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Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism

ABSTRACT

Nationalism in Japan is a topic of manifold discussions and can be observed from a political point of view, social standpoint or even through the lenses of a modern pop-culture. Some may argue that every country has its own version of this sentiment – and quite rightly. However, what sets Japanese right-wing tendencies apart from other countries is the strong prevalence of mythical motifs in modern discourse. It is a presence so strong and yet natural, that most of the Japanese cannot even perceive it as a nationalistic tendency. For the majority of people, nationalism is linked to somewhat crude imagery – skin-heads, Nazi emblems, open and plain hatred for any foreign element etc. However, nationalism can also be dressed up in cute clothes and can occur as an innocent slip of the tongue or may take the shape of a shrine in calm woods. In this article I will try to outline the main elements of a highly intricate pattern of Japanese nationalism in connection to their mythological roots.

KEY WORDS

ethnicity, history, Japan, Korea, mythology, nationalism, yamato

After 11 March 2011, when Japan was still in a state of shock after the strongest earthquake ever recorded there, and the subsequent tsunami that swept through kilometres of land, Ishihara Shintarō¹ – the then-Governor

¹ In case of Japanese names, the Asian order will be preserved through the entire article, that is family name first and given name afterwards. Non-Asian names will be written according to the western system.

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of Tōkyō – uttered words that in every other country could never be uttered publicly without serious consequences. He said that the tsunami was “divine retribution” because the Japanese had become greedy.² Nationalism in Japan borrows heavily from classical beliefs and myths while at the same time creating a new mythology, tightly bound to history and religion. Japanese nationalism in some aspects does not differ from a display of such sentiments in any given country. Yet there are also differences that set Japanese right-wing tendencies apart from any other country. No other country claims they are gods’ descendants.

This article will try to bring to light some mythological elements in Japanese nationalistic discourse, and how nationalism created its own mythology based on a curious mixture of classical texts, myths, rumours and fears. In order to do this, a short overview of classical mythology will be presented focusing only on the most controversial and troublesome issues. They will in turn be linked to modern nationalism as an explanation for a few other myths that were created in the last century, namely:

- the myth of monoethnic Japan,
- the myth of WWII in Japan,
- the myth of the “chosen nation” and *nihonjinron* theory.

Myths have heroes, as does nationalism. Myths have people who convey them – just like nationalism. Mythology and nationalistic sentiments in Japan are inextricably linked, creating what Rudolf Otto called *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*.³ Nationalism is no different.

Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu writes that “myths can be elevating to a nation, enabling people to cohere, to energize, and to compel themselves to defy rational limits. Yet myths can be disastrous, causing a nation to lose touch with reality and with its shared humanity with others.”⁴ Japan has experienced both aspects of this definition.

One of the best definitions, by comparison, of modern mythology is provided not by academic specialists, but by the combined effort of many people, pouring their thoughts into the concept on a website devoted to modern pop-culture:

² 「大震災は天罰」「津波で我欲洗い落とせ」Asahi Shimbun, [online] <http://web.archive.org/web/20111010081743/http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0314/TKY201103-140356.html> [viewed on 10 December 2014].

³ After: R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harvey, New York 1936.

⁴ S. Murphy-Shigematsu, *Multiethnic Japan and the Monoethnic Myth*, “MELUS” 1993, Vol. 18, No. 4, p. 78.

One of the main distinctions between modern mythology and ancient mythology is that the events or figures in more modern works remain in circulation or exist today. These characters and stories have typically been created or written about in the last few hundred years, rather than the thousands of years that often separate the present from ancient myths. The characters or events that popularize such myths often emulate modern values or ideas, but do so in a way that still resembles the characters and stories used in ancient myths and legends.⁵

This quote not only incorporates the traditionally perceived image of mythology, but gives an invaluable insight into the method of using newly created motifs – so that they still look like they belong to ancient mythical lore. This also perfectly fits Japan and the country's many modern myths – Amaterasu has been written into history while Shintō was most likely artificially put together at a later date, and some say that the Imperial reign was a constructed myth as well. The final decades of the 19th century up to the disaster of WWII were built upon the mythical notion of a “chosen nation”, created by the gods and populated by their descendants.

Politicians like Ishihara, often reach out to mythological motifs and symbols to connect with their voters and their beliefs. In addition, in latest two decades, Japan has witnessed a surge of new nationalistic ideas, often connected with myths surrounding the divine origin of the nation. There is a great deal of articles, books and theses regarding nationalism, each presenting the phenomenon from different angles and perspectives. In this article, I adopt a definition proposed by Boyd C. Shafer, who states that nationalism is “that sentiment unifying a group of people who have a real or imagined common historical experience and a common aspiration to live together as a separate group in the future.”⁶ In the case of Japan, this particular definition is especially appropriate. The past of Japan is an echo still reverberating through many cultural artefacts and phenomena. It is visible in cinema, television shows, music, literature, art, and essentially the whole pop-culture is influenced by the past, be it in a positive or negative way. What is more, the future that Japanese politicians envisage consists of a Japan united by “Japaneseness”, which excludes members of other ethnic groups, even if it tolerates them at some level. This unique sense of belonging to one nation is rooted in ancient chronicles,

⁵ WiseGEEK, [online] <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-modern-mythology.htm> [viewed on 10 January 2015].

⁶ A. J. Eckstein, *Japan's National Identity: Nationalist or Not?*, [online] <http://www.lehigh.edu/rfw1/public/www-data/courses/1999/spring/ir163/Papers/pdf/aje3.pdf> [viewed on 10 January 2015].

Shintō revival thought, the *Kokugaku* school and of course WWII. Few authors explicitly state that “Japanese people possesses the nationalistic view of their country psychologically and socioculturally. However, the general public is not aware that their practice and beliefs in society are in fact nationalistic in the eyes of outsiders.”⁷ But since “nationalism” has some negative connotations with WWII atrocities, it usually is avoided. Instead politicians like Ishihara postulate *aikoku*, “love for the country”, patriotism compared to the love one has for one’s own family.

Kojiki and *Nihongi*, the oldest chronicles of Japan, compiled in the early 8th century, both present, albeit in a slightly different way,⁸ the story of how the Japanese Archipelago was born. After a few generations of gods, finally the pair of primeval creators appeared – Izanagi and his female counterpart Izanami. They gave birth to the Japanese landscape and *universum*, but in the end this procreation led to Izanami’s demise during childbirth. Furious Izanagi killed the child, a god of fire, but Izanami was bound to the Otherworld nevertheless. After the unsuccessful rescue and separation of the divine pair, Izanagi had to purify himself from the remnants of the Land of Darkness where his wife stayed. His ablution took place under a waterfall and during this process new gods were born: Amaterasu, Goddess of the Sun – from his left eye, Tsukiyomi, the soon-to-be-forgotten God of the Moon – from his right eye, and Susanōō, God of the Winds – from blowing his nose. The taboo of pollution (both ritual and physical), strongly stressed in Shintō, is present even in everyday life today. Before entering any sacred place, visitors have to clean their hands and mouth with fresh, running water.⁹ However, this purity taboo can still be witnessed in the “clean blood” belief, a conviction that only the blood of Japanese is pure, as the Japanese race itself, and foreigners’ blood is “dirty”.

⁷ M. Takeuchi, *The Reinforcement of Cultural Nationalism in Japan: An Investigation of Japaneseness and “the Notebook for the Heart”*, Kamloops, British Columbia 2006, p. 4.

⁸ The discrepancy comes from the different teams that were in charge of writing the chronicles. There were two teams displaying influences from Korean kingdoms of Baekje and Silla. *Nihongi*, the later chronicle, finished in 720, written in classical Chinese, incorporates Daoistic and continental beliefs even in such simple myth as the creation of the world.

⁹ This takes place at the small pavilion with basin filled with running water, called *temizuya* (or *chōzuya*). The rite represents a symbolic purification before entering a sacred space. Usually the basin is accompanied by the statue of a dragon, which stands for the water element in traditional Chinese mythology. Even more interestingly, dragons are also connected to the Japanese Imperial Household, since in the mythology, the daughters of the Dragon King, living deep in the ocean, became consorts of one Emperor.

From the aforementioned divine triad, only one deity has been incorporated into the official, imperial mythology, namely Amaterasu.

There is a paramount belief in the Goddess Amaterasu existing since the oldest days in Japanese mythical world. Traditionally ascribed as her divine descendant, Jimmu founded the country of Yamato – the core from which Japan evolved. The day of this happening, 11th February,¹⁰ is now celebrated in Japan as the Foundation Day (*Kenkoku Kinen no Hi*). The date, devised according to the traditional Chinese calendar (counting back a few 60-years cycles from around the year 601), is intended to show the neighbours and the whole region the antiquity of Imperial reign, which for centuries was not even imperial at all. This stratagem of little political character was only possible after Yamato established itself as a nation based on law in 702. Then Japan started to reinvent its own history and even myths in order to guard the sovereignty of one line of rulers over other clans, also aspiring for power. During the pre-war period (since Meiji) a traditional calendar was used, starting from 660 BC, and this date was widely recognised as the truth. What *Kojiki* was saying then were not myths, but historical facts. But what makes this even more interesting is the presence of this date in contemporary discourse as well.

As Russell Kirkland argues, Amaterasu suddenly appeared in the mythology, and the belief that she has been worshipped in the Grand Ise Shrine from times immemorial is erroneous. He bases his research on comparing a few versions of the same myth as present in both *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, and then weighing them against other sources. As a result, it becomes evident that Amaterasu only emerged as a divine figure around 673, when Temmu became the Emperor.¹¹ What is more, the Grand Shrine of Ise never worshipped Amaterasu before that date and the oldest sources give no clue as to the main deity there. He quotes a Japanese scholar, who writes about the royal descent myth that: “[All] of them, and especially myths, were not archaic traditions handed down among common people but were fabricated by court intellectuals in order to establish the eternal legitimacy of the imperial household to rule over the land of Japan.”¹² How pervasive those traditions were, was proved by propaganda during WWII. Seventy years later it seems that national sentiments have found their way from obscurity to political chambers and television.

¹⁰ According to myths, Jimmu founded Yamato on 11 February 660 BC. This date is historically impossible though, since the inhabitants of the Archipelago were basically pre-Bronze age hunters-gatherers, with few permanent settlements.

¹¹ R. Kirkland, *The Sun and the Throne. The Origins of the Royal Descend Myth in Ancient Japan*, “Numen” 1997, Vol. 44, Fasc. 2, p. 139.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 124.

Kokugaku was an intellectual movement trying to purify Japanese tradition, polluted by alien ideas and thoughts. Motoori Norinaga, one of the most prominent scholars of the 18th century, undertook the enormous task of re-reading and explaining the *Kojiki*, the oldest extant chronicle of Japan. In it he wanted to find the Japan that had been lost, to turn back the time and return to the age when gods lived with the human population. He turned to both the oldest chronicle and to the first imperial anthology of poetry – *Man'yōshū*. His commentary on the *Kojiki* served as the basis for the later development of the “State Shintō” (*kokka shintō*) in the Meiji period. As Klaus Antoni points out accurately: “for State Shintō, having been based on the idea of a homogenous Japanese family state understood as *shinkoku* the ‘country of the gods’ with a deified emperor as its head, the illusion of a monogenetic foundation through Jinmu tennō never became obscure.”¹³ Motoori Norinaga wanted to discover the pure Japanese ideals and motifs, unpolluted by foreign influence. Since his time, and especially from the Meiji period, ancient texts started to be treated with an almost religious reverence. The modern anthem of Japan (*Kimigayo*) is a poem from the 10th century and has slightly negative image nowadays. It reads:

Thousands of years of happy reign be thine;
 Rule on, my lord, until what are pebbles now
 By ages united to mighty rocks shall grow
 Whose venerable sides the moss doth line.¹⁴

The presence of the Emperor figure is quite obvious here, but there might be a little more mythological imagery in it. There is a motif of pebbles turning to rocks (in the original as well: *sazare-ishi no / iwao to narite*) and there is one myth with explicit connections to rocks. Ninigi, the great-grandson of Amaterasu, one day met a beautiful girl named Konohana and asked her father, a mountain god, for permission to marry her. The father wanted Ninigi to marry his other daughter, Iwanaga, but Ninigi refused. Embittered and rejected, Iwanaga cursed the future line of Ninigi – had he married her, their line would be as everlasting as the rocks. Instead, human life is as short as the cherry blossoms (Konohana’s full name is *Konohananosakuya-hime*, Cherry Blossom

¹³ A. Klaus, *Creating a Sacred Narrative: Kojiki Studies and Shintō Nationalism*, Lecture given at the Conference Shintō Studies and Nationalism, September 12–14, 2007, Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna) and the Seminar Modern East Asia, Columbia University (New York), February 8, 2008. In print.

¹⁴ Translation by B. H. Chamberlain, [in:] P. K. Pradyumna, *Japan in the 21st Century: Environment, Economy, and Society*, Lexington, Kentucky 2010, p. 298.

Princess). Comparing the imperial reign to ‘mighty rocks’ might be treated as a counter-spell to this ancient myth. What is more – in the original (absent in Chamberlain’s translation), there is a phrase *yachiyo ni* meaning “eight thousands generations”. Izanami and Izanagi were the eight generation of gods. “Eight” appears four times in the nuptial poem of god Susanōō (“*Yakumo tatsu / Izumo yaegaki / Tsuma-gomi ni / Yaegaki tsukuru / Sono yaegaki wo*”¹⁵) in the meaning of “many”. The repetitions in this poem clearly serve as a protection spell. Susanōō has slain a serpent that had eight heads and eight tails. In the early Shōwa period the phrase *hakkō ichi-u* (Whole World Under One Roof – the translation is not literal and also contained a number ‘eight’ in it) was used in fascist propaganda, legitimising the occupation and military aggression. To quote how *hakkō ichi-u* was implemented, I will use the transcript from the Judgment of International Military Tribunal for the Far East after WWII:

In 1924 a book was published by a Dr. Okawa who was originally one of the accused but who became mentally unstable in the course of the trial. He stated that, since Japan was the first state to be created, it was therefore Japan’s divine mission to rule all nations. He advocated the Japanese occupation of Siberia and the South Sea Islands. In 1925 and thereafter, he predicted a war between East and West, in which Japan would be the champion of the East. He said, in 1925, that Japan should endeavour to fulfill that sublime mission by developing a strong moralistic spirit.¹⁶

The number “eight” has a clear connection to both the gods and the imperial tradition despite its earlier meaning of just “many”.

Kamata Tōji points out one interesting fact regarding both *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*. He writes that “in *Izumo fudoki*,¹⁷ contrary to the creation of land by Izanami and Izanagi as in the chronicles, there is a different myth – that of land pulling.”¹⁸ He adds that the whole region of Izumo was once connected to the Korean Peninsula and was separated from it during this act of *kunihiki*.

¹⁵ R. E. Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles: The Tales of Muju Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism*, Albany, New York 1985, p. 318.

¹⁶ Judgment of International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Chapter IV The Military Domination of Japan and Preparations for War, [online] <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/PTO/IMTFE/IMTFE-4.html> [viewed on 22 December 2014].

¹⁷ *Fudoki* are ancient records of provincial topography, tradition, mythology, history, etc. that were compiled under the imperial order in 8th century. Only *fudoki* from Izumo are complete, other four that exist to this day (Harima, Hitachi, Hizen and Bungo) remain incomplete.

¹⁸ T. Kamata, 「現代に生きる日本神話」 *Japanese Myth in Contemporary Japanese Society*, [online] http://mii-art-r.com/document_kamata2.html [viewed on 22 December 2014]. Translation my own.

The Izumo region was always the most problematic for the ancient Japanese state makers – it was different and stubborn, resisting incorporation into the Japan that was taking shape. This is probably one of the echoes that returned even though probably all state officials were unaware of it, when Japan incorporated the Ryūkyū archipelago in Meiji era, and started suppressing the Ainu people on Hokkaidō. The idea of any heterogeneous element in the country at that very sensitive moment, both politically and historically, was feared and dealt with swiftly.

Amaterasu is the divine ancestor of the Imperial Household and her figure, adorned with sun rays, as she steps out of the cave, is one of the most iconic images in Japan. Those sun rays emanating from the goddess were incorporated in the Meiji period into the official flag of the Japanese Imperial Army and as a naval ensign in 1870 and 1889 respectively. This flag, a red circle with red sun rays around (called *kyokujitsuki*), symbolised Japan as the Land of the Rising Sun. It still remains a symbol of the atrocities committed by the Japanese Army during WWII against neighbouring countries, especially South Korea and China. After Japan's defeat in 1945, the national flag was reduced to a mere red circle on a white background (called *hinomaru*). However, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force still uses the same design, only shifted slightly to the left. *Kyokujitsuki* is used on various occasions, especially during sporting events (however this is always met with mixed feelings) and of course by nationalists. It appeared on the *hachimaki*, bandana-type stripe of fabric worn as a headband by *kamikaze* pilots during WWII. As an Imperial symbol, it represented the unity of pilots with the nation. The moment they fastened it around their heads, their personal life disappeared and they became part of the *kokutai*, a living organism that was Japan. Sun rays represent Amaterasu; she is the ancestor of the Emperor and even though the Constitution of 1947 states that the Emperor is only a human and not a living god, nationalists disregard this statement as being imposed by occupying forces. Using *kyokujitsuki* is also a display of abhorrence towards the course of modern life in Japan, and nationalists often glorify the Meiji period as a period when Japan was strong, independent and treated with respect by foreign countries. The sun-rayed flag is a symbol of the country's divine origins and strength of the nation as well.

Divine descendants founded a nation, Yamato. The beginnings of the state were not as peaceful and smooth as the ancient chronicles would have us believe. They were bloody, full of treason and the slaughter of stubborn tribes that did not want to yield to the Yamato tribe.¹⁹ From this emerged the people

¹⁹ Ironically, *yamato* is written in kanji meaning “great peace/harmony”.

of Japan. But the word *yamato* did not vanish even when the country adopted a new name, Nihon. The most famous hero of Japanese myths is called Yamato-takeru (The Brave from Yamato) who is known for subduing the Kumaso people (the mythological beasts, Others, non human creatures sometimes referred to as “earth spiders”, *tsuchigumo*). A more recent appearance of it is in the *yamato damashii* – the “Japanese spirit” concept, created in the Heian period (794–1185), but extensively used in the Meiji period and decades leading to WWII. It is still propagandised by nationalists as the unbending and unyielding spirit of the Japanese people – it is:

[...] an inherent faculty of common-sense wisdom, resourcefulness, and prudent judgment that is characteristic of, and unique to, the Japanese people. It also refers to a practical, “real life” ability and intelligence that is in contrast with scholarship and knowledge acquired through formal education. It is a term used to express such ideas as the essential purity and resolute spirit of the Japanese people, the wish for the peace and security of the nation, and the possession of a strong spirit and emotion that will meet any challenge, even at the expense of one’s own life.²⁰

In short – *yamato damashii* represents the pure Japaneseness that Motoori Norinaga had dreamed of. It stands against foreign influence such as Chinese thought and nationalists use it in their rhetoric targeting the Western culture in Japan.

Another use of *yamato* is in the name of the most famous battleship of WWII, namely the Battleship Yamato of the Yamato class. Her tragic fate is still remembered in Japan and the silhouette of this battleship on the waves of the ocean setting sail on her last mission is one of the groups of nationalistic imagery. The fact that she was sunk by American forces taking down most of her crew is the epitome of bravery, and the impending doom of the Japanese Empire as well. Sunao Tsuboi, an A-bomb survivor expressed the sentiment of all Japanese when he said that “I used to be a pro-military boy who believed Japan would never lose as long as we had the Yamato.”²¹ The battleship remains a symbol of Japan’s spirit to this day.

When WWII ended, the Allies began their occupation of Japan, during which the country almost reinvented itself. The Emperor was no longer a living god. The country had no army (only Self-Defence Forces). War criminals

²⁰ *Yamato damashii* on Encyclopedia of Shintō: <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1236> [viewed on 15 January 2015].

²¹ A-bomb exhibit at Nevada Testing Museum proves to be an eye-opener, [online] <http://www.apfn.net/messageboard/08-10-06/discussion.cgi.64.html> [viewed on 2 January 2015].

were tried, judged and either executed or put to jail. Democracy arrived in Japan for good. However, this soon started to unfold in many unpleasant ways. At the very beginning of the Meiji period a shrine was erected by Imperial decree. Since Shintō has been taken under the state's patronage, it was also funded by the state. This shrine in Tōkyō – Yasukuni – combines both the mythological elements of spirits of the dead and a nationalistic agenda. There are numerous occasions on which Prime Ministers visited the shrine, despite it is still being frowned upon by neighbouring countries and even some circles in Japan. Yasukuni is not an easy case. After her demise, Izanami went to the Netherworld as is the fate of every one. However, people who died a sudden death, cannot leave this world because they still have unfinished business here. This abrupt end caught them unprepared and usually people who died for the country are also classified as those souls that cannot part from this world. Yasukuni venerates the souls of people who lost their lives in the name of the country, both civilians and military. The problem lies with the seven people whose memory is also celebrated there – seven convicted war criminals. Visits made by private people, survivors and families of fallen soldiers are not the main problem. But when a Prime Minister²² or any other official pays a visit, this is perceived as an insult towards every country that suffered at the hands of the Imperial Army.

The last three decades show signs that nationalistic tendencies in Japan are on the rise. The 1990's are called "the lost decade" and the country has been in an economical slump since then. This has led to frustration and retrospection towards the glorious past when the nation was respected and strong. Of course, this may provoke the alienation and hostility of any foreign element as they may be perceived as a form of disruption. The Japanese like to believe in the "myth of a monoethnic Japan". It is not rare to read or hear that Japan is a homogenous country, but the truth is far from it. Japan is not a multicultural state and chances are it never will be, but a significant 2% of the population are ethnically different from the Japanese. Alongside this modern monoethnic myth developed another one – the myth of WWII. Every year brings another attempt at whitewashing history, especially WWII and Japan's role in the "Pacific theatre". Some go as far as to turn Japan into a victim of WWII and not the aggressor. According to Kobayashi Yasunori, the Japanese Army did not invade the countries of Asia, but liberated them from the oppressive colonial rule of Western countries. The Nanking Massacre is just a rumour fabricated by US,

²² Koizumi Jun'ichirō was the most notorious Prime Minister of the last 15 years. He visited Yasukuni six times officially.

and the infamous *comfort women* were in reality volunteers.²³ Kobayashi is the author of the *Gōmanism sengen* manga, one of the many revisionist approaches to history, creating his own myths of a misunderstood and wrongfully accused Japan. His blatant denial of what happened during WWII is met with mixed reactions. Some start a discussion with him, yet others, like one young person in 2001, say that “this cartoon was saying exactly what we were all feeling back then. The manga was addressing matters that many Japanese people have simply been avoiding, like we’ve been putting a lid over something smelly. I just felt it said things that needed to be said.”²⁴

The last of the modern myths, born out of the militarisation preceding 1945, gave way to the *Nihonjinron*, roughly translated as the “theory of Japaneseness”. The conviction that Japan was chosen by the gods to unify the whole East Asia and create a sphere of prosperity, stemming from the simple myth, was strong enough to permeate later in the post-war years. Japan was born from the gods and therefore it is unique. Befu Harumi states that:

[...] what is at issue is the invincible *belief in* that uniqueness and the claiming of uniqueness in the *Nihonjinron* discourse. [...] Comprehension of these unique features supposedly requires not rational or logical understanding, but an intuitive insight into Japanese culture that only natives can achieve. Thus foreigners are defined as incapable of understanding the essence of Japanese culture. [...] The notion that foreigners could fully comprehend Japanese culture and therefore act and behave like any Japanese threatens their ethnic and national integrity.²⁵

Nihonjinron discourse is, in most cases a dilettante dispute, delving into tiny bits of Japanese culture while explaining why it is so unique and better than every other country’s culture.

Nationalism in Japan borrows heavily from mythology, albeit most of the symbols are distorted and covered in other images. The most persistent myth that is still alive in the nationalistic thought is the myth of Japanese uniqueness. This is based on the myth of divine ancestors of the Imperial family and, by the extension, of the whole of Japan. Elements of traditional beliefs are still present – the mythological motifs (sun rays, *torii* gate, *yamato* notion, ritual

²³ E. Reese, *Right Wing Rising. Japanese Nationalists Use Comics, Film, Punk Rock to Recruit Youth*, [online] <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/07/10/MN211532.DTL#ixzz0oqcXTkWF> [viewed on 12 December 2014].

²⁴ H. W. French, *Japan’s Resurgent Far Right Tinkers With History*, [online] <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/25/world/25JAPA.html?ex=1137042000&en=97ea6fa8833d1189-&ei=5070> [viewed on 15 January 2015].

²⁵ In: M. Takeuchi, op. cit., pp. 7–8.

purity) used in everyday life. Some people use them as just daily props, but for some right-wing oriented individuals and groups, they have become the indispensable paraphernalia of their own beliefs. Mythology is still alive in Japan.

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