but their accounts had been so vague and disjointed as to be useless. "What happens in that other world is a mystery, not to be divulged."[59] On the other hand, thanks to the will of the gods, secrets in ancient texts had become public knowledge, as had previously unknown objects and scientific discoveries made in foreign lands. Perhaps now he would be allowed to learn about the nooks and crannies of another realm previously kept hidden.

The text that resulted from the encounter with Torakichi is notable for the way it treats the other world as real.[60] Now titled *Senkyō ibun*, translated by Carmen Blacker as *Strange Tidings from the Realm of the Immortals*,[61] it

55. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 243.
56. See Suzuki, *Snow Country Tales*, 30–36, 69–72, 137–43, 146–48, 264, 275–80.
57. Hansen, *When Tengu Talk*, 195.
58. Hirata Atsutane, *Tama no mihashira*, 146.
59. Hirata Atsutane, *Senkyō ibun*, 1. Page numbers in the text refer to this source. For an extended account of this encounter, see Hansen, *When Tengu Talk*, 36–38.
60. Inoue Nobutaka, "Hirata Atsutane to minshū kisō shinkō," 34.
61. Blacker, "Supernatural Abductions," 124.

was a collaborative effort. Other titles for different iterations give various names for Torakichi and his teacher. An account by Yamazaki Yoshishige put Torakichi in the realm of *tengu* and used a character for his teacher's title that means "Buddhist monk." It achieved considerable renown and spread widely.[62] The Hirata family archive contains a bewildering array of disjointed, fragmentary, and sometimes contradictory documents, some emphasizing his sacred, almost divine nature, a couple in Atsutane's hand highlighting his spirit possession. Kanetane put them together in the early 1850s to produce a definitive manuscript and tried to limit its access to trusted members of the school, as Atsutane had insisted because he knew that not everyone was likely to believe Torakichi's story.[63] In 2018 a Twitter posting sparked a resurgence of interest in *Strange Tidings*, and modern versions of the text without the instances of spirit possession went through several printings.[64] That social media would popularize an early nineteenth-century account of the unseen speaks to contemporary dissatisfaction with the notion that the material world is all there is.

From the time he was a boy of six or seven, Torakichi claimed that he had displayed an uncanny ability to foretell the future. Brought up in a poor family that allowed him to run wild, he tried to apprentice himself to a fortuneteller, only to be rebuffed. When he came across an old man selling medicines out of a small wide-mouthed pot, he became intrigued when the man climbed into the pot and flew off. Some days later, he accepted the man's invitation to join him in the mountains, and over a five-year period Torakichi traveled back and forth between his home and a realm filled with extraordinary creatures often doing mundane things.

So who was the man and what was this world? Torakichi called him Sugiyama Sōshō, and at first Sugiyama explained that he was what is called a *tengu* (p. 9), living with twelve other *tengu* on Mount Iwama. *Tengu* either have long narrow noses or beak-like noses resembling a bird of prey. They have claws for feet on which they stand upright like human beings, wings as well as arms, and they usually come in either black or red. They are known in Japanese folk religion as fighters and troublemakers, but like most otherworldly figures, they can also serve and protect. Later, Torakichi called *tengu* "base creatures" (p. 21) and denied that they had raised him. Finally, he explained that his teacher had counseled him to use the term *tengu* because it was readily understood, but in fact his teacher was a *sanjin*, a man of the mountains.

62. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*, 164.

63. See Endō, "Hirata Atsutane *Senkyō ibun* no kensei katei," 1–20; Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*, 165–73.

64. Endō, "Hirata Atsutane *Senkyō ibun* no kensei katei," 1.

Torakichi changed his tune when he realized that Atsutane despised *tengu*. In 1821, soon after meeting Torakichi, Atsutane compiled *Thoughts on Bewitchments Past and Present* (*Kokon yōmikō*), which contains stories about *tengu* bad behavior. Imai Hidekazu has recently compared how this text and *Senkyō ibun* approach *tengu*, the one drawing on documents, the other on his informant. In *Thoughts on Bewitchments*, Atsutane posited that *tengu* were originally Buddhist monks whose evil practices had led to their transformation, and among the worst of these was their sexual preference for boys. Having learned that women were forbidden on the mountain where *tengu* and *sanjin* lived, Atsutane had a disciple ask Torakichi if Sugiyama practiced same-sex relations. This Torakichi indignantly denied. Imai argues that in such distinctions we can catch a glimpse of Atsutane's perplexity caught between his belief that *tengu* actually existed and his dislike of the foreign Buddhist elements that they represented.[65]

According to Torakichi's account, men like Sugiyama start out as recluses. At first animals fear them, but over time they become close, and the animals even bring them food. Once they have survived for thirty years, they can live as long as trees and rocks. Torakichi's teacher had been around since before the time of Buddha in service to the gods (p. 82). Eventually he would die, meaning that he was a quasi-immortal. Sugiyama was not the same as the godly gods whose deeds are recorded in the ancient texts. Instead, he, the *tengu*, and the monsters whom people were most likely to meet lived in a different realm of the unseen world. The quasi-immortals knew no more about what went on in the realm of the august gods than human beings knew about quasi-immortals.

Torakichi asserted that quasi-immortals are intermediaries between people and gods. Each mountain has at least one quasi-immortal. They keep registers of who lives where, and at the new year, they gather at Mount Zōzu in Shikoku to help the chief quasi-immortal at the Konpira complex deal with the petitioners who flock there with their appeals. They resemble the Chinese immortals in that they have magical powers, but they are not the easygoing idlers pursuing their own pleasure that you find in China. Instead, they work hard worshipping the gods in the correct fashion. Torakichi warned that even though people may think their pleas to the gods are reasonable, from the gods' perspective, many are wicked. Unless the quasi-immortals step in, the gods may punish the petitioner. As they become wiser, quasi-immortals get more and more referrals to deal with people's appeals.

65. Imai Hidekazu, "Kinsei chishikijin no kaii ninshiki to Atsutane," 108–9, 112, 117.

They also practice the austerities that confer magical powers, which enables them to do more for people. Their lives are thus much harder than humans' lives, and they envy us (pp. 53–54).

Torakichi provided voluminous information about the quasi-immortals, explaining that they use their magical powers for all sorts of purposes. They can ward off evil and help the gods defend Japan against its enemies. They can fly. Sugiyama took Torakichi to foreign lands, from China to the west, though they never lingered long enough for Torakichi to learn much about them. They flew up to the moon, which had holes in it, and as close to the sun as possible without being incinerated. They visited the isle of women. Given the inhabitants' tendency to eat men, it was a good thing Torakichi and his guide were invisible.

Torakichi's account of the quasi-immortals provided incontrovertible oral evidence for life in the unseen world. Hoping to learn more, Atsutane enticed Torakichi to live at the Hirata house to question him further. These interviews were not one-on-one. Instead, Atsutane invited his disciples, acquaintances, and the intellectuals of his day to participate as well. They were all educated men, well versed in their chosen fields and eager for experiences beyond what they could get from books, just as twentieth-century Japanese ethnographers sought to obtain knowledge not found in books through immersion in the daily lives of rural folk.[66] Yashiro and Yamazaki Yoshishige, for example, later joined the famous novelist Takizawa Bakin in a society that collected miraculous and strange tales.[67] They and Atsutane questioned Torakichi on mundane matters such as what the quasi-immortals wore and ate, whether they slept, and what kinds of medicines they made. The hereditary gunnery expert Kunitomo Yoshimasa exclaimed over Torakichi's depiction of air guns. The agronomist Satō Nobuhiro disputed Torakichi's explanation of the stars (p. 173). Some interlocutors were interested in mudras and magic spells; some wanted to know how they could get to the mountains and meet the quasi-immortals. They recorded their questions and answers in copious detail. So far as Atsutane and his fellow interviewers were concerned, all information, whether written or oral, had the potential to contribute to their understanding of the unseen world. But while other scholars of his time also dabbled in the occult, Atsutane stood out for incorporating oral lore on things unseen into a worldview originally derived from combining multiple written sources.

While Torakichi was staying with Atsutane, spirits twice possessed him.

66. Christy, *A Discipline on Foot*, 39–43.
67. Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 168.

According to the account in "Record of Discussion on the Sacred Child's Spirit Possession" (*Shindō hyōdanki*), one occurred on 1821.3.21 while Atsutane was away. Present were two servants, Atsutane's wife, Orise, and her adoptive father, Yamazaki Atsutoshi, from Koshigaya. Torakichi started speaking unintelligibly, asked for weak tea, and drank. He spoke again, this time more loudly. Atsutoshi purified himself and came to Torakichi's side, thinking that this encounter would broaden his understanding of the Way of the gods. It appeared that the tutelary god of Koshigaya, Hisaizu, had come. Anger filled the room, and Orise feared that the god was tormenting Torakichi. When she asked what message he was trying to convey, she learned that Sugiyama had appeared in support of the Hisaizu god to help his disciple, who was being attacked by one hundred evil spirits for trying to spread the Way of the gods. At some point in the future, these spirits planned to afflict even Atsutane with the plague. The god and Sugiyama beat back the spirits, except for one whom Torakichi would have to confront on Mount Asama after he had recovered his strength. Torakichi then awoke and asked what had happened (p. 118).

The significance of this encounter is that Torakichi acted as a medium for Sugiyama and the Hisaizu god. Given Torakichi's long-standing connection to Sugiyama, it makes sense that the quasi-immortal would speak through him, but why does the Hisaizu god appear? He can be associated with Atsutane's multiple ties to Koshigaya and its shrine through his patron Atsutoshi, his wife, Orise, and the votive plaque of Uzume that Atsutane had dedicated to the shrine less than a year earlier. Moreover, what is called the Hisaizu god in this account goes by other names as well. As we have already seen, the god worshipped at Hisaizu shrine is Ōnamuchi, the land-forming god, otherwise known as Ōkuninushi, the lord of the unseen world. Yoshida Masaki argues that for Ōkuninushi to appear under the name of Hisaizu while driving away demons offered proof positive in the real time of the present for Atsutane's theory that Ōkuninushi indeed ruled the unseen world of the dead.[68]

In this and in another episode, Torakichi apparently had some sort of seizure that the people around him interpreted as spirit possession. As we know from Carmen Blacker's seminal work, such incidents characterized shamanistic practices found not only in Japan but on the north Asian mainland as well.[69] What makes Torakichi unusual is that he fell into a trance when there was no one nearby to channel his experience and make it legible to others before Atsutoshi made himself into a suitable vessel through purification. As

68. Yoshida Masaki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 248.
69. Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, 21–23 passim.

far as Atsutane was concerned, what was important was Atsutoshi's opportunity to be brought into the presence of beings from the unseen world who otherwise remained unintelligible.

Atsutane also sought an ongoing connection with Sugiyama. According to *Strange Tidings*, he wrote a letter for Torakichi to deliver to Sugiyama along with a copy of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, asking Sugiyama to correct its mistakes and to answer the many questions he had concerning the unseen world. "If you grant my request, I will prepare and perform a suitable ceremony every month for as long as I live" (p. 22). Sugiyama eventually agreed to allow Atsutane to hold a service for him once a year and to allow his image to be hung for that purpose.

Strange Tidings contains sketches of Torakichi and Sugiyama as well as creatures in the realm of the immortals, but as an object suitable for worship, Sugiyama's image needed to be in a painting. An obscure painter named Serisawa Dōei produced one based on a sketch by Torakichi in 1821.4, and Torakichi was astonished at what a good likeness it was.[70] An inscription at the top identifies Sugiyama respectfully as the everlasting kingly god Takane (Hibitsu Takane-ō no mikami). It depicts him sitting solitary on a lofty crag in a pose like that of a Zen monk,[71] a deer reaching up to offer him a sheaf of rice. Across his brow is tied a string holding a round jewel that signifies his divinity. Behind his shoulders are two starched black tails like those attached to headdresses worn at the imperial court. Tied with a white ribbon, his hair flows down his back onto a train of white figured brocade. Thick eyebrows arch above piercing eyes, a prominent nose, and an open mouth. Like the men called *yamabushi*, who went into the mountains to develop their spiritual power, Sugiyama/Takane has a full moustache and beard. His clothing is more austere, consisting of a black outer robe with laces at the bottom of the sleeve, the color proclaiming that he is royalty in the unseen world of quasi-immortals, and as a regal personage, he holds a scepter in his hands. A sword protrudes from beneath the robe, and checkered pants with an elaborate apron complete the costume. The figure thus combines elements of popular religion with courtly decorum.

Among the paintings commissioned by Atsutane to depict the realm of the quasi-immortals and its inhabitants is one showing "Dance of the Seven Lives" (*Shichishō mai*). Like the image of Takane, it too depicts the landscape of the unseen world in brilliant color. As Torakichi explained in

70. *Sasshi* 180–5, HAKS.

71. See the hanging scroll portrait of Jiun Onkō in Singer, "Old Worlds, New Visions," 237.

Fig. 23. Sacred image of monarch Hibitsu Takane, with inscription, ink-brush painting (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

a text of that name recorded on 1822.2.1, the dance required some seventy-four performers—fifty dancers plus musicians and conductors.[72] Each wore a green robe over loose pants gathered at the ankle and a long train under his free-flowing hair. Like Sugiyama/Takane, each had lots of facial hair. Each wore an elaborate headdress held down by overlapping panels in a variety of colors and topped by a mythical creature in red holding a round jewel. The dancers formed a large circle with the musicians inside and a sacred pillar at the center that the chief conductors circled. Each dancer sounded a syllable in order, drawing it out, while the troupe members moved their feet to and fro while rotating slowly around the ring. This was repeated twenty-five hundred times until each of the dancers had uttered each of the fifty syllables of the language at that time. (Today's Japanese has forty-seven syllables.) When they had all finished, they faced the pillar as before, made the sign of the sun with their fingers, and then chanted the syllables together. Finally, a bell signaled the end. The aim was to give pleasure to the heavenly gods and earthly spirits and drive evil spirits off the mountain to purify it. It could also change the hearts of evil spirits for the better. In a letter dated 1849.10.24, a disciple from Echigo on the Japan Sea wrote that he had received a copy of this picture and found it so mesmerizing that he felt like he had entered the world of the sacred immortals—he had come into their presence.[73] Like the putative practitioners of the Kuebiko ritual, he had transcended his conscious self, this time through art.

The paragraph above summarizes a detailed description of ritual practice that nobody performed but that, combined with the picture of the dance, achieved the goal for Atsutane and his followers of bringing them into contact with denizens of a world as colorful as their own. The name of the dance, *Shichishō*, is a Buddhist concept, referring to seven rebirths. (The fourteenth-century imperial loyalist Kusunoki Masashige is said to have promised to come back to life seven times to fight for the emperor.[74]) By turning the notion into a purification ritual, Atsutane and Torakichi transformed what had originally been a Buddhist term into Shinto belief. Like the secret rites that Atsutane crafted for Kuebiko, it shows how he appropriated Buddhist concepts by claiming that they were inherently Japanese.

Atsutane's infatuation with Torakichi provoked a mixed response from his fellow scholars of the ancient Way. Some avidly supported him in eliciting information about the hidden world; others were appalled that he relied

72. Hirata Atsutane, *Shichishōmai no ki*, 4–6.
73. Shokan 15-1-4, HAKS.
74. Morris, *The Nobility of Failure*, 106–40.

Fig. 24. A quasi-immortal dancer (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

on the imaginative stories of an illiterate boy. In Kyoto, Hattori Nakatsune, whose diagrams had inspired *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, called Atsutane's faith in Torakichi a sickness.[75] Buddhist priests, who believed that what happened in the hidden world should remain mysterious, slandered Atsutane, one propagating a rumor that the shogunate had arrested Torakichi and censured Atsutane, another claiming that Atsutane had fed Torakichi his lines

75. Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 164.

Fig. 25. *Dance of Seven Lives*, ink-brush painting (no date). (Courtesy of the National Museum of Japanese History.)

and found the heavenly stone horn in a second-hand store.[76] None of these critics doubted that other worlds existed; at issue was whether contemporary oral accounts for them could be trusted and whether digging too deeply for evidence might be impious. In contrast, Atsutane sought traces of the gods and spirits wherever he could find them, and just as he relied on a much wider range of documents than Norinaga and other scholars, he also trusted oral reports derived from popular beliefs. While Torakichi's stories failed to corroborate written accounts regarding the gods, they opened the possibility that the unseen world contained diverse realms, each with its own beings. For disciples wanting to learn about the world of gods and spirits, Torakichi's account fitted with Atsutane's prior pursuit of local lore, and the disciples eagerly sought copies.[77] One disciple reported that a quasi-immortal had flown a man from Shimōsa northeast of Edo to Mount Ōyama to the west and then back home. The quasi-immortal later stayed at the man's house and imparted an oracle from the three Kanto shrines.[78]

Strange Tidings was not the only evidence that Atsutane collected regarding the unseen world in the present. In addition to *tengu*, *Thoughts on Bewitchments* describes mountain gods with the faces of tigers and such low-status spirits as river sprites.[79] In 1823, Atsutane noted that a creature had appeared in Hitachi province with the body of a person but with a horse's head and feet. That same year, a letter from a disciple in Suruga described a giant that had terrified villagers in his area. Another letter from Suruga described a woman who had become possessed by a spirit.[80] Other stories about strange occurrences arrived from different provinces. One involved *tengu*, another a person who could understand birds, and a third a woman with hidden teeth.[81] In 1831, Atsutane wrote a preface for "True Words about the Unseen Realm at Mt. Kirishima" (*Kirishima yama yūkyō shingo*), which Hatta Tomonori had begun compiling in 1806. It described the unseen realm at sacred Mount Kirishima in Kyushu that featured figures unknown to Torakichi—female immortals.[82] Kanetane respectfully offered it to the gods and made it an appendix to *Strange Tidings*.

Even into the last years of the Tokugawa regime, when Kanetane and

76. Hirata Atsutane, *Senkyō ibun*, 41–42; Yoshida Asako, *Hirata Atsutane*, 182, 184.
77. Nakamura Kazuaki, *Hirata Kokugaku*, 163–85.
78. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Kokugaku to Kisarazu no Yatsurugi Ise," 3.
79. Hirata Atsutane, *Kokon yōmi-kō*, *HAz*, vol. 3.
80. Shokan 1-2-17; 1-2-11; 1-2-18, HAKS. See also Shokan 1-4-33, HAKS.
81. Shokan 1-2-10, HAKS.
82. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*, 173, 179.

Nobutane became increasingly involved in the politics surrounding Japan's response to pressure from Western powers for diplomatic relations and trade, they and the school's disciples continued to take apparitions seriously. In the 1850s the posthumous disciple Usui Teikan sent reports from Hōki province that a woman had been arrested for cannibalism and that people had seen an oversized cat with four legs but feathers on its body and the face of a person.[83] Other letters from Usui placed requests for copies of *Strange Tidings* next to rumors about foreign affairs, and he was not the only disciple to place equal weight on current events and happenings in the unseen world.[84] Both were equally real. In 1857, the year that Townshend Harris proposed a commercial treaty with the United States to the shogunate, the son of the imperial palace official Ōtsuka Buzō reported that he had caught sight of a noble-looking person riding on the back of a large bird flying through the air from southwest to northeast faster than an arrow without a sound. Both man and bird gleamed gold and silver in the sunlight. The bird's head was larger than that of a horse.[85] Unlike the stories told by Suzuki Bokushi or Ueda Akinari, such sightings were perceived as nonthreatening. Instead, they were welcomed because they supported Atsutane's contention that denizens of the unseen world could take many shapes. As late as 1870.12, when Nobutane was working for the new central government, he wrote in a letter to his parents about the thirteen-year-old granddaughter of disciple Kashida Arao who had gone to the unseen world. Upon her return she reported that Norinaga was serving Takane-ō while Atsutane served Ōkuninushi. Nobutane only half believed her but promised his parents that he would soon send a full report.[86]

Once Atsutane opened access to unseen realms by accepting the accounts of Torakichi and others, his descendants had to do the same. In 1840 a man from Wakayama named Misawa Akira joined the school, corresponded with Kanetane, and read Atsutane's works (see chap. 3). On 1852.10.3, Misawa sent Kanetane the first chapter of a document titled "Tales of the Hidden World" (*Yūkai monogatari*) containing an interview with a young man named Shimada Yukiyasu, who had visited the realm of the immortals. It resembled *Strange Tidings* but described a much more elaborate hierarchy: sacred immortals, immortals, quasi-immortals, and strangers, with base gods at the bottom. Shimada's teacher was a sacred immortal named Lord Risen.

83. Shokan 8-52-44; 8-52-46, HAKS.

84. Shokan 16–19, 19-2-42, 19–40, 19-2-12, 19-2-40, HAKS; see Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku*, 174–79.

85. Drawing by Ōtsuka Tominosuke, Shokan 19-2-21-2, HAKS.

86. Shokan 15-38-19-1, HAKS.

The next chapter, which arrived the following year, was all about medicine, which was Shimada's profession. Atsutane appeared in the third chapter. According to Shimada, he was known throughout the unseen world for his virtuous deeds, and he had been promoted to the top rank in the bureaucracy. He had a new name, bestowed on him by the great god Ōkuninushi, that was now to be used in the visible world as well.[87]

Misawa used the information that he got from Shimada to manipulate Kanetane. Kanetane sent gifts to Lord Risen in thanks for Atsutane's promotion and title. When Misawa asked Lord Risen through Shimada about acquiring a picture of the world of the gods, Lord Risen refused because statues of the Buddha as well as pictures of heaven and hell were forbidden. Kanetane asked about images of the gods. They too were absolutely forbidden. The Hirata house must burn its images of Miyabi no kami and Sugiyama/Takane. This put Kanetane in a bind. He wanted to follow Lord Risen's instructions, but he had been worshipping Sugiyama's image for thirty years. Moreover, as Atsutane had aged, he had come to look more and more like that image, so much so that some people thought Sugiyama had returned. As for Miyabi no kami, Kanetane was just then planning another printing of her likeness, it being one of the house's moneymakers. Kanetane prevaricated, saying he would burn the images, but he never did. A few months later (1853.7.5), the entire Hirata family asked Lord Risen through Misawa to accept them into his school and had him grant them names in the unseen world. Lord Risen then informed Kanetane that he was to recognize Misawa as his superior and that Nobutane was to marry Misawa's daughter.

Why did Kanetane accept what to an outsider looks like a blatant power play? Mitsumatsu Makoto argues that unlike Atsutane, Kanetane never found a direct connection to the unseen world. He was not even able to communicate with the dead Atsutane, whereas Shimada Yukiyasu's experiences in the realm of the immortals resembled Torakichi's closely enough to lend them credibility to anyone who believed in *Strange Tidings*. Misawa and Kanetane thus shared a view of the unseen world that constituted a cornerstone of the Hirata school's doctrine, giving Misawa an ability to communicate with it that Kanetane had to respect.[88]

Kanetane finally doubted Lord Risen when the latter blew his response to the coming of the Americans. In *Strange Tidings*, Atsutane had closely questioned Torakichi regarding threats from foreign countries, and in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, he had promised to join the gods in fighting foreign

87. For this account, see Mitsumatsu, "Kaei-ki no Ibukinoya," 1–24.
88. Mitsumatsu, "Kaei-ki no Ibukinoya," 11, 13.

invasion. If Lord Risen was truly a god, he must know what they would do to protect Japan. Once Commodore Perry arrived in Japan on 1853.6.3 with a demand to establish diplomatic relations, Misawa asked Lord Risen for help. According to what Misawa reported to Kanetane, Lord Risen said not to worry, to just give the foreigners what they want. Once they see how well Japan is defended, they will withdraw. Kanetane then asked Lord Risen through Misawa what was going to happen, but his answers didn't jibe with the information Kanetane received in Edo regarding Perry's determination to force a treaty of friendship on Japan. According to Misawa, Lord Risen promised that when Perry came back in 1854, all the gods would gather and drive him away. That didn't happen, but Lord Risen continued to claim that the gods' long-term strategy would eventually result in Japan retaining its sanctity as the divine country.[89]

After Perry returned earlier than expected in 1854, Kanetane no longer believed Lord Risen because the gods had done nothing to protect Japan. Moreover, the medical treatments he had advocated proved worthless. Ignoring his proscriptions, Kanetane went ahead with his plans to reprint Miyabi no kami's image. In a letter dated 1854.4.25, Kanetane stated that he no longer trusted Misawa's statements because they did not fit with what was happening. Rather than the shogunate putting up a fight as Lord Risen had predicted, it had signed a treaty opening up two ports to trade and permitting an American consulate in one of them. Kanetane never denied the existence of the spirits or the possibility of interactions with them. He even kept the first two chapters of *A Tale of the Hidden World*. He deemed subsequent chapters containing Lord Risen's commands to destroy images of the gods and promises to expel the foreigners mediocre at best and black magic at worst, so he burned them.[90]

Atsutane saw his portrayal of actual gods as the return of beliefs repressed by the introduction of foreign creeds. He deplored the way that Buddhism had become dominant in Japan and warped Japanese culture, but its influence was so pervasive that even he could not escape it. Whether in iconography, ritual, or dance, his gods, spirits, and immortals all showed traces of Buddhist aesthetics and practice. The same can be said for Chinese studies. Like Norinaga, Atsutane believed that the Chinese needed Confucian morality because they were inherently immoral, unlike the innately virtuous Japanese, but he also believed that because the five human relationships were natural, the virtues that structured them were natural as well. In short, as

89. Mitsumatsu, "Kaei-ki no Ibukinoya," 18–20.
90. Mitsumatsu, "Kaei-ki no Ibukinoya," 20–21.

other scholars have pointed out, Atsutane often borrowed from Buddhism and Confucianism in building his arguments.[91] He took what he wanted to enhance the appeal of his images, to imagine a ceremony that had the potential to meld him with his favorite god, or to confer meaning on a dance. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he participated in the age-old practice of cultural appropriation and assimilation.

Another reason to juxtapose these cases is to trace where they came from and what that implies for the spread and elaboration of Atsutane's ideas. The Kuebiko story, prayer, ink-brush painting, and secret ritual arose from Atsutane's deductive reasoning based on ancient texts. Thanks to his disciples, the all-knowing Kuebiko remained available for use as the god of scholarship. Uzume had a similar origin in Atsutane's study of the age of the gods, and she too became widely known owing to devoted disciples who recorded her story and built on her image as Miyabi no kami. Information about the quasi-immortal Sugiyama came not through texts but through oral informants and fellow travelers on the ancient Way. Disciples and collaborators also expanded his message and carried it forward. On the other hand, as Alan Christy has pointed out in his study of Yanagita Kunio and Japanese native ethnography, "The one who produces the theoretical framework is rarely (if ever) able to control the way students employ that framework."[92] This was true of the Hirata school, for example, when Misawa Akira came up with a new vision of the world of the immortals. As I will show in the next two chapters, Atsutane tried to enlarge his impact beyond his school by associating it with the two chief Shinto organizations of his day. Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Kanetane then had to deal with differences and discord among Atsutane's disciples and collaborators that fractured the school and took his beliefs in new directions.

91. Hansen, *When Tengu Talk*, 26.
92. Christy, *A Discipline on Foot*, 8.

CHAPTER 6

The Shirakawa, the Yoshida, and Atsutane

An important path for Atsutane to promote his version of the ancient and pure Way of the gods lay through the priests who performed rituals at shrines for the heavenly deities and earthly spirits. Some of his earliest disciples were priests, and when he stopped at shrines on his 1816 pilgrimage to the Katori and Kashima shrines, he met and enrolled more. These priests helped further his teachings because they shared their knowledge of local lore with him, wanted to learn about the Way of the gods, and provided a conduit to their parishioners. Many were affiliated with one of two sometimes cooperating, sometimes competing houses at the imperial court: the Yoshida and the Shirakawa.

While Atsutane's relations with collaborators and disciples generally developed on a catch-as-catch-can basis, he could be deftly strategic in tapping into the existing networks of shrine priests to spread his teachings. Of particular significance for his purposes was what he wrote for and about the Shirakawa and Yoshida. The Shirakawa texts sought to educate priests in the ancient Way of the gods and to provide guidance for and through a theology designed to attract a priestly audience. In them, Atsutane built on the history and cosmology that he had deduced for *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* and *A Definitive Compilation of Ancient History*. In his first essay on the Yoshida house, he targeted everything he found wrong with it and deplored how Buddhism had distorted the ancient Way of the gods in the course of Japanese history; in the second he struck a more conciliatory tone, urging the Yoshida house to update its teachings in line with his interpretation of the ancient Way and Shinto theology. Exploring these treatises thus illuminates how Atsutane brought shrine priests into his net and how he modified his message to fit different contexts.

Neither the guidelines written for priests affiliated with the Shirakawa nor the defense of the Yoshida became widely known. (The attack on the Yoshida acquired notoriety in the 1850s when a disciple tried to publish it without Kanetane's permission.) This is probably because they were written for a specialized audience, and they remained in manuscript. Until Endō Jun wrote his magisterial book on the Hirata school of Japan studies and early modern society, these works were almost completely ignored in modern scholarship.[1] Yet they illuminate Atsutane's views on what constituted Shinto, the roles that the established institutions should play in promoting Shinto, and the place of Shinto priests in the religious life of their communities.

The Shirakawa House's "Scholarly Principles"

In the early nineteenth century, the Yoshida and the Shirakawa made new efforts to recruit paying affiliates across the country among shrine personnel, from head priests to exorcists to carpenters to women who mediated communications with the spirits (*miko*). The Shirakawa house was the underdog in the competition to build a following, having suffered from a series of incompetent, sickly, or infertile leaders before Sukenobu (1770–1824) became the head, and he was the first to notice Atsutane. According to Kanetane's biography of his famous father, in 1808 Sukenobu asked Atsutane to offer instruction in ancient studies to the shrine personnel attached to the Shirakawa house.[2] Other accounts state that Atsutane became Sukenobu's disciple in 1811.[3] It is unclear whether his tie to the Shirakawa resulted from his own request or came about through Sukenobu's urging. Sukenobu granted him the title of scholar-teacher (*gakushi*) and in 1816 had him ghostwrite "Scholarly Principles for the Shirakawa House" (*Hakke gakusoku*). In 1840, the Shirakawa appointed Atsutane chief scholar (*gakutō*), and in this role he wrote an outline for priests to follow in pursuing their studies.

"Scholarly Principles" has a murky origin. According to one account, Atsutane merely edited a text by that name that already existed after he received Sukenobu's request to instruct his affiliates.[4] Scholars now believe that Atsutane wrote it in Sukenobu's name. The Shirakawa began distribut-

1. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku to kinsei shakai*, 166–212.
2. Hirata Kanetane, *Daikaku-kun go-ichidai ryakki*, 430.
3. For discussions of Atsutane's early contacts with the Shirakawa, see Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 2–3; Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 75–76.
4. Hirata Kanetane, *Daikaku-kun go-ichidai ryakki*, 430.

ing it in 1816,[5] and it circulated in manuscript even beyond the ranks of Shinto specialists.[6] Like so many of Atsutane's writings, there is no definitive version, and a printed text from 1911 differs slightly from the manuscripts in the Hirata archive at the National Museum of Japanese History.[7] Even though each copy credits Sukenobu as the author, the drafts in the Hirata archive retain corrections and additions by Atsutane in red ink. Kanetane later admitted that his father had written it.

"Scholarly Principles" was directed at Shirakawa affiliates in the priesthood. People who wished to study according to Shirakawa house principles as defined by Atsutane were to pursue "the Way of the gods, the great Way across all countries, eternally unchanging in its operation that derived from the unified laws of the imperial gods and warriors."[8] In other words, scholarship in the Shirakawa house meant focusing on the age of the gods, their deeds and lineages, the centrality of the emperor to the Japanese polity, indeed the world, and the Way of the warrior (*budō*). This connection between gods and warriors can be read as expanding on Atsutane's earlier promise in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* to fight, if necessary, against Japan's foreign enemies. It is the most original idea developed in a text that for the most part repeats what Atsutane said elsewhere. To make his case, Atsutane first narrates and interprets the age of the gods for his readers. This ancient history bleeds into the present, he says, because the Way of the gods endures as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

As Atsutane explained, the Way of the gods can be found originally in the history of the age of the gods, and he had definite ideas about which gods should be included. The first gods, Amenominakanushi (the god at the center of heaven), Takamimusubi (exalted generative deity), and Kamimusubi (sacred generative deity), "existed without any beginning in the middle of heaven and did nothing. They crafted the first thing to be created out of their inactive divine virtue. When that first thing split in two, thus began heaven and earth."[9] This cosmology, based on *Record of Ancient Matters*, can

5. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 592.

6. In 1843 the Kaga domain retainer and Hirata disciple Kawachi Senzō wrote a memo to Kanetane indicating that he had received a copy of "Scholarly Principles" along with other texts and that he was using them to instruct his fellow retainers. Shokan 16-92-18-7, HAKS.

7. This study is based on Sōkō 1–2, HAKS, and Yamamoto, *Shintō sōsetsu*, 426–31. Additional drafts are labeled Sōkō 1-28-3 and Sasshi 223 and 385, HAKS.

8. Sōkō 1–2, HAKS, 1; Yamamoto, *Shintō sōsetsu*, 426.

9. Yamamoto, *Shintō sōsetsu*, 426; Sōkō 1–2, HAKS, 2–3. Page numbers in the text refer to this source.

be found throughout Atsutane's works and leads to what he deemed the two imperial ancestors, Izanami and Izanagi. It was after catching sight of his wife's putrefying body in the underworld that Izanagi rushed back to this world where, in the process of purifying himself, he produced out of his eye the sun goddess Amaterasu, who later sent her grandson down to rule over the islands of Japan.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Atsutane drew on a wider range of sources for his cosmology than did other Japan studies scholars, and he urged students affiliated with the Shirakawa to do the same. He recommended that they study Japan's ancient histories, the *Record of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan*, though he did not indicate how they should reconcile their differences. They should also study records of ancient lineages such as the 807 *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*, which related the origins and decline of the Inbe lineage of court ritualists. "Through study we can correctly understand the ancient transmissions regarding the primeval origins and the foundation of our basic teachings as well as the established explanation of the seven generations in the age of the gods, the divine work of the imperial ancestral deities, and the imperial decree by the heavenly ancestors that Amaterasu's descendants should rule forever." Atsutane laid out lists of topics to be explored, from the origins of how to measure distance and weights to rites and ceremonies to the beginning of sacred dance, the secret formula for purification, the chronology for the age of the gods, the profound principle for pacifying the spirits of the dead, and much, much more. "Investigate everything from the original nature of the sun god and the moon god to the fundamental origin of the warrior Way" (p. 3). If the student did this, he'd come to understand what it meant to be a Japanese person blessed by the gods and beholden to them.

But the student should not stop with the study of origins. He must also contrast Japan's history with that of China and India to properly appreciate Japan's superiority. "If you investigate the ancient histories of other lands, you will clearly discern that our empire is from the beginning the ultimate ancestor of all countries." Thanks to Japan's divine creation, everything that contributes to administering a state originated in Japan and then spread throughout the world. "It is thus meet and right that the Way of the gods is the great overall Way for all countries." To sum up Atsutane's position: Insofar as scholarship is founded on the study of "our country" (*kokugaku*), and it's used in governance, there is little need to pursue the scholarship of other countries, which can so easily lead a student astray, particularly the seductive theories found in Chinese learning. "Do not deviate even for a moment from the canonical precedent of respecting the domestic and despising the foreign" (p. 6).

Atsutane expected students to read Japan's recorded history as an object lesson in what happened when foreign ideas such as Buddhism and Confucianism were allowed to debase the ancient and pure Way of the gods. He noted sadly that the simplicity of ancient days was gone forever, replaced by corruption and immorality. How could people promote the heresy that, because the end justifies the means, a retainer might overthrow his lord or treat the ancient legends about the gods as "nothing more than allegories and hypotheses?" (p. 8). When foreign teachings from India and China became so popular as to supplant the Way of the gods, the center no longer held, private conflicts erupted, and "there was no reverence for imperial authority" (p. 10). The administrative hub moved to Kamakura, emperors were exiled when they tried to restore their authority, and, finally, following the Ōnin civil war (1467–77), "lords and retainers, fathers and sons, elder brothers and younger brothers raised private armies against each other, challenged each other to battle, killed, and plundered" (p. 12).

Like other scholars of his day, Atsutane contrasted the degenerate military dynasties prior to 1600 with the benefits bestowed on scholarship and the Way of the gods by the Tokugawa shogunate. In his opinion, the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, intentionally promoted Japan studies by ordering emperor and court to prioritize scholarship of the ancient Way, and the emperor had complied by having *Chronicles of Japan* printed on woodblocks for the first time to encourage the study of Japan's sacred books (p. 14). Throughout Japan, from domain rulers in Owari and Mito to commoners such as the shrine priest Kada no Azumamaro and Atsutane's avowed teacher, Motoori Norinaga, scholarship had flourished that winnowed out the confusion caused by foreign ideas and promoted "the pure old meanings of the first age" (p. 16). Atsutane directed students in the Shirakawa house to "take this deeply to heart, pursue your research into the ancient Way for the sake of court and military, elucidate the issues raised above, and never rest even for a moment from praying for enlightenment from the gods with an ever more purified heart" (p. 17).

In this set of instructions for priests, Atsutane highlighted not the yearly round of seasonal observances centered on shrines but the fundamental equivalence between the Way of the gods and the Way of the warriors. It's threaded throughout the text: "At the command of Amaterasu and Takamimusubi, the gods who constitute the chief support of the warrior Way descended first to vanquish and pacify the violent, evil gods living in the great sacred country. . . . The emperor Jinmu used the Way of gods and warriors to peacefully govern the realm" (p. 9). The characters used to write Jinmu, "god" (神) and "military" (武), recapitulate this dual Way. When Bud-

dhism became Japan's dominant religion, "the Way of the gods was despised, and the warrior Way was seen as vulgar while literary arts were respected. For that reason, the simplicity of the ancient Way gradually degenerated" (p. 10). Atsutane distinguishes between the appropriate warrior Way that supports imperial rule and the actions of individual warriors who showed no respect for the imperial court. Unless the warrior Way served the imperial Way of the gods, Atsutane asserted, it risked leading its practitioners into a self-centered pursuit of glory and reward. Even though most priests served communities of commoners, Atsutane made no mention of a commoner Way.

Atsutane also wrote another text titled "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" (*Hakke gakusoku engi kō*), which he signed as chief scholar Taira no Atsutane.[10] It is undated, but because his appointment came in 1840 it was probably written at that time or later. According to Endō Jun, "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" was compiled when a Shirakawa affiliate, Inoue Masakane (1790–1849), founded a new religious sect called Misogikyō (Purification Teachings) that the magistrate of temples and shrines deemed deviant. In the course of Inoue being investigated, his tie to the Shirakawa came up, and so the magistrate inquired into Shirakawa teachings.[11] In response, Atsutane produced a text designed to put the Shirakawa house message on a solid scholarly base that conformed to his understanding of ancient histories and allow it to forestall the charge that its lax approach to teaching and supervision was responsible for Inoue's activities.

In contrast to the earlier text, "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" deals entirely with the age of the gods. Atsutane refrains from invidious comparisons with foreign countries, and he ignores the human history of Japan. The text has a three-part structure: the first gives a detailed account of the age of the gods beginning with the earliest acts of creation, incorporates copious quotations from ancient histories, lists variants for each god's name, and narrates their achievements. The second part repeats the chronology of the first but in abbreviated form and with some additional information. The third summarizes the first two parts and adds an admoni-

10. Hirata Atsutane, *Hakke gakusoku engikō*," 307–20. Page numbers from here on forward in the text refer to this source.

11. Kokuritsu rekishi minzoku hakubutsukan, *Meiji Ishin to Hirata Kokugaku*, 30. Inoue became a Shirakawa affiliate in 1834. The magistrate of temples and shrines started investigating him in 1840 before exiling him in 1843. See Hardacre, *Shinto*, 315–16. In 1864, the Ōmi merchant and Hirata disciple Nishikawa Yoshisuke asked for a copy of "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" as soon as it was published. Shokan 8-52-4-1, HAKS.

tion to the student to study the origins of the Katori and Kashima shrines in eastern Kanto, which are dedicated to the gods who pacified the land in preparation for the arrival of Amaterasu's divine grandson. It also recommends that the student investigate three things: the origin of the *Chinkonsai*, an imperial ritual revived by the Shirakawa to strengthen the emperor's spirit before he performed ceremonies leading to his enthronement;[12] the imperial court's altar to the eight deities (Hasshinden); and shrines in rural areas (pp. 319–20). Atsutane ends the text by reminding the student that the reason for military rule in the present (i.e., the Tokugawa regime) is because it conforms to the imperial Way, the Way of the gods—in other words, the ancient Way (p. 320).

Although Atsutane urges the student to investigate each of the points he raises, he provides such all-encompassing guidance that it is difficult to see how a student could reach anything but Atsutane's own conclusions. This is particularly the case when it comes to the generative gods and the location of *yomi*, the filthy underworld of the dead. Each of the first three gods was a solitary deity, except that according to a variant of *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*, Takamimusubi is male and Kamimusubi is female. This is important to Atsutane, as we have seen in the account of how Kuebiko identifies Sukunabikona (see chap. 5). It's through the productive force of their virtue that subsequent phenomena appear. Keeping in line with the ancient chronicles, Atsutane then names the generations of gods leading up to Izanagi and Izanami. Their achievements mark a new stage in the process of creation—the islands of Japan and everything on them, culminating in the ordinary folk (*aohitogusa*) (p. 308).[13] The problem is that while *Record of Ancient Matters*, *Chronicles of Japan*, and *Gleanings from Ancient Stories* all have plenty to say about where the deities come from, none of them say anything about people (p. 311). Atsutane gets around this lacuna by bringing up the liturgy for the fire pacification ceremony that relates how Izanami briefly returned to earth to give birth to more deities. He argues that the text had become garbled and originally there must have been a reference to Izanagi and Izanami giving birth to the parent deities of people (p. 311). Since this ceremony ultimately addresses the creation of the folk, it is important to get it right, and that requires much sifting of evidence from various sources. By reading the canon with a steadfast mind, the student can appreciate how the great blessing of the gods' love for the people flows from the heart of the

12. Ishino, "Shirakawa hakke 'maiasa godaihai' no seiritsu," 84–85.

13. I take this translation of *aohitogusa* from Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 23 passim.

three generative deities as well as Izanagi and Izanami, who followed their commands (p. 312).

The cosmology found in "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" also comes straight out of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, only without the diagrams. First, we have the original three gods and then the thing sending out a shoot that breaks off to become the earth. According to Atsutane's idiosyncratic reading of the ancient histories, the bottom of the earth gets no heavenly light and therefore is called *yomi*, glossed with the characters for "seeing night (夜見)." When *yomi* separates and becomes the moon, it explains why a poem in the earliest poetry anthology, the *Man'yōshū*, can make a play on the sound of the word "*yomi*" by using different characters in the phrase "the moon, already beautiful" (*tsuki yomi* 月予美) (p. 310). The two creator gods then create the sacred land of Japan, descend to it, and produce everything that people need to live, including fire, which so burns Izanami that she dies and goes to *yomi*. Izanagi follows her and then returns to earth at a place in Izumo, thereby tying the age of the gods to the here and now of Atsutane's day (p. 315).

"Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" might raise questions in the mind of a critical reader. Atsutane is not consistent in his cosmology, he admits that he doesn't know everything, and he borrows terms from Chinese philosophy while denigrating Chinese thought. Izanagi purifies himself after visiting *yomi*, and once he has done so, he creates the two deities who animate the sun and moon, Amaterasu and her younger brother Susano-o. As we have seen, however, the sun of heaven god (Amatsuhi) had already provided light, and Atsutane does not explain his connection to Amaterasu. The same is true for the moon and its original god (p. 317). It seems that it took 1,792,470 years from the descent of the heavenly grandson to the age of Jinmu, the first emperor. If the student has doubts about this, Atsutane suggests that he investigate it further, implying that Atsutane himself wasn't certain (pp. 318–19). In describing how the gods' love for the people is evident in the benefits they bestowed, Atsutane uses a term, the "five elements" (五行), that derives from Chinese philosophy but puts his own spin on it. Rather than see these elements as a priori, he apotheosizes them, arguing that the gods of wind (in Chinese this would be wood), fire, metal, water, and soil each appeared with the elements for which they are responsible through the work of Izanagi and Izanami and that these then combined to create everything of use to people (p. 312). For example, when giving birth to the fire god caused Izanami such pain that she vomited, the pair of male and female gods who resulted became the gods of metal (p. 313). It is important for the student to understand how the gods and elements are

coeval and inseparable because then the student will show proper respect to objects that emanate from the elements. Each element is thus a transformation and manifestation of its gods; it does not derive from an abstract notion of movement or phase as in China. If that is indeed the case, why use the character for movement (行) at all? Students of Chinese studies deplored Atsutane's fast and loose use of Confucian terminology, but for his audience among the shrine priests, his appropriation of such terms enriched his argument by illuminating the omnipresence of the gods.

"Scholarly Principles" and "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" aimed the theology that Atsutane had developed in his earlier writings at a specific audience. "Scholarly Principles" emphasizes the dual Way of the gods and warriors as a goal for shrine priests. "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" instructs them to investigate the history of the gods and bring their understanding of it into their daily practice. By filling in the connections between the "solitary deities" and Izanagi and Izanami and specifying that along with the land and deities the ordinary folk are also key components of creation, Atsutane crafts a dynamic theology that shows how the deities shower blessings on the people and why the people in return should show gratitude through prayers and rituals. "Expanding on the Shirakawa House Scholarly Principles" was thus eminently suitable as a guide for priests under Shirakawa supervision.

Intellectual historians have traced how Atsutane's work came to valorize agricultural labor because so many of his adherents were farmers;[14] they have not pursued what he had to say about the Way of the warrior. Nor have they focused on his directives aimed specifically at priests. These two texts thus expose heretofore unexplored dimensions to Atsutane's thought—his bold marrying of the Way of the gods to the Way of the warrior and his assertion that shrine priests had an obligation to educate themselves not just in the rituals performed on behalf of parishioners but in the national history of the age of the gods.

Several decades later Kanetane took the importance of the warrior Way even further. In 1857 he wrote a memo addressed to Egami Den'ichirō, a farmer from Chikuzen in Kyushu, in which he lamented how Shinto priests manipulated the system set up to regulate them. The first half, in which he criticized the Yoshida house, will be discussed in the next chapter. In the second half, he attacked shrine personnel for disgracing their profession by indulging in laziness, drunkenness, and debauchery. Although Kanetane was

14. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 218 *passim*; McNally, *Proving the Way*, 213–14.

critical of their moral failings, he recognized that the problem was poverty—for priests at shrines with no lands attached to them or for itinerant priests unattached to any shrine, the only way to make a living was through outside work. He proposed that rulers provide allowances for impoverished priests and establish schools where they might practice the dual Way of the literary and martial arts. Not only were priests encouraged to master these skills; when they returned to their villages, Kanetane advised them to set up their own schools where they could teach their parishioners and village youths to read, despise the Buddha, and learn to fight.[15]

Scattered evidence suggests that Atsutane's message as iterated by Kanetane resonated with Hirata disciples among the Shinto priesthood. In a letter dated 1846, Kanetane praised the shrine priest at the Yatsurugi Hachiman shrine near Edo for having constructed a practice hall for sword fighting.[16] In 1868, just as armies under the titular rule of the Meiji emperor were marching to gain control of Japan, Hatano Takao in Mikawa and ten priests in Tōtōmi separately organized shrine personnel to train in sword fighting. Most of them were Yoshida affiliates, so it was their adherence to Atsutane's teachings that led them to promote the Way of the warrior at this critical juncture.[17]

Both Atsutane and Kanetane promoted the study of the ancient and pure Way as a duty for shrine priests. It wasn't enough to perform rites and ceremonies, whether in accordance with imperial court protocol or local practice; priests should also educate themselves in Japan's canonical texts, contribute to elucidating them, and use them to heighten their awareness of their obligations to the emperor and the gods. They should teach their parishioners about the Way of the gods and how to put it into practice in their daily lives. People should follow this Way because the gods love the people and bestow them with blessings. Evil gods may cause calamities, but thanks to the work of the purification gods (*naobi no tama*), harmony will be restored.

When Atsutane urged priests to follow the dual Way of the gods and warriors, a Way centered on the emperor that had existed since Amaterasu bestowed sword, jewel, and mirror on her grandson Ninigi, he added a historical dimension to previous scholarship. In 1736, Yoshimi Yukikazu, the chief priest at the shrine to Tokugawa Ieyasu (Tōshōgū) in Nagoya, counseled priests to study both the martial and literary arts, "in order to cul-

15. Hirata Kanetane, "Shake kan'i shissō no koto," Sasshi 249–3, HAKS.

16. Nakagawa, "Hirata kokugaku to Kisarazu no Yatsurugi Ise," 16.

17. Hatano Takao Kenkyūkai, ed., *Bakumatsu Mikawa-kuni kannushi nikki*, 436–37; Inoue Tomokatsu, *Kinsei no jinja to chōtei ken'i*, 305.

tivate their determination to serve the country."[18] Yoshimi was writing at a time when Japan faced no immediate foreign threat, and he was more concerned that priests neglected their public duty to pray for the imperial house in favor of making money by offering private prayers. Atsutane's emphasis on martial practice in 1816 reflects his awareness that Japan needed to defend itself following the 1808 HMS *Phaeton* incident when a British ship sailed into Nagasaki harbor and destroyed its shore batteries without meeting the slightest resistance. His 1813 introduction to *White Waves of the Kuriles* begins with that debacle and previous violence done by Russians in Ezo (Hokkaido).[19] Refracted through current concerns, his emphasis on the Way of the warrior set against his tracing of the military's role throughout Japan's history contained an implicit message for everyone, not just warriors, in the present.

It thus made sense for Kanetane to take Atsutane's admonition a step further in urging priests to teach the dual Way to their parishioners. Like other grassroots activists, Kanetane responded to the debates in ruling class circles over what to do about the foreign threat and specifically what to do about Townsend Harris's 1857 demand for a commercial treaty by urging commoners to cross the status boundary that separated them from the warriors and learn to fight. Now that the barbarians had appeared at the shogun's gate, Kanetane's call to arms resonated with priests regardless of their affiliation with either the Shirakawa or the Yoshida.

The Yoshida House—Worthy or Unworthy?

Before Atsutane conceived of Shinto in terms of practice and belief, the Shirakawa house's identity centered on its hereditary right to transmit the protocols for court ceremonies to the emperor and high nobility. The Yoshida house, in contrast, maintained an understanding of Shinto based on its own elaborate set of teachings articulated by Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511). This intellectual scaffolding both justified claims by the Yoshida to an exalted position in Shinto affairs and defined what Kanetomo called the "one and only Shinto" (*yuiitsu shintō*). Under the impact of Buddhism, native Japanese deities had come to be seen as avatars of the Buddhas or as some combination of them. The Yoshida asserted that no, the native deities existed independently of the Buddhas, what Bernhard Scheid calls "the invention

18. Quoted in Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, 330.
19. Hirata Atsutane, *Chishima no shiranami*, 1.

of Shinto."[20] Had Kanetomo not made this claim, worship of native deities might well have faded away. On the other hand, as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars pointed out, the Yoshida had faked a genealogy and the imperial honors they had received to justify their right to license Shinto priests for fees, and in addition they had not completely rid their practice and thought of Buddhist elements.

In this milieu, Atsutane had a much rockier relationship with the Yoshida than he had with the Shirakawa. In 1809, when Atsutane began producing lectures for his students that synthesized his understanding first of the ancient Way and then of the Buddhist-inflected forms of Shinto, he lumped the Yoshida's teachings in with the latter.[21] In fact, he castigated the Yoshida school for being so deeply imbued with Buddhism that its message could scarcely be called Shinto at all. Just over ten years later, in 1822, Atsutane reversed course and authored a defense of the Yoshida school titled "Soliloquy" (*Hitorigoto*). It smoothed the way for his trip to Kyoto in 1823, and thereafter he served as a scholar-teacher for the Yoshida in Kanto. Eighteenth-century scholars had debunked the Yoshida claim to have descended from Ame no Koyane, the ancestral god of the distinguished Fujiwara family, associated with prayer and ritual, who had accompanied the sun goddess's grandson when he descended to take possession of the earth. Based on evidence conveniently uncovered in ancient histories, Atsutane produced a revised genealogy that affirmed the desired link, thereby strengthening his ties to the Yoshida and their affiliates.

When Atsutane first lectured on Yoshida teachings, he had only eighteen students. He entrusted them with taking notes and making clean copies, allowing them to annotate and expand his basic text. Even the title was not fixed. Although it's known today as "The Great Meaning of Vulgar Shinto" (*Zoku shintō tai'i*), the first time it appeared, in the 1813 catalog appended to *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, the title was given as "On the Topic of Sorcery" (*Fugaku danpei*).[22] There it is described as "an essay on vulgar syncretic Shinto created by wicked Buddhist monks who wanted to expand the number of people who believe in Buddhism in our sacred country by combining it with Shinto. Taking a lesson from them, later people manufactured what

20. Bernhard Scheid, *Der eine and einzige Weg der Götter*.

21. For a detailed bibliographical analysis of the publication history of "Vulgar Shinto" see Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Atsutane no *Zoku shintō dai-i*," 30–42.

22. Atsutane creates two compounds for the title of this text. 巫学 refers to the study of sorcery. 談弊 is read with the same sound as 談柄, but whereas the character used by Atsutane for *pei* means collapse, the standard compound refers to a long-handled flyswatter waved by monks to announce the topic for a talk.

is called 'one and only Shinto' by mixing in Confucian elements. This is not true Shinto."[23] In 1851 a priest in Iyo on the island of Shikoku proposed publishing "On the Topic of Sorcery" in Osaka, but the imperial court blocked publication because the text contained statements that denigrated the outer shrine at Ise.[24] Not until 1860 did the Hirata school print "The Great Meaning of Vulgar Shinto" for distribution to its disciples.

The delay in printing, the fact that the text has two titles, and the 1851 ban on publication all suggest that the text had aroused controversy among Shinto priests and Japan studies scholars, which was perhaps Atsutane's aim. One way to draw attention to what he meant by true Shinto was to attack what he saw as false, and as Wilbur Hansen shows, this also meant criticizing how neo-Confucian scholars in Japan had distorted the Way of the gods.[25] It has been slighted in contemporary Japanese scholarship except for a chapter by Miki Shōtarō that summarizes its content and one by Nakagawa that analyzes its publication history. Endō Jun even questions whether it was written as early as Kanetane claimed in his biography of Atsutane.[26] Nonetheless, a text of some sort must have existed by 1813 that summarizes Atsutane's views as refracted through his disciples. Combined with his later "Soliloquy," it sets the stage for the complicated intellectual and institutional relationship that unfolded between him and the Yoshida. Juxtaposing the two essays shows how Atsutane changed his mind once he recognized the advantage of supporting the Yoshida, not just for his own sake but for the community of shrine priests.

In "Vulgar Shinto," Atsutane argued as he often did that he was simply following in the footsteps of his teacher, Motoori Norinaga. He did indeed quote Norinaga's *Tamakatsuma*, but as Miki notes, whereas Norinaga's criticism of syncretic Shinto had been scattered and fragmentary, Atsutane constructed a sustained argument bolstered by his reading in earlier criticisms of the "one and only Shinto." One of the most important was by Yoshimi Yukikazu, who in 1739 refuted claims that the Yoshida had descended from

23. Nakagawa, "Hirata Atsutane no *Zoku shinto tai'i*," 32; the ethnographer Orikuchi Shinobu noted that Atsutane used the term "*zoku*" to disparage what he considered to be vaguely rationalized Shinto theories. *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, 20:353.

24. Nakagawa, "Hirata Atsutane no *Zoku shinto tai'i*," 37.

25. Hansen, *When Tengu Talk*, 135–38.

26. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane no kenkyū*, 112–43; Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Hirata Atsutane no *Zoku Shintō tai'i*," 30–42; Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 203, 205. In *Hirata Atsutane*, the intellectual historian Tahara summarizes *Zoku shinto tai'i* in his survey of Atsutane's early works, 126–27.

Ame no Koyane. Yoshimi also pointed out that precedents for the array of court titles claimed by the Yoshida could not be found in official histories. They must have been based on forgeries.[27] Atsutane combined this evidential approach to studying human history with his belief in the unquestionable veracity of histories recounting the age of the gods to come up with plausible conclusions, so long as one accepts the original premise.

Atsutane traced syncretic Shinto back to three Buddhist monks—Gyōki (668–749), the first to preach Buddhism to people outside the court; Saichō (767–822), the founder of the universalistic and inclusive Tendai school; and Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the esoteric Shingon sect. Gyōki came up with the idea of using *honji suijaku* theory—the notion that the Buddhas are the original entities and the deities are their traces—as a means to spread Buddhism and eclipse Shinto. Saichō used this theory to subordinate Hie shrine to his Buddhist complex on Mount Hiei by turning the Hie god into the "Mountain King" (*Sannō*) with three Buddhas as his essence. According to Atsutane (and Yoshimi), Kūkai had deliberately raised the outer shrine at Ise dedicated to Toyouke no ōkami above the inner shrine dedicated to the sun goddess by asserting that Toyouke was really Kunitokotachi and claimed that as another name for the first original god, Amenominakanushi. Norinaga pointed out that Kūkai had drawn only from *Chronicles of Japan* in his retelling of the creation story and that the *Chronicles* was a "Chinese-infused text with deity names like Kunitokotachi (forever-standing land)."[28] According to Japan studies scholars, Kūkai's goal was to promote Shingon Buddhism by persuading the outer shrine to spread his teachings.[29] His ranking of the gods as well as his esoteric practices had a major impact on the Yoshida and other Shinto sects.

Atsutane launched several lines of attack against the Yoshida house and the "one and only Shinto" that it promoted. As the most powerful Shinto institution of his day, he saw its willingness to compromise with Buddhism as setting a dangerous precedent, while making it more difficult for him to get his message across. First, he denigrated the Yoshida's inferior origins in contrast to the Shirakawa. Descended from the imperial line, the Shirakawa house had held the same position for eight hundred years and thirty generations. It took charge of everything related to sacred matters at court, supervised the court bureaucracy, guarded the shrine located inside the palace,

27. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 141.

28. Bentley, *Tamakatsuma*, 128. See also 171–72 in the same text for more of Norinaga's criticism of *Chronicles of Japan*'s Chinese coloring also quoted by Atsutane.

29. For this summary, I have relied on Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 114–17.

and conferred office on the regents. One of its original responsibilities was to perform services at the Hasshinden, at least until the Yoshida moved it out of the palace to the Yoshida shrine.[30]

Atsutane pointed out that in contrast to the Shirakawa's noble lineage, the first known Yoshida ancestor was a diviner from Izu named Hiramaro, parentage unknown. Because he was skilled at reading tortoise shells, he accompanied an imperial mission to China between 833 and 850 as a lowly attendant without rank or office. Upon his return, he and his descendants, originally called Urabe, rose in prominence. They even reached the upper ranks of the nobility, despite being from a base house and still in charge of the tortoise shell diviners (p. 140). The only reason why the family, now calling itself Yoshida, got away with designating itself the superintendent of Shinto was because of its dirty tricks. It falsified documents, grabbed unwarranted authority, and fabricated a genealogy. "Claiming that it is so ordered by the military government, Yoshida officials deceive shrine personnel across the provinces and gull them into coming under Yoshida control. Since they do this out of greed, they are just like the monks" (p. 144). What, opined Atsutane, could be more damning?

Atsutane reserved his greatest scorn for Yoshida Kanetomo. "The forgeries, false statements, and plots all come from his hand" (p. 146). Kanetomo had forged a genealogy through Nakatomi no Kamatari, the great ancestor of the Fujiwara house, to the god Ame no Koyane. Kanetomo then asserted that the liturgy that was performed by Ame no Koyane before the cave where Amaterasu had hidden was a secret transmission handed down in the Yoshida house. Atsutane argued that there could be no secret transmissions apart from the prayers written down for all to see in texts from the age of the gods. Instead, Kanetomo's liturgy originated in a prayer created by Kūkai in his teachings on syncretic Shinto (p. 147). Even the term that Kanetomo used for his teaching, *yuiitsu*, originated in the *Lotus Sutra*.[31] Atsutane also charged that Kanetomo falsified imperial edicts and misinterpreted earlier texts to promote his house. He brought an eight-sided hall for Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, into his shrine precincts, lied by claiming it had been a place of worship for the gods since the time of the first emperor Jinmu, and called it the Hasshinden, where the imperial gods were enshrined.[32] In 1489 Kanetomo claimed that the divine objects containing

30. Hirata Atsutane-ō, "Zoku Shintō dai'i," 137–38, 141. Page numbers in the text from here forward refer to this source.

31. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 128.

32. Atsutane had never seen the Yoshida shrine in Kyoto, and this description conflates two of its structures, the Daigengū with eight sides and the shrines to the eight

the spirits of the gods at the two Ise shrines along with other sacred treasures had emitted light and flown to his family shrine, thus providing the excuse for building a new shrine to Amaterasu. In Atsutane's eyes, "he deserves the gods' punishment" (p. 149).

Atsutane accused later generations in the Yoshida family of enhancing their power, wealth, and prestige while developing new ways to exploit shrine priests. When the shogunate set out to regulate Shinto affairs in 1665, it gave the Yoshida limited rights to recommend priests for court rank and to regulate what priests wore.[33] Atsutane had evidence that the Yoshida tried to get these shrine clauses revised to extend its control over shrines across Japan and faked imperial decrees to claim an appointment as councillor of divinities, the title traditionally held by the Shirakawa. The five regent houses questioned why they had not been shown the original decrees instead of copies. The Yoshida bluffed, pretending that the originals had been handed over to a functionary to take to Edo, only to be lost when his house burned down (p. 159). In the end, the Yoshida house was prohibited from submitting recommendations for rank to the emperor without going through the official on duty. Still, the Yoshida retained the right to license priests without court rank to wear ceremonial robes above their station, which, Atsutane noted, would have been inappropriate in any case since they were hunting robes, and to grant them names signifying bureaucratic office. "This is outrageous and disrespectful" (p. 160).

Toward the end of "Vulgar Shinto," Atsutane raises issues concerning practice. Here again he draws on earlier criticisms. How can the Yoshida claim to believe in the "one and only Shinto" when most of its ceremonies come from Shingon Buddhism? The *goma* rite of burning prayer sticks is performed in esoteric Buddhism because the wood represents people's suffering and calamities to be purified by fire. For shrine personnel to perform it is inappropriate. In Atsutane's eyes, Shinto altars should be four-sided structures, yet the Yoshida built an eight-sided altar and created rituals based on esoteric Buddhism that it sold to aspiring shrine personnel as a secret transmission. Later, in the late seventeenth century, the former fishmonger Yoshikawa Koretaru steals the Yoshida's most prized secret traditions and sets up his own school. Neither Koretaru's descendants nor the Yoshida know what they're doing when they pretend to worship the gods, nor do they know the appropriate names for the gods (pp. 165–66).[34]

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imperial deities. Kanetomo received the emperor's permission to transfer the Hasshinden to the Yoshida shrine during the civil war of 1467–77.

33. See Teeuwen, "Shinto in the 1660s and 1670s," 151.

34. For a more sober account of how Koretaru ended up with the Yoshida's most

In "Vulgar Shinto," Atsutane presented a history of Shinto as it developed under the impact of foreign systems of belief—Buddhism and Confucianism—ending with Yamazaki Ansai (1619–82), who created the most all-encompassing attempt to refine a new Shinto doctrine since Kanetomo. To his credit, Ansai loathed Buddhism, and his followers pledged to reject all syncretic notions, yet he called his teaching "Suika," a term that originates in Buddhist terminology, as Atsutane observed. Ansai tried to replace Buddhism with neo-Confucianism, a set of doctrines that had originally been created out of Song metaphysical Buddhism, as well as yin-yang and the five elements. Yin-yang theory requires that the sun be male and the moon female, the opposite of Japan's ancient history. Atsutane also ridiculed Ansai for having associated the gods with the five elements, calling the idea nonsense.[35] As we have seen, Atsutane had himself associated the gods with the five elements, even if his elements were slightly different from the Chinese ones. Like Norinaga, he argued that teaching rules of conduct *à la Chinois* indicated that people were so bad as to need them, but he sometimes preached something similar. In castigating the works of others, he reserved the right to be inconsistent.

Atsutane's aim in writing "Vulgar Shinto" was to expel Buddhist and Confucian elements from Shinto, to draw a line between the purity of what he saw as ancient Shinto and later additives.[36] Only in this way, he believed, could he and his followers, indeed Japan as a whole, recapture the age of the gods here and now. To make his case, he cited other scholars to prove that he was not simply inventing his argument and that others had earlier discerned the corruption in Shinto teachings. Given that the most powerful institution of his time was the Yoshida house with its syncretic brand of Shinto, it is not surprising that he attacked it with special vehemence.

Having castigated Yoshida Shinto, in 1822 Atsutane then repudiated some of what he had earlier asserted and tried to conciliate the Yoshida in "Soliloquy." By this time, he knew priests who also criticized the Yoshida for not following the ancient Way, and he wanted to unify Shinto beliefs and practice, not cause schisms. In "Soliloquy," Atsutane acknowledged that while the Yoshida had accepted Shinto-Buddhist syncretism in medieval times, their purpose was to prevent the true old Way from disappearing. Without the Yoshida's efforts to preserve them, ancient writings would have been lost to history. "Even people who detest the Yoshida house cannot inquire into

secret transmissions, see Scheid, "Shinto as a Religion for the Warrior Class," 308–16.

35. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 119–23.

36. Miki, *Hirata Atsutane*, 142–43.

the meaning of the ancient Way without relying on old documents from before the Engi reforms (901–923) that the Yoshida handed down."[37] Yes, the Yoshida had performed Shinto practices mixed with Buddhist elements, but that was because they had thought deeply about conforming to the ways of the world. Their practice thus fitted the times in which they lived. In "Vulgar Shinto," Atsutane had mocked the Yoshida house for its pretentious claim to descend from a god. Now he turned around and, in a fine bit of circular reasoning, argued that the Yoshida house must be descended from Ame no Koyane because all diviners without exception are Ame no Koyane's descendants. Atsutane had previously cited Yoshimi Yukikazu to buttress his argument, but to support the Yoshida, he turned against Yoshimi, claiming that many of his points were nothing but "scornful slander" (p. 239).

Having lauded the Yoshida house for preserving Shinto in the face of the Buddhist onslaught, Atsutane next tried to bring it around to his way of thinking. Now that the ancient Way was flourishing, he urged the Yoshida to change its teachings to fit the times lest it alienate local priests who wanted to base their practice on ancient texts. Some prominent priests had already turned their backs on the school (p. 241). The Yoshida should advance its scholarship by appointing scholars of the ancient Way as teachers, opening a school for Shinto studies, and leading the priests in each region back to the past based on ancient studies that emphasized the great Way of the emperor, not their personal, private self-interested ways. "By relying on ancient studies, the errors that have accumulated since the middle ages will be corrected, and we will return to the past that accords with the emperor's beneficent mercy" (p. 241). The Yoshida had to allow scholars to investigate the past, and when their interpretations conflicted with the doctrines and practices transmitted by the Yoshida, then the Yoshida should work with the scholars to bring them into harmony. The Yoshida should resist putting limits on scholarship, and the scholars must not embarrass them by making their differences public. The settling of old disputes thus had to be done in secret. If the Yoshida agreed, then "your house's occupation of performing Shinto rituals handed down to you from Ama no Koyane will continue to be transmitted to both heaven and earth" (p. 242).

While the beginning of "Soliloquy" represented an extraordinary reversal for Atsutane, the rest of the text suggests that his aim was reform. Most scholars assume that he wrote it to ingratiate himself with the Yoshida house. This was certainly the view of Atsutane's contemporaries and acquaintances.

37. Hirata Atsutane, *Hitorigoto*, 240. Page numbers in the text refer to this source. See also Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 174–78.

A letter to Motoori Ōhira written in 1823 by Atsutane's devoted supporter in Kyoto, Hattori Nakatsune, explained Atsutane's thinking:

> Hirata is trying to spread the Way of the gods throughout the realm. He thinks that if he persuades the Yoshida house to reform its Shinto in line with the ancient studies Shinto handed down by Norinaga and uses that house to convey his teachings, it will be easy for him to do this.[38]

Hattori also thought he understood why the Yoshida would go along with Atsutane's proposals:

> Lord Yoshida's beliefs typically have to do with his house's worldly affairs. In recent years Hirata has become famous in Edo, he preaches the ancient Way, he has many pupils, and he has become powerful. I've heard that even the Yoshida Kanto administrator has become one of his disciples. He's reporting to the Yoshida house in Kyoto that if it doesn't cooperate with Hirata, the situation will become impossible. (p. 434)

But would this work? "The Yoshida style is just like that of Honganji, and since it amasses money whether asleep or awake, it's completely set in its ways" (p. 437). By this, Hattori meant that these two institutions thrived by licensing priests, the one Shinto, the other Buddhist, and gaining income from these licenses had little to do with doctrine.

Atsutane demonstrated further goodwill toward the Yoshida by revising its genealogy. For this he got help from three priests in Mikawa who later became his disciples. The revision was needed because the genealogies analyzed by eighteenth-century scholars had shown a break in the line between Chijimaro, a human descendant of Ame no Koyane, and Urabe Hiramaro, from whom the Yoshida traced their descent. In 1823.5, just a few months before he went to Kyoto, Atsutane used ancient texts to construct a new lineage, starting with Amenominakanushi, whom he identified as the ultimate ancestor of all, deities and people alike. He then provided a different descent for Hiramaro, making him a cousin, not the son of Chijimaro, and showing that both were descended from Ame no Koyane.[39] Because

38. Hirata Kanetane, *Kiyo sōhansho*, 435. Page numbers in the text going forward refer to this source.

39. Hirata Atsutane, *Kikka keifu den*, SHAz 8:285–304; Sōkō A216, HAKS.

Atsutane's work was based on evidence drawn from historical investigation, it superseded earlier attacks on the genealogy.[40] Descent from Ame no Koyane mattered because he was the originator of Shinto rituals and the divination that ascertained the will of the gods. As his direct descendant, Kanetomo's version of Shinto was thus superior to all others that preceded it,[41] an example of how genealogy bestows credibility and thus becomes important as a matter of faith.

Students of religion as it presents itself in today's Japan often argue that Shinto is more a matter of practice and this-worldly benefits than doctrine.[42] People visit shrines to pray for help in passing school entrance exams, getting a job, or getting married; they participate in local shrine activities to build community spirit; they visit famous shrines because they are famous and in beautiful locations. The same can be said for the people of Atsutane's day, but it cannot be said of Atsutane and the Shinto priests who became his disciples or with whom he associated. For them, belief in the gods required knowing the appropriate prayers and which gods had done what when. Such knowledge could only be acquired through intensive study. They tried to understand the nature of evil, not to eliminate it but to reconcile themselves to it and to placate the gods who caused it. They had questions regarding death. In his "Scholarly Principles" for the Shirakawa house, as in his more famous texts, Atsutane grappled with these issues and encouraged his readers to do likewise.

Atsutane's goals in writing his texts concerning the Yoshida were different from those in composing guidelines for Shirakawa affiliates, and so were his materials. Rather than compare different versions of the age of the gods, based on the belief that each of them might contain a kernel of truth, as he had done for the Shirakawa, in "Vulgar Shinto" he turned first to the history of what men had accomplished on earth, encapsulated in Norinaga's laments for the impact of Buddhism. Then he drew on the writings of his seventeenth and eighteenth century predecessors on resistance to and co-optation of Buddhism in the history of the Yoshida family and in late seventeenth-century Suika Shinto. In "Soliloquy," as well, he argued with his predecessors over what the Yoshida had done rather than over what gods had done. He contradicted what he had previously written, perhaps because he found it expedient to conciliate the most powerful Shinto institution of his time and he had come to realize that his earlier assertions challenged his own faith. If divina-

40. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 179.
41. Inoue, *Kinsei no jinja to chōtei ken'i*, 27, 32
42. See, for example, Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*.

tion originated with Ame no Koyane and the Yoshida's ancestors had proven themselves adept at it, then they had to have descended from that god. Proficiency thus proved that genealogies could be sacred texts. And, as Mark Teeuwen has pointed out, at this time, "history was the very source of sacredness," and the sacred originated nowhere else but in the age of the gods.[43] This was the message that Atsutane and the Hirata school took to heart.

43. Teeuwen, *Watarai Shintō*, 26.

CHAPTER 7

The Shrine Priests

Supporters and Rivals

Endō Jun contends that the study of religiosity must attend not only to doctrine but also to practice and organization. This premise underlies his point that until recently, scholars tended to see Atsutane's thought and Kanetane's efforts to expand the Hirata school as separate issues rather than being intertwined.[1] It's thus important to investigate the links between the Hirata school and personnel in the two chief Shinto institutions of the Edo period. Examining the relations among Atsutane, his descendants, and the Shinto priesthood at the intersection of doctrine, practice, and organization shows how they changed over time.

Over the course of his career, Atsutane maintained connections to the Yoshida and Shirakawa houses. These connections facilitated personal relationships that helped him to expand his network of disciples, gave him access to priests who helped compile or edit texts, and brought not just the priests but also their parishioners within the orbit of his teachings. One important Yoshida affiliate provided the channel through which Atsutane presented his works to the emperor in 1823, an achievement that Atsutane boasted about to the end of his days.

Atsutane not only wrote for the Shirakawa and for and about the Yoshida (see chap. 6) but also involved himself in their affairs. He, and later Kanetane, became deeply entangled in the Shinto institutions that provided priests with benefits and set boundaries on their activities. The Hirata family's interactions with the Yoshida and Shirakawa have been little studied, but they became an essential part of the school's engagement in religious and

1. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku no kenkyū*, 206.

political affairs as the old Tokugawa order collapsed in the 1860s and the new centralized institutions under the nominal rule of Emperor Meiji were being created. As a result, the most influential school of thought among Meiji-era Shinto priests was Japan studies.[2]

Atsutane's and Kanetane's efforts to overcome the troubles that befell the offices that managed Yoshida and Shirakawa affairs in Edo speak to the importance they attached to maintaining priests and shrines. Associating with religious establishments in turn had an impact on the Hirata school because it numbered priests affiliated with these establishments among its staunchest supporters. Kanetane's oversight of the Shirakawa Edo office eventually led to his promotion of a religiosity founded on ancestor worship and reverence for the imperial house.

Shrine Personnel and the Hirata School

Studying the relations between Atsutane and individual priests, regardless of their affiliation with either the Shirakawa or the Yoshida, provides a personal angle to these connections and illustrates the ways in which priests might take the initiative in defining matters of doctrine. When Atsutane started giving lectures and enrolling disciples in 1804, his first recruit outside of his fellow Matsuyama domain retainers was a shrine priest named Wakabayashi Izumi. Wakabayashi was the priest at Myōgi shrine in Komagome, then on the Edo outskirts, where the ruler of Edo before the Tokugawa, Ōta Dōkan, had prayed for victory in the 1570s. Like many shrine priests who joined the Hirata school, Wakabayashi thus came from a storied lineage and headed a shrine with a documented history. Five years later, Wakabayashi introduced another priest to Atsutane's school. Of the 550 disciples that Atsutane attracted during his lifetime, 127, or 23 percent, were shrine personnel.[3] Most of his disciples (4,187) joined after his death; of that total, 20.9 percent were connected to shrines. Samurai constituted 15.8 percent of the total number of disciples, over twice their representation in the population at large.[4]

Shrine personnel constituted a more amorphous category than did samurai, making it difficult to ascertain their percentage of the total population. In a survey of gazetteers in southern Kanto from the late Edo period, Helen Hardacre found that of 747 shrines, slightly under 10 percent had profes-

2. Inoue, "The Shintō World of the 1880s," 331.
3. *Ibukinoya monjinchō*, 15–43.
4. Kikuchi, "Hirata 'monjinchō' ni tsuite," 3.

sional shrine priests.[5] In most cases, the status system lumped ritualists at smaller shrines or those holding only a part-time position with townspeople or farmers. In recording names, geographical location, age, and date of entry into the school, the Hirata roster of disciples makes no mention of whether people associated with shrines were affiliated with either the Yoshida or the Shirakawa. Furthermore, the house diary and other records show that not all shrine priests who visited the family, bought Atsutane's writings, and supported his cause signed up as disciples. For that reason, any assessment of Atsutane's quantitative impact on the Shinto priesthood based on the family's lists necessarily remains incomplete. It's nonetheless noteworthy that priests joined his school at a higher rate than their likely percentage of the overall population. This is significant because in their public capacity, priests routinely interacted with congregations of parishioners and had an inherent standing to teach about the ancient Way of the gods.

A coterie of priests who served at Hachiman shrines in Mikawa in central Japan illustrates the opportunities for priestly initiative. Tokugawa Ieyasu, who hailed from the region, had a special regard for Hachiman, the god of war. When he became shogun in 1603, he granted lands to support these shrines guaranteed by a document stamped with his red seal. At the inauguration of each subsequent shogun, the priests from the Hachiman shrines had to travel to Edo to renew their red seals. During the 1838 trip, three of the priests—two affiliated with the Shirakawa, one with the Yoshida—visited the Hirata house, where they commissioned a dramatic recitation of prayers.[6] Only one of them, the Yoshida affiliate Hatano Takao, had become a disciple, though the other two sometimes visited the house and read Atsutane's works. A leading Shirakawa affiliate, Takeo Masatomo, spent decades in Edo fighting attempts by the Yoshida house to bring his fellow affiliates, like the third visitor, Watanabe Masaka, under its control. In 1841 Masatomo's son, Takeo Takatomo, who had joined the Hirata school in 1827, sent Hatano Takao a treatise written by his father that recapitulated the history of the age of the gods in accordance with Atsutane's teachings, criticized the confusion in rites and ranks wrought by the Yoshida, and explained why Shirakawa Shinto was the one true tradition. Takatomo appended a note saying, "Since we're of the same [Hirata] school, and we are on such friendly terms, please take a look at this."[7]

5. Hardacre, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, 50.

6. Kishino, "Mikawa Hirata-ha kokugakusha," 28–29.

7. This text, "Kamigoto no uretamigoto," written in 1817, can be found at http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/iview/Frame.jsp?DB_ID=G0003917KTM&C_CODE=0214-24708 (accessed September 12, 2018). The statement by Takatomo is appended to another

Fig. 26. Onogoro Island with inscription by Hirata Kanetane (ink-brush painting, 1849). (Courtesy of the Motoori Norinaga Kinenkan.)

Regardless of their affiliation with the Yoshida or Shirakawa, the Mikawa disciples acted as distribution agents for Atsutane's publications and spread his word through study groups. They also hoped to satisfy their desire for a better understanding of the age of the gods through imaging how the world began. In 1849, Kanetane wrote to Hatano to report that two of his compatriots had paid him a visit and viewed a hanging scroll of Onogoro Island, the land created from the brine that dripped from the jeweled spear held by Izanagi and Izanami. In 1816, Atsutane had commissioned a painting of the island and inscribed seven poems on it.[8] Both priests wanted a copy, and Kanetane remembered that Hatano had earlier asked for one as well. Kanetane then had three paintings made for a fee and copied Atsutane's poems on each himself.[9]

document, *Jingihaku shokushō enzetsusho*, written in 1838. Nishio-shi Iwase Bunkō: Kotenseki shoshi dētabēsu no. 52–197, https://iwasebunko.jp/stock/database.html (accessed July 23, 2018).

8. Walthall, "Jendaa kara bunseki suru Hirata Atsutane no shisō," 167–70.
9. Aichi kenshi hensan iinkai, *Aichi kenshi shiryō*, 505–6.

Onogoro Island may be small, but its phallic shape speaks to its generative properties (see chap. 4). It is a strange-looking island studded with rocks and pebbles, crowned with evergreen trees, its narrow shaft and bulbous top bisected with a line of mist. Atsutane's poems speak to the reality of this miraculous island and its implications for humankind. The first describes the creation of the land by the gods; the second then highlights the significance of the jeweled spear and its transformation into not just an island but a mountain, the pillar of the country (a phrase that is found in *Chronicles of Japan*):

Kuni naka no	The pillar of the country
hashira to kami no	set up by the gods
tsui tateshi	when they thrust with the jeweled spear
nuhoko no nareru	became a mountain
yama wa kono yama	that is this mountain

Subsequent poems assert that the gods then created the Japanese people in all their multitudes and urge the people to take the creator gods as their model. Over the course of this poem sequence, Atsutane moves from concrete images that celebrate Onogoro Island's creation to the lessons that he and his students should learn from the gods and put into practice in their daily lives. The painting thus provides visual proof of what the gods made that had nothing to do with clothing and rites sold through the Shirakawa and Yoshida schools.

One prominent shrine priest affiliated with the Yoshida who also became a Hirata disciple was Mutobe Yoshika (1806–63). His shrine, called Mukō, had been established in the early eighth century, even before the capital was first founded in the Kyoto basin at Nagaoka. According to a section in Atsutane's *Exegesis on Ancient History* that Mutobe copied, the Mutobe family was descended from Ishikoridome, the god who fashioned the mirror used to lure Amaterasu out of the cave and who accompanied the sun goddess's imperial grandson Ninigi on his descent to earth.[10] Mutobe was the ninetieth in the Mutobe line of priests for Mukō shrine and served as tutor for the Kōmei emperor. He was thus a prominent figure in Kyoto religious circles, and he had excellent connections.

Among these connections was Mutobe's elder sister Hyōgo, who served a woman called Reizei, the chief female official attached to the retired emper-

10. Kobayashi, *Hirata kokugaku no reikon kan*, 119.

or's consort. Through these two women, in 1823 Atsutane had *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* and several of his works on history presented to the emperor and the retired emperor's consort. (Atsutane's works took a different route to get to the retired emperor. In that case, the retired emperor's concubine, a Tominokōji daughter, provided the conduit.) This was all done informally, out of the public eye, requiring no bothersome negotiations with the court's military liaison. From then on, Atsutane had the privilege of stamping these books, which sold on the open market, with a seal indicating that the emperor had seen them.[11]

Atsutane is often lauded for daring to offer his writings "above the clouds," but the retired emperor Kōkaku (1771–1840, r. 1779–1817) had already prepared the ground. As part of his initiative to foster ancient studies at court and raise its salience among intellectuals, Kōkaku encouraged scholars to present their works on ancient studies and classical poetry to the nobility. In 1790 Norinaga had his exegesis on *Record of Ancient Matters* presented to Kōkaku's elder brother, an imperial abbot, who forwarded it to Kōkaku. A fellow student of the ancient Way, Uchiyama Mataki, went through a female attendant to have his work read by Kōkaku in 1812 and wrote Atsutane a letter explaining how he had done so. By the time Atsutane went to Kyoto, Kōkaku had retired but remained the power behind the throne.[12] Nonetheless, such a rare accolade pleased Yamazaki Atsutoshi, Atsutane's patron in Koshigaya, likely helped to increase the number of his disciples, promoted the sales of his books, and most importantly affirmed the validity of his teaching.

Mutobe joined Atsutane's school because he and Atsutane shared an interest in explaining and interpreting the ancient age of the gods. Mutobe had read *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* before Atsutane arrived in Kyoto and had even written a commentary on it. He and his father spent much time with Atsutane during his visit, and Mutobe was allowed to copy portions of *Exegesis on Ancient History* with the proviso that he not let others see it without permission.[13] Atsutane later wrote that he valued Mutobe's suggestions so highly that he was going to incorporate them into his text. While Mutobe was staying in Edo for a month in 1838, he often visited the Hirata house. He thus had a good understanding of Atsutane's views on which gods had done what, and he provided the chief support for the Hirata school in the Kansai area.[14]

11. Akita ken Komonjokan 7.237 "Hirata Daikaku go meshitate no setsu kakiage no kiroku" 1841.8.

12. Endō, "Norinaga-gaku no keishō to Hirata Atsutane no tōjō," 136.

13. Nakagawa Kazuaki, *Hirata Kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*, 263–64.

14. Sasaki, "Amenominakanushi no Kami," 8.

But, as Kobayashi Takerō has observed, the two men fundamentally disagreed on the nature of the first gods. Atsutane stated that although male and female, Takamimusubi and Kamimusubi did not unite as husband and wife, whereas Mutobe believed that they did. Mutobe emphasized that the five deities with "*musubi*" in their names enshrined in the imperial Hasshinden had contributed to the production of everything including governance. Moreover, Takamimusubi and Kamimusubi produced the other three as their children. In contrast, as we have seen, Atsutane argued that the first gods to have sexual relations as husband and wife were Izanagi and Izanami, who created the land and its people and then gave birth to the wind, fire, metal, water, and earth gods, who collectively constitute the basis for everything.[15] These differences suggest how easily scholars could disagree in their interpretation of canonical texts. Even one friendly to Atsutane might find it difficult to fully embrace his vision of antiquity.

After Atsutane died, Mutobe continued to diverge from his teachings. He placed special emphasis on the powers accruing to the gods and tutelary deities in the unseen realm and is chiefly responsible for the prominence given to Ōkuninushi among Atsutane's posthumous disciples.[16] In Mutobe's view, Ōkuninushi did not govern just the hidden world of the spirits. He also replaced Takamimusubi and Kamimusubi in administering the rites that give "people birth in this world, and after they are born, control their weal and woe, and all other aspects of their lives."[17] The emperor is in charge of performing rites and ruling the visible realm, but for ordinary people, Ōkuninushi is the more important since he controls whether they prosper or suffer. He delegates his authority to tutelary deities (*ubusunagami*) who take responsibility for everything that happens and thus become the chief object of local worship, leaving the sun goddess to fade into the background. Yijiang Zhong calls Mutobe Atsutane's best disciple because he transformed Japan's social topography into "a Shinto nation in which the individual was unified with the kami under the command of Ōkuninushi."[18] With this argument, Mutobe drifted away from the Yoshida party line that highlighted the central creator role described in *Chronicles of Japan* for Kunitokotachi.[19] Nevertheless, Yoshida Yoshihiro, the then head of the Yoshida house, was so impressed with Mutobe's argument that he wrote the preface for Mutobe's *Selections from Ancient Legends on Shrines to Tutelary Deities* (*Ubusuna-sha*

15. Kobayashi, *Hirata kokugaku no reikon kan*, 119–24.

16. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, 235–42; Sasaki, "Amenominakanushi no Kami," 12.

17. Sasaki, "Amenominakanushi no Kami," 10.

18. Zhong, *The Origin of Modern Shinto in Japan*, 157.

19. Breen and Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto*, 49, 61, 222.

koden-shō), in which he praised Mutobe and added, "Please disseminate this to your colleagues immediately so that they may make its meaning known to all the commoners in their vicinity."[20]

Yoshihiro's words reflect the role played by shrine priests in spreading ideas about the ancient world of the gods to ordinary people. An activist priest (and not all of them were) might well lead study groups as Hatano Takao did in the 1850s and 1860s to teach his parishioners about Japan's superior place among nations as the land of the rising sun. Other prominent members of the Hirata school such as Tsunoda Tadayuki, later the chief priest at Atsuta shrine near Nagoya, and Yano Harumichi, one of Kanetane's closest associates, supported Mutobe's writings on Ōkuninushi and the tutelary gods, with Yano writing his own summary during the "Movement to Disseminate the Great Teaching" in the 1870s. According to Sasaki Kiyoshi, in this way Mutobe's claim that Ōkuninushi was superior to the other gods came to be associated with the Hirata school, even though Atsutane never went so far.[21] Mutobe's willingness to become Atsutane's disciple provided the Hirata school with the imprimatur of a notable shrine priest in western Japan, while at the same time, as we will see below, Mutobe's impact on its teachings took the school in a direction that later conflicted with the orthodoxy promoted by the Meiji government.

In contrast to Mutobe, the turmoil created by another interpreter of ancient texts remained within the Yoshida house. In 1824 Miki Hirotaka published *The Real Meaning of Nakatomi Purification* (*Nakatomi no harae hongi*). In this commentary on the ritual invocations performed twice a year, he contended among other things that when Emperor Jinmu set up his administration he created a well-field system of land distribution. In the ancient Chinese model, for every nine fields, arranged ideally like a tic-tac-toe board, the farmers would receive the produce for eight; the harvest from the central field went to the emperor. This seems unlikely. It was a considerably lighter system of taxation than that officially imposed on Japanese farmers at the time, and such explicit regulation of economic relations was probably never practiced in China either. Nonetheless, the following year, the Yoshida house authorized the text by producing a preface for it, its publications office issued it, and its representative in Edo affirmed the contents.[22]

20. Kobayashi, *Hirata kokugaku no reikon kan*, 116. Only the 1857 edition has this preface; a later edition published in 1876 does not, 146.

21. Sasaki, "Amenominakanushi no Kami," 31–32.

22. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 184–85.

With this evidence of his credentials, Miki traveled through Kanto, claiming to be a scholar-teacher authorized by the Yoshida and demanding that the priests support him.[23]

Atsutane, his disciples, and Yoshida affiliates among the Kanto priesthood were furious. In an angry letter dated 1825.9.10 to Nariai Ōe, a shrine priest in faraway Bizen, Atsutane described how Kanetane had come across *The Real Meaning of Nakatomi Purification* during a trip northeast of Edo. "It's a stupid book by an idiot called something like Miki Hirotaka who's causing trouble by using the lord's authority to spread it around and demanding 100 *hiki* apiece from the shrine priests. . . . I've heard that his behavior is outrageous and uncouth, and I can't tell you how much I regret that this reflects badly on the lord."[24] Reading between the lines of his vehement response suggests that he saw this man from Kyoto as encroaching on his territory.

A recently enrolled Hirata disciple, Ikuta Yorozu, took up the cause, preparing a written attack against *The Real Meaning of Nakatomi Purification*. On 1825.9.3, a month before Miki received the Yoshida imprimatur, and just two days after Ikuta had seen the first edition, he started writing "Three Trees One Sickle" (*Miki hitokama*—the characters for "*miki*" are "three trees") and finished it three weeks later. Ikuta argued that Miki had misread a phrase relating to purification ceremonies as concerning the relationship between lord and retainer and he was wrong to see an essentially Chinese system of taxation as having originated in Japan. In any event, what did that system have to do with purification? Two years later, Ikuta wrote an appendix to his original essay that went beyond Miki to castigate Yoshida Kanetomo for nominating himself back in 1484 as the chief of the bureaucracy for the way of divinities (*jingidō kanryō chōjō*) and thereby challenging the Shirakawa-Yoshida hierarchy. Despite Ikuta's well-articulated criticisms of this Yoshida-sponsored tract, when Ikuta got into trouble with his domain in 1828, Atsutane had the Yoshida second him to its Kanto office as an assistant scholar-teacher.[25] According to a letter Ikuta later wrote to a friend, he planned to go to Kyoto and points west "carrying my flaming sickle that will surely repel everything," an indication, perhaps, that he

23. Hirata Kanetane, "Hitorigoto ni tsuki sonogo no jujitsu," 251, 269. Page numbers in the text refer to this source.

24. Hirata Atsutane, "Kugatsu tōka tsuki Nariai nushi ate Hirata Atsutane shokan," 53. My thanks to Endō Jun for this reference.

25. Endō, "Shūkyō-shi kara mita bakumatsu ishin-ki no Hirata kokugaku," 130, 133.

intended to force Yoshida adherents to repudiate Miki's ideas. Ikuta's plans never materialized.[26]

Atsutane's disciples among the shrine priests later attacked Miki's text in petitions and letters to the Yoshida house when its Edo office fell into disarray in 1829. Shrine priest Ui Dewa no kami from Katori district, Shimōsa province, wrote, "I've never seen such nonsense. It makes no distinction between Confucius and Buddha; it's absurd and preposterous. I can't believe it received the lord's approval." A student of the ancient Way himself, Ui criticized Miki's scholarship, saying that "not one of the explanatory notes is correct" and that Miki's claim that the well-field system is the essence of the Nakatomi purification invocation is "a perversion of the way of the gods" (p. 269). Two priests from Kazusa had much the same complaint. They too had read the text, only to discover that it had nothing to do with the traditions handed down in the Yoshida house. "He claims to be a Yoshida disciple, but is he really?" (p. 259). Priests also complained that Miki hounded them to buy his book and contribute to the costs of building a school.

From the priests' point of view, Miki preached a perverted doctrine and cost them money. Shrine officials allied with village leadership saw promoting the well-field system of taxation as potentially destabilizing the rural social order, and in the early nineteenth century with the increase in depopulated villages, vagrancy, and lawlessness, this was a significant concern. But beyond the economic and social fallout, Miki was spreading false teachings. The men who complained about him may have lived in the hinterland, but thanks to their association with Atsutane they were well schooled in ancient studies. They thus had the confidence to stand up to an outsider, even one with Yoshida house backing.

For Atsutane, aligning himself with the Yoshida, Japan's largest religious organization at the time for shrine priests, proved a mixed blessing. He gained adherents of his own—Hatano Takao and his friends, for example, who helped him construct the Yoshida genealogy. As Mutobe's writings disclose, however, it is unclear to what extent Atsutane succeeded in changing minds since Mutobe continued to explore his own interpretations of the generative gods and Ōkuninushi. At the same time, it appears that the Yoshida house was willing to allow its affiliates and Atsutane to promote diverse readings of ancient texts. So far as the priests were concerned, Atsutane's teachings satisfied their need for text-based scholarship combined with local lore to use in instructing their parishioners in the worship of the gods that affirmed their position in the village hierarchy. In the case of Miki

26. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane*, 146, 154, 155; Endō, *Hirata Kokugaku*, 183–87.

Hirotaka, however, the Yoshida tolerance for divergent opinions went far beyond what the Hirata school or the priests with which it was affiliated were willing to accept. Atsutane sided with his disciples, in part because he disagreed with Miki's interpretation of the great purification text and in part because his supporters among rural priests pushed him to do so.

The Yoshida House and Its Edo Branch Office

The Yoshida branch office in Edo had a checkered history from its inception in 1791, a history intertwined with its socioeconomic functions as well as relations between its shrine priests and the Hirata family. Yatsurugi Katsuyoshi, a priest at Hachiman shrine in Kisarazu just to the east of Edo, had pushed for an office in Edo because he and his fellow priests hated the time and expense it took to travel to Kyoto with their problems (p. 255). They resented priests who wore ceremonial robes without permission. Other priests wanted to change the name of their shrines to rid them of Buddhist elements or to escape from the control that a Buddhist temple held over them. Some wanted to hold Shinto funerals even though long-standing practice and the shogunate delegated this function to the Buddhists. The shogunate as well pressed the Yoshida to set up an Edo office because it wanted better supervision over Kanto priests and an official close at hand when questions arose. The Yoshida left it up to the Kanto priests to finance and build the office; once they had done so, it could not be inaugurated until the Yoshida sent an official from Kyoto to staff it. He was to be permanently stationed in Edo; his superior, a Yoshida retainer with Suzuka as his family name, visited Edo as seldom as possible.[27]

The priests in eastern Japan welcomed the Edo office. In a petition dated 1829.9, representatives for all the shrine personnel in Habu district, Kazusa province, praised its early days: the officials acted appropriately, they engaged in scholarship and even the fine arts, and they rebuilt shrines and erected new ones. Thanks to them, the Way of the heavenly gods and earthly spirits flourished. Across the country the rise or fall of this Way was entirely dependent on the character of the officials appointed to run the new Edo office (p. 251).

By the time Atsutane wrote "Soliloquy," the Miyagawa family had taken control of the Edo office, and the man responsible for brokering Atsutane's

27. For a history of the Edo office, see Sugiyama, "Yoshida-ke Kantō yakusho," 59–106.

connection to the Yoshida was Miyagawa Danshō, the second in his line. He is first mentioned in the Hirata records as having visited Atsutane's house on 1823.7.3, just nineteen days before Atsutane left for Kyoto, but it is likely that he had met Atsutane earlier. He certainly knew him by reputation. When Atsutane paid his first visit to the Yoshida headquarters, the house elder Suzuka Echizen Tsurutane stated that he had already heard about Atsutane from Danshō.[28] After Atsutane's return to Edo, Danshō appointed him to be a scholar-teacher for the Yoshida, a new position created possibly in response to his proposals in "Soliloquy" that the Yoshida encourage the ancient Way of the gods and spirits. It also speaks to the priests' concern with maintaining the social order and the Yoshida's drive to gather as many priests as possible into its fold. Danshō's statement reads:

> Since you have been diligent in recent years in the study of the Way of the gods, you are now appointed scholar-teacher. Henceforth you are instructed to educate the shrine priests attached to us and under our control. Moreover, whenever you travel around the villages, you are to admonish any priests guilty of misconduct and instruct them not to neglect their calling and their Shinto initiation.[29]

Neither in this appointment nor in a similar one that Atsutane received later from the Shirakawa is there any mention of payment for his efforts; the honor of serving a noble house was expected to be reward enough.

It is likely that Atsutane and the Yoshida read Danshō's statement in different ways. The Yoshida had a great many affiliates in the Kanto region and keeping track of them had proved beyond the capabilities of the Edo official.[30] Kanetane traveled widely in recruiting disciples to his school; how convenient if on his trips he could also check on the Yoshida affiliates. The mention of "initiation" is key: for the Yoshida, the role of teacher meant encouraging priests to buy the licenses for initiations, successions, and rituals, and Atsutane helped several priests get these licenses.[31] The Yoshida knew, moreover, that the Shirakawa had poached some of its affiliates. It thus needed Atsutane. It did not specify how Atsutane was to educate the priests under its control, leaving it up to him to promote his own vision of the ancient Way of the gods. Atsutane, for his part, thought the Yoshida would bolster his reputation with shrine priests and provide cover for his

28. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 179–80.
29. Miyakawa, "Miyakawa Danshō kōtatsusho," Sasshi 209–6, HAKS.
30. Sugiyama, "Yoshida-ke kantō yakusho no sōritsu," 75.
31. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 181.

publication projects. Nakagawa Kazuaki argues that by publicizing Atsutane's connection to the Yoshida, the appointment increased his influence over Shinto priests.[32] Both sides hoped to use the other.

While controversy over *The Real Meaning of Nakatomi Purification* was still simmering, misconduct in the Yoshida bureaucracy came to light in 1829. It began with the Yoshida official in charge of provincial affairs in the Kyoto headquarters, Suzuka Shuze, who embezzled money and acted arbitrarily regarding shrine positions in Iwami province north of Hiroshima. According to Kanetane, who had become Atsutane's surrogate in corresponding with disciples, Miyagawa Danshō had been planning to retire when the scandal broke. Although Danshō was not accused of wrongdoing, his underlings had been in the habit of extorting money from shrine personnel. The magistrate of temples and shrines, who had the power to investigate irregularities and punish perpetrators, banished Miyagawa from Edo where he soon died, sentenced Suzuka Shuse to exile, and disciplined both the shrine priest who had originally exposed the scandal and the intendant for his district (p. 244).

The loss of Miyagawa meant that a successor had to be found, and this could have been Atsutane's moment. One coterie of priests representing shrines in Kazusa wrote to Kanetane seeking to verify what had happened. If the rumors were true, they hoped that perhaps Atsutane or Kanetane might take over the office. "This would make possible administration of the Way of the gods and spirits and the promotion of Japan studies" (p. 243). Kanetane also received copies of letters and petitions sent to Kyoto asking that Atsutane be made either representative or guardian. A statement was made on 1830.3.4 by general representatives from Kazusa, one a disciple, the other not: "Why has there been no response to last year's petitions?" (p. 272). They wanted to have Atsutane appointed Miyagawa's successor, but if the Yoshida preferred someone else, then Atsutane should be made guardian or at the very least the Edo office's agent until practices improved. More letters along similar lines followed at the end of the year and into 1831 (pp. 280, 282).

The priests' faith in Atsutane, both as an instructor in the ancient Way of gods and spirits and as an administrator, is truly noteworthy. His chief adherent in Mikawa, Hatano Takao, wrote a letter of support, as did priests in Echigo, but most came from the region northeast of Edo in the Kazusa and Shimōsa provinces, where Atsutane had a large concentration of dis-

32. Nakagawa Kazuaki, "Higashi Kazusa ni okeru Hirata kokugaku no tenkai," 118.

ciples, some 42 percent of his total among commoners in 1828.[33] In many cases, disciples joined with non-disciples in mobilizing all the priests in their district with Yoshida affiliation. Four petitions had no disciples among the signatories at all, yet they too favored appointing Atsutane to oversee the Edo office in one capacity or another (pp. 251–52, 265, 267–68). These documents thus provide evidence of the multiplier effect of Atsutane's connections to the Yoshida in that he reached many more people than those who appear on his lists of disciples. In one letter, Atsutane pointed out that in the provinces where he had been active as a teacher, the number of devout believers in the gods had been increasing by the day, and several hundred commoners had formed confraternities to promote wearing clean clothes when visiting shrines or petition to hold Shinto funerals (p. 283). When he later told the authorities in Akita that he had several hundred disciples (*monjin*) and thousands of followers (*deshi*), he must have had in mind men like the Yoshida-affiliated priests and their parishioners.[34] Remember that as a young man Atsutane had wanted to make his name as a scholar. In the crowded marketplace of ideas in early nineteenth-century Edo, emphasizing the size of his school and the number of his followers was one way to prove that he had achieved his goal.

Atsutane's letters to the Yoshida headquarters indicate that priests were also hounding him to assume at least some responsibility for reforming the Edo office. Yet he hesitated out of respect for the Miyagawa family and pity for the deceased family head. Danshō had hoped that his younger brother, Kingo, then age fifteen, might succeed him. Kanetane pointed out that Kingo was devoted to scholarship, but the priests countered that he was unequal to the task of running an office overrun by ruffians who called themselves priests (pp. 244, 251–52, 256). At the end of 1829, Atsutane wrote the following to the Yoshida house elders and the official in charge of provincial affairs: "If Kingo is vested with both the family headship and position [as Edo representative] not only Danshō's family but also the spirit of the deceased Danshō now residing in the underworld will be satisfied."[35]

Atsutane had another reason for refusing to take over the Yoshida's Edo office: he was simply too busy. He needed time to pursue his studies, and taking on an administrative position would not advance his scholarship.

33. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 194.

34. Akita ken Komonjokan 7.237 "Hirata Daikaku go meshitate."

35. Hirata Kanetane, "Hitorigoto ni tsuki sonogo no jujitsu," 263. Kingo paid his first visit to the Hirata house on 1830.3.13. He reported that he had been made the Miyagawa successor, but owing to his youth, Ogawa Orie was to stand in for him at the Edo office. Miyachi "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:19.

Becoming the Edo office representative was thus out of the question, though he was willing to consider an appointment as guardian to reassure the Yoshida affiliates. In a letter dated 1829.10.29, Atsutane asserted that ever since he became the Yoshida scholar-teacher, he had been loyal to the Yoshida, and even now he would refuse any remuneration if he were to act as guardian (p. 254). He repeated this offer in 1830 with a request that the Yoshida headquarters appoint a representative because the Edo office's reputation was in decline. Moreover, Miki Hirotaka was continuing to cause trouble with his demands that the priests build him a school, and no one had the authority to make him stop (p. 273).

Frustrated with the lack of a response by the Yoshida to the priests' protests, Atsutane drafted a petition to the shogunate. He never sent it, and it remains unpublished. It outlines the issues raised above, points out that the priests have been urging the Yoshida to appoint a new Edo office representative for years, and emphasizes that administrative malfeasance—demanding kickbacks and bribes for licenses—could cause trouble for the shogunate should priests abandon their Yoshida affiliation, leaving them unbeholden to any authority. Since the priests and Atsutane have been unable to get the Yoshida to respond, he explains, he wants the shogunate to bring its authority to bear. Most of the draft then goes on to lecture the shogunate on the proper principles of rule, urging it to remember the dictates of Emperor Kōtoku (r. 645–54) recorded in *Chronicles of Japan*: "First of all worship and pacify the gods and spirits, then debate affairs of state."[36] An apocryphal set of admonitions attributed to Sugawara no Michizane emphasizes respecting the spirits of heaven and earth, and a long quotation from an instruction manual by the famous medieval regent Ichijō Kaneyoshi (1402–81) for shogun Ashikawa Yoshihisa begins: "Our country is the land of the gods." Therefore, the construction of shrines and the performance of rites must take place before deliberating matters of rule. The petition goes far beyond problems with the Yoshida Edo office to urge the shogun to rebuild shrines and order the daimyo to do likewise. This will make the spirits happy, and they will bless rulers and commoners alike. In short, only by paying proper respect to the gods can the country be well governed. The petition was thus of a piece with Atsutane's message about the omnipresence of the gods, in this instance extended beyond his usual audience of commoners, priests, and warriors to the highest reaches of government.

Atsutane recognized that his was an audacious petition, but it encapsu-

36. Sasshi 369, HAKS. The following quotations are also from this unpaginated document.

lated his view of the relationship between gods and rulers. Rulers administered the visible world, always recognizing that their hopes and plans were subject to the whims of the invisible gods. Faith came first, but it had to be expressed in appropriate ways through the right structures—shrines and rituals. These had to be regulated lest heresies derived from foreign religions such as Buddhism or perhaps even Christianity creep in or ruffians trick innocent believers into parting with their money. The Yoshida thus had a crucial role to play in maintaining the proper order, if only they would perform it.

Even though the Yoshida were willing to have Atsutane serve as scholar-teacher, the idea of appointing him to an official position at the Edo office horrified conservative members of the house. In their eyes, he was an outsider who criticized rituals traditionally performed at the Yoshida shrine that incorporated esoteric Buddhist elements. In the middle of 1831, one of the Yoshida house elders, Suzuka Echigo no kami, wrote to Atsutane agreeing that he was too busy to administer the Edo office. Instead, the elders decided to give the position to Matsuoka Sanai. "We've discussed this matter with the priests and warned them to submit. We instruct you to continue as you have up to now as scholar-teacher and redouble your efforts in matters of instruction."[37]

Atsutane already knew Matsuoka. At the end of his trip to Kyoto in 1823, after he had presented his work to the imperial family, Matsuoka came to meet him, and Atsutane found Matsuoka to be an attractive young man.[38] He was a functionary in the Yoshida house as well as a poet. His grandfather had served as head of the Yoshida school, where he had promoted the neo-Confucian-infused Suika Shinto. It is unlikely that Matsuoka had not received training in this tradition as he was growing up, even though he had also pursued ancient studies. He was thus a compromise candidate, acceptable to the conservatives in Kyoto and, it was hoped, agreeable to Atsutane's followers in Kanto. The problem with Matsuoka was that he was unable to control the personnel who staffed the Yoshida Edo office and over time proved to be incompetent.[39]

The Hirata house later took a leaf out of the Yoshida playbook in instituting a new ploy to raise money from its disciples. When shrine personnel affiliated with the Yoshida, they were expected to purchase licenses to perform ceremonies and rites as well as to wear ceremonial clothing, headgear, and shoes.[40] In 1836, Atsutane issued his own flyer listing prices for instruc-

37. Sasshi 209-6-2, HAKS.
38. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 3:386.
39. Endō, *Hirata Kokugaku*, 198–99.
40. Miyachi Harukuni, "Yoshida Shintō saikyōjō no juju ni tsuite," 62.

tion in designated fields as well as for initiation into what he deemed orthodox practices, divided into categories: studies in the ancient Way, calendrical studies, fortunetelling, military science, and study of the occult. Once a student had completed listening to a course of lectures on the ancient age of the gods, he could pay to learn the rituals for purification, the Way, the suppression of fire, the repose of souls, and the Kuebiko ceremony (see chap. 5), all for the price of 1,000 gold *hiki*. The course in military science cost 500 *hiki* for lectures on the complete body of military texts, and it was supplemented by oral transmissions on medicine, how to read the clouds to forecast victory or defeat, and how to use the terrain, which cost 1,000 *hiki*. Secret transmissions on Chinese military techniques, weapons, armor, diagrams, and texts cost an additional 2,000 *hiki*.[41]

By way of comparison, Hatano Takao paid the Yoshida 8 *ryō* (3,200 *hiki*), of which his parishioners put up 7 *ryō*, for license, ceremonies, and clothing when he succeeded his father as chief priest of his Hachiman shrine.[42] It is unlikely that a disciple paying these sums to the Hirata would see the return on his investment that a priest could expect. Instead, the aim was more likely self-gratification along the lines of schools for everything from swordsmanship to poetry that charged for instruction and initiation into secret transmissions. The Hirata house was unique in offering initiation into such a range of topics, all tied together by Atsutane's belief in the deep connection between the Way of the gods and the Way of the warrior. It was also unique in selling initiation into ideas as well as rituals.

Atsutane's efforts to align Yoshida beliefs and practices with his teachings on the ancient Way ultimately failed. In a memo probably written in 1857 for Egami Den'ichirō, a farmer from Chikuzen who joined the school in 1855, Kanetane complained about how the Yoshida continued along the same lines as before. First, they called themselves chief administrator for the Way of the heavenly gods and earthly spirits (*jingidō kanryo chōjō*), a title that rightfully belonged to the Shirakawa. Second, what they called the Way of the gods (*kami no michi*) was not the authentic Way of the gods but a syncretic practice. Third, they claimed the right to recommend priests for court rank and office, at great financial benefit to themselves, whereas all they were entitled to do was issue licenses for priestly garb. In short, to the extent that shrine personnel had developed bad habits, the Yoshida were to blame.[43]

Kanetane's complaints struck at the heart of Yoshida house practices.

41. Sasshi 175, HAKS; Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan, *Meiji ishin to Hirata kokugaku*, 14.

42. Miyachi Harukuni, "Yoshida Shintō saikyōjō no juju ni tsuite," 60–64.

43. Sasshi 249–1, HAKS.

Based on its claim of descent from Ame no Koyane and its history of supervising shrines, the Yoshida had developed a system for organizing shrine priests codified by the shogunate in 1665. They sold either initiation or succession licenses for priests, which gave the priests a social status they would not have had otherwise.[44] Even carpenters who built shrines bought licenses for costumes and ceremonies from the Yoshida. Along with the licenses, the priests also chose from a menu of prayers, practices, and rituals to perform for their parishioners.[45] In this way commoners too became incorporated into the Yoshida way of doing things. Some of the items on the menu were innocuous, such as purification ceremonies. Others were more controversial, the *goma* ceremony in particular (see chap. 6). The system's monetary underpinnings frequently had unfortunate consequences. Putting markers of prestige and ritual up for sale encouraged Yoshida underlings to harass priests to buy more. When the Yoshida authorized texts such as Miki's commentary on the Nakatomi purification ritual, these writings too could be foisted on priests. And some priests bought the prestige of Yoshida affiliation but ignored the substance of any teaching. Atsutane and Kanetane tried working within the Yoshida system for over a decade to promote the true ancient Way of the heavenly gods and earthly spirits, but they gradually realized that the Yoshida were too entrenched in their ways to change. Instead, at the end of Atsutane's life, his family developed new ties to the Shirakawa.

The Shirakawa House and the Hirata Family

Endō Jun thinks that the person who most likely brought Atsutane into the Shirakawa orbit was Takeo Masatomo.[46] He was the hereditary priest for Yamanaka Hachiman shrine, located in the mountains of eastern Mikawa, one of those given a red seal by Ieyasu. Despite his shrine's remote location, Masatomo played an important role in Shirakawa affairs by leading a legal fight by a handful of Mikawa priests to reject Yoshida control and affiliate with the Shirakawa.[47] While the lawsuit dragged on, Masatomo spent much of his time traveling between Kyoto and Edo, and by 1825, he had become a

44. Inoue, *Kinsei no jinja to chōtei ken'i*, 6, 211.

45. Miyachi Harukuni, "Yoshida Shintō saikyōjō no juju ni tsuite," 58–65.

46. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 209.

47. See Kishino, "Mikawa Hirata-ha kokugakusha," 22–58; and Mase, "Bakuhansei kokka ni okeru jinja sōron to chōbaku kankei," 63–93.

frequent visitor to the Hirata house.[48] When Atsutane hosted a prayer recitation in 1838 for three Mikawa priests, Masatomo was one of them.

The Shirakawa established a branch in Edo later than did the Yoshida, and its plans for Atsutane quickly went awry. In 1840.5, it opened a school in Edo and appointed him to be a scholar-teacher, the same title that he had earlier received from the Yoshida.[49] Atsutane asked that the appointment letter be predated to 1837.5, a month before his leading disciple and one-time adopted son Ikuta Yorozu had launched his ill-fated rebellion in Kashiwazaki, perhaps, Endō supposes, to shore up his reputation when the shogunate was viewing him with ever greater suspicion.[50] In 1834, the shogunate's official Confucian scholar, Hayashi Jussai, reported that Atsutane asserted his own faction of Japan studies; slandered Confucianism, Buddhism, and mainstream Shinto; and promoted his peculiar ideas to the exclusion of everyone else's, thus sowing confusion among the people. Shogunal officials heard from critics that some of Atsutane's essays—a proposal for a measurement guild, a radical interpretation of ancient Chinese texts that claimed a Japanese origin for the three sage kings, and a lunar calendar revised according to the imperial Way—meddled in affairs of state and harmed customary practices and beliefs.[51] Before he had a chance to lecture at the Shirakawa school, the shogunate sent Atsutane back to his home domain of Akita at the beginning of 1841, but he continued to advise the Shirakawa through Kanetane.

The Shirakawa too had to deal with corrupt officials, in this case their Kanto administrator Minamiōji Sabee. In 1842.6, the senior councillor Mizuno Tadakuni forbade religious leaders to live in the central Edo wards. At the same time, Minamiōji had to answer questions from the magistrate for temples and shrines regarding Inoue Masakane, the founder of Misogi-kyō (purification teachings), who became a Shirakawa affiliate in 1836 (see chap. 6).[52] Atsutane wrote the response to the magistrate's questions regarding the Shirakawa office's functions from exile while complaining to Kanetane that Minamiōji was untrustworthy.[53] Even though the magistrate provided money and land for the Shirakawa to move its office, Minamiōji demanded funds from the priests under his control, which he then embezzled. For this

48. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane*, 957 passim; Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:19 passim–262 (1851).

49. Hako 6–9, HAKS.

50. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 210.

51. Nakagawa, *Hirata kokugaku no shiteki kenkyū*, 283–87.

52. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 369.

53. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane*, 593.

the magistrate exiled him in 1843.i9. He then dismissed Minamiōji's successor for wrongdoing in 1845 and exiled him the next year. Two of his underlings died in prison during the investigation.[54] In desperation, the Shirakawa sent a man from Kyoto, Togura Kunai, to run the Edo office.

The shogunate's decision to move religious leaders out of central Edo inadvertently brought the Shirakawa and Hirata into closer proximity. After Atsutane was exiled to Akita, he wrangled a position in the domain's retainer band that allowed Kanetane to move the family into the Akita compound in Asakusa. The Shirakawa administrative office settled in at Torigoe shrine, just a few blocks away. This made it easy for Kanetane to spend time there, which he frequently did. Togura hated living in Edo and complained that the responsibility of the office was too much for him. Knowing that Togura was looking for a successor so he could retire, Kanetane proposed his second son, Kaneya, then a youth of eighteen. Since everyone who paid the fee to become a Shirakawa affiliate also tipped the official who processed the application, the position of Kanto administrator was a lucrative one, and Kanetane had to pay Togura 10 *ryō* for the honor of having him adopt his son. Kaneya soon proved unequal to the responsibilities of office. Kanetane finally sold it to Furukawa Mitsura (1810–83), who later suffered his own difficulties with the magistrate of temples and shrines when an underling proved to be corrupt.[55]

Both Kaneya and Furukawa used the prestige of their office as the Shirakawa Kanto administrator to promote the Hirata school. In 1851, disciples devoted to Sugawara no Michizane for embodying the Japanese spirit while imbibing Chinese learning decided to recreate the treatise about him titled *A Brief Biography of Tenmangū* (*Tenmangū godenkiryaku*), which Atsutane had originally published in 1820. (The woodblocks had been lost in a fire.) Kaneya put his name and official title to its preface. At the same time, the disciples organized a confraternity for the Way of the heavenly gods and earthly spirits (Jingidō zokkō) at the Shirakawa Kanto office.[56] In 1860, Furukawa wrote a preface for Kanetane's publication of Atsutane's "Vulgar Shinto."[57] In this way Kaneya and Furukawa enabled the Hirata house to take advantage of the Shirakawa imprimatur in matters of Shinto just as Miki Hirotaka had earlier used the Yoshida.

Despite their difficulties finding competent administrators, Shirakawa Suketaka (1822–51) and later Sukenori (1841–1906) forged ahead with plans

54. Konkō, "Shokoku monjin-chō ni miru Shirakawa-ke no monjin," 73.
55. Walthall, "Good Older Brother," 51–79.
56. Endō, *Hirata Kokugaku*, 213–14.
57. Nakagawa, "Hirata Atsutane no *Zoku shintō dai'i*," 39.

to open schools where Shinto theology could be disseminated to priests and commoners, what Suketaka called the "ancient Way of the imperial court" in Atsutane's appointment letter.[58] Such language indicates that the Shirakawa valued Atsutane not just for his connections to the priesthood but also for his teachings that prioritized the emperor's descent from the sun goddess and the early period in Japanese history when the emperor's reign was said to have reached all corners of the country, what Ernest Satow called "the revival of pure Shin-tau."[59] Atsutane's exile along with malfeasance at the Edo office put a brake on Shirakawa ambitions, but by 1856 it located new men to serve as scholar-instructors with Kanetane appointed head of the Edo school in 1860. Between 1858 and 1868, it opened schools run by priests across Japan predicated on the Shirakawa house principles originated by Atsutane. In at least two cases, the Shirakawa record of disciples notes that men had decided to join because they had either read Atsutane's works or studied with Kanetane.[60]

Sukenori actively promoted new organizations to spread revivalist Shinto. He encouraged the extension of confraternities in western Japan like those Atsutane and his followers had earlier set up northeast of Edo or the one that Hirata disciples established at the Kanto office in 1851. This time instead of focusing on improving local practices, the goal was to get members, both men and women, to come to Kyoto to worship outside the gate to the Hasshinden (the shrine to the emperor's eight tutelary deities) in the Shirakawa residence rather than the one controlled by the Yoshida. There they were to pray for peace in the realm, good harvests, security for the home and the confraternity, and prosperity in business. Sukenori also encouraged his disciples to make pilgrimages to shrines big and small across the country and lecture on revivalist Shinto—the Way of the heavenly gods and earthly spirits and the ancient Way that unified rites and rule, another way of drumming up supporters and inadvertently or deliberately spreading Atsutane's beliefs in the divine Way of the gods and their protection for the Japanese people through the sun goddess's descendant, the emperor. The Shirakawa record of disciples lists 2,500 men and women, of whom 950 were shrine personnel and 1,300 were commoners.[61] Hatakama Kazuhiro highlights the dramatic increase in the number of Shirakawa affiliates after 1855. The new members tended to become Atsutane's posthumous disciples, and

58. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 592.
59. Satow, "The Revival of Pure Shin-tao," 165–253.
60. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 592–93.
61. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 594–95.

in return, his disciples became more likely to acquire priestly credentials.[62] Endō argues that bringing together membership in the Hirata school with Shirakawa affiliation shows how the Shirakawa backed the Hirata school's religiosity.[63]

Even though it was a religious organization of long standing, the Shirakawa house gracefully accommodated new approaches to expressions of faith. At least two proponents of religious sects that have arisen since 1800, what are now deemed new religions, found a home there—Inoue Masakane, the founder of Misogi-kyō, and Kawade Bunjirō, the founder of Konkō-kyō.[64] On 1845.8.21, Shirakawa Suketaka apotheosized Atsutane with the title "*Kamu tama no mihashira ushi*" (divine scholar of the sacred pillar of the soul).[65] This honor came four years before the shogunate pardoned him in 1849 for the unspecified crimes that had led to his exile. Thereafter, the Hirata family occasionally hosted ceremonies for "Mihashira-sama."[66] In 1853 Kanetane paid 500 gold *hiki* for the Shirakawa house to apotheosize the Hirata family ancestors, making them not just ancestral spirits but full-fledged gods. Two years later, Sukenori accepted Kanetane's request to apotheosize Atsutane's two wives as "the first divine female of the sacred pillar of the soul" and "the last divine female of the sacred pillar of the soul."[67] In 1862.2, Sukenori raised Atsutane's posthumous rank from "sacred spirit" (*reishingō*) to "sacred shrine" (*reishagō*). In this way Kanetane acted to affirm the faith-based character of his school and to establish the possibility of deification in a process akin to canonization. Sukenori went along with him because it fitted with his goal of promoting the revival of the Way of the gods and spirits.[68]

During the tumultuous years of the 1860s, while imperial loyalists called on the shogun to obey the emperor's wish to expel the foreigners and the shogunate tried to get the imperial court to support its plans to negotiate with the foreigners, Kanetane and the Hirata school promoted a return to the past that put service to the gods first. Atsutane and other Japan studies scholars had previously asserted that the unity of rites and rule under the emperor had been a cardinal principle in ancient times. This message

62. Hatakama Kazuhiro, "Tokugawa jidai kōki no shintō to Shirakawa-ke," 13.
63. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 240.
64. Kondō, *Shirakawa-ke monjinchō*, 595.
65. Hako 6–9, HAKS.
66. For 1845.10.22, see 199; for 1851.9.11, see 260 in Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō" 2.
67. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:276, 293.
68. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 228–29.

took on an increasingly anti-Buddhist, anti-foreign cast that fed into the "Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians" movement promoted by the self-proclaimed "men of high purpose," many of whom combined it with the Mito school's Confucian-infused emperor-centered nationalism.

Even before the shogun announced on 1862.9.7 that he would travel to Kyoto in 1863 to conciliate emperor and court, daimyo and imperial loyalists had started to flock there. Nobutane was among their number. When he plotted under ambiguous circumstances with the activist noble Iwakura Tomomi, Akita domain elders recalled him to Edo. In his place they sent the more prudent Kanetane, thinking that his wide-ranging contacts could provide useful information. This brought him and the Hirata disciples into proximity to Shirakawa Sukenori and fostered enduring personal ties between them.[69]

Already in Kyoto was one of the most influential Hirata disciples at that time, Yano Harumichi, a samurai from the Osu domain in Shikoku. Sukenori appointed him to be a scholar-teacher for the Shirakawa house in 1862. Thereafter, he issued a series of manifestos and memorials aimed at realizing a system that united rites and rule in accordance with the "enduring Way of the gods" (*kannagara no michi*) through the establishment of an imperial studies school, the recovery of imperial tombs, and the revival of the ancient Council of Divinities (Jingikan). After the shogunate's second expeditionary force against Chōshū domain failed, with cries for a return to direct imperial rule everywhere in the air and a burgeoning membership in the Hirata school, the young head of the Yoshida house, Yoshinori (1837–90), decided that the only way to reinvigorate his house's doctrine was through the Hirata school. To carry out this goal, he attended Yano's lectures and read Atsutane's works.[70] Although the Mito school attracted future Meiji statesmen and Atsutane's contemporaries such as Ban Nobutomo and Tachibana Moribe had competed with Atsutane in studying the ancient Way of the gods, Yoshinori's turn to Atsutane's teachings to keep his house relevant while the old order was collapsing speaks to the central role that the Hirata house played in the Shinto revival.

Kanetane and Nobutane built on Yano's efforts to bring the Shirakawa and Yoshida together. On 1867.3.16, an imperial decree came down for the Yoshida to build a Japan studies school because the Shirakawa had previously refused. Once they heard this news, Kanetane and Nobutane sent a

69. Miyachi, "Bakumatsu Hirata kokugaku to seiji jōhō," 235–84.

70. For a detailed study of Yano's ideas and plans, see Wachutka, *Kokugaku in Meiji-Period Japan*, 21–30.

letter to Sukenori urging him to work with the Yoshida because the Yoshida had abandoned its old bad habits and was carrying out broad research into the past. Now was the time to revive ancient practices centered on the unity of rites and rule under the emperor, if only the two houses would work together with help from the Hirata.[71] Neither organization acted on this proposal, but it lends weight to the assertion by literary scholar and historian Yamada Yoshio that the turn by both the Shirakawa and the Yoshida toward Hirata Shinto was equivalent to bringing shrine officials across Japan under Hirata auspices before the Meiji government instituted a unified system for regulating shrine personnel.[72]

Coda

With the establishment of the Council of Divinities in the intercalary fourth month of 1868, the new Meiji government placed shrine priests directly under its control as part of its drive to centralize rule, thereby eliminating their institutional ties to the Shirakawa and the Yoshida. When the emperor moved to Tokyo, Shirakawa Sukenori and Nobutane followed. Yoshida Yoshinori, Yano, and Kanetane remained in Kyoto, where they hoped the emperor would return and support an Institute for Imperial Studies (Kōgakusho). It opened in 1868.10, only to be abolished less than a year later because the Japan studies faculty insisted that it take precedence over schools for Confucian and Western studies at a time when government leaders who had been trained in Confucian thought were looking to the West for science, medicine, and technology. Nobutane served as tutor to the emperor as well as taking a series of positions under Sukenori in various iterations of the government bureaus established to deal with matters of Shinto and religious affairs. One of his colleagues and superiors was Fukuba Bisei from Tsuwano domain, who joined the Hirata school in 1858. In the long, voluminous letters that Nobutane wrote to his parents, he occasionally mentioned how well he and Fukuba got along.[73]

As H. D. Harootunian demonstrated in *Toward Restoration*, while Atsutane's followers maintained one vision of an ideal government based on the unity of rites and rule, the main driving force that provided practical blueprints for replacing the Tokugawa military regime with a state centered

71. Endō, *Hirata kokugaku*, 239.

72. Quoted in Itō Hiroshi, *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 169–70.

73. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:83, 86; Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:422–87 passim.

on the emperor came from the infusion of Chinese studies with nativist beliefs.[74] The combination of an emphasis on the enduring Way of the gods with the Mito school's ideology of *kokutai* (national essence) didn't hold together long, leaving many religious figures unhappy at the sidelining of their aspirations. The Hirata school too fissured, with Atsutane's disciples taking his ideas in mutually contradictory directions, some continuing to assert that the sacred land of the gods should remain free from foreign pollution, others replacing the slogan attributed to Sugawara no Michizane of "Chinese learning, Japanese spirit" with "Learning from all nations, Japanese spirit."

The Hirata school's impact on the new religious bureaucracy forged by the Meiji state soon ended. The faction headed by Yano Harumichi emphasized the primacy of Ōkuninushi as ruler of the hidden world, as Mutobe Yoshika had argued, and therefore Ōkuninushi should be placed in the pantheon of the gods worshipped at the shrine in the imperial palace. This led to an intense dispute with the proponents of the sun goddess, the emperor's progenitor, led by Atsutane's disciples Ōkuni Takamasa (1792–1871), who had been one of the first to join his school in 1807, and his disciple, Fukuba Bisei. They advocated separating Shinto and Buddhist sites, a goal also favored by the Yano crowd, but they valorized Amaterasu and her divine grandson who had founded the imperial line. As far as they were concerned, by giving too much credit to Ōkuninushi, Yano simply supported the commoners' superstitious beliefs in local tutelary deities. In the 1871 "Offense against National Affairs" incident (Kokuji ihan), a precursor to the pantheon dispute of 1879–81 (see the epilogue), they forced Yano and other Hirata disciples out of government and sent Yano to the countryside. Fukuba believed in the need to move with the times, work with the men who had seized power in the new Meiji government, and accept science and technology from the West.[75] Nobutane too understood this, but he died early in 1872. With his death, the Hirata family's position in the Meiji state's central bureaucracy came to an end.

Atsutane's engagement with shrine priests and their organizations had a decisive impact on the dissemination of his ideas and the history of his school. The priests provided an unparalleled conduit to parishioners who otherwise would have had little opportunity to learn about his theology. The length of this conduit is difficult to measure, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it went beyond the study groups organized by village elites and

74. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration*.
75. Katsurajima, *Bakumatsu minshū shisō no kenkyū*, 72–75.

other commoners for those who had the time and education to read Atsutane's writings. Information flowed the other way as well. Priests reported on local lore as well as what they considered unorthodox teachings and on dilapidated shrines, messages that Atsutane took to heart. Their concerns forced Atsutane and later Kanetane into collaboration with the Yoshida and Shirakawa institutional networks of shrine personnel, leading eventually to the Hirata school's efforts to bring the two together in the common pursuit of the ancient Way.

The Hirata school always had to contend with internal disputes and external competition in propagating its ideas. After the Treaty of Amity with the United States in 1854 and especially after the 1858 commercial treaty, signed by the shogunate in defiance of the emperor's wishes, adherents of both the institutionally focused Mito school and the religiously oriented Hirata school (each containing diverse factions) criticized the shogun for having forgotten the loyalty he owed his lord. Once the armies fielded by southwestern domains that claimed to fight in the name of the emperor had defeated the shogun's allies from the northeast in 1868, the new centralized government quickly forgot that restoring the emperor to the direct rule his ancestors had putatively enjoyed in the eighth century was supposed to mean a unity of rites and rule. Within the Hirata school, the faction that affirmed the preeminence of the ruler of the unseen world then lost out to the faction that promoted worship of the sun goddess and loyalty to her imperial descendants in a line unbroken for all eternity.

CHAPTER 8

The Women behind the Men

Among the dimensions to Atsutane's thought, life, and legacy that have received less attention than they warrant, one encompasses the women who collaborated with him and with his descendants. Mothers, wives, daughters, servants flit across the dates in the house diary, going to shrines and temples, celebrating milestones in their lives, and occasionally providing entertainment. When men mention women in their letters, it is usually to convey a greeting, and many of women's own writings have disappeared. Stories about them disclose what was important to men. Yet, thanks to the painstaking work done by Miyachi Masato and his team in the Hirata archive at the National Museum of Japanese History, we can catch glimpses of what women meant for Atsutane's beliefs and teachings, and we now have a clearer picture of how they contributed to the Hirata family project.

Atsutane had a unique vision for his wife's position in his house that he expressed through names, and he handed this vision down to his daughter, adopted son, and grandson. His beloved first wife was named Orise. After she died and he contracted a second marriage, he named his new wife Orise. According to a cryptic entry in the house diary, he then received a message from the gods designating his daughter's name to be Chō.[1] The second Orise died in 1846, whereupon Chō became the third Orise. When her eldest son and family heir married some years later, his bride took the name of Chō as a sort of wife-in-waiting, placing her in the slot that Atsutane had originally created for his daughter. Such repetitions in naming and renaming procedures were not uncommon for men. For them, names might identify a status

1. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 923.

rather than an individual and vary according to the situation. Businessmen and Kabuki actors handed down house names, the Ōmi fertilizer merchant and disciple Nishikawa Zenroku VI (1816–80), for example, or the Kataoka Nizaemon lineage in Kabuki that continues to this day. Members of scholarly and noble lineages, men with property, or men with aristocratic pretentions often handed down a character in their name from one generation to the next. In the Hirata house this was "tane." While women too changed their name upon moving to a new stage in life, I know of no other instance in which successive wives or wives-in-waiting took the same name. Yokoyama Suzuko believes that the Hirata naming practice for women demonstrates that within the Hirata household, the wife's authority was equivalent to her husband's.[2] I think it's more likely that Atsutane wanted to strengthen spiritual connections between women and that his successors, male and female, did too. By taking Orise I's name, Orise II and Orise III could be seen to embody her spirit transmitted through the magic of words.

No matter how impoverished it became, the Hirata house maintained the standards of the samurai, and as is so often the case, this burden fell heavily on women. Women existed in private space; they were defined by private space; and they defined private space. Insofar as they acted in private space, they acted for the household's benefit, whether large or small, powerful or not, and they conformed to its norms, especially the dictates of filial piety that required service to in-laws above all else.[3] Their deeds may occasionally appear inordinately self-sacrificing to a modern reader, but they kept the family going.

The Hirata women contributed to the traditional objective of maintaining the house, but they sometimes did so in unexpected ways. Although historians have assumed that men handled the business side of the family enterprise, it's now clear that from the time Atsutane began lecturing in 1804 to at least 1875, women kept the daily accounts.[4] In addition, the archive illustrates through his writings how Atsutane thought about the spirit world after his first wife died, while letters at times of family crisis written by his second wife and daughter shed light on the internal dynamics of the Hirata house and in particular on the roles that women played in furthering its interests. Each of the three women named Orise thus contributed in her own way to Atsutane's vision of the relations between the seen and unseen worlds while straddling the divide between household and school. My focus

2. Yokoyama, *Hirata Atsutane gosai Orise*, 7. I am grateful to Yokoyama for giving me a copy of this transcription.

3. See Yonemoto, *The Problem of Women*, especially chapter 1.

4. Miyachi, "Sannin Orise," 62–63.

is on what can be known of their lives, and to them I add Nobutane's wife, who followed a trajectory that took her away from the Hirata family while remaining true to Atsutane's teachings. In short, women too collaborated with Atsutane in both spiritual and material ways. Whereas men came and went, women kept the house going.

Orise I: Beloved Wife and Muse

Little is known about Atsutane's first wife, and biographers have sometimes filled in the gaps with supposition and hyperbole. She receives scant mention in Kanetane's biography of his father—just ten lines giving her name, age at marriage, family background, children's birth dates, and death date at age thirty. Other information comes from the way Atsutane memorialized her in a draft of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, in poems he wrote lamenting her loss, and in the poems she wrote that he found later among her papers. Based on this evidence, Inoue Yorikuni (1839–1914), who promoted Atsutane and his work in the late nineteenth century, declared that it must have been Orise I who introduced him to Norinaga's essays, a pretty story that has been recycled all too often. Later historians have lauded her as the epitome of the "good wife and wise mother," called the two an ideal couple, and observed that it is in a wife's power to build up her husband or tear him down.[5] This may be true, but what I find most remarkable about Orise is how Atsutane claimed her as a spiritual guide after her death, supporting his vision of dreams as avenues along which spirits can travel from their unseen world to the dreamer.

Orise's origins are obscure. According to a memo written by Atsutane, she was born on 1782.5.20 to Ishibashi Seizaemon, a Numazu domain retainer, and his wife, who was divorced because of illness when Orise was eight years old and became a Buddhist nun. Orise's mother was a farm woman, as was her father's second wife. One historian has discovered that Ishibashi Seizaemon died at around age thirty in 1803, making him only ten years Orise's senior. Perhaps Seizaemon adopted her when her status needed to be raised so she could become a suitable bride for Atsutane.[6] Earlier she had joined the household of a shogun's vassal as a maid when Atsutane happened to be working there. Such houses regularly swelled the size of their female staff by bringing in girls of good breeding, sometimes from the countryside if their

5. See Itō Hiroshi, *Orise fujin den*, 8, 10.
6. Hirano, "Hirata Atsutane no fujin Orise den no saikentō," 81–88.

families were sufficiently well-off, to do light work and be companions to the master's wife in exchange for training in decorum, etiquette, and ceremony—a sort of finishing school.[7] Historians always emphasize that Orise was well educated based, so far as I can tell, on her knowledge of classical poetry. Atsutane was generally not shy about mentioning the people with whom he interacted during his career, but he never disclosed the name of the family that had employed him and Orise, maybe because what they did there didn't reflect well on how the vassal supervised his servants.

From the shogun's palace to vassals' compounds, fraternizing between servants of different sexes was forbidden. The inner quarters where women worked were off-limits to men except for family members, and women were not supposed to venture into male-dominated space. The shogunate and domains threatened illicit sex with severe punishments, including execution and public exposure. At the same time, rulers preferred that the patriarch, whether husband, father, or master, handle the matter privately. This meant killing the woman and her paramour if he could be found. Based on cases analyzed by Mega Atsuko in Okayama, it was more important to kill the woman than the man in a publicly sanctioned honor killing.[8] Even flirting could get a couple into trouble, yet somehow Atsutane and Orise became well acquainted. Atsutane was quite a talker, and his scholarly ambitions captivated her. The two fell in love. In Atsutane's words, "Aah, this woman. From the time we were young, we became soul mates." And as he later wrote in the margins of his family genealogy, "Without the permission of her parents or the head of the household where we worked, she promised herself to me."[9]

No matter who Orise's father or guardian was, he would have been unlikely to allow her to marry a penniless man of no fixed abode. Somehow Atsutane had to transform himself from servant into samurai. This was easily done so long as he could find a suitable household head willing to adopt him. "I had not intended to continue someone's house, but when I realized that I would not be able to marry Orise, I talked it over with her and decided to do it."[10] His adoptive father was Hirata Tōbee, age sixty-nine, a military expert in the Bitchū Matsuyama retainer band. In 1783 Tōbee had been sent to serve one of the lord's daughters, who had married a shogun's

7. Walthall, "Fille de Paysan, Epouse de Samouraï," 55–86.

8. Mega, *Hankachō no naka no onnatachi*, 138–48. I thank Luke Roberts for this citation.

9. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 17. The first quotation is from a draft for *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. See also Walthall, "Social Norms versus Individual Desire," 195–216.

10. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 20.

vassal. Atsutane's status in Edo was so low that an acquaintance, Takahisa Bunkichi, a samurai from a nearby domain, had to agree to play the role of his uncle. As nephew to a respectable house, Atsutane became acceptable to Tōbee and his domain.

Just because Atsutane had become heir to the Hirata house did not mean that he could choose his own wife. Normally that responsibility fell to the adoptive parents, who would have preferred someone related, or at least known, to them. In a lucky break for Atsutane and Orise, Tōbee's wife, Soe, died in 1801, leaving the two men without a woman to run the household or to object to Atsutane's choice of a mate. As soon as the mourning period for Soe was over, the couple married on 1801.8.13. Orise was nineteen, and Atsutane was twenty-seven. Thereafter, Orise managed the family's scanty finances, tended the garden, nursed her increasingly decrepit father-in-law, bore three children, and supported Atsutane while he pursued his studies.

Poverty plagued the couple from the start. Tōbee enjoyed but a tiny stipend, and at first Atsutane's scholarship brought in no money at all. Orise gave birth to her first child, a boy, on 1802.5.20; he died a month later. On 1805.1.16, her daughter Chie/Chō/Orise III was born. Owing to the family's straitened circumstances, in 1807 Tōbee and Atsutane agreed that Atsutane should take temporary leave of the barracks in the retainer's compound where the family was living and set himself up as a doctor in a townspeople's section of Edo. Atsutane had some qualifications for this because he had studied medicine with his uncle in Akita before traveling to Edo.[11] He took his barely three-year-old daughter with him but left his wife behind to tend to his father-in-law. Although this separation may shock readers today, especially since Orise gave birth to a third child while they were living apart, it was common practice at the time. Had she abandoned Tōbee, she would have neglected the duty to her in-laws that women and men owed according to the norms of filial piety.

Living apart did little to ease the family's financial problems. Atsutane gradually gave up his medical practice in favor of lecturing on the ancient Way. He got into verbal fights with Confucianists and Buddhists but, despite the publicity, gained little income. In 1809, at the age of seventy-seven, Tōbee received permission to retire. He was granted a meager pension and died shortly thereafter. Only six people attended his funeral: one was Orise's brother, head of what may have been a farm family since Atsutane did not call him by his surname, and another was Atsutane's nominal uncle. The small number of attendees attests to the family's poverty. After the mourning

11. Shokan 23-5-2, HAKS. Draft of a statement to domain officials by Tōbee.

period, Orise and her two children left the apartment in the barracks to join Atsutane in town. He maintained his affiliation with the Bitchū Murayama domain until 1823 for the status it brought him.

Orise's death followed Tōbee's a few years later. When disciples from Sunpu offered Atsutane the opportunity to concentrate on his work in 1811 (see chap. 3), he left his beloved wife once more, going so far away and becoming so engrossed in his communion with ancient history that she neither saw nor heard from him until he had completed drafts of three major works and returned early in the new year of 1812. There he discovered that she was ill, worn out by years of struggle and possible malnutrition. While nursing her, he began revising *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* and showed her a synopsis. In response she wrote a poem of praise:

Tama chihau	The sacred pillar of the soul—
kami no makoto o	a bright mirror in which
masu kagami	the truth
sayaka ni tokeru	of the protective deities
tama no mihashira	is brilliantly clarified[12]

Orise thus encouraged Atsutane to complete what he had started in Sunpu, and he kept the poem as a sign that she supported his efforts. Her loss left him prostrate with grief until he realized that the only way to console her spirit was to fulfill her last wish by making a success of his scholarship. On the forty-ninth day after her death, he purified himself and returned to his studies because, he believed, that was what she would have wanted.[13]

In one draft of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane inserted a long passage praising Orise for her help in pursuing his studies. In it he recounted how they met, fell in love, and wrangled permission to marry. Sometimes when he was in a bad mood, he would scold her for no reason at all or find fault with her. She never answered back but simply waited for his rage to abate. Oh, his gentle wife with whom he had become one flesh, one body. No matter how much he praised her, it would never suffice. Even while she was dying, she was planning for his future. When her children saw her coffin, they cried that mother was hiding in it and she must come out. Watching them almost led him to collapse.[14] This passage is not in the printed text because his disciples and friends made him take it out. To laud one's wife

12. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 42.

13. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 42.

14. Itō found this draft and Orise's poems among Atsutane's papers. See *Taigaku Hirata Atsutane den*, 96–100, 104; *Orise fujin den*, 37–42.

in words that were meant for the outside world violated social boundaries because mention of a woman's name in public could destroy her reputation.

Nevertheless, in both public and private, Atsutane continued to recognize Orise as a spiritual guide. As was customary at the time, she received a posthumous Buddhist name—"Window to the moon, excellent heart, faithful woman." Atsutane decided that name did not capture what she meant to him, and so in his genealogy, he titled her "Cloistered chastity, the eldest sister who helped broaden the way" to celebrate her support and virtue. He recollected that while he was in Sunpu and working on his second volume on the age of the gods, a certain issue arose. "It was quite strange how I came to be concerned with that question, and it seemed like my wife's blessed spirit, her marvelous spirit, was helping me."[15] This too ended up cut from the published version of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*. What remained, and even that was shocking, was a brief statement that she, along with him, would serve Norinaga's spirit.

For Orise and Atsutane, as for many of their compatriots, dreams facilitated spiritual union. Like mediums and other intercessors with gods and spirits, dreams could bridge the barrier between seen and unseen worlds. After Orise died, Atsutane found four poems among her papers that she had composed while he was in Sunpu at the end of 1811. This is her first one:

Ubatama no	Wouldn't it do
yume michi ni dani mo	my heart good
waga seko ni aite	to meet my husband
kokoro o yaru	even on the dark path
yoshi mo kana	of a dream

Perhaps mindful of the ancient belief that if a lover was thinking of his love, he would appear in her dream, in another poem she wept, yearning for her husband who didn't come to her even in a dream. She wondered if perhaps it was because he was working so hard on "the Way of the jeweled spear" (the spear that Izanagi and Izanami thrust into the brine from the floating bridge of heaven) or, awful thought, maybe he had found someone else. Atsutane cried while reading these poems, and he cried after he read them. In the poems that he wrote in the throes of his grief, he called to his wife to join him in his dreams. All he wanted to do was sleep in the hope that she would come to him, and sometimes she did.[16]

15. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 41.
16. Itō, *Orise fujin den*, 40, 45.

A decade later, Atsutane again saw Orise in a dream. This time he was in Kyoto while he was trying to finagle a way to get his works presented to the imperial family. In his diary he notes on 1823.8.28 that he saw her and was then unable to get back to sleep.[17] Miyachi Masato points out that dreams testified to a meeting of spirits, but the dead could only appear when a link with the living had already been established.[18] Thus it was that Atsutane claimed to have become Norinaga's disciple in a dream. Seeing Orise in the same way years after her death would have been one way for Atsutane to prove his sincerity in having done likewise with Norinaga, at least to himself.

Orise had an impact on Atsutane's life that has been little recognized. Seldom have intellectual historians incorporated the study of emotions, least of all love, into their analysis of his career. On the other hand, it's also easy to overstate the extent to which she influenced the direction of his thought. Haga Noboru, for example, claimed that in clarifying where the spirit goes after death in *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane sought to console himself for Orise's demise.[19] Yet Atsutane began the text before he knew she was sick, and he added his words on her only later. Had she not died, would he have recalled how they came together? At the same time, seeing his wife in dreams both soon after her death and in 1823 validated his belief that spirits indeed remain nearby; they do not go off to some other world, whether heaven or *yomi*.

Partner in Exile: Orise II

As the daughter of a tofu maker in a provincial town, Orise II suffers by comparison with Atsutane's first wife. Orise II and Atsutane did not have a passionate affair, she did not write classical poetry that we know of, her only spiritual connection with him was through her name, and she outlived him. Yet she comes across as a gregarious woman who could entertain guests with the samisen and imitate Atsutane's artistry with the brush.[20] She accompanied Atsutane into exile in 1841, and the diary she kept of the people they met as well as her letters back to the family in Edo shed a bright light on how the couple reacted to the enforced separation and the new experiences that awaited them. For her as well, dreams were an important way to connect

17. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:11. The date is 1823.8.28.

18. Miyachi, "Sannin Orise," 58.

19. Haga, "Kaisetsu," 7.

20. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:15; Akita Shiritsu Akarenga Kyōdokan, *Akita no senjin*, 29.

with loved ones, in her case her step-grandchildren. These remnants of her life thus provide a different angle on the women behind the men. In contrast to Orise I, who can be seen as a muse, Orise II gives us insight into the wife as a social planner.

Atsutane's marriage to Orise II was arranged before they met. In 1818, his patron in Koshigaya, Yamazaki Atsutoshi (see chap. 1), recognized that with two hundred disciples, Atsutane needed a wife to manage his affairs, and Atsutoshi knew just the woman. To raise her to a status suitable for a samurai, he adopted her himself. A lacquerer in Koshigaya, one of Atsutane's disciples, served as the go-between. Atsutane was forty-three; Orise was around twenty-seven, and this was her first marriage. Historians assume that the reason for her advanced age as an unmarried woman was because she had worked as a maid in Edo. On 1818.11.18, the date that she entered his house and thirteen days before the wedding ceremony, Atsutane presented her with a note stating, "You shall be called Orise."[21]

Orise II's responsibilities extended well beyond those typical for an urban wife. Until her stepdaughter married Atsutane's adopted son-in-law Kanetane in 1824 and he joined the household, Orise managed its affairs by herself, handling the finances, negotiating with publishing personnel, and doing the cooking and sewing. Miyachi Masato compares the Hirata school to a mom-and-pop store in which the wife must be ready to entertain customers—that is, students, would-be disciples, visitors of all sorts—and keep track of who paid for what.[22] In occasionally supervising the formalities for admission into the Hirata school, Orise functioned as an administrative assistant. She protected the time Atsutane needed to pursue his studies and guarded the house while he went out to consult with others. She also helped him keep a house diary, noting who came to see them and who went where. It provides tantalizing glimpses of women's comings and goings as well as those of men, but it is extremely fragmentary, in part because when Kanetane later made a copy, he tended to retain only those portions written by or pertaining to Atsutane.[23]

Orise II ran an exceptionally fluid household. Visitors who resided in Edo went home at night, but out-of-town guests expected to bed down with the family. Some might stay for months at a time, listening to Atsutane's lectures, studying his writings, and making copies of those that particularly impressed them. Students were supposed to pay for their board, but not all

21. Hako 3–41, HAKS. The date for the wedding, 12.2, is in Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 917.

22. Miyachi, "Sannin Orise," 58–62.

23. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:16.

of them did. Should they get sick, Orise had to nurse them. When Torakichi came to live with the family, Orise helped dress him like a samurai and played games with him, providing the entertainment that kept him with them rather than with Yamazaki Yoshishige, who had first laid claim to him. Torakichi ended up living with the Hirata family for eight years, and it was Orise II along with Yamazaki Atsutoshi who had a dialogue with the Hisaizu god who possessed him (see chap. 5). Like Orise I, she too participated in proving the presence of spirits close at hand.

Orise II is best known for her letters sent from exile in Akita to her stepdaughter in Edo.[24] They are filled with names—people to whom she wishes to be remembered in Edo, people with whom she has come in contact on the road, men who wish to join the school, officials in Akita who supplement out of their own holdings the meager allowance that the couple received from the domain. Orise also lists the people in each of the households headed by Atsutane's brothers. Until the domain granted Atsutane an official appointment seven months after their arrival, she had to live with these relatives, all virtual strangers. For a time that meant staying with the Watanabe, into whose household Atsutane's older brother had adopted his younger sister Fumi to marry the man designated as his heir. Orise got along well with Fumi—the two enjoyed spending the evening telling sad stories to make each other cry, though their nightly tears irritated Atsutane.[25]

Orise filled her letters with requests for food, clothing, and other necessities and with discussions of money matters. The couple left Edo with barely more than the traveling clothes on their backs. But Atsutane was an important scholar, and Orise wanted him to look the part. Once they arrived in Akita, it turned out that some of the outfits she had requested did not suit Akita conventions and had to be exchanged for others. And they both needed warmer clothes to withstand the cold north. When Orise learned that Atsutane's five-year-old nephew didn't have the *hakama* (pleated trousers) that samurai boys began wearing at that age, she asked her stepdaughter to send some and reported that he was delighted with them.[26] Then there was the question of food: Atsutane had bad teeth and liked his food soft, plus his palate had grown accustomed to Edo flavors and textures. Orise did the cooking, but she needed utensils and ingredients, including vegetables such as eggplants that could only be obtained in Edo. She also needed laundry soap and hair oil.[27] She always hoped that she could remit at least a portion

24. Walthall, "The Creation of Female Networks in Exile," 67–87.
25. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 562, 564.
26. Yokoyama, *Hirata Atsutane gosai Orise*, 58.
27. Yamaguchi, *Mairasesōrō*, 107.

of the entrance fees from men who wanted to become disciples or money from the sale of Atsutane's works back to the family in Edo, but all too often she needed the income herself. Worse, coins were scarce in northern Japan, and to her dismay, some men paid entrance fees in food.

Life in the provinces was different in other ways. In Edo, Orise had been free to visit shrines and temples or go drinking with her friends. Samurai women didn't do such things in Akita. A respectable woman stayed inside as much as possible, except for rare excursions, and she had to have an escort to go outside. The couple had only one servant, and when Atsutane needed him, Orise was left alone. Servants were supposed to do the shopping, but theirs was so inept that Orise despaired. Being literate herself, she was shocked at how many wives of important men could neither read nor write. Part of the problem was a lack of books suitable for girls, and she asked that some be sent to Fumi's granddaughter. On the other hand, Atsutane's relatives and supporters were kind and seemed to enjoy her company. Orise helped Atsutane entertain visitors, and once, when he was out, she amused his staunchest supporter, Onooka Jinzaburō, for an entire afternoon all by herself.[28]

Throughout their exile, Atsutane and Orise II pined for their grandchildren and looked forward to seeing them in their dreams. In his first letter back home, Atsutane wrote, "In my dream last night I was delighted that you brought Kaneya to me, but alas, it was only a dream." Or again, "On the night of the twenty-seventh of last month, one by one Suzu and the others came flying through the air. I sat them on my lap and pressed my cheek against theirs. . . . You and Chō came afterwards and, saying that it was getting late, snatched them away. I woke, asked my wife if she had seen them, and realized it was a dream."[29] Orise claimed that she dreamed about the children every night, watching them play, holding them in her arms. "I look forward to going to bed, hoping I will see them in my dreams."[30] She'd also been seeing an occasional visitor to the house, a woman called O-Waki, in her dreams, and she worried that something was wrong.[31] These dreams signaled how much Atsutane and Orise II missed the children while testifying to the spiritual connection between them and the family in Edo.

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28. Yokoyama, *Hirata Atsutane gosai Orise*, 92, 167, 44, 143.

29. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 533, 588. Walthall, "For the Love of Children," 68, 70.

30. Watanabe Tōsui, *Hirata Atsutane no fujin*, 162.

31. Yokoyama, *Hirata Atsutane gosai Orise*, 71. The letter is dated 1841.9.24, and the last time the house diary records a visit from O-Waki is on 1841.2.4. See Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:156.

Atsutane and Orise longed to return to Edo, but only Orise did so. Atsutane died in 1843, and Kanetane buried him on the side of a hill outside the castle town facing in the direction of Norinaga's grave. Before Kanetane and Orise left Akita, they produced a hanging scroll of Kuebiko, Orise painting the image and Kanetane writing the inscription.[32] Then they rejoined the family in Edo. Orise spent the rest of her life surrounded by the grandchildren and helping her stepdaughter. She died in 1846 at around age fifty-five. In 1855, the Shirakawa shrine organization apotheosized her and Orise I, making them the first and last divine female spirits of the sacred pillar of the soul (see chap. 7).[33] In this way the Shirakawa recognized their contribution to Atsutane's lifework.

The Manager: Orise III

Orise III's story dramatizes how women played an essential role in maintaining the Hirata family. Born in 1805, she accompanied Atsutane as a small child while he tried to earn a living as a doctor. In 1824, she married Kanetane, the man Atsutane had selected to be his heir. She outlived her husband, and at least two of her sons and possibly more, before her death in 1888, making her the longest-lived member of the family before the twentieth century. After her father and stepmother went into exile in Akita in 1841, she kept the family accounts. In 1868 she left a vivid record in the letters she wrote to Kanetane of how she shuttered the family business in Edo while he was in Kyoto. She is also reported to have memorized many of Atsutane's texts and have served as her father's secretary in producing elegant imitations of his brush strokes.[34] She would have made him a worthy successor, it was said, if only she had been born a man.[35]

As a woman, Orise III performed one role that Orise I and Orise II had not: she bore and raised multiple children. The first came in 1826, just a little over a year after her marriage, a daughter named Fuki. Fuki died of smallpox less than three years later, to the family's sorrow. According to the house diary, once medical treatment proved ineffective, Atsutane shut himself in his study where he beseeched the gods to save her throughout

32. Akita shiritsu Akarenga kyōdokan, *Akita no senjin*, 29.

33. Yamaguchi, *Mairasesōrō*, 113.

34. Iyataka Jinja Hirata Atsutane Satō Nobuhiro Kenkyūjo, *Hirata Atsutane ushi zushū*, 23.

35. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 30.

a long, thankless vigil.[36] Just the year before, in 1828, the boy who became Nobutane was born. The family lavished attention on training him to succeed his grandfather. Years later, in 1870, Nobutane thanked his mother for his strict upbringing: "When I look at the man I have become, I have to say that all the hardships you put me through a long time ago have proved their worth."[37]

Orise III's other children did not become Nobutane's equal. Two years after his birth, Orise bore her second son, Kaneya, followed by Kanesaburō in 1833, daughter Iku in 1835, and another daughter, Suzu, in 1840. These were the children about whom Atsutane and Orise II dreamed during their exile. In 1843, just a month before Atsutane died in Akita, Orise III gave birth to her last child, a son named Taneo. She was then thirty-eight, an advanced age in that era to be having children, and she had been pregnant or nurturing infants for eighteen years. The two daughters married Akita domain retainers who resided in Edo, keeping them close to their mother. Kaneya proved to be a lifelong troublemaker who liked to drink, got into fights, and wore finer clothing than he could afford.[38] In 1870 he wrote to his mother asking her to make his elder brother loan him the hefty sum of 30 *ryō* because he could not make ends meet.[39] Kanesaburō did not like to read, a serious failing in a scholarly family, but he was happy to print texts from woodblocks.[40] Both Kaneya and Kanesaburō became the adopted heads of other families. Taneo succeeded his brother Nobutane on the Hirata family's official registry, but his parents did not think he had the intellectual heft to become the fourth head of the scholarly line founded by Atsutane.

In addition to raising her children, Orise III helped maintain the Hirata school's network of disciples and fellow travelers. In 1826, the author of a letter to Kanetane mentioned that he had received a letter from her; in 1829, Murai Sanjirō, who had joined the school the year before, asked Kanetane to pass along his sincere regards to his wife. Such statements became more common after Kanetane formally took over the school in 1846. The Nanbu domain retainer Kikuchi Shōko apologized in 1857 for not having paid his bill in full when he had resided at the school two years earlier and for not having thanked Orise for her help. He addressed his letter to Kanetane, Nobutane, and the honorable wife. Similar messages came from other men,

36. Watanabe, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*, 31–32.
37. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 1:110.
38. Walthall, "Good Older Brother, Bad Younger Brother," 51–79.
39. Shokan 19-1-36-1, HAKS.
40. Shokan 5-2-19; 5-2-24, HAKS.

for example, Kuzushiro Hikokasu in Satsuma.[41] In a memo attached to one bundle of letters, Kanetane noted that he had discarded three letters written to Orise.[42] Around 1863, Miyazaki Mototane, a shrine priest from Kyushu who studied at the Hirata school but never became a disciple, wrote a long letter to Orise in which he thanked her for taking care of him while he was sick, lending him clothes appropriate to the season during his stay, and sending gifts to members of his household.[43] The evidence is scattered, but from it Miyachi Masato deduces that Kanetane and Orise collaborated in maintaining the connections that supported the school.[44]

The evidence for Orise III's management of the school's finances is far more substantial. Starting in 1841 when her father and Orise II went into exile and ending in 1874, Orise III kept a record of income.[45] She also kept track of expenses, but those records remain only in fragments. Occasionally she totaled income against expenses, and Kanetane used her notebooks to tally a history of the family's yearly income.[46] When exile and the ban on Atsutane's books dried up their revenue, Orise sold clothing and borrowed from supporters. Once Akita started paying stipends and provided the family left in Edo with housing in one of its barracks, their fortunes improved. Orise III recorded who joined the school and the fees they paid, in some cases listing names that never made it onto the ledger of disciples. She kept track of the money remitted by booksellers nationwide, money from disciples who acted as a clearinghouse for the school's publications, gifts that came through correspondence with men who were not disciples, and the salaries paid to Kanetane and Nobutane. During the violent years between 1859 and 1865, when the shogunate defied the emperor's wishes to expel the Western barbarians, Kanetane and Nobutane stopped keeping the house diary, just as the number of disciples started to explode. Orise's account books are thus the sole, if incomplete, record of those with whom the family interacted. On his way to Akita early in 1868, Nobutane wrote her a letter in which he discussed the school's business affairs and acknowledged her de facto position as manager: "How did the year-end reconciliation of accounts go with the booksellers?"[47]

Orise I and Orise II too kept financial records, but few of those remain.

41. Miyachi, "Sannin Orise," 63–64; see also Shokan 16–23, HAKS.
42. Shokan 23-5-6-0, HAKS.
43. Shokan 8-52-1, HAKS.
44. Miyachi, "Sannin Orise," 63, 65.
45. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," vol. 3.
46. See, for example, Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 3:7; 1841.4.1.
47. Shokan 5-2-21; Shokan 17-2-11, HAKS.

In the Hirata house, the dividing line between the domestic side of family life and the business side was often blurred, especially when students boarded with the family. Even after the menfolk got salaried positions in the Akita domain bureaucracy, they continued to maintain Atsutane's school as a private enterprise with their wives' help.

In the early months of 1868, Orise III found herself in charge of the family enterprise with her daughter-in-law Chō II as her assistant. At the end of 1867, the shogun had returned his powers to the throne and the court had announced that the emperor would take over in accord with the reputed practice of ancient days. Some lords went to Kyoto to declare their support for the imperial cause; many more dismantled their mansions in Edo and withdrew to their domains, forcing retainers and their families to do the same. On 1867.12.23, Nobutane accompanied his lord back to Akita. Meanwhile, the domain ordered Kanetane to go on a fact-finding mission to Kyoto. Orise noted the substantial sums each received to cover expenses on the road.[48] They both sent reports back to their wives, and the women responded in kind. Of the many letters that Orise wrote during her life, these are the ones that remain.

Orise III's letters ramble from changing conditions in the city, to help she received from friends and disciples, to her decisions on what the family should do. Just two days after the menfolk left, the women were astonished to learn that the shogun's allies had raided the Satsuma compound in southwestern Edo because it had become a base for imperial loyalists who attacked foreigners and stirred up trouble. A letter to Nobutane dated 1868.1.2 reported that suspicion had fallen on the Hirata house. Lest they be caught with incriminating evidence, Orise, Kanesaburō, and Chō wrapped up two bundles of letters and took them to the home of one of Orise's daughters for safekeeping. They worried too that they might be arrested and questioned about where Kanetane and Nobutane had gone. In the meantime, Orise tried to get Kanesaburō to understand the Way of lord and retainer that comes from the gods by participating in a study group along with Chō and her daughters that focused on Atsutane's works. She and Chō agreed that no harm would come to them so long as they "kept the faith."[49]

Subsequent letters also mixed news, rumors, and family affairs. In a letter dated 1.12, Orise III listed all the shrines and temples she had either visited herself or delegated to Kanesaburō with a prayer that things turn out well. She alluded to the 1868.1.4 battle of Toba-Fushimi that ended in a rout for

48. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 3:287.
49. Shokan 17-2-12; Shokan 17-3-1, HAKS.

the shogun's forces: "I heard the other day that Kyoto is in an uproar, and all the conflicting reports worry me." The Akita lord had decided to do nothing about the summons to domain lords to show their loyalty to the emperor by coming to Kyoto, a decision that frustrated Nobutane. Troops were gathering to march on Edo in the name of the emperor, with arson as a favorite weapon of war. There she was, surrounded by the family's flammable capital—the stacks of woodblocks used to print Atsutane's works. She reported the good news that the previous shoguns' widows—Kazunomiya and Tenshōin—were going to send two ladies-in-waiting as messengers to Kyoto to ask that the imperial army not attack Edo. "If that happens, things will calm down immediately, and we will put off sending the woodblocks away for the time being." Even better would be if the former shogun took his troops off to France as rumor claimed he would. She and Chō II called him "Pig One" (Buta-ichi): *buta* (pig) because he was said to like pork, a substance then foreign to the Japanese palate, and *ichi* (one) because the name of his adoptive house before he became shogun was "One bridge" (Hitotsubashi).[50] In the meantime, Chō reported to her brother-in-law Taneo, in Kyoto with Kanetane, that foot soldiers had been running amok in the commoner wards, firing off guns and terrifying the populace.[51]

With Orise III in charge of the family enterprise, Chō II maintained its function as an impromptu clearinghouse for news. Chō reported to Nobutane in Akita that unless she heard otherwise, she would circulate his letters among friends and relatives, some of whom wanted to distribute copies to other people hungry for the latest word.[52] In a letter dated 1868.1.11, she wrote that Okamoto had brought them details of the shogun's defeat at Toba-Fushimi. When she informed Terushima and Katsura, who were Hirata disciples and Akita domain retainers, they came immediately to discuss what Okamoto had said and confirmed the news through talks with other disciples. She enclosed with her letter copies of the reports that they had acquired. How thankful she was that even though the imperial army was smaller, its spirit had won the day.[53] A week later, she sent Nobutane an eyewitness account of the battle along with other documents.[54] Toward the end of the month, one of Atsutane's nephews from Akita visited the Aizu compound in Edo, where he saw men who had been wounded in the battle wearing Western-style uniforms. Their defeat had shocked the Aizu officials.

50. Shokan 5-2-9; 17-2-2; 17-2-13, HAKS.
51. Shokan 5-2-32; letter dated [1868.2]13, HAKS.
52. Shokan 17-3-1, HAKS.
53. Shokan 18-2-26, HAKS.
54. Shokan 17-2-13, HAKS.

Day by day more domain lords submitted to the emperor. From Kyoto, Kanetane warned that the imperial court was organizing punitive expeditions. By the third or fourth month, they would come at Edo from all sides. His instructions that Chō relayed to Nobutane were to discard household furnishings but save the woodblocks.[55]

In supporting the return of the emperor to direct rule, the Hirata family found living in the shogun's capital to be less and less tenable. Orise III first thought that the family would have to follow Nobutane to Akita and then discussed evacuating to the central province of Shinano, where large nests of disciples would have sheltered them. In a letter to Kanetane dated 1868.1.23, she finally declared that she wanted to follow him to Kyoto, the ancient and, she assumed, future capital. She could not make this decision on her own. Instead Kanetane and Nobutane had to get Akita's permission for such an unprecedented request, at the very time when domain officials were urging all retainers to move north (letter of 1868.2.7). In the meantime, Orise continued to prepare the woodblocks for shipment out of the city. She and Chō II hoped that Nobutane would return to Edo to help them, but instead he went directly from Akita to Kyoto. She described how she went through the family's belongings, deciding what to keep and what to sell. Old and ugly doors, folding screens, a heavy chest, and a suit of armor were simply in the way, so she chose to get rid of them. With so many families doing the same thing, finding buyers was challenging. And then there were the goods that she was storing for other people, her daughters' clothing, for example. If she sold it, her daughters' in-laws would expect her to reimburse them at the price at which they valued the clothing, not what it would fetch in a glutted market. She had help—men to do the heavy work and negotiate with shippers—but she didn't feel comfortable leaving their work unsupervised.[56]

Orise III and Chō II continued to manage the school's business while preparing to leave Edo. Chō promised her husband that she would make a copy of the house diary for him.[57] They still dealt with aspiring students. In a letter dated 1868.2.18, Chō sent a secret report to Taneo in Kyoto on Takagi Genzō, who had joined the school that day. The former shogun, Takagi's liege lord, was trying to demonstrate sincere submission to the emperor by living in seclusion in Edo. Being shut up had given Genzō claustrophobia, and he had escaped for the sake of his health. Although he knew nothing about scholarship, he wanted to join Kanetane in Kyoto.[58] Meanwhile,

55. Shokan 18-2-9; date is 1868.1.27, HAKS.
56. Shokan 12-2-12; 5-2-1; 5-2-5; 5-2-19; 5-2-10; 5-2-24; 5-2-7, HAKS.
57. Shokan 17-2-11, HAKS.
58. Shokan 5-2-34, HAKS.

Kanesaburō was still making prints from new blocks, so the family decided to ship those last. It was a painstaking process, and Orise wasn't sure if he'd be finished by the time they wanted to leave. She planned to offer a large farewell gift of Atsutane's writings to the Kashima and Katori shrines along with a cash donation. "I'll make sure to purify the offerings, so please don't worry about that" (1868.2.8). She accepted money from a disciple who sold books for her in Itoigawa and negotiated with others who wanted a 30 percent discount on the books they sold. A block carver brought the last of the woodblocks that he had contracted to prepare for printing (1868.2.13).[59] Her record of income shows book sales, remittances from bookstores, and disciples' fees as well as reimbursements for the food and drink she offered her guests. Upon the family's departure for Kyoto, the domain provided 80 *ryō* for their expenses on the road.[60]

Orise III made skillful use of her family and community connections to further the interests of the Hirata house in uncertain times. She involved Chō II and her son Kanesaburō in her plans; she hired strong young men willing to work for room and board in a depressed labor market. A stream of visitors checked on the family, offered advice, and brought news. Furukawa Mitsura came every day. He was a prominent disciple who took over the Shirakawa office in Edo when it proved to be beyond her son Kaneya's capabilities (see chap. 7). Orise made a point of visiting four Buddhist priests who had come from a temple in the Ina valley because she wanted to ask about barriers and other obstructions on the road to Kyoto. Orise and Chō continued to tend to the important matter of the gifts that mediated ties with friends and supporters: salted fish guts, a favorite condiment, came from Itoigawa near the Japan Sea while salmon roe came from Tsugaru at the northern tip of Honshu (1868.2.1). At Kanetane's request, the women sent a box of eel prepared in the Edo style to a family friend and supporter in Akita.[61] As word spread that the Hirata family was going to move to the ancient capital, more and more people asked to join them.

Leaving Edo required elaborate preparations. To Orise III's relief, on 1868.2.17, the domain finally gave its permission for the family to go to Kyoto instead of Akita. After consulting with her daughter-in-law, Orise decided to hire just one enclosed palanquin for herself and an open palanquin for Fuji (Nobutane's concubine and his daughter's mother) and the wet nurse to share by turns. Chō II was happy to walk. Two porters would carry

59. Shokan 5-2-24; 5-2-7; 5-2-23, HAKS.
60. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 3:288–92.
61. Shokan 5-2-2. From Chō to Kanetane, 1868.2.2, HAKS.

a long chest suspended from a pole. There would be three horses, two for the male attendants to alternate riding and one with two paniers slung across its back holding valuable items and topped with a branch from the sacred sakaki tree as an offering to the gods (*tamagushi*). Orise worried that there would be lots of expenses on the road, but "it can't be helped."[62]

At a time of political turmoil, there was safety in numbers. One disciple from the Ina valley in central Japan, Kitahara Inao, was so worried about the family's safety that he sent his younger brother to escort Orise and the others to Kyoto.[63] In the end, eight men accompanied a party of eleven women and children. They all left Edo around 3.11; aches and pains delayed Orise's arrival until five days after the others reached Kyoto on 3.29.[64] On 4.11, imperial forces entered Edo castle without a fight, thus sparing the city from the fires of war. The last Tokugawa supporter of consequence to vacate it was Tenshōin, the Satsuma-bred widow of the thirteenth shogun.

Information concerning Orise III after her arrival in Kyoto is so scarce that she fades into the background. She and Kanetane remained in the city for four years. At first, they expected that Kyoto would become the new capital, but the emperor moved to what was now called Tokyo. Nobutane followed him and wrote voluminous letters to his parents covering subjects ranging from changes in government policy to whether his maid/concubine was pregnant (she wasn't). In 1870 he summoned his wife, his daughter, and Fuji, along with two boys he was thinking of adopting, to join him. At the end of 1871, Chō II wrote a letter urging her parents-in-law to come to Tokyo—Nobutane was dying. He passed away on 1872.1.24, killed by a weak constitution exacerbated by overwork.

After Nobutane's death, Chō II returned to her natal family. She stopped using her Edo-style appellation and became Naga or Nagako—using the same character but with a different pronunciation. In 1874 she joined her brother Kubo Sueshige (1830–86) and nephew Norichika (1858–1919) in publishing *Illuminating Doctrine through Actual Examples* (*Meikyō jijitsu*). It was designed to educate children in the Three Principles for Instruction issued by the Meiji government in 1872: revere the gods and love the country; adhere to the principles of heaven and Way of humanity; and accept the emperor as lord and obey the court's commands. *Illuminating Doctrine* draws widely from the Japanese canon, citing the ancient histories, the famous miscellany *Tales Ancient and Modern,* imperial poetry anthologies,

62. Shokan 5-2-25, HAKS.
63. Miyachi, *Rekishi no naka no* Yoake mae, 68–69.
64. Miyachi, "Hirata kokugaku no saikentō," 2:374.

Fig. 27. Side and front views of Hirata shrine, Yoyogi 3-8-10, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo. (Photographs by M. William Steele and Anne Walthall, 2024.)

and prose from the imperial court. Nagako and Norichika claimed responsibility for the work in the introduction; Sueshige explained how it came to be published in a coda. The text contains statements on the importance of love in educating children and stories about filial women, but nothing indicates which of the authors wrote what.[65]

Nagako also became an instructor in the Women's Doctrinal Academy, which had been established to promote the Three Principles. In July 1873, she was invited to give a sermon in Kanda.[66] At the end of the year, she and other instructors went to a ceremony honoring the gods Sarutahiko and Miyabi (note that the name for the female half of this couple is the one promoted by Atsutane, not Uzume, the one by which she is more widely known). Throughout 1874 and into 1875, Nagako participated in academy functions, appearing whenever her attendance was requested at ceremonies that invoked the gods and joining sessions devoted to explicating Atsutane's *Evidence for Ancient History*. The diary kept by Atomi Kakei that documents the academy's creation turns skimpy starting in the middle of 1875, and with that Nagako disappears from the historical record.[67]

In the end, it was Orise III who oversaw the survival of the Hirata house. After Nobutane's death, it shrank to include her, Kanetane, their fourth son, Taneo, and his wife, and their granddaughter Ishi. At first Kanetane had enough money from salaries and book sales to buy a large estate in the northeastern suburb of Yanagishima, where he devoted himself to a splendid garden with an artificial mountain, pond, and stream. There was ample room for a shrine to Atsutane with residences for Kanetane and Orise plus their second son's and daughters' families. Kanetane formally retired in 1875 and died five years later, leaving the family's publishing business to Taneo and its finances in dire shape. In 1883 the family sold the estate and moved everything to Koishikawa, next door to the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu. Because Taneo was often sick, he lacked the energy to publish more than a few volumes or to negotiate with booksellers. When he died in 1886, his niece Ishi was just nineteen and Orise III was eighty-one. Ishi appealed to the postal authorities for permission to inherit Taneo's license to sell postage stamps but was refused. However, the home minister at the time and father of the imperial army, Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), granted her permission to publish Atsutane's history of Indian customs and religion with

65. Hirata Nagako, *Meikyō jijitsu*, 594–624.

66. Odaira Mika, "Female Shrine Priests" 235–37. I thank Kate Wildman Nakai for this citation.

67. Atomi Kakei, *Atomi Kakei Nikki*, https://www.atomi.ac.jp/univ/kakei/, accessed April 3, 2022.

its critical biography of Shakyamuni.[68] Just when it appeared that the two women might have to sell the Koishikawa land, devoted disciples stepped in to help with the publishing business and find a husband for Ishi.[69] She married Tozawa Morisada, a young Shinto priest, on 1886.8.1, five months after the death of her uncle, and he became the family's fourth head, Hirata Moritane (1862–1945). Having secured her father's line, Orise III died on 1888.3.21.

The Hirata school lasted from 1804, when Atsutane first listed disciples, to 1876, when Kanetane shut it down, but thanks to women, the family enterprise continued. In dreams, prayers, and education for children, the three Orise women supported Atsutane's vision of the presence of the gods and spirits in everyday life. At a critical moment following Taneo's death, Orise III and her granddaughter kept the publishing side of the Hirata school going until the posthumous disciple Inoue Yorikuni, Ishi's husband, Moritane, and Orise's grandson Miki Ioe contracted with a modern publishing company to issue Atsutane's complete works in the early twentieth century. The Hirata family may have denigrated Tokugawa Yoshinobu as "Pig One," but when he died, Moritane led his funeral procession.[70] The Koishikawa property burned in the firebombs that incinerated Tokyo in May 1945. Before it could be rebuilt, the Tokyo municipal government expropriated the land for subway car storage. In 1958 the Hirata family moved to Yoyogi, just south of Shinjuku station, where the Hirata shrine is tucked into the corner of a residential building. Getting public recognition for it as a religious corporation took until 1973. When Moritane's son Munetane (1889–1973) died without issue, Ishi's great-grandchildren, the cousins Maita Katsuyasu (1935–2010), a director for a building management company, and his wife, Harue, inherited the corporation, and they called on priests from other shrines to perform ceremonies.[71] After Harue died in 2018, Kobayashi Takerō, priest at the Hisaizu shrine in Koshigaya, temporarily assumed oversight of the shrine. It still stands today, but the priest, a medical doctor named Ikeuchi Ryūtarō, and its skeleton staff work only part-time.

68. Moritane 1–9; 16–2, HAKS. See Auerback, *A Storied Sage*, 119–64.
69. Inoue Yorikuni, "Hirata-ke iji no geki," provisional #7.
70. "Norito," sasshi 10, HAKS.
71. Kamata, "Hirata Jinja no sōken," 255–60.

Epilogue

Atsutane's Legacies

Atsutane has meant different things to different people. He's been used and abused. His legacy in modern Japan, the period from approximately 1868 to the present, has endured through the disputes in the Meiji period (1868–1912) over which gods to worship to twentieth-century scholarly efforts to extract meaning from ancient texts. Intellectual historians have analyzed what Atsutane wrote in the context of his times and theirs. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the founders of Japanese ethnography deemed Atsutane to be their forebear while nationalists drew on Atsutane's writings to validate their assertions of Japan's superiority, an endeavor that ended with Japan's defeat in World War II. In the postwar period, scholars have continued to reassess the mark that Atsutane left on Japan studies, while the occult boom of the 1970s and 1980s led to popular editions of his writings on ghosts and spirits. In short, his ideas have long had and continue to have currency. Tracing his lasting impact—on individuals, institutions, politics, and historiography—is the purpose of this epilogue.

A Legacy of Discord in the Hirata School

It is indisputable that the Hirata school held sway over Japan studies in the years leading up to and beyond the Meiji Restoration. It continued to attract disciples after Atsutane's death until Kanetane shut it down in 1876. Its members found positions in the bewildering sequence of new bureaucracies established to manage Shinto affairs, and even men who participated in constructing the Meiji state, such as Saigō Takamori, visited it repeat-

edly. But when disciples quarreled over which gods to worship, what constituted appropriate texts for study, where the capital should be located, and what form the government should take, they weakened the Hirata school's influence. Atsutane and his collaborators had studied Japanese medicine, agronomy, botany, and astronomy in addition to history. Under the pressure of state sponsorship and the impact of Western categories for dividing up knowledge, the field of Japan studies shrank, with the previous eclectic assortment of topics being replaced by Western scientific and humanistic disciplines. Atsutane remained a scholarly forebear, but more rigorous approaches to sorting and tracing textual lineages superseded the way he filled in the gaps in constructing an urtext for the history of the age of the gods.

The Meiji state claimed to restore the emperor to the position his ancestors had enjoyed in a line unbroken since the sun goddess sent her grandson Ninigi down to rule over the islands of Japan and his great-grandson Jinmu founded the empire. Some of Atsutane's followers assumed that this meant restoring the unity of rites and rule that characterized the administrative organization in ancient times. Their hopes were quickly dashed. As one of Kanetane's closest associates, Yano Harumichi, wrote in a melancholy poem:

Kashihara no	The thought
miyo ni kaeru ni	of returning to the age of
omoishi wa	Kashihara—
aranu yume nite	the impossible dream
arijishi ma no wo	of but a moment[1]

In 1863, ancient studies specialists, Atsutane's disciples among them, had determined that Kashihara, a site south of the modern city of Nara, was where Emperor Jinmu had ascended to the throne. It thus symbolized all that Atsutane's followers had hoped for with the new government, hopes that remained as marginalized as the site itself when the emperor moved to Tokyo. According to Sakamoto Koremaru, Yano and his supporters brought their failure upon themselves when they insisted that the only way to bring about a true restoration of imperial authority was for the emperor to return to Kyoto. They also did not understand a different vision of the unity of rites and rule, one in which the emperor conducted rites and ruled above a modern bureaucracy inserted between the emperor and his subjects, the

1. Orikuchi, *Orikuchi zenshū*, 23:130; for a slightly different last line, see *Orikuchi zenshū*, 20:406.

foundation and framework for the Meiji nation-state that endured to the end of World War II.[2]

The dispute over which gods deserved worship exposed fault lines within the Hirata school. In contrast to Atsutane's cosmology based largely on the 712 *Record of Ancient Matters*, Ōkuni Takamasa, one of his earliest disciples, as well as the priests at Ise where the sun goddess is enshrined, preferred the 720 *Chronicles of Japan*. This was because the *Record* begins with the three generative gods as the first deities in the cosmos (see chap. 3), giving them a temporal priority over the sun goddess. For Meiji government leaders trying to build a strong modern state centered on the emperor, no deity could be allowed to take precedence over the imperial ancestor. The main text of the *Chronicles* highlights the role of Kunitokotachi, who becomes the imperial guardian. (In *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*, Atsutane had dismissed him as unimportant.) The *Chronicles* also refer to Ōkuninushi by a different name and belittle his role as ruler of the unseen world. Whereas the *Record* derives from oral history, the accounts in the *Chronicles* contain documents from the age of early kingship. In the eyes of later scholars, who deemed it the first national history, it had the greater authority. On the other hand, Takamasa's 1857 list of the "four greatest scholars of Japan studies" culminated with Atsutane, suggesting that while Takamasa disagreed with his teacher over the relative value of the foundational texts, the two men remained fundamentally united in their commitment to Japan studies.[3] Takamasa died in 1871, but his domain lord from Tsuwano, Kamei Koremi, and his chief disciple, Fukuba Bisei, from the same domain remained true to his message. Under their leadership, the Tsuwano faction ended up dominating religious discourse in Meiji Japan even though other members of the Hirata school promoted a different set of teachings that remained closer to what Atsutane had preached.[4]

Discord between followers of the Hirata and Tsuwano factions culminated in the Pantheon dispute of 1880. The Tsuwano supported the Ise priests who advocated a streamlined set of gods to be worshipped at the central government office charged with overseeing Shinto affairs, one focused on the sun goddess, the imperial ancestress. The Hirata and the Senge family of shrine priests at Izumo wanted a larger set of gods to be included—Ōkuninushi and the three generative gods plus, in Kanetane's case, the pair Izanagi and Izanami, the sun goddess's brother Susano-o, and her grandson

2. Sakamoto, *Meiji ishin to kokugakusha*, 15–16, 51, 62–63.
3. *Nihon shoki senroku 1300nen*, 31, 52–53.
4. See Breen, "Ideologues, Bureaucrats and Priests," 231–38.

Ninigi. Did Ōkuninushi not rule over the hidden realm? And didn't the ancient gods provide an essential link to the local gods and ancestral spirits worshipped at shrines across Japan? This was the Hirata faction's position, but the Tsuwano faction and its supporters argued that too much attention paid to Ōkuninushi, the afterlife, and the ancestral spirits might distract the people from focusing their devotion on the sun goddess and her descendant, the emperor. Throughout the 1870s, the Ise-Tsuwano faction that controlled the succession of bureaucracies established to manage Shinto affairs repeatedly rebuffed petitions by the Senge to invite Ōkuninushi into its pantheon of gods. In 1881 the government decreed that the imperial deities worshipped inside the palace were to be the ones worshipped in the Bureau of Shinto Affairs. To prevent such disputes in the future, it deemed beliefs concerning the afterlife to be religious and not its concern, whereas ceremonies centered on the emperor and his divine ancestors pertained to the state. These ceremonies remained at the center of public life until 1945.[5]

New Japan Studies for a New Nation

Atsutane had devoted his life to studying ancient texts to gain a deeper understanding of the gods as they actually existed. Following Commodore Perry's visit to Japan in 1853, the number of samurai studying at the Hirata school increased dramatically, and some of them returned home with guidelines for instruction and lists of texts. After the Meiji Restoration, domain rulers sent scholars to Nobutane to bring back knowledge of Shinto and expertise in ancient studies for their schools.[6] This sort of Japan studies that parsed texts for traces of the gods soon disappeared from the education system,[7] but it lingered in private academies. In 1878, two years after Kanetane closed the Hirata school (Ibukinoya) and in response to the creation of the neologism *shūkyō* to mean "religion," Kanetane's fourth son, Taneo, founded the Church of Fundamental Teaching (Honkyō kyōkai). He planned for it to expand the reach of Atsutane's message by setting up branches in provinces across Japan under a more modern-sounding name, one that gestured toward a new way of conceiving the relationship between faith and scholarship. He also hired a priest for the Hirata shrine while he became a priest, the first in the Hirata family, at a different shrine. Taneo soon allowed the church to escape from

5. Maxey, *The "Greatest Problem,"* 213–14.
6. Kumazawa, "Minshū wa naze Atsutane katari ni miserareta no ka," 371.
7. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion*, 154.

his control while he devoted himself to publishing tracts associated with Atsutane's ideas. He died in 1886, and Moritane, his successor, continued the dual track of shrine priest and publisher.[8]

The split between religion (defined as beliefs concerning the role of the gods in human affairs) and rituals designed to promote patriotism centered on the emperor led to a widening divide between religion and scholarship attuned to Western norms of documentation. Meiji scholars began to treat the age of the gods as myth by taking an evidential approach to the Japanese canon. At the same time, state and general education retained the belief in the emperor's descent from the gods as an article of faith.

Atsutane's belief in the superiority of Japan meant that his ideas continued to be influential in institutions devoted to preserving and perpetuating what were deemed unique and essential features of Japanese history and religion. He had targeted Shinto priests to disseminate his message, and his impact remained strongest in schools established for them. Meiji-period priests could no longer validate their position by receiving licenses from the Yoshida or Shirakawa, nor could they inherit their positions because the government had abolished the hereditary Shinto priesthood. They needed credentials. It thus became possible for students of Atsutane's thought who did not come from priestly families to gain employment in the shrine world, and it freed them from control by the Buddhist priesthood. The result was the emergence of a successful, coherent Shinto theology.[9]

New institutions arose to educate priests. The Institute for Research into the Imperial Canon (Kōten Kōkyūjo) was founded in Tokyo in 1882 during a wave of resurgent commitment to Japan's cultural identity in reaction to what were perceived as Westernizing fads. It had one of Atsutane's posthumous disciples as its supervisor, and Yano Harumichi was an instructor. The basic texts were Atsutane's favorites—*Record of Ancient Matters, Chronicles of Japan*, and *Gleanings from Ancient Stories*. Charged with certifying priests, the institute set up boards nationwide to do so. In 1885, Ise shrine created its own organization—Jingū kōgakukan—to educate its priests using the same ancient texts.[10] The Tokyo institute became Kokugakuin University in 1890, still the premier institution for research on the Japanese canon. It brought Japanese history, literature, and law into the curriculum for priests.[11] A notable graduate is Kobayashi Takerō, the current priest at Hisaizu shrine in Koshigaya. His writings address interpretations of the spir-

8. Aizawa Minori. "Hirata kokugaku no Meiji," 21–26.
9. Miyachi Masato, *Rekishi no naka no* Yoake mae, 262.
10. Wachutka, *Kokugaku in Meiji-period Japan*, 128–45.
11. Takeda Sachiya, "'Meiji kokugaku' no seiritsu," 213–17.

its by disciples of the Hirata school; he worked with Sakamoto Koremaru, professor at Kokugakuin University, to publish a twelve-volume series of books on research into Hirata Atsutane, Japan studies, and Shinto and to hold monthly meetings at Hisaizu shrine for local people to study *Record of Ancient Matters* and Japanese culture;[12] and he reproduced Atsutane's votive plaque of Ame no Uzume for public display.

From the Meiji period on, scholars acknowledged Atsutane as their forerunner, but they were more likely to see his methods as anachronistic. No longer did they subsume diverse fields under the rubric of Japan studies. Instead, the pursuit of knowledge became more specialized. Tokyo Imperial University, at the apex of the public education system, had briefly maintained a general humanities curriculum focused on Japan that counted Hirata Moritane, the fourth head of the Hirata school, among its graduates, but it also separated a Japanese history department from its Japanese literature department. Notable figures in Japan studies who had a personal or familial connection to the Hirata school kept Atsutane's emphasis on the study of Japan even as they reformulated his methods and goals in line with new academic disciplines based on models imported from the West.

Some of Atsutane's posthumous disciples worked with the state while others opposed at least some of its policies. Inoue Yorikuni and his associates obtained authorization for two new religions—Konkō-kyō and Tenrikyō—as sectarian organizations by showing how their message harmonized with *Record of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan*. They helped disseminate the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education because they saw traces of Hirata teachings in it, as expressed in the phrase "guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth." Three Hirata disciples assisted the head of the Imperial Household Ministry library. It was not full-time work, but they enjoyed the prestige of the position and its closeness to the emperor. The Popular Rights Movement that married reverence for the emperor with criticism of autocratic bureaucrats attracted disciples. The lifelong opponent to the pollution caused by the Ashio copper mine, Tanaka Shōzō (1841–1913), joined the Hirata school in 1865. He later became a Christian while dedicating himself to guaranteeing the livelihood of the emperor's subjects and preserving Japan's sacred soil.[13]

Confronted with the danger of appearing old-fashioned compared to Western scholarship and European thought, some practitioners of the new

12. The series is titled "The Hisaizu shrine's little teaching institute library" (Hisaizu jinja shōkyōin sōsho). Kobayashi Takerō, *Hirata kokugaku no reikonkan*, back page.

13. Takeda, "'Meiji kokugaku' no seiritsu," 219–24.

Japan studies moved further from Atsutane's teachings. When Atsutane and his followers wrote of reverence for the emperor, they meant a mystical connection to his person and a defense of Japan as the soil that he and his ancestors made sacred. They never conceived of an abstract love of country, but that was about to change. In 1887, two years before the promulgation of the Meiji constitution, based largely on German models that defined the parameters of the modern state, Konakamura Yoshikata criticized those who valued only *Record of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan* and believed that nothing was more important than understanding the enduring Way of the gods. He argued that they should instead approach and use the study of literature and history to nurture patriotism. Haga Yaichi, whose father had been a Hirata disciple, incorporated study of the gods into his work on Japan's national character and the *kokutai*, or national essence, a term often found in the writings of the Mito school that combined Confucian ethics with Japan studies. Haga was a specialist in classical literature who hoped the Western methods he had learned in Germany would revitalize Japan studies, and his subject matter also included Buddhist and Confucian thinkers. In his view, any foreign ideas that might improve Japan should be imported and used.

As nationalists became more militant in the twentieth century, scholars called for a new Japan studies to clarify Japan's unique national character. Inoue Tetsujirō, who introduced Western philosophy to Japan while condemning Christianity as incompatible with Japan's national essence, ran a training course for teachers on national morality in 1910, the same year that Japan annexed Korea. His followers were few, and for a time, the field of Japan studies lay dormant.[14] That changed on May 30, 1937, when the Ministry of Education issued *Fundamentals of Our National Essence* (*Kokutai no hongi*). It marked a decisive shift from civic virtue to national spirit with an emphasis on the emperor's sacred authority. Just thirty-eight days later, Japan declared war on China. One of its authors, Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, a professor of Japanese literature, wrote in 1939 that the Hirata faction had furthered Japan studies, but still more needed to be done. This task fell to scholars who ever since the Meiji Restoration continued to imbibe Japan's spirit of scholarship while aiming to perfect it. Their goal was to internalize the pure Japanese culture and national spirit that has existed from ancient times to the present.[15] In this way Inoue and Hisamatsu retained Atsutane's respect for the emperor while subordinating his reverence for the gods to national objectives.

14. Matsumoto, *Kado no Azumamaro*, 420–21.
15. Toishiba, "Shinkokugaku no teishō," 227–33, 241–43.

Atsutane became identified with the ultranationalism of the 1930s owing to his uncompromising belief in the sacrality of the emperor and Japan's superiority to all other lands, but those who claimed Atsutane's authority did violence to his central concerns. Atsutane sifted through arcane texts to track down in mind-numbing detail every one of the myriad gods, from their various names to their parentage to their deeds. He sought to feel their presence as he had on his 1816 pilgrimage. When he issued moral pronouncements, he used Confucian rhetoric that focused on the family. Over one hundred years later, scholars were more likely to incorporate Western disciplinary methodologies and twentieth-century philosophical discourse into their study of Japan, and they identified with the modern nation-state.

From Hagiography to Historiography

While some scholars trained in Western methodologies revisited classical texts and made them speak in the language of modern nationalism, others promoted their forebears who had nurtured the study of Japan. In 1883 Inoue Yorikuni was able to get posthumous imperial court rank for the men Ōkuni Takamasa had deemed "the four greatest scholars of Japan studies": Kada no Azumamaro, Kamo no Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane. Yorikuni continued to advocate court rank for Hirata disciples in the years that followed, even having it bestowed on the female poet and imperial loyalist Matsuo Taseko.[16] His brand of Japan studies focused on the traditional scholarship of the Edo period. In 1897 he led a team in publishing the first collective biography of 105 men deemed Japan studies scholars who died between 1657 and 1887. One ongoing issue was what to do about Arai Hakuseki, who studied Japanese texts but from a Confucian perspective. Yorikuni included him in his 1900 expanded edition, but when Haga Yaichi led a team to produce an even more extensive collection that included men from earlier eras as well, Hakuseki was excluded. Haga argued that the revival of pure Shinto began with Kada no Azumamaro and culminated with Atsutane, thus narrowing Edo-period Japan studies to the history of Shinto.[17] In so doing, he rejected the treatises on Japan and its gods written by other self-identified Confucian scholars such as Hayashi Razan.

In the twentieth century and especially following World War I, the movement to identify with the Hirata school of Japan studies figured in

16. Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman*, 329–31.
17. Kimura, "'Kokugaku' kenkyū," 246–49.

the unease with what Japan, primarily urban Japan, had become, what has been characterized as "overcome by modernity." The resulting discomfort can be seen in efforts by the literary critic Kobayashi Hideo and others to rescue Japan from Westernization, a celebration of the communal body by the founders of Japanese ethnology, Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu, and a scrutiny of nation-building in the Meiji period and how it had gone wrong.[18] This scrutiny is exemplified most famously in Shimazaki Tōson's historical novel *Before the Dawn* (*Yoake mae*), first serialized in 1929. It recounts how Tōson's father and his compatriots, living in the mountains of central Japan, became disciples of the Hirata school and expected the Meiji Restoration to bring about a unity of rites and rule, emperor and people. His hopes dashed, Tōson's father went insane.[19] Another work published the same year was Ichimura Minato's *History of Imperial Loyalist Thought in the Ina Valley* (*Ina sonnō shisō shi*). It begins with an imperial prince who fought for the losing side in fourteenth-century battles between the northern and southern courts, delves into the spread of the Hirata school in the 1860s, and ends with proponents of Fuji-kō, a sect that worships Mount Fuji.[20]

During Japan's long war on the Asian mainland that began with the conquest of Manchuria in 1931, the question of how people living in Japan experienced modernity became entangled with defining Japan's mission in Asia and bringing the eight corners of the world under the Japanese roof. A return to thinking about why otherwise obscure men studied history and culture in the late Tokugawa period came in January 1945, when Itō Tasaburō published *Grassroots Japan Studies* (*Sōmō no kokugaku*). It focused on local intellectuals and community leaders in town and country to understand how Japan studies as taught by Norinaga and Atsutane penetrated regions far from urban centers.[21] Ichimura's book was published locally and was aimed at his peers in the Ina valley. Itō stood at a further remove from his subject, and that distance gave him a wider audience.

In between Ichimura's *History of Imperial Loyalist Thought* and Itō's *Grassroots Japan Studies*, scholars and local notables outside mainstream institutions continued to look to Atsutane for inspiration. Before the centenary of his death in 1943, his admirers published a plethora of books recounting the dramatic incidents in his life and lauding his commitment to throne and

18. Kimura uses this phrase in "'Kokugaku' kenkyū," 250–51. See also Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, especially 300–302, 304, 311, 330–31.

19. Shimazaki, *Before the Dawn*.

20. Ichimura, *Ina sonnō shisō shi*.

21. Itō Tasaburō, *Sōmō no kokugaku*, v. The volume was republished with additions and subtractions in 1966 and 1982.

nation. After retiring from the army as a general in 1928, Watanabe Kinzō (1874–1965) turned to local history and spent ten years living in Koshigaya. In 1942 he published the first biography of Atsutane that drew less from his essays than from documents related to his life. He appended transcriptions of house diaries and letters to Kanetane and others, over one thousand pages in all, still a valuable resource for scholars today.[22]

At the end of 1942, in preparation for the centenary of Atsutane's death, Watanabe joined local notables in erecting a huge stele in Atsutane's memory on the grounds of Hisaizu shrine in Koshigaya. It's still there, a monument to promoting Japan's wartime spirit. Led by the prefectural governor's representative, the principal of the local girls' school, the mayor, and priests, three hundred people from as far away as Akita and Sendai attended the daylong ceremony—prayers in the morning, speeches in the afternoon. As the mayor reminded the audience, Hisaizu shrine was the appropriate place for the stele because with his votive plaque of Uzume luring the sun goddess out of her cave, Atsutane had illustrated his faith in the shrine's gods. With Atsutane's connection to Koshigaya having come through his patron Yamazaki Atsutoshi, Atsutoshi's great-granddaughter Yamazaki Junko, age eleven, unveiled the stele. The poet in Chinese and translator of English literature Doi Bansui (1871–1952) spoke on the irrefutable evidence for the existence of the soul. He recalled that during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), the hero of the Meiji Restoration, Sakamoto Ryōma, twice appeared in Empress Shōken's dreams. In keeping with Atsutane's promise at the end of *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul* that should Japan come under attack, his spirit would join the gods in defending its sacred soil, Doi proclaimed, "Whether it's the divine spirits or the spirits of the war dead who protect the nation, if we believe firmly in their existence and daily offer sincere prayers to them, we'll win the Greater East Asia war."[23] Other speakers ignored Atsutane's focus on the age of the gods and the afterlife of spirits. Instead, they lauded his three principles that the war was to bring to fruition: Japan was the ancestral nation for all countries, the imperial household was the lord of all countries, and the Way of the gods was the Way for all countries.[24] The ceremony took place six months after the battle of Midway Island doomed Japan to defeat.

When twentieth-century urban-based intellectual historians explored Atsutane's writings, they came up with diverse conclusions. In essays published before World War II, Muraoka Tsunetsugu identified Atsutane's legacy

22. Watanabe Kinzō, *Hirata Atsutane kenkyū*.
23. Yamazaki Tatsuzō, *Hirata Atsutane to Yamazaki Atsutoshi*, 1–4, 14, 51
24. Yamazaki, *Hirata Atsutane to Yamazaki Atsutoshi*, 6, 10.

with "Restoration Shinto" but also emphasized its monotheistic and eschatological elements—monotheistic because in his view Atsutane incorporated Christianity into his cosmology and eschatological because Atsutane's followers took his teachings about the next life to mean that it was more important and enduring than this one.[25] In 1936, the literary critic Yamada Yoshio, who admired Atsutane's breadth and depth of knowledge of the Japanese canon, edited *An Account of Opening Up the Subject* (*Kaidaiki*).[26] Other scholars were more critical. The Marxist Hani Gorō viewed Norinaga's appreciation for traditional Japanese aesthetics as liberating the Japanese mind from feudal Confucian ethics but argued that Atsutane undermined the possibility of liberation thanks to his superficial and weak intellect. In 1935, Watsuji Tetsurō characterized Atsutane as dogmatic in doctrine but with a natural scientific understanding. Then, in 1952, he called Atsutane a degenerate who derived from Norinaga not an appreciation for classical literature but a faith in extremist myths and placed a large portion of the blame for Japan's militarism on Atsutane's fanaticism.[27] These criticisms led some postwar scholars to brand Atsutane a lunatic while trying to understand why and how his ideas attracted so many adherents. Norinaga escaped condemnation despite his assertions of Japan's superiority owing to his scholarly achievements, but Atsutane fell much further from favor. His scholarship, which was unquestionably more controversial than Norinaga's, was disregarded in favor of playing up and denigrating his nationalism and credulity.

Atsutane's Ethnographic Legacy

Atsutane's penchant for collecting local lore and stories about strange happenings made him a model for the men who invented Japan's native ethnography in the early twentieth century.[28] Like Atsutane, they supplemented what they got from documents with stories told by informants, as Atsutane had done in traveling to the Katori and Kashima shrines. Their goals differed, however: ethnographers wanted to compile information on how people in remote areas lived their daily lives, whereas Atsutane leaned toward learning about encounters with gods and spirits. Nevertheless, early ethnographers looked up to Atsutane. Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953), a leader in the field, argued that the man associated with founding native ethnography,

25. Muraoka, *Studies in Shinto Thought*, 9, 29, 213, 216.
26. Hirata Atsutane, *Koshichō kaidaiki*, 3–18.
27. Kimura, "'Kokugaku' kenkyū," 251–53; Yamashita Hisao, "Preface," 6.
28. I take this from the subtitle of Christy's book, *A Discipline on Foot*.

Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), made research into the Japanese gods his chief purpose. In the beginning, his scholarship resembled Atsutane's, and he followed a similar path from text-based knowledge to folklore.[29]

Orikuchi admired Atsutane while acknowledging Atsutane's faults. To mark the centenary of Atsutane's death anniversary in 1943, Orikuchi gave a lecture at Kokugakunin University, his alma mater, on "the tradition of Hirata's Japan studies." In it he praised Atsutane above Norinaga for understanding the need for morality, for the delight he took in scholarship, and for what Atsutane had written about ghosts, spirits, and the unseen world. At the same time, he described Atsutane as a true eccentric with a mania for reading and writing. Orikuchi admitted that his contemporaries found it absurd that Atsutane had believed Katsugorō, a man who claimed to have returned from the dead, but Orikuchi praised him for pursuing diverse sources, even if the search sometimes revealed Atsutane's gullibility, as in his interviews with Torakichi, a "boy who seemed like a tengu's prostitute." The interviews themselves, Orikuchi commented, "resembled those conducted by spiritualists of today with spirit mediums." Nevertheless, Orikuchi approved of Atsutane's having collected stories that portrayed ghosts as complex beings, some frightening, others friendly. To Orikuchi's way of thinking, Atsutane probably hoped that studying ghosts would help him understand the nature of gods. They all pertained to the spirit world, which Atsutane sought to grasp in its entirety.[30]

Atsutane received other national attention during the war as well. The front page of the *Nippon Times* reported that on the centenary of his death, August 20, 1943, Atsutane was posthumously honored by having his court rank raised to third rank, junior grade in recognition of his distinguished service to the imperial cause. Fighting for that cause meant that the war in the Pacific would drag on for another two years.

Atsutane in Postwar Japan

Atsutane's legacy continues to this day. After the war, intellectual historians no longer revered him as the scholarly exemplar that he had often been seen as before the war, and they rejected the nationalism associated with him that was based on the notion of Japan's divinely ordained primacy. Instead, they tried to figure out why his ideas spread so widely, especially among

29. Orikuchi, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, 19:210, 214.
30. Orikuchi, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, 20:418–45. The quotations are on 431.

the rural elite, and what effect his belief in Japan's superiority had on the jingoistic nationalism of the 1930s. In a book published in 1957, the intellectual historian Matsumoto Sannosuke emphasized Atsutane's religiosity, leading Koyasu Nobukuni in 2001 to praise Atsutane's theological creativity in explaining what happens to the soul after death in a way that spoke to common people's soteriological concerns.[31] Matsumoto and Koyasu both analyzed Atsutane's texts to tease out their meaning at the time they were written and placed them in the wider context of current historiographical trends. This work continues to the present, as can be seen in a recent study group at Kokugakuin University devoted to *The Sacred Pillar of the Soul*.

During the last twenty years, scholars with access to the Hirata family archive have taken a different approach. They've investigated the Hirata family's relations with printers, booksellers, disciples, and collaborators, demonstrating, for example, that texts originally composed by Atsutane were often edited and amended by others and published sometimes decades later. They have also reconceptualized Atsutane's motives and worldview by showing how Atsutane's fear of Russia and fascination with Western scientific ideas propelled him to affirm a Japanese identity based on a belief in the gods, their presence in invisible worlds, and their immanence in the visible world.

Scholars and people with an interest in ancient texts continue to read, explicate, and celebrate *Record of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan*. Beginning in 1976, a study group of parishioners at Hisaizu shrine began to meet once a month to explore the former.[32] More recently, researchers at Kokugakuin University have developed an ongoing project to analyze this text. In 2012, the 1300th anniversary of *Record of Ancient Matters* was celebrated at shrines across the country, Japan's postal service issued a commemorative stamp, and Miyazaki prefecture in Kyushu held a series of events and symposia because Miyazaki claims sites where many of the events it relates took place. On 2012.4.30, Izanagi shrine on the island of Awaji sent the head of its "Committee for the Preservation of Divine Script Offered at the Shrine" to Tokyo to lecture on the mysteries of the miraculous power of language.[33] Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 1300th anniversary of *Chronicles of Japan* was a more subdued affair, but Kokugakuin University went ahead with an exhibition displaying editions and commentaries beginning with the earliest extant copy from 1236. The catalog's subtitle was "A book that ties together kami and people."[34]

31. Koyasu, *Hirata Atsutane no sekai*, 7, 8, 11.
32. Shimane, *Koshigaya no jinja*, 14.
33. http://hounoubun-hozonkai.com/index.php?20120430prj
34. *"Nihon shoki" senroku 1300 nen*.

Atsutane's search for evidence of the unseen world continues to resonate in popular culture. When an occult boom that shows little sign of waning swept Japan starting in the 1970s, Atsutane's interviews with Torakichi gained new currency and the ghost stories that he'd collected spawned new iterations. Abductions like that experienced by Torakichi—tales of being spirited away by denizens of the unseen world—have been recounted in various media, from oral accounts recorded by Yanagita Kunio to twenty-first-century websites.[35] Some people today are critical of a political process beginning in the Meiji period that resulted in transforming the emperor into the symbolic head of a modernizing state and displaced beliefs in local gods in favor of national deities. In their view, this process sapped the shrines of their purpose, leaving it doubtful whether it's worth praying to local deities for help with life's problems. Shrine precincts now harbor "spiritual power" in the case of Takachiho, one of the locations for the sun goddess's cave, or "power spots," as at Hisaizu shrine, where devotees can enhance their spiritual energy by channeling the gods. The questions that exercised Atsutane regarding who each god was and what they did matter less now than a mental strengthening of the spirit.

Research into the Hirata school of Japan studies continues to flourish. To mark the 180th anniversary of Atsutane's death in 2023, a fat volume of essays appeared in the spring. The title takes advantage of the homograph *kyōshin*, which can be written with characters meaning "fanatic" (狂信) or "sympathetic vibration" (共振): *Hirata Atsutane: From Fanatic to Sympathetic Vibrations* (*Hirata Atsutane: kyōshin kara kyōshin e*).[36] At the end of the year, the journal *Contemporary Thought* (*Gendai shisō*) published a special issue on Atsutane. A total of thirty-eight scholars contributed their thoughts on Atsutane's scholarship, predecessors, collaborators, disciples, and afterlife, including me.[37]

35. Staemmler, "Virtual kamikakushi."
36. Yamashita and Saitō, *Hirata Atsutane: Kyōshin kara kyōshin e*.
37. Walthall, "Jendā kara bunseki suru Hirata Atsutane no shisō," 161–77.

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