

Article

Creating Modern Japanese Subjects: Morning Rituals from *Norito* to News and Weather

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Abstract: This original research on Restoration Shinto *Norito* seeks to explain the rhetorical devices used in the composition of a morning prayer ritual text. The nativist scholar, Hirata Atsutane, crafted this ritual to create a Japanese imperial subject with a particular understanding of native identity and national unity, appropriate to the context of a Japan in the shadow of impending modernity and fear of Western domination. The conclusions drawn concerning Hirata's rhetoric are meant to inform our understanding of the technique and power of the contemporary Japanese morning television viewing ritual used to create post-modern Japanese citizens with an identity and unity appropriate to a global secular context.

Keywords: Hirata Atsutane; Restoration Shinto; religious ritual; *Norito*; modernity; identity construction; NHK

1. Introduction

This article is an attempt to explicate modern Japanese identity by examining in detail a Shinto morning *Norito*, a prayer ritual that originated in the 19th century just a few decades before the vaunted modernization and Westernization that occurred after American ships forced the opening of Japan in 1854. Morning prayer rituals are still conducted today by practitioners of the several forms of Japanese Buddhism, Shinto, and New Religions; of course, the complexity and level of focus and dedication depend upon the individual practitioner, as well as the demands of the tradition being practiced. However, both the cognitive and affective ways that the ritual works internally on the practitioner should remain constant with the process to be explained within, crossing tradition and time. A second goal of this paper is to raise interest and suggest analogies to unrecognized secular rituals that reinforce identity and create unity among millions of Japanese who are not consciously performing religious rituals meant to define them and bind them to a particular group. Although media and level of religious commitment do differ between pre-modern and post-modern examples of morning ritual in Japanese culture, the production of identity and unity are similarly achieved.

Every morning, millions of Japanese wake up early to prepare and/or eat breakfast, perhaps coffee and a pastry for the working men and women on the go. Most likely they turn on NHK, the state sponsored public broadcasting television network for five minutes of news at the top of the hour.¹ More often than not they hear short reports concerning the latest government policies, disasters man-made or natural, and perhaps the achievements of Japanese athletes in the international sports

¹ NHK stand for Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, Japan Broadcasting Corporation, which was originally modeled on the BBC when it was created in the 1920s. It is publicly funded, but its management is appointed by the Japanese government and has public responsibilities spelled out by charter. It has sometimes been criticized for not being a neutral critic of the Japanese government.

arenas. They hear the latest weather forecast to tell them whether to wear coats or carry umbrellas, and there is a short report on the condition of the financial markets and the international value of the yen.

More important for this essay's suggestions about secular ritual concerning NHK in the morning is the 15-minute daily installment of a six-month, approximately 150-episode *renzoku terebi shôsetsu*, or *asadora*, that is, a serial morning drama usually featuring the struggles and successes of young women learning how to take on adult roles in a traditional yet changing Japanese society. This program began in 1961 and is broadcast from Monday through Saturday at 8:00 to 8:15 every morning, and repeated at 12:45 to 1:00 in the afternoon. According to Japanese rating services, they are usually the most popular morning viewing option and the main reason for tuning in to NHK in advance to get the daily news and weather. These serial dramas are often based on semi-historical figures, or else feature traditional occupations or social roles, while the settings for the dramas are rotated around the 48 political districts of the Japanese islands.

For example, a recent morning series featured a young woman from Yamanashi prefecture in Eastern Japan, who was modeled on the real-life woman who translated *Anne of Green Gables* into Japanese, which has become a staple, if not a classic, in young adult women's literature in Japan. This morning series was set in the first half of the 20th century and included scenes of Japanese civilian life during the Second World War. The series advanced standard opinions of the tragedy of war for the Japanese populace and reinforced traditional values of individual perseverance, while attempting to show the importance of balance between personal striving and family devotion. A more recent *renzoku terebi shôsetsu* featured a young woman from Ishikawa prefecture, a western district bordering the Sea of Japan, who dreamed of becoming a pastry chef; that is, finding a place for females in a traditionally male-dominated profession. This series was set in contemporary times and it too was intended to demonstrate the difficulty of navigating individual desires that conflict with traditional obligations to family or other social groups.² However, it not only demonstrated modern difficulties with tradition and change, it also modeled successful attempts to satisfy Japanese tradition values while allowing for change.

The most famous example of this *renzoku terebi shôsetsu* was the 1983–1984 year-long series titled *O-Shin*. *O-Shin* was loosely based on the life story of an actual historical female supermarket entrepreneur. The eponymously titled series chronicled the life of a country girl from an impoverished tenant farm family. Born into a life of poverty at the turn of the 20th century, O-Shin's starving parents basically sold her into indentured servitude for a bag of rice. However, O-Shin proved to have the strength of character to survive hardship and mistreatment, educate herself, achieve wealth, and raise a family, often as a single parent. In essence, the character O-Shin herself stood for modern Japan. Escaping the relative poverty and hardship characterizing 19th-century Japan, O-Shin learned that perseverance and sincerity were the traditional values needed to survive the Tokyo earthquake of 1923, the tragedies of the Second World War (while always displaying the attitudes of a pacifist), and then painstakingly build a successful chain of supermarkets that are known not so much for their profitability, but rather their commitment to serving and pleasing the public. In short, the identity modeled by O-Shin was NHK's conception of the ideal identity of Japan, both enduring the tragedies of the first half of the 20th century and enjoying the economic successes of the second half of the 20th century.³

The appeal of the *renzoku terebi shôsetsu* is the cause of the modern morning ritual that reinforces a version of Japanese identity. However, while the show is the magnetic core that attracts millions of

² This conflict between *giri* and *ninjô*, duty and personal desire, has been the starting point for dramatic narrative in traditional Japanese literature and theater for centuries.

³ This is of course a simplified explanation of *O-Shin*; however, a more detailed description would show much deeper connections to Japanese conceptions of themselves and their nation. *O-Shin* was the most popular series with a consistent TV rating of over 50% of the Japanese viewing audience. It holds the record high rating for a single episode reaching over 60% of the morning audience, and it has been translated and viewed by audiences all over the world.

viewers daily, the viewers are also then subjected to other secular ritual offerings that surround the serial drama. The audience is mainly composed of Japanese housewives preparing their families for their various outside activities, but it does also include, and certainly affect, the men and children of the household. While the serial drama provides traditional lessons on Japanese identity, the news and weather programs before and after the 15-minute morning drama, provide information that brings about a uniformity of action and opinion for that particular day for those millions of Japanese viewers and their families.

The rest of NHK's broadcasting line-up is also unquestionably dedicated, and the station is officially chartered to feature programming that should appeal to the general Japanese citizenry. Their daily line-up of shows introduces and displays Japanese current events, as well as historical and cultural offerings for the education and entertainment of the viewing public. NHK does this through broadcasts of weekly period dramas, frequent documentaries about traditional arts and activities, current events programs, live diet debates, international sporting events, biennial high school baseball tournaments, bi-monthly 15-day Sumo wrestling tournaments, classical music concerts, folk song contests, as well as frequent news reports that include financial information and detailed up-to-the-minute weather updates.

I suggest that the repetition of NHK television images in the morning, in particular the viewing of the *renzoku terebi shôsetsu*, constitutes a secular morning ritual, analogous to a religious morning prayer ritual that not only binds the Japanese viewing public in a shared vision of reality, but also places them in traditional relationships to nature, the nation, the land, the government, business, the general public, and the "Japanese tradition", changing though it is. To understand how this daily ritual of television viewing can create a secular Japanese citizen in the 21st century, I offer an analysis of a Shinto morning prayer ritual, first practiced in the 19th century, but which was modeled on prayer rituals that were practiced centuries earlier, and whose structure still resounds in contemporary Japanese prayer rituals in practice today. The very devices explained in the following analysis and their functions of producing a Japanese subject, should be informative for comparing and contrasting the devices and the functions of NHK morning television viewing ritual.

2. Creating the Japanese Subject

The following analysis offers a new understanding of the 19th century Japanese religious ritual entitled *Maichô shinpai shiki*, written by the "national learning"⁴ scholar, Hirata Atsutane, while it models a method for analyzing the inner workings of one particular Japanese ritual text, which I believe can be fruitfully applied to the understanding of contemporary morning prayer rituals as well as secular ritual. For the sake of convenience, I will translate Hirata's ritual text as *Morning Worship Prayers* [1]. It will be asserted herein that this ritual text is an example of 19th century Japanese nativist rhetoric in action, and that it was intentionally crafted in order to work in rhetorical fashion.⁵ By "work in a rhetorical fashion", I mean that it had an "explanatory affect", so that by some various modes of persuasion and by the attendant modes of understanding consistent with such persuasion, this ritual made sense to the practitioners. That is, it was purposefully constructed to create, maintain, and reinforce a religious understanding of the cosmos and the practitioners' role and orientation in that cosmos [2–5].

⁴ Hirata Atsutane's (1776–1843) importance to the Western academy has fluctuated, but at times he has been recognized as a restoration Shinto fanatic whose writings were one of the most important sources for the Japanese nationalist rhetoric that led to the tragedies of the Pacific War. He is usually given a prominent position in the early modern Japanese movement called *kokugaku*. *Kokugaku* is often rendered "national learning" in English, which is a direct translation of the two Chinese ideographs of which it is composed. However, it is sometimes translated as "nativism" as discussed in historical treatments of 19th-century American "native" reaction to more recent immigrants from Europe. In essence, in its Japanese form it was a movement aimed at recovering an original Japanese culture free from foreign influence.

⁵ Hirata, of course, also claimed that the ritual worked miraculously or magically, that is, in a more traditional religious fashion, as it was intended as a worship service for the various Japanese gods (*kami*) included within the text.

There is an important rational and utilitarian aspect to this ritual, which is often overlooked by mistaking it for an exotic list of 28 simple verses of praise and entreaty encompassing a widely diverse subject matter loosely associated with a Japanese Shinto-style pantheon.⁶ This assertion that Hirata's construction of a native Japanese religion is to an overwhelming degree rational and "cognitively responsible", especially when considering the main corpus of his writings, would not be without disputants, being that "rationality" has often been narrowly defined by establishing a universal Western concept of "Reason" as the ultimate authority to which one must submit in order to be rational.⁷ I use the word "rational" in this case study to mean simply a consistent systematic means-to-an-end way of thinking by which different people employing this same thought system would usually reach the same conclusions. Thus, the term "rational" becomes contextually and historically determined, and rescues the reader from a Western-biased orientalist evaluation of the systematically logical but "irrational" thought systems of past and present foreign cultures.

Even if this use of the word "rational" is allowed, my assertion that this simple list of prayers to assorted Japanese gods (*kami*), the *Morning Worship Prayers*, has a cognitively responsible explanatory affect for the practitioner, is by no means obvious.⁸ The explanatory techniques and the strengths and weaknesses of several different types of narratives have been often studied and analyzed; however, less familiar to us are the techniques and trajectories by which seemingly simple lists or inventories become vehicles of explanatory affect and persuasion, particularly when they are used in religious rituals. This study will be concerned with the rhetorical strategies that have determined the order of this list.

In order for a list to become a meaningful and effective explanation, the contents of the list, and in this case a particular version of the myths and history surrounding those contents, must be familiar to the practitioner. Yet, mere familiarity with certain stories is insufficient for explanatory affect. These stories must be made intimately familiar, attractive, and pertinent to the daily life of the practitioner. In other words, this ritual becomes more effective if the practitioner is made to believe himself to be a participant in Japanese mythology. Furthermore, in order to understand the effect of this list, we must remember the setting and the act. It must be emphasized that the list is being performed in a practitioner's home in a ritual that serves to worship deities invoked in that practitioner's home. Obviously, since participation in the enactment aids in the establishment of the explanatory affect, it will therefore be important to analyze Japanese mythological themes and models of participation in, and relationship with, the divinity invoked in the ritual.

Lastly, this analysis will also include discussion of the explanatory effect of this list that is facilitated by troping strategies of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. Significantly, this use of tropes and the transfers of meaning that they facilitate in this ritual are not peculiar to Hirata and his writings. They are familiar Japanese tropes that have pre-critical acceptance, thereby lending credence and power to the explanatory effect of this ritual troping.⁹

3. The Ritual

Hirata's *Norito* text acts in part as an instruction manual for a short, 28-step, daily morning ritual of purification and prayer. This manual explains exactly what, according to the author, a proper Japanese person should do every day in order to conform to and benefit from his new theological instruction, and Hirata claimed that he himself performed this ritual on a daily basis. Instead of

⁶ The specific definition of ritual used herein is "work done at the behest of and under instruction from spirits, gods, or powers, and it is work that has efficacy in its performance" ([6], p. vii).

⁷ Hirata's investigations into spirit possession, past life experiences, and his speculation concerning the other world have prompted some to question his commitment to Western-style rational thinking [7–12].

⁸ For extended discussion on rational choice theory in religious studies see ([13]; [14] pp. 12–13).

⁹ "Hence, ritual acts must be understood within a semantic framework whereby the significance of an action is dependent upon its place and relationship within a context of all other ways of acting: what it echoes, what it inverts, what it alludes to, what it denies." ([2], p. 220).

his usual theorizing and pontificating at great length, in this work, we have plain and simple ritual instruction.¹⁰ The major religious claim for this ritual is that proper performance by its Japanese participants would “incorporate” Hirata’s version of Japanese native mythology within them. In so doing, the ritual traces the lineage of the progenitors of the Japanese people, the emperors and the court nobility. It is the biological, genealogical relationship between those superiors and the rest of the Japanese people that was to become embodied within the practitioner. The ritual also indicates, in general terms, what is expected of both superior and subject in this relationship. The ritual creates a bond between emperor and subject by creating a corporate structure, so to speak, so that all Japanese people have a role to play in a divine mythology—a role that not only requires an investment of spiritual capital on the part of the people, but that also pays dividends in this life and in the eternal Japanese afterlife [17].

In Hirata’s nativist mythology, submission to the emperor is not a matter of sacrifice in the sense of giving what is dearest, perhaps one’s life, for divine approval or salvation. It is not the act of an inferior who merely recognizes his or her lowly status in the divine or natural hierarchy. However, it is also not a first step in a natural process, by which one betters one’s teleological and soteriological accounts. Though at times it may have taken on aspects of the above-mentioned relationships with divinity, it is ultimately an exchange of humanity for divinity. If understood in that sense, it is a deal too good to pass up; that is, if one is Japanese, and if one accepts the cosmos as Hirata describes it. If that is the case, then this one simple ritual can create sacred identity for eternity.

The vital question is how this ritual accomplished this exchange whereby all Japanese can profit. Is there supposed to be a divine and miraculous efficacious formula in these words or is it something else? The answer to this question is that although Hirata’s Japanese nativists are known for believing in the power of the spirit of certain sounds/words, there is some greater mythological process that this ritual causes one to recognize, or better yet, to “re-cognize”.¹¹ Another reason to believe that it is not the power of the ritual words alone that bestow divinity are Hirata’s comments in the postscript to this ritual, which state that one can substitute different methods and different words for one’s own morning prayer ritual ([1], p. 9). Therefore, the answer to the question as to why the ritual works is to be found in the understanding by Hirata that divinity has always been available to those Japanese who can realize who and what they truly are. The ritual therefore serves to create or solidify recognition of Japanese subjectivity that includes divinity not available to any other peoples of the world.

This declaration of a historical and mythological foundation to the divinity of all Japanese people begs the question why this ritual is necessary if the Japanese truly have divinity as their birthright. One answer to this lies in Jonathan Z. Smith’s “The Bare Facts of Ritual” wherein Smith asserts that ritual reveals a tension between the perfect world and the real world [19]. This particular understanding of ritual is instructive in the case of Hirata’s morning prayers. That is, this ritual would not be necessary if the emperor were exalted as Hirata believed he had been in the past, and if the Japanese people had already claimed their birthright of divinity.

According to Hirata, the perfect world of the Japanese once existed. It did not still, or yet, exist in the Japan of his day, but it had existed in the past. This nostalgic theory of a Japanese paradise had been proven to Hirata’s satisfaction by a nativist scholar from the previous generation, Motoori Norinaga [20].¹² Hirata claimed that Motoori’s philological researches in the ancient Japanese classics had first revealed some survivals of the pure Japanese native, and from these survivals Hirata believed

¹⁰ According to Hirata, a proper Japanese person worships only Japanese *kami*, and not Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or any gods brought to Japan as part of a foreign religious system of worship. Hirata devoted works to debunking the historicity of Buddhist claims, and also in those works described a theory whereby people should rightly follow religious teaching that grow out of their own native soils. Therefore the very fact that a religion originated in China or India made it unsuitable for the Japanese people [15,16].

¹¹ Symbols can also be important parts of religious exchanges in a “spiritual” economy [18].

¹² Motoori Norinaga (1733–1801) is by many accounts the greatest nativist scholar in Japanese history and the most admired by Hirata.

he was able to discern the *Ur*-Japanese, the ones that did not exist in his time, but that had to have existed in the beginning of time. What those *Ur*-Japanese had that Hirata's present Japanese did not have, was purity, which he understood to be a precondition for their divinity. In order to regain this lost divinity, the Japanese had to re-achieve or recover this purity. They did not have to return to the exact same state of technology or economy as the Japanese of the past, nor did they have to lose their history. They merely had to remove the impurities that they had imported over the centuries since the Age of the Gods in Japanese mythology.

The physical sources of these impurities that Hirata has listed off and railed against in many different works were, namely, India and China. These foreign lands and cultures bear the brunt of the negative Japanese nativist rhetoric as did the Irish Catholic papists and the treaty-breaking whites in the Anglo-American and Native American instances of nativism. The enemies in Hirata's case were not so much the actual peoples of these places, but more importantly, their cultures that had infiltrated and "defiled" pure Japanese native culture—a process that many other Japanese intellectuals both past and present had touted as progress and the advancement of Japanese civilization. Thus, the two main impurities that stripped the Japanese of their divinity could generally be designated Buddhism and Confucianism.

It would be difficult for most people, contemporary Japanese included, to imagine a Japan of any historical period without Buddhism or Confucianism composing a substantial portion of the culture of the period, not to mention the ethical make-up of every individual Japanese subject in that period. That, in particular, is why Hirata had to rely on a purportedly historical, yet necessarily mythological narrative in order to reconstruct a mythic world of Japan in a time before recorded contact; that is, in the time of the perfect world. That reconstruction of his perfect Japan would lead him to call for an Eliadean daily ritual re-enactment performed by each individual Japanese subject.

The mythology given in the *Kojiki* (712 C.E.) and the *Nihongi* (720 C.E.) chronicles a descent of Ninigi the heavenly grandchild to the islands of Japan [21,22]. The narratives emphasize that the divine descendant from heaven brought divine food, rice, to the land of Japan, but in Hirata's ritual the most important thing the god Ninigi brought was the purity associated with his divinity. The other bearers of this purity are by Hirata's definition those touting their imperial lineage, they are the descendants of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, who was born from a ritual of purification performed by her father Izanagi following the corruption caused by the death of his wife. Hirata claimed that the Japanese people are related to these ancient Japanese *kami* in an unbroken chain of genealogical descent. No other humans besides the Japanese are said to have this divine connection, thus, according to Hirata, there could be no other claimants for this purity and the pursuant divinity. Therefore it followed that to devote oneself to cultures that lacked this divine origin and accompanying purity, as the Japanese Buddhists and the "Sinophiles" did, was, in Hirata's opinion, an abhorrent and unacceptable situation not only for himself, but also for the Japanese nation.

Although divinity was a birthright of the Japanese, according to Hirata, it still had to be claimed, and the claim was to be made through his ritual. In Japanese religious practice, *kami* (along with *tama*, divine spirits) are divine entities that must be ritually fixed in sacred spaces before they can be worshiped.¹³ Once that is accomplished, voluntary action by the seeker of divinity can be undertaken. Hirata argued that the impure actions of Japanese Buddhists and "Sinophiles" were clear evidence that in his time being born Japanese was no longer enough. Hirata determined that intentional action was required, in essence, an oath of allegiance had to be sworn by each Japanese subject confirming his willing submission to the Japanese emperor.

In the analysis of this sacred oath of allegiance, in the form of daily Shinto *Norito*, it will be necessary to focus on the simple structures of the ritual text: the movement from abstract to concrete paralleled by the movement from national to local; patterns and tropes of purification, descent, and

¹³ *Tama* means either a human spirit, a nature spirit, and when used honorifically can also designate a *kami*.

submission; and the use of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, or other figures of speech. This analysis of textual structure should grant us some understanding of the grammar and syntax of the ritual after which it should begin to make sense. If these trajectories, themes, and tropes are not recognized as making meaning; that is, if the associations they intend to create fail or seem insubstantial, then the ritual falls into absurdity; the practitioner tires of it; and the scholar seeking to wrest meaning from it is forced to view the ritual as irrational nonsense.

4. The Morning Prayer Ritual

Again, the claim that Hirata's *Morning Worship Prayers* is more than just a list of 28 verses and supplicatory actions strung together in random order is not obvious since the prayers to the *kami* are not linked by chronological narrative or by a pattern of hierarchical authority. The following section displays a brief sequential listing of the main topics of the 28 verses. It is simplified to avoid overburdening those unfamiliar with Japan's religion and myth with detailed descriptions of the deities or divine geographies involved. In the analyses that follow, many of the verses will be expanded upon, but for the most part this brief listing should be sufficient for the reader to follow the argument of this article.

4.1. Numbered Ritual Topics

0. Prefatory purification
1. The imperial residence (home of the living *kami*)
2. Tatsuta shrine's divine wind *kami* (who provides divine purification)
3. The three creator *kami* (*kami* from the beginning of time)
4. Amaterasu, the sun *kami*, and all the *kami* of heaven
5. Tsukiyomi, the moon *kami*, and all earthly *kami*, and also all the *kami* of the underworld
6. Ninigi, the imperial grandchild (sent from heaven to rule earth)
7. Jimmu (the first emperor and grandchild of Ninigi) and all the subsequent emperors
8. Ise shrines (Imperial family shrines)
9. Three shrines for *kami* who pacified the earth for Ninigi
10. Izumo Taisha—Ôkuninushi (main earth deity and his shrine)
11. Three shrines for Ôkuninushi and related Izumo deities
12. Two shrines for Sukunabikona and Ônamuchi (*kami* of medicine and technology)
13. The shrine for Iwanagahime (representing longevity)
14. Atsuta Jingu (shrine for imperial regalia)
15. Principle shrine of the worshiper's province
16. The shrine for the worshiper's *ubusuna kami* (tutelary *kami*)
17. The house *kamidana* (altar for the deities)
18. Plea to Izanagi (creator deity) for purification
19. *Sae no kami* (*kami* of obstacles)
20. Seven generations of heavenly *kami*
21. Ame no uzume (*kami* representing descent to earth)
22. House protector *kami*
23. Harvest protector *kami*
24. Cooking stove *kami*
25. Well *kami*
26. Lavatory *kami*
27. *Kami* for ancient studies
28. Ancestors as *kami*

For those unfamiliar with Japanese religion and myth this listing looks like an odd mixture of *kami* and places; famous and obscure, national and local, public and private. It might be thought to be nothing more than a structured walk through Hirata's religious cosmos. It definitely is not a copy of his nativist hero Motoori's morning prayer list, and purposely not ([20], pp. 179–82). The following analysis should demonstrate that this list of Hirata's recommended morning prayers has a structure and a grammar that supplies an imperial nationalist identity to those who would support that nativist cause.

4.2. General Strategies: Sequential Movements

The first step in this nativist ritual for implantation of Japanese imperial myth in the worshiper is the abstract identification of the *kami* to be implanted. As we can see from the outline of the ritual, after an initial purification, the first and most important object of reverence for this ritual is the imperial residence.¹⁴ The worshiper is instructed to face in the direction of the emperor's residence to offer worship; however, neither the specific emperor nor the specific province is identified. Those material details are not important. It is the abstraction of *kami* housed in the appropriate residence for that *kami*, which is modeled here in this verse. The first verse works as a kind of introduction or salutation, the greater object and intent of the worship is announced in the second verse. This greater intent is the worship and entreaty for favor of all the heavenly and earthly *kami*. In order to accomplish this, the worshiper must first face Tatsuta Jingu, wherein resides the *kami* of the winds, to request a special purification which parallels and spiritually improves upon the merely physical purifications with which he started the ritual.

After the physical purification, the introduction of the abstract concept of the imperial *kami*, and then the spiritual purification, the ritual's trajectory becomes even more abstract, as the next verse is primarily devoted to the three *kami* of creation, which are by definition formless and not recognized as being physically enshrined anywhere. In fact, they are located in a heaven above Takamagahara, the mythical high plain of heaven. The directional instructions for the worshiper in this verse are not toward a place in Japan, as is the case with most of the other verses, but rather toward the direction of the north star, which I would suggest is not simply "north", just as similarly, the term, "direction of the rising sun", which appears later is not simply "east." The cosmological connotations are clearly more important than the concrete physical directions, since they are not concrete and physical in the sense that they are known and visited locations. Likewise, verses 3 through 6 require different physical orientations for the worshiper, but they are more important as mythological orientations for mythological locations.

It is at verse 7 that the instructions lead the worshiper to return to earth, as it were, to pay reverence to the first emperor Jimmu Tennō and the generations of emperors that have followed him. The movement of the subject matter of the ritual has to some degree, but not absolutely, become historical. The movement from abstract to concrete in this ritual is not being accomplished by a gradual shift to historical familiarity with a recounting of human deeds accomplished by human-like beings, but rather by the introduction into the ritual of actual physical locations and structures wherein the mythological divinities are said to reside. Verses 7–14 identify existent and active locations where *kami* associated with and important to the imperial mythology, as reorganized by Hirata, were enshrined and worshiped. This physical identification of the abstract imperial mythology is the middle step in the sequence whereby this ritual implants imperial mythological ideas into famous and well-known

¹⁴ An extremely simplified but useful explanation of the sequential structure of Japanese ritual as a subcategory of Asian ritual is first: purification followed by invitations, offerings of food, entertainment, praise, or some combination of those hospitality elements. The ensuing ritual developments usually entail prayers, requests for assistance, and promises of future worship, loyalty or activity on behalf of the deity being communicated with. Lastly, there are concluding acts of send-off and goodbye [23].

locations, and eventually into the homes and altars of ordinary individual Japanese with no imperial genealogical pretensions.

Verses 15 through 17 constitute the move by which these morning orders, which have been acting as a nationalist imperial myth-inspired ritual, change into a local, domestic, and individually-oriented ritual. Verse 15 requires worship of the principal shrine in the particular worshiper's district. Verse 16 requires worship of the worshiper's local tutelary *kami*.¹⁵ Verse 17 literally brings the imperial mythology home by calling for the establishment of a sacred *kami* space, *himorogi*, by use of sacred rope in the individual worshiper's home, into which the imperial mythological *kami* is incorporated and commemorated. This verse also contains a plea for the *kami*'s guidance and favor signifying the worshiper's first statement of willful connection to and dependence upon imperial family *kami*.¹⁶

Verse 18 refers to the *Kojiki* story of Izanagi's escape from the underworld, his blocking off of all impurities from that land, and his purification ritual that results in the creation of the sun goddess *kami* Amaterasu, who is considered to be both the font and the continuing source of divinity for the imperial line. However, the invocation of Izanagi in this case is not just or even mainly for the benefit of the imperial household, but rather for the descent of divinity into; the protection from evil for; and the ensurance of creativity and prosperity for every common Japanese household. Paralleling the imperial *kami*'s descent into the household, the ritual continues in verses 19 through 21 by praising and entreating the supporting players in the imperial grandson's descent. However, this part is not the recollection of the mythological descent from the high plain of heaven to Japan, instead it is the enactment of the present descent into the worshiper's household. This sequence employing the trope of the descent of the *kami* serves as a transitional stage in the ritual process for the passage from state religion to folk religion.

Earlier a movement from national and imperial sacred locations to local and private sacred locations was noted. In verses 19 through 21 there is a parallel movement from imperial state *kami* to folk *kami*, and also an overlapping of the two. Verse 19 is both praise and plea to the *sae no kami*, whose many symbolic meanings and associations Hirata expands upon in his expansive religious work *Tamadasuki* [25].¹⁷ However, most important for the local trajectories of this ritual are the *sae no kami*'s associations with purification, protection, and prosperity. The first story Hirata mentions in his *Tamadasuki* explanation of *sae no kami* is the story of Izanagi's flight from the impurities of the underworld and his sealing the passageway to and from that impure land. *Sae no kami* perform a similar function of clarifying borders on the local and folk levels.

Sae no kami are also important in this ritual for their common identification with the *kami* Sarutabiko and his role in allowing the descent of the Imperial Grandson Ninigi. Sarutabiko also doubles as a folk fertility figure along with his shaman *kami* bride Ame no uzume.¹⁸ Verse 20 concentrates on Ame no koyane, the *kami* appointed to be the imperial grandson's protector on the descent. Here we see that the movement in these verses is away from the persons representing the lineage of the imperial household and toward those who submit to it or serve it. Verse 21 is in tribute to Ame no uzume who aided in the imperial descent by pacifying her future husband Sarutabiko, who then became a loyal follower and servant of the imperial line.

These two deities represent a marriage of heaven and earth, but they also serve as a reminder of an imperial state mythological presence in every farm village in the form of *dosôjin*, local protector

¹⁵ There are two sets of tutelary *kami*: clan *kami*, *ujigami*, and local jurisdictional *kami*, *ubusuna kami*. One relationship is genetically determined while the other is geographically determined. These sometimes are overlapped in practice for social or political purposes.

¹⁶ For detailed explanation of individual *kami* in English I suggest the use of Kokugakuin University's website which includes an *Encyclopedia of Shinto* [24].

¹⁷ *Tamadasuki* is an extended monograph written by Hirata that can be understood as hundreds of pages of detailed explanation of the mythical narratives summarized by this morning prayer ritual [25].

¹⁸ Ame no uzume's shamanic credentials come from the story of a ritual dance she performed that assisted in drawing out the sun goddess when she had retreated into a rock cave denying sunlight to the world.

kami couples. *Dosôjin* couples are carved statues placed along roadsides that mark the recognized physical limits of a traditional village. Whether or not the *dosôjin* are always seen in such a light, the imperial aspirations of the ritual benefits from the blurring of imperial and folk traditions by causing an association of the local with the imperial state.

The last few verses are not only about submission and the blurring of imperial and local, they also contain an important element that shows that this relationship with the imperial is not just altruistic submission and service. From verse 17 until the final verse 28 there are continual reminders of what the *kami* do for the worshiper. Most visible and repeated throughout the ritual is the virtue of protection from calamities and impurities. Also prominently mentioned are the benefits afforded; such as, wisdom, harmony, proper hierarchical relations, prosperity, and happiness.

Verses 22 through 27 of the ritual offer very basic and specific blessings and protections for the individual worshiper. Verse 22 is for protection of the house structure itself. Verse 23 speaks of protection for the land of the household; and the *kami* worshiped in this verse are harvest deities, suggesting the divine bestowal of fruitful agricultural production. Verse 24 is dedicated to the *kami* of the cooking stove to ensure the purity of the household fire and the granting of long life.¹⁹ Verse 25 is for the *kami* of the well to ensure the purity of the water and again to grant long life. Verse 26 is to receive similar blessings from the *kami* of the lavatory. Note that the movement from the national and imperial to local and private is very much in evidence now when we recall that verse 1 concerns the emperor in his palace and verse 26 concerns the worshiper in his own lavatory.

The final verse, verse 28, is even more personal in benefit than the previous few. In this verse, all of the worshiper's ancestors are enshrined and commemorated in the household altar. They are treated in the same fashion as all the previous *kami* and they are asked to provide similar benefits for the surviving family. They are also praised for allowing the worshiper to offer up rituals to the *kami*. Here, in the final verse, the worshiper's parents and grandparents have joined the emperor as *kami* to be worshiped in the same ritual. There is in this ritual then, an implied promise. That promise is that when the worshiper dies, he too will become a *kami*, in the same general company of the all the heavenly and earthly *kami*.

This brief analysis of the temporal movement of the verses revealed clear techniques by which this ritual works to slowly and gradually make the unfamiliar familiar. Furthermore, even though at first glance the ritual seems to be about praise and service to the emperor, it is, in the end, transformed into a ritual promise of divinity and salvation for the worshiper. The national, the mythological, and the imperial have become, as much as the worshiper's cognitive make-up allows, the local, the mundane, and the personal.

In the afterword of the Shinto ritual, Hirata wrote that if one did not have the time to conduct the whole ritual every day, then it would be enough to perform verses 1, 17, and 28. These are: verse 1 in praise of the emperor, verse 17 the installation and praise of the imperial pantheon in the worshiper's home, and verse 28 in praise of the worshiper's ancestors. This is clearly a shortcut that brings the divinity of the emperor into one's own home, and then promises a similar divinity for the worshiper. In one sense it can be seen as a bargain struck between the worshiper and the worshiped, and in another sense, one which will be considered next, it is a recapitulation of the ancient pattern of divine descent, similar to ritual implantation of *tama*, which has been said to have been an ancient Japanese religious practice seen most strikingly in spirit possessions of the female shaman *miko* and specifically

¹⁹ This *kami* reports to his superiors on the merits of the family at the end of every year, which results in a new decision on future apportionment of longevity.

in the imperial ritual of the *chinkonsai*.²⁰ Both of these rituals are, of course, very plausibly models that inspired Hirata.²¹

4.3. General Strategies: Descending Movements

Although the previous section's attempts at description and analysis of the ritual rely rather heavily on a functional understanding of ritual, wherein the form is determined by the use, this should be seen as a natural consequence of Hirata's position as constructor of a new theology, one which had obvious political consequences for himself as well as desires for the Japanese emperor and the Japanese nation. Moreover, it makes sense that even the most seemingly innocent rituals would be composed of well-thought out sequences that, regardless of their supernatural efficacy, also depend upon "categories of collective thought", or "figures of speech" that are seldom questioned or beyond question by the given society or by the authors of the rituals themselves. These categories and figures have an unreflective if not unintentional power to effectuate the desired ends of the ritual—a power that seems to work by magic, or by logic, or by some kind of linguistic association.

The idea of the movement of the divine downward in order to inhabit and bless the land and the people of the human world has been accepted and written about for centuries in Japanese myths and histories. The point stressed here is the descent structure's remarkable prevalence and persistence throughout Japanese history, in a variety of religious contexts. This is to reaffirm that, for the Japanese of Hirata's time, the category of divine descent had reality and power. Furthermore, Hirata used this powerful structure in this ritual several times.

There are two main obvious reminders or invocations of the divine descent structure in this morning worship ritual. The first starts with the abbreviated retelling of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* Age of the Gods stories, which run from verse 3 through the actual descent of the imperial grandchild in verse 6; reinforced by verse 7 in which Jimmu and the rest of the emperors can be seen as living testaments of the first descent and the continual descents that occur with the installation of each new emperor. The second invocation of the category of divine descent occurs again in verses 19 through 21 with the praising of Ame no koyane, *sae no kami* (Sarutabiko), and Ame no uzume.

The idea of descent and physical "evidence" of this descent is also raised in verses 9, 10, and 11 of the shrine listings of verses 8 to 15. The shrines in verse 9 are dedicated to *kami* who aided in Ninigi's descent, and verses 10 and 11 are about shrines to the *kami* who submitted to the imperial messengers and therefore enabled the descent. In fact, according to the mythology, the existence of Izumo Taisha, Ōkuninushi's shrine, is due to a condition of his submission. All the reminders or the invocations of the myth of the imperial descent aside, the very existence of shrines or even the most primitive *himorogi* is completely dependent on this structure of Japanese category of collective thought, which considers as an unquestioned given fact of reality that some people have the power to call down *kami* or *tama* from some elevated realm and enclose that sacred entity in a given space. Therefore the whole ritual is composed of over 20 re-capitulations of the theme of divine descent, but of course it is also attempts to accomplish more than that. It is intended as an actual enactment of the techniques by which Hirata and his followers called down spirits and placed them in sacred enclosures.

The sequential techniques which I described in the earlier section would then not be seen as "merely" bringing about a psychological feeling of unity between emperor and subject, nor as just promoting a belief in the merging of the sacred and the profane in the next existence. Instead, that sequence of ritual attempts to effectively and sacredly realize that unity and merging. A psychological understanding of the effect of the ritual, and a phenomenological understanding that gives the ritual

²⁰ Ancient histories point to the use of female mediums called *miko* who became temporary vessels for spirits. The *chinkonsai* ritual was used to pacify or recall a departing spirit and typically would strengthen the spirit of the sitting/living emperor.

²¹ For information in English on the use of child mediums by Japanese esoteric ritual specialists see the M. Strickmann chapter entitled "The Genealogy of Spirit Possession" [26]. Hirata had extensive encounters with child mediums [5,7,9]. For specific Japanese examples in Japanese I recommend Sakô [28].

actual transformative power cannot be completely reconciled, yet by no means does this lead to the conclusion that both processes cannot be working on Hirata's assumed worshiper at the same time, as both understandings are mutually reinforcing.

Thus far in the analysis of this simple ritual we have seen the techniques of the author working for the same effect on two different levels. Yet, there is a third level on and by which this ritual moves toward an effective conclusion that unites worshiper and emperor. This third level is one of narrative troping. It is a cognitive level as are the first two, and like them it is not always "universally" rational or logical. Nevertheless, it is important as the level where minor shifts and major leaps between verse subjects in the ritual take place, thus allowing wholesale transitions and identifications between otherwise dubiously related subject matter to take place.

4.4. Sentence Level Tactics: Troping

Very few of the movements of this ritual can be traced by looking for classical logical syllogisms. No major premises, no minor premises, and no "logical" conclusions can aid us in predicting or making sense of why the next verse in sequence has been chosen. Knowing the story of ancient Japanese imperial mythology helps us some of the way, and as we have seen, the pattern of *kami* descent from that mythology can suddenly appear as a recurrent theme. However, if we think of the Japanese mythology as an elaborate genealogy; furthermore, if we think of this ritual as a daily revival and recreation of that genealogy; and finally, when we see that at the end of the ritual all of the worshiper's ancestors are now "somehow" included in that genealogy, we can then feel somewhat assured that broadly speaking, Hirata's is attempting to connect the alpha with the omega, the emperor with the commoner. It is a search for that "somehow" that may allow us to understand the workings of this ritual.

In the family genealogies that most of us might be familiar with, people are seen to be related to other people by marriage or by biology. Those familiar devices hold up in this genealogy through verse 7. After verse 7, no attempt at making a biological or marital connection between emperor and commoner is attempted. After that point, other linking devices are called for, and in these instances, linguistic devices are freely and effectively employed.

At verse 8 the link must be made from *kami* to shrine, mental structure to physical structure. Here we have direct association of the *kami* with the shrine, or the direct association of the *kami* and a relic. In this case, linguistically, the shrine or the relic can be used as a metaphor for the *kami*. In actuality, the association between the signified and its signifier has broken down, going beyond even the efficacy of metaphor, to a linguistic and cognitive identity that aids immensely in making this a true genealogical relationship for Hirata. Still, of course, on a certain level, we might want to assume that Hirata and his worshipers made at least some kind of distinction between a being that can procreate and a physical structure that cannot, and in that event the genealogical move made by Hirata can still be classified as metaphor, or a linguistic trope.

Still, at this point the genealogical, troping connection has not reached the common worshiper, the Japanese everyman. In verses 8 through 14 the metaphoric association between imperial *kami* and shrine has been repeatedly reinforced, but it is not until verse 15 that these imperial *kami* are physically and metaphorically located in every province of Japan. Furthermore, it is not until verse 16 that these shrines (*kami* metaphors) are connected to tutelary shrines that have solid clan and territorial relationships with common Japanese people. Moreover, it will take a metonymic association, another linguistic trope, to complete the genealogical connection that does not exist in reality nor in the mythology.

Although verse 16 is dedicated to *ubusuna kami*, which are usually described as territorial *kami*, *ubusuna kami* are not originally clan *kami*, which are properly called *ujigami*; that is, *ubusuna kami* are not biologically related to the people who visit their shrines. According to Hirata's interpretation of the mythology, the *ubusuna kami* hold a post of responsibility and protection over local areas; in the same manner as the *ichi no miya kami* hold provincial level posts; and the *kunitama no kami*, Ōkuninushi,

etc., hold national posts. Therefore, even if *ubusuna kami* are mistaken for *ujigami*, they are still not biologically heavenly *kami*, they are earthly *kami* who have submitted to the imperial *kami* and have accepted a post in the hierarchy just as the main earth deity, Ōkuninushi, was said to have done in the mythology.

It is the *ujigami* who are said to be biologically ancestral *kami*; that is, they were formerly human clan members to whom bloodlines can be theoretically traced. Hirata explained that a semantic slippage occurred whereby the meanings of the two terms had been conflated. Therefore, usage of *ubusuna kami* also readily brings to mind clan connections. Hirata recognized, but did not argue against this linguistic ambiguity, since this semantic slippage worked for his purposes. One local *kami* was metonymically switched with another and the Japanese worshiper found that his ancestral *kami* were part of the imperial hierarchy of *kami*, albeit not an especially exalted part.

Still, even though the genealogical connection had been made from *ujigami* to worshiper and, with the help of the conflation between the terms, *ubusuna kami* to the worshiper, there remained the task of connecting shrines housing *kami* from the imperial mythology to shrines housing less exalted Japanese *kami*. There is a bloodline from the heavenly *kami* to the *kami*/shrines of each province, and there is a bloodline from the terrestrial *kami*/shrines to the people, but there is no genealogical connection between those two lines. Thus, it is at just this level that any real biological connection between emperor and commoner disappears.

The connection between emperor and worshiper is ultimately based on a mythological relationship of submission to divinity from on high. The most important model from the mythology is the story of the main earth deity Ōkuninushi. Ōkuninushi accepts the inevitability of conquest by the heavenly *kami* and is rewarded with a role in the mythology and a position of importance in the pantheon of imperial *kami*. The story of the submission of the earth deity Sarutabiko is another similar model from the mythology. The worshiper's religious option is that if he too submits, then he too will be blessed and given responsibility and position in the imperial genealogy. If he does then submit, in doing so he will find that his ancestors are enshrined in the *kamidana* along with the imperial deities. He will also recognize that his ancestral deities, the *ujigami*, have also been accepted in the imperial pantheon.

Perhaps to be expected, the offers of divinity; relationship with the emperor; and a part in the imperial mythology, which are the stated purposes of this ritual, are not offers of the same level of divinity; nor a family blood relationship; nor a leading role in the mythology. However, this use of metaphor and metonymy have manipulated thoughts about the mythology enough so that a small, but significant, piece of a sacred meaningful worldview has been made available to all Japanese people who perform it. Hirata himself could have had no claims to any larger piece of the mythology than any other none-emperor or none-noble Japanese person. Nevertheless, with ownership of this one small piece of the Japanese mythology, Hirata seems to be able to claim all of the glory of the mythological and historical Japanese past for himself and for each individual Japanese person. The linguistic devices by which he has eked out a corner for himself and all Japanese, give way to a synecdochal move by which one man who submits to the emperor can become a glorious hero with everlasting life. Hirata's nativist approach is both emotionally affective and rhetorically effective; however, history shows that rhetoric was not all there was to Hirata's activities.

The morning NHK viewing ritual does not require the rhetorical strategies of the morning prayer ritual that anticipated the Meiji Period imperial restoration. This is mainly due to one major difference lying in the objective of the two rituals. The early modern ritual seeks to create a Japanese subject that believes in a sacred mythology that suggests a biological and genealogical connection between divine emperor and divine commoner. However, the events of the Second World War and the American occupation forces put an end to continued propagation of any such religious identity.²² Furthermore, the events of the Second World War, the American occupation, the economic miracle of the post-war

²² Powerful voices in post-war America were for the total eradication of the Shinto religion ([29] p. 196).

period, the bursting of the economic bubble in the early nineties, the ensuing twenty-year recession, the Tōhoku Tsunami, and the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster (among other shared successes and disasters) have created a different, but unified understanding of Japanese identity among the Japanese populace born in the post-war period. This identity is considered by Japanese to be diverse when compared across regions, but is unified in its distinction between insider and outsider, Japanese and *gaijin* (foreigner). Although the Japanese citizen will claim unique qualities for his or her own hometown, the same Japanese citizen claims solidarity and unity when compared with the non-Japanese. NHK, especially in its morning programming, focuses its broadcasts on what all Japanese share, even the shared opinion that one's particular region of Japan has environmental qualities and local products unmatched by any other region of Japan.

5. Conclusions

In a simple listing of Hirata Atsutane's prodigious textual production, *Morning Worship Prayers* is just a short *Norito* prayer recorded by Hirata's students in 1829 [30]. It is a script for a ritual consisting of 28 verses in praise of deities, along with directions for the physical actions to be performed when reciting those verses. This *Norito* is similar to, but purposely different from, earlier versions of similar *Norito* composed by Motoori Norinaga years earlier. It can be alternatively understood as outlining a skeletal structure of Hirata Shinto, and as such, a shortcut to understanding the hierarchy of Shinto *kami* constructed by Hirata [31–33].

However, this ritual is not just about a list of *kami* and shrines to be worshiped each morning as its title would suggest. Instead, it is a ritual that by various interesting strategies, some obvious and some subtle, creates a new and special identity for the Japanese people. In essence, it creates the Japanese subject by providing a cosmic importance for all Japanese, great and small. In general, it attempts to establish a strong sense of unity and community. In particular, it empowers a symbol, an abstraction of the emperor, intended to politically identify all Japanese as imperial subjects. Furthermore, what must not be forgotten is that all of this is occurring in an early modern Japanese context that finds many Japanese feeling threatened by oppressive and frightening forces of modernity both within and without the islands of Japan.

Hirata practiced this morning prayer ritual and promoted the practice among the loyal followers of his nativist academy, which grew to be a powerful political force opposing foreign influence in the late 19th century. Being a part of a daily routine, the performance of these rituals identified the practitioners as a distinctly homogeneous group of Japanese persons in the 19th century. I suggest that those millions of contemporary Japanese citizens who perform all or part of the daily secular ritual of watching NHK public broadcasting, attracted by the *renzoku terebi shōsetsu*, are rendered that much more homogeneous in knowledge and values. Hirata's short list of morning prayers takes less than ten minutes to perform and amounts to a series of self-produced images. Morning television viewing practiced for the same amount of time, or even double the time it takes to say the prayer ritual, provides much more visual and audio information on the state of the nation. NHK provides what every Japanese citizen needs to know to function effectively and efficiently for that particular day in a Japan that has been transformed into something far different than what it was in Hirata's time.

In the 19th century, for the Hirata morning ritual, the sacred implements needed to accomplish the ritual connection, were simply an altar and a rope. For the contemporary version, the ritual implements consist of a television set, an active cable connection, and remote control, with coffee and pastry optional. Just as Hirata's ritual offered benefits to the practitioners, the contemporary news-viewing component also can claim to offer the practical benefits of up-to-date news and weather information for the modern Japanese ritualist and their families. Certainly, these benefits are not as grand, but they do still create bonding and some level of group identity, and are extremely important to having a pleasant and productive day.

Just as the Hirata morning ritual connected the local ritualist to the national stage, in the contemporary morning NHK viewing ritual, we have an activity that brings national news and

international events to all locales in Japan, starting from the congested city megalopolises of Eastern and Western Japan; namely Tokyo and Osaka, to the remotest country locations of Northern and Southern Japan. Each region of Japan also has a local NHK news bureau so that regional news reports are brought closer to home for all locales. During this morning connection with state information services all viewers in all homes in every locale of Japan are informed equally of what NHK's management has considered necessary and important information for the Japanese citizen. Up to the minute weather information, temperature and precipitation forecasts are also reported for every district throughout the country, so that when news is varied for citizens of differing regions it is still a regionally homogeneous product tailored in a way that is most useful to Japanese in all locales pursuing their daily activities efficiently and comfortably.

Therefore, similar to the Hirata ritual, the television viewing rituals have abbreviated versions that are tailored to the needs of the individuals, but still suggest an agreement between information provider and information receiver. The receiver joins the community of shared knowledge holders by accepting the authority of NHK as official provider of information. In that sense, the government-appointed management of NHK has replaced Hirata's figure of the Emperor as the source of authority for establishing Japanese identity.

On any given day in contemporary Japan, the performance of this secular ritual results in millions of housewives and other *renzoku terebi shôsetsu* fans wearing hats, overcoats, scarves, or carrying umbrellas. Millions more Japanese citizens, men and children, who are cared for and who converse with these millions of *renzoku terebi shôsetsu* fans, are also then affected by the morning ritual. This results in millions of similarly informed citizens knowing to avoid certain train stations or being prepared to comment on: the latest athletic triumph for the nation; volcanic eruption, typhoon, earthquake, landslide, or other life-threatening natural disaster; the Emperor or Empress' latest visit to the hospital; the Prime Minister's current foreign visit; or the feasibility of getting a good exchange rate for the package tour during the coming summer vacation.

In contrast with the Shinto morning prayer ritual, identity and unity is not achieved by repetition of an imperial and mythic genealogy, and rhetorical genius is no longer required. To a great extent a unique Japanese identity, which still includes the imperial family, the traditional gods, the same history and the same mythology, has already been successfully ideologically implanted among the populace by their shared experience of the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, it is that common and shared post-modern and globalized, yet traditional, Japanese identity that is reinforced on a daily basis, in part due to the content of the daily *renzoku terebi shôsetsu*. The way this is accomplished is by creating and distributing a shared knowledge of the daily practical realities of Japan each and every day. Seemingly without effort and with little notice, this litany of knowledge of current events and weather forecasts heard and seen on television every morning and spread by word of mouth through almost every household creates a comforting solidarity among the Japanese populace. This is a comfort and solidarity not shared with the many recently arrived foreigners who do not watch the morning news for lack of language ability and thus are those seen running for cover when the rains start, or who find themselves underdressed or overdressed for the day, either shivering uncontrollably or sweating profusely.

Any Japanese citizen is capable of springing up out of bed and rushing off to work or some other activity without a minute's delay. Nonetheless, it is more likely that there is a morning routine that orients him and prepares her for one more day like all the other days of repeated activity that define them and sustains them as 'we, Japanese' (*ware ware Nihonjin*).²³ Perhaps, as Marshall McLuhan warned us a half century ago, the medium of television has transplanted former modes of morning activity [34]. Perhaps, television viewing, not to sleight other secular encroachments into religious activity in the 21st century, has replaced morning prayer rituals as the daily reminder of who the

²³ This is the common beginning to any explanation why the Japanese are different from the rest of peoples of the world.

Japanese are and what they intend to do on one particular day as well as on all the rest of the days of their lives.

I conclude this article with the hope that this exercise in the analysis of the rhetorical devices of the Shinto morning prayer ritual aids us in drawing analogies to the identity creation and group bonding power of the programming provided by NHK both in the morning and throughout the day. I hope I have also demonstrated that the theories and methods of religious ritual studies can play an important role in academic studies of secular society. At the very least, this article serves as a call for further research into the intersection of mass media and secular ritual, as well as this kind of post-modern phenomena's effects on identity formation in developed societies equipped with the most advanced technologies.

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