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Author(s): Basil Hall Chamberlain

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The following paper was read, on behalf of the author, by Dr. E. B. Tylor :—

NOTE on the JAPANESE GO-HEI, or PAPER OFFERINGS to the SHINTŌ GODS.

By BASIL HALL CHAMBERLAIN. (Communicated by Dr. E. B. TYLOR, F.R.S.)

[WITH PLATE IV.]

SOME European travellers have imagined that the heathen Japanese, prompted by equal frugality and irreverence, offer paper to their gods because it is the cheapest article at hand.

Others of a more curious turn of mind, have speculated on the coincidence of sound between *kami*, “god,” and *kami*, “paper.” The coincidence is fortuitous, *kami*, “paper,” being apparently the corruption of a Chinese term, while *kami*, “god,” is a native word meaning “above,” “superior,” and hence applied to “governors of provinces,” the “government” in general, and to the “gods” themselves. Moreover, though paper is now used in the ceremonies of the Shintō religion, this was not so in early days, *i.e.*, in days preceding the eighth century of the Christian era. The offerings then were made of two kinds of cloth—a white kind made of the paper-mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), and a blue kind made of hemp. Such cloth was the most precious article in the possession of a population to whom luxury and art were unknown. Later on, when Chinese civilisation had brought a variety of manufactures in its train, hempen cloth ceased to be regarded as a treasure worthy of the divine acceptance; and, frugality perhaps helping, and partly also in accordance with that law of progress from the actual to the symbolical which characterises all religions, paper began to be used instead. We cannot tell the date of the change, Shintō having suffered such eclipse from the eight to the seventeenth centuries that little regarding its mediæval history has been preserved. During all that time Buddhism reigned supreme.

The specimens of *go-hei* on a stand (Pl. IV, fig. 1), such as is placed before the altar, were cut for me by Mr. Kakinuma Hiromi, an aged Shintō priest, who served for years at the shrine of Jeyasu at Nikkō and elsewhere. They are therefore only exactly representative of the pattern sanctioned by his sect, the *Yoshida-ryū*.

The *go-hei* of the other great Shintō sect, the *Shirakawa-ryū*, are slightly—very slightly—different. It should also be mentioned that the most important of all Shintō temples (those of

Ise, Igumo, and Kashima, and a few others) follow precedents of their own in this as in other matters of ritual. The chief distinction seems to be that caused by the varying number of the folds. While the Yoshida sect sanctions the use of four folds in the paper, the Shirakawa sect doubles the number and has eight (*see* fig. 2, Pl. IV). Having no wooden stand, each stick with its *go-hei* and hempen string should be stuck in a small vase, pot, or section of bamboo, such as is used for holding Japanese pencils.

The stickless *go-hei* (fig. 3) is a specimen of the shape adopted when the *go-hei* are to be hung in lines to a cord, as is often done in front of temples, also in front of houses at New Year time.

There is said to be no symbolism attaching to the shape, number of folds in the paper, length of the stick, &c. Each sect, or great temple, has clung to its traditional practice in these matters; that is all. The same is true of the other Shintō ceremonies, such as the offerings of rice, fish, and rice-beer to the gods. And what the priests say on this subject I incline to accept as true. Shintō appears to me, after a study of its chief documents carried on through a series of years, to consist not of fossilised ideas, but of fossilised ceremonies. The Japanese had few ideas before China and (through Buddhism) India were thrown open to them.

The very commentators of Shintō, patriotic as they are, and over anxious to magnify everything Japanese, at the expense of everything foreign, acknowledge that Shintō has no moral system, no body of views of any kind save worship of the gods, who were the ancestors of the Imperial House. Thus it was that Shintō collapsed utterly at the touch of Buddhism. Thus, too, is it that it fails to support itself now that an attempt has been made to revive it as a political factor. It has nothing in it that appeals to the religious instincts of the people.

Description of Plate IV.

Fig. 1. Fourfold *go-hei* on stand, placed before altar; cut by Kakinuma Hiromi, Priest at the shrine of Jeyau at Nikko (Yoshida sect).

Fig. 2. Eightfold *go-hei* of Shirakawa sect.

Figs. 3 and 4. *Go-hei* for hanging in lines on a cord in front of temple, or of houses at New Year. The specimens figured in this plate have been presented to the Oxford Museum by B. H. Chamberlain, Esq., Tokyo.

A. ROBINSON.

JAPANESE GO-HEI.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. F. V. DICKINS, as having long resided in Japan, and studied Japanese life and thought, desired to offer a few observations. Shintō as usually written—it was a Sinico-Japanese, not a Japanese term—meant the way of the gods, in Japanese *kami no michi*. But the Japanese expression was a translation of the Chinese one merely, and for their oldest form of religion they had no native name whatever. This was a typical fact. The more what was called Shintō was examined, the more it was found to be Chinese in character, like everything else appertaining to the life of old Japan. Of the early history of Japan we know nothing. There were no documents, historic or archæological. It began with the introduction of Buddhism and Chinese writing. Before Buddhism Confucianism had, no doubt, made its way across the eastern seas, and with it more or less of the old religion of China. How much of this old religion was mixed up in the oldest form of Shintō it was difficult to say, or rather how much of Shintō was not a mere imitation of the imported faith. It was hard to pick out anything in Shintō that could not be found in ancient Chinese religion, except the details of ceremonies. There were three kinds of Shintō—the latest the sort of eclectic or eliminative Shintō of the Revivalists of a hundred years ago; the Buddhist Shintō of Kūkai (*kōtōdaishi*); and the oldest that of the Kojiki, the Monyōshu, and the Norito. Its only ethical aspect was the practice of purification—a development probably of bodily cleanliness which experience had shown to be profitable and pleasant. The worship was not so much of ancestors as of heroes—war or culture heroes. There were no sacrifices, which is peculiar; there were simply offerings to the gods. Among these were offerings of cloths of different kinds fastened to the twigs of a spray of Sakaki (*Cleyera japonica*). This conventionalised and regularised would easily develop into the *go-hei*, a Chinese expression signifying not paper at all, but august offerings (*hei=nigate*). *Nusa* were rods bearing a bunch of hempen fibre commemorating, doubtless, like the *go-hei*, a useful invention. The *yenso* of the Ainos was probably derived from these *nusa*, if not original, as they well may have been. A black *go-hei* Mr. Dickins had not seen before. Shintō could not be called a religion; its mythology even was inorganic, but it had nevertheless played a most important part in Japanese history. It had preserved the unity of the country through many perils by its apotheosis of the Mikado as direct descendant of the gods, and intermediary between them and the empire, a position which the Buddhists never assailed. The Buddhists, indeed, did not assail Shintō, but appropriated its Pantheon. Every Japanese was born a Shintōist as a sort of agnate of the local god, lived under any faith he liked, and was buried with Buddhist rites, thus conciliating both the gods and Buddha.