

An Engagement with the Scholarship on Mitogaku, from the 1930s to the Present

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Introduction

The study of ideologies of the Tokugawa Period in Japan has enjoyed a long and winding history. However, amongst the various ideologies across the broad intellectual landscape, attention has been focused on Confucianism and Kokugaku (National Learning), which have for most of the twentieth century functioned as twin poles from which to situate Tokugawa thought. Comparatively, little scholarly attention has been paid to Mitogaku, a particular intellectual tradition that sprung out of Mito Domain.⁽¹⁾ Even Maruyama Masao's monumental *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, one of the first synthesis-driven academic surveys of Tokugawa thought and influential both inside and outside Japan, spent precious little space on discussing Mitogaku.⁽²⁾ This

(1) As far as I could find, among survey histories of Japan or collections of articles categorized by time period—both types of work being places from which those people beginning study of, or who are just interested in, Japanese history, tend to start from—there appear to be no cases in which Mitogaku is discussed in an independent chapter, while Confucianism and Kokugaku were often discussed as such.

(2) Maruyama Masao, *Nihon Seiji Sisōshi Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku

is unfortunate, for while modern scholars may be quick to consider Kokugaku relevant in discussions of topics such as Japanese nationalism, Mitogaku, despite its significance for the Meiji Restoration, has received no such attention. Whether this is due to a tendency for historians of Tokugawa to situate Mitogaku within the Bakumatsu context, or a tendency for historians of Meiji to relegate it to the Tokugawa era, is unclear. The lack of attention paid to Mitogaku generally is therefore troubling.

Fortunately, there has been significant scholarship on Mitogaku conducted in Japan, but this has remained marginalized within the broader field of Tokugawa intellectual history. While we can thus at least find a number of works on Mitogaku available in Japanese, in terms of English-language scholarship there exists but one monograph (J. Victor Koschmann's *The Mito Ideology*) and a few scattered articles.⁽³⁾ This is extremely limited when compared to the plethora of English-language scholarship concerning either Tokugawa Confucianism or Kokugaku. The question as to why this has happened, and why Mitogaku has been marginalized, was one of the issues that informed this article's undertaking.

Marginalization has led to a tendency to take a reductionist approach to Mitogaku, whereby scholars either slot it into the broader Kokugaku

Shuppankai, 1952). It was composed of articles Maruyama had originally published from 1940 to 1944, and was translated by Mikiso Hane in 1974. See Maruyama Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

(3) J. Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790-1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Kate Wildman Nakai and Harry D. Harootunian are among those historians who have done work that incorporated Mitogaku but did not focus on it.

or Confucian categories, or position it somewhere between those poles, rather than considering whether it occupies a distinct position worthy of consideration in its own right. This has further obscured whether there were varieties of Mito thought, rather than just that reflected by Aizawa Seishisai, who is frequently taken as the standard 'exposition' of the Mito position. In addition to Mitogaku as a category often being marginalized and collapsed into the larger categories of Confucianism or Kokugaku, then, a further problem is the tendency to generalize the content of Mitogaku. Perhaps, just as Herman Ooms problematizes the idea of there having existed one 'Confucianism' in Tokugawa, we should likewise problematize the idea of there having existed one 'Mitogaku.'⁽⁴⁾

In order to correct the situation, it is first necessary to fully comprehend it, and towards that aim an important first step is an understanding of the historiography of Mitogaku. Before one can ask why Mitogaku has received relatively little attention, and what kind of study is required to approach Mitogaku, one must ask how it has been understood to this point, and ascertain how this can contribute to the intellectual history of the Tokugawa Period. The current article, by charting the historiography of Mitogaku from the prewar era to the present, is therefore a tentative step towards laying a foundation to pursue these important questions. It comprises several sections. The first addresses the prewar period through to 1945, and is subdivided into two parts covering the prewar era and the Pacific War years. The second section covers the postwar period through to 1995, while the final two sections consider English-language scholarship and post-1995 works, respectively. Almost

(4) Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1985).

all of the works that discuss Mitogaku preface their arguments with a discussion of their own understanding with regards to the question of “what is Mitogaku,” a fact which by itself suggests less ideological cohesion than has often been assumed, and indeed raising this question is a good first step towards offering a corrective to accounts that have marginalized and generalized Mitogaku.

1. Early Scholarship on Mitogaku (1930—1945)

Treating the 1930s and the Pacific War together as part of the same larger section may appear problematic to some, but with the beginning of the war the earlier themes in Mitogaku scholarship did not radically shift so much as become intensified and more numerous. The steady increase in writings on Mitogaku sped up and then exploded with the start of the 1940s. As a result, it is logical to treat them together in one large section subdivided into two parts. Since space limitations prevent covering every work published, I have selected works based not only on the degree to which they are reflective of the time period, but also with an eye towards revealing the variety of perspectives on Mitogaku

(1-1). Scholarship on Mitogaku during the Prewar Era (1932—1940)

Almost nothing existed in terms of dedicated scholarship on Mitogaku before the 1930s. Earlier Taishō-era works on Mitogaku were published, but achieved little notice, and few are extant. Often we can only deduce the existence of such works from authors who in later publications made reference to their early work. A broader consciousness of Mitogaku appears to have been nonexistent.

This state of affairs is borne out by the chronological tables provided by Yoshida Toshizumi in his historiographically-minded work on Mitogaku.⁽⁵⁾ According to Yoshida's overview, there was nothing before 1928. That year was the 300th anniversary of the birth of Tokugawa Mitsukuni, the Daimyō of Mito who initiated the great historical project for which the early Mito school was most famous. In light of the positive evaluation of Mitsukuni during the prewar era, it is not particularly surprising that from the anniversary date onward there was a renewed interest in Mito. Over the next few years, Mitogaku studies began to become more popular, and gradually scholarly works on the subject began to appear.⁽⁶⁾ From 1932 and 1933, there was a significant increase in the amount of scholarship, and it is fitting to begin my analysis of pre-war scholarship at this point with an important early work by Hōjō Shigenao.

Hōjō's *Mitogaku to Ishin no Fūun* (Mitogaku and the Circumstances of the Meiji Restoration) was published in 1932.⁽⁷⁾ From the start, Hōjō reveals that he has no doubts about understanding Mito as both a birthplace of "loyalty to Tennō thought" (*kinnō shisō*), and as a pioneer of the Meiji Restoration.⁽⁸⁾ His work is based upon this viewpoint. For Hōjō, Mitogaku was a philosophy that controlled the entire nation intellectually; he states that, "looking at the major domains at the time, there were none that did not receive the influence of Mitogaku."⁽⁹⁾

(5) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu: Meiji Ishinshi no Saikentō* (Tokyo: Honpō Shoseki, 1986), 236-241.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Hōjō Shigenao, *Mitogaku to Ishin no Fūun* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shūbunkan, 1932).

(8) Ibid., 1.

The author also framed his work in response to issues of his own time:

The youths at the time of Bakumatsu faced the construction of a new Japan with morale which was like a heavenly-horse flying fast in the sky. The closed-door and expel-the-barbarian policies were also indeed an expression of their devotion, too proud to take insults from foreign countries. Yet, the youths in this present time have unfortunately lost the place where they should belong; voices of a national intellectual crisis have cried out in public. Thus, in this situation, this book also might be refreshing for this modern society.⁽¹⁰⁾

In this work, the contemporary situation of early Shōwa Japan is overlaid on the Meiji Restoration, suggesting a similar sense of national crisis, to which the author responds that in order to encourage youth now, it is necessary to follow the spirit of Mitogaku that led to the success of the Meiji Restoration. Considering how Mitogaku tends to be associated with intense nationalism, it is significant that even at this stage at the dawn of modern Mitogaku scholarship it was being treated as a solution to contemporary problems, during a time when a sense of national crisis was widespread and comparisons to the Bakumatsu era were common, as were calls for a “Shōwa Restoration” solution.

From 1931 through to 1934, some five or six books on Mitogaku were published every year. 1934 was a watershed year, with more than ten publications recorded.⁽¹¹⁾ One of these was Matsuoka Ryōtarō’s *Mitogaku no Shidō Genri* (The Leading Principles of Mitogaku).⁽¹²⁾ For Matsuoka,

(9) Ibid., 2.

(10) Ibid., 3.

(11) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu*, 237.

who presents his text as one approach to systemizing Mitogaku thought, Mitogaku was the traditional spirit in the Mito domain successively transformed into one form of domain studies, the outline of which is expressed in the works of Fujita Tōko and Aizawa Seishisai.⁽¹³⁾ More than that, however, he continues, Mitogaku “teaches us the most important thing in our national lives, and how to obtain it.”⁽¹⁴⁾ What is this most important thing? The way of the Japanese *minzoku* (people or race). Mitogaku, he explains, is its principle; thus, Mitogaku is like a history of the *minzoku*.⁽¹⁵⁾ As with Hōjō, then, Matsuoka saw Mitogaku as having particular relevance for the Japanese of his own day. “Mitogaku,” Matsuoka writes, “is that which teaches us that, as an independent nation, we must have a clear grasp of something that should be called our only life—our “way”—in our social lives, and in national life, which is the highest stage of social life.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Further, he continues, so long as national control is carried out with the head of the royal household (which he presents as the “head household of the *minzoku*”) as its center, while following the rules set by the ancestors, then “the destiny of the nation will be eternal together with heaven and earth” so long as the “*minzoku* does not fall into ruin.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Mitogaku, he claims, makes us firmly believe this, and moreover causes us to realize that this is just common sense.⁽¹⁸⁾ For Matsuoka, Mitogaku

(12) Matsuoka Ryōtaō, *Mitogaku no Shidō Genri* (Tokyo: Keibunsha Shoten, 1934).

(13) *Ibid.*, 1–2.

(14) *Ibid.*, 7.

(15) *Ibid.*, 9.

(16) *Ibid.*, 1.

(17) *Ibid.*, 3.

also has a proven track record: when the pressures of imperialism rushed from overseas like a tide, he states, the Bakufu lost its power to control the nation, and it is thanks to Mitogaku that the Bakufu managed to maintain the independence of the nation against foreign countries by controlling the nation's sense of crisis completely.⁽¹⁹⁾

With regards to the intellectual nature of Mitogaku, rather than Mitogaku being fundamentally Confucian in its orientation, Matsuoka argues that “the intellectual principle of Mitogaku is *minzokuteki* [*minzoku*-ness],” and it adapted Confucianism merely as a study method in accordance with the trends of the time.⁽²⁰⁾ Matsuoka does not suggest that Mitogaku is completely unique, and he recognizes that it “fused Kokugaku and Confucianism” as well; however, he is adamant that “its spirit is based on Shintō alone.”⁽²¹⁾ In an image that will recur over time, although normally with regards to Aizawa's *Shinron*, Matsuoka offers a “holy bible” of Mitogaku: the *Record of Kōdōkan* by Rekkō (Tokugawa Nariaki), who he claims stated the “theory and practice of the Great Way with the authoritative attitude of a leader.”⁽²²⁾

Like Hōjō Naoshige, Matsuoka too understands Mitogaku as having been a source of intellectual leadership for the nation in its time, since many scholars visited Mito Domain or “sought the national spirit” in Mitogaku.⁽²³⁾ Although he addresses Mito as an intellectual center of its time, he neglects to discuss other aspects of the domain—such as politi-

(18) Ibid.

(19) Ibid., 13.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Ibid., 14.

(23) Ibid., 178.

cal, economic, or geographical issues—that could also be expected to have been considered if his claim were true that Mitogaku was at its core the study of Mito Domain.

Since 1934 when Matsuoka's book was among those published, the number of books on Mitogaku increased significantly.⁽²⁴⁾ One of the authors who warrants particular attention in this period is Takasu Yōjirō. He would go on to write more works in the late 1930s, and then become one of the dominant figures in the explosion of works on Mitogaku at the beginning of the 1940s, as we shall see.

In his 1935 work, *Mitogaku no Shin Kenkyū* (New Studies on Mitogaku), Takasu sees Mitogaku as having been born during a wave of revival of learning that was promoted by the encouragement of education by the first Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu.⁽²⁵⁾ Mitogaku, he explains, emerged alongside the re-examination of Shintō, national history, and national literature ushered in with the arrival of a new era and its free discussion of learning.⁽²⁶⁾ Gi-kō (The Lord of Righteousness, i.e., Tokugawa Mitsukuni) was one of the people representative of these developments.⁽²⁷⁾ For Takasu, Mitogaku was a form of cultural and political production in the new system; unlike Matsuoka, he sees it as having been a part of the Bakufu education system.⁽²⁸⁾ Takasu also understands Mitogaku as having two aspects: one is historical, the other is spiritual, and these were mixed—for this reason, he asserts, the entire picture of

(24) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu*, 237.

(25) Takasu Yōjirō, *Mitogaku no Shin Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1935), 304-305.

(26) Ibid.

(27) Ibid.

(28) Ibid., 304.

Mitogaku is still ambiguous, and while broadly one can still speak of Mitogaku, distinguishing these two aspects is necessary in order to examine its content.⁽²⁹⁾ This is a recurring theme in his work.

Takasu argues that in the present, Japan has already absorbed and adapted what it needed from the West, and having done this, it is necessary to return to its original form as well, and hurry to show Japanese culture and create new forms of it.⁽³⁰⁾ In such circumstances, he stresses, significant consideration should be given to the contribution that Mitogaku made to the present.⁽³¹⁾ Takasu's view encourages not only recognizing how Mitogaku has played a role in creating the present, but also suggests it is a useful tool to return to Japan's "original form," a kind of archetypal state of Japanese society and culture.

In the following year, Takasu published *Mitogakuha no Sonnō oyobi Keirin* (The Reverence for the Tennō and (Correct) Way of Governing of the Mitogaku School).⁽³²⁾ Again we find a sense that Mitogaku has lessons to offer the present, with Takasu stating that understanding Mitogaku offers a lot of things to a Japan in crisis; however, he also emphasizes that an understanding of Mitogaku is necessary to fill in the holes in Japanese intellectual history.⁽³³⁾ Mitogaku is one of the cores of Japanese intellectual history, he implies; without Mitogaku, Japan's intellectual history is weakened and incomplete.⁽³⁴⁾ On the one hand, Takasu's

(29) Ibid., 305.

(30) Ibid., 314.

(31) Ibid.

(32) Takasu Yojirō, *Mitogakuha no Sonnō oyobi Keirin* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1936).

(33) Ibid., 2.

(34) Ibid.

views here are interesting in light of how later historians continued to relegate Mitogaku to the sidelines, something that Takasu evidently believed was problematic in his own time. On the other hand, there is also the sense that Mitogaku's value is somehow utilitarian, since Takasu sees Mitogaku as important because it offers aid to a contemporary Japan struggling with crises, aid that can only be effective if preceded by a complete understanding of Mitogaku.

In a section on modern criticism on Mitogaku, Takasu discusses how Mitogaku prompts Japanese to think through how their ethics, culture, and studies have become too Westernized since Meiji times. He states, "Now, the time has come for Japan to stop copying and following the West, and move forward to the creation of our culture based on the spirit of the imperial way."⁽³⁵⁾ Furthermore, in doing so, he feels that contemporary people should draw inspiration from Mitogaku: "Mitogaku established the national morals, attempted to create a new political order based on Kokutai, and interpreted national history with pure Japanese spirit."⁽³⁶⁾ In this regard, Takasu clearly believes that Mitogaku stimulates contemporary Japanese to reflect upon themselves. In sum, he is suggesting that people in the present time, beset by national crisis, learn from Mitogaku, which had previously contributed, he believes, to the furtherance and unity of the national spirit.

Takasu avoids merely conflating his own time with the Bakamatsu era, noting that they are not the same. However, he holds that Mitogaku and its political philosophy contain truths that appeal to modern people in the same sense—as a model of national morality.⁽³⁷⁾ Mitogaku, he claims,

(35) Ibid., 742.

(36) Ibid., 742–743.

(37) Ibid., 744–745.

teaches people to deal with education with a fair, harmonious, and synthetic attitude.⁽³⁸⁾ It emphasizes the conduct of politics based on respect for the gods and successive Tennō, and in all respects in life it is necessary to trace back a line to the rules that the gods and imperial ancestors created.⁽³⁹⁾ Since modern education lacks, and ignores, this completely, he laments, the failings of modern politics are to be expected.⁽⁴⁰⁾ What does Mitogaku offer education? It “emphasizes the way as a human,” he asserts.⁽⁴¹⁾ Ideally, education should approach knowledge as a secondary goal while giving primacy to morality and ethics. Modern education, in Takasu’s view, has pursued the complete reverse, resulting in people possessing knowledge but evil characters, who cannot but use knowledge wrongly.⁽⁴²⁾ Mitogaku, which puts morality first and foremost, should give us cause to rethink education; indeed, Takasu suggests, the heavily specialized and divided world of modern education should learn from Mitogaku, which has a more synthetic perspective.⁽⁴³⁾

Takasu does not just praise Mitogaku, but also points out some shortcomings as well, such as neglecting studies of ancient history.⁽⁴⁴⁾ However, he is highly defensive. For instance, he admits that Mitogaku has a strong *minzoku-shugi* (*volk-ish*, nationalistic) color, but defends this as unavoidable considering the situation of the time.⁽⁴⁵⁾ He argues, con-

(38) Ibid., 745.

(39) Ibid., 749.

(40) Ibid.

(41) Ibid., 751.

(42) Ibid., 751–752.

(43) Ibid., 751–753.

(44) Ibid., 755.

(45) Ibid., 754.

versely, that if the time had required international harmony, then Mitogaku would have included it as well.⁽⁴⁶⁾ This suggests that he understands Mitogaku as possessing not only a core component that remains relevant to the Japanese of his day, but also components that are the product of historical conditions, and can presumably be modified to suit the present. In sum, he argues that even if Mitogaku does not fit the modern situation perfectly, it still has much to offer people, and in order to create a new culture, everyone in this modern society should consider Mitogaku.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Just as with his previous work, there is a sense, strongly present in the thought of many interwar intellectuals, that some fundamental aspect of Japanese cultural or spiritual consciousness had been lost through Westernization, and there was a need to return to an authentic “Japaneseness” to create a new culture in response to the crisis of the present. For Takasu, Mitogaku represented one way to achieve such an aim.

The year 1937 was something of an aberration in terms of works pertaining to Mitogaku, in that not too many were published.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The general trend of an increasing amount of publications through the course of the 1930s, however, continued. Another significant work in the late 1930s appears to have been Nishimura Fuminori’s 1938 work *Mitogaku Nyūmon* (An Introduction to Mitogaku).⁽⁴⁹⁾ Nishimura mentions, as did Takasu before him, that voices recognizing Mitogaku had been increasingly raised in recent years.⁽⁵⁰⁾ He also points out that people’s under-

(46) Ibid.

(47) Ibid., 755–756.

(48) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu*, 238.

(49) Nishimura Fuminori, *Mitogaku Nyūmon* (Tokyo: Nagamine Gyokubundō, 1938).

standing of Mitogaku was as a very vague concept—the term Mitogaku could be heard here and there, but people could not clearly understand what Mitogaku was.⁽⁵¹⁾ The very fact that people were discussing Mitogaku to the extent that Nishimura thought their apparent confusion warranted comment is likely indicative that a rising interest in Mitogaku was a social trend of the time.

He introduces several definitions of Mitogaku, such as the theories of the Sonnō-Jōi⁽⁵²⁾ movement, or the contents of the *Record of Kōdōkan*. After this discussion, he shockingly, spending but a few words, states that “simply speaking, Mitogaku is the study of overthrowing the Bakufu.”⁽⁵³⁾ Given that the consensus even at the time was that the Mito School had actually sought to *support* the Bakufu, this view is unorthodox to say the least. As for the origins of Mitogaku, he points to Gi-kō, without question, and understands Mitogaku as having continued on from him.⁽⁵⁴⁾ For Nishimura, the foundations of Mitogaku were laid by Gi-kō, and were completed by Rekkō.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Some moderate Mito scholars, Nishimura goes on to explain, claimed that the original principle of the Mito Domain was to revere the Tennō and expel the barbarians by supporting the Bakufu—the Mito Domain was not seeking to revere the Tennō to destroy the Bakufu, their own head family.⁽⁵⁶⁾ However, it was impossible to carry this out in reality, he

(50) Ibid., 1.

(51) Ibid.

(52) “Revere the Tennō and Expel the Barbarians.”

(53) Ibid., 2.

(54) Ibid.

(55) Ibid., 5.

(56) Ibid., 3.

claims, and as a result the attitude that the Mito Domain took (and the view that Mitogaku consequently encouraged) was to destroy the Bakufu in order to revere the Tennō.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The school that taught the methods, and trained the soul, for this end was the Kōdōkan domain school.⁽⁵⁸⁾ “For the Bakufu,” claims Nishimura, “Mitogaku was a truly frightening study indeed.”⁽⁵⁹⁾ Similarly, “In a word[phrase],” he writes, “Mitogaku can be defined as the study of making clear the kokutai, and raising the imperial way.”⁽⁶⁰⁾

Thus, our assessment to this point has indicated not only that the 1930s had witnessed a rising interest in Mitogaku, but that this was undertaken with an eye to making connections to the present, and even theorizing potential adaptations of Mitogaku ideology to solve the perceived crisis Japan faced in the present.

(1-2). Scholarship on Mitogaku during the Pacific War (1941—1945)

With the expansion of the war in Asia, and the onset of war with the United States, writings on Mitogaku reached a fever pitch. Calls for Mitogaku’s relevance to the present continued, the studies took on an increasingly intense air, and the sheer number of works continued to multiply through the early 1940s. When we consult Yoshida’s chronological list, we find that the increase in Mitogaku-related works between 1940 and 1943 in particular is highly remarkable,⁽⁶¹⁾ with the trajectory

(57) Ibid., 3-4.

(58) Ibid.

(59) Ibid., 4.

(60) Ibid., 6.

(61) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu*, 239-240.

of studies begun at the beginning of the 1930s reaching its zenith.

One of the dominant figures in this period was Takasu Yōjirō, discussed above. His output here is quite extensive and requires consideration. In 1941 he published *Mitogaku Retsuden* (The Lives of Mitogaku Scholars), the subtitle of which was “Introduction to Mitogaku.”⁽⁶²⁾ As for the purpose of writing the work, he mentions in the preface the large number of people who intend to work on Mitogaku, and that public and private universities would also have courses on Mitogaku in the future.⁽⁶³⁾ Thus, he reasons, it is important to make them familiar with the Mito scholars by providing a book on their lives. From these remarks, we can clearly tell that Mitogaku studies, and perhaps popular interest in Mitogaku, were at a high point at this time. Takasu evidently saw this as a positive trend, with much more to come, but he offers no clues as to the reason for this popularity or how the contemporary socio-political situation may have contributed to a rising interest in Mitogaku.

Takasu praises Tokugawa Mitsukuni excessively. He declares, “Gi-kō was excellent as a philosopher, politician, poet, and scholar—the most eminent person in any field. There is no one, except he, who was qualified with all of these merits in the 300 years of the history of the Edo Period.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ He also praises Rekkō as well, although he admits that he cannot be compared to Gi-kō; both of them, he nevertheless acknowledges, were quite similar in how they carried out their beliefs.⁽⁶⁵⁾

(62) Takasu Yōjirō, *Mitogakuto Retsuden* (Tokyo: SeibundōSinkōsha, 1941).

(63) *Ibid.*, 1.

(64) *Ibid.*, 5.

(65) Takasu writes, “Thinking about what Rekkō had done, he indeed seemed to have the remarks and conduct of his ancestor Gi-kō as an ideal, and had been strongly influenced by that. He did not stick to only the Bakufu’s

According to Takasu, the whole of Mitogaku—including both historical studies and political thought—began with Gi-kō.

The relevance of Mitogaku as an ideal for the present again comes through strongly. Takasu declares,

Today, when the New Order⁽⁶⁶⁾ is preached loudly, what is sought must be people who are not really interested in riches and fame, and have enthusiasm for the aggrandizement of the spirit of revering the Tennō, like the Mitogaku scholars. That is, we need to devote ourselves to the service of the state beyond personal interests. In this regard, Mitogaku scholars are highly suggestive for the present.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The following year, as the Mitogaku trend peaked, Takasu published several more works. One of these, *Mitogaku no Hitobito*, was actually a compilation of articles that he had previously published in various journals.⁽⁶⁸⁾ He may have taken advantage of the flourishing interest in Mitogaku to expose these articles to a broader audience. The key ideas in these articles, which date a few years back, remain largely constant through Takasu's works. Therefore, I will only briefly touch on an interesting point here that showcases Takasu's linking of Mitogaku with pres-

intention when carrying out his thoughts or beliefs. In this regard, the way of Rekkō is quite similar to that of Gi-kō. However, as a person in general, Rekkō is not as great as Gi-kō." (ibid., 42).

(66) The New Order (*shintaisei*) was an attempt to replace party politics with a pervasive, authoritarian bureaucratic state. It reached its ultimate expression in the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Taisei Yokusankai) in 1940.

(67) Ibid., 8.

(68) Takasu Yōjirō, *Mitogaku no Hitobito* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1942).

ent concerns.

Although it is just called a supplement, Takasu includes an article on the activists involved in the famous Sakurada Gate incident⁽⁶⁹⁾ in this book. He justifies this in his prefatory notes by stating that,

Those people were not directly connected with Mitogaku; however, they represent the spirit of the Mito warriors very well. Further, while the Akō warriors devoted themselves to one domain and their lord, the warriors at the Sakurada Gate strove for the whole of Japan, Tennō-centrism. In this way, I believe that they are superior to the 47 warriors of Akō.⁽⁷⁰⁾

In Takusa's argument, we can detect an association of Mitogaku with the "royal way," and a mode of overlapping the present situation with the time of Bakumatsu. Takusa's tendency to read the present through this lens has political implications as well; he hints at a justification for even reckless actions born of loyalty, and while he does not directly identify the Sakurada Gate incident with the May 15th Incident (the assassination of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi), he states that they have in common an element of giving a warning to their respective times.⁽⁷¹⁾

Another work Takasu published in 1942 was *Mitogaku Jiten* (Encyclo-

(69) The Sakurada Gate Incident was the assassination of the chief bakufu minister Ii Naosuke by Mito Domain warriors on 24 March, 1860.

(70) Ibid., prefatory notes.

(71) Ibid., 310. The May 15th Incident took place in 1932: a group of young rebel naval officers, hoping to bring about a "Shōwa Restoration," assassinated Premier Inukai Tsuyoshi. They failed to bring about a revolution, but were popularly admired for their courage and patriotism.

pedia of Mitogaku), which perhaps was intended, like *Mitogaku no Hito-bito*, to serve as a reference for the many people becoming interested in Mitogaku.⁽⁷²⁾ As with his other works, he emphasizes how Mitogaku is a spirit of the Japanese *minzoku*, and has a fundamental “Japanese” characteristic.⁽⁷³⁾ That being said, Takasu distances himself from extremes somewhat by stating that “Mitogaku originally emphasized righteousness and morality, but it does not encourage direct action. There is no discourse in Mitogaku which teaches such a thing.”⁽⁷⁴⁾ Therefore, it is “completely wrong to see Mitogaku as fascistic,” he explains, “Fascism has nothing to do with Mitogaku.”⁽⁷⁵⁾ He states emphatically that the “first stage to study Mitogaku is to approach it with a fair mind” (i.e. without being biased by the perception that it is fascistic).⁽⁷⁶⁾ His statements to this effect, of course, tell us that at least some people at the time did understand Mitogaku as fascistic in character, or at least as a philosophy popularly held by fascists.

Elsewhere, he situates the relevance of Mito to the current situation in Japan by framing the issue internationally. “Now the world is disappointed by the decay of Western culture, and despairs at the decline of Chinese and Indian culture,” he states.⁽⁷⁷⁾ It is now to Japan that the world turns its expectations, trying to advance coexistence and co-prosperity with Japan, he continues, pointing out that this has been expressed by many “excellent foreigners in various fields” writing about Japanese

(72) Takasu Yōjirō, *Mitogaku Jiten* (Tokyo: Ida Shoten, 1942).

(73) *Ibid.*, 2.

(74) *Ibid.*, 7.

(75) *Ibid.*

(76) *Ibid.*, 7-8.

(77) *Ibid.*, 53-54.

culture.⁽⁷⁸⁾ These wise foreigners place much emphasis on the need to “respect the Japanese spirit which is unique to Japan, a nation of an immortal and youthful culture,” he argues, concluding therefore that Mitogaku, which developed this very thing for over three centuries, must be valued the most, and studied both broadly and deeply.⁽⁷⁹⁾ This is a clever rhetorical device, suggesting that foreigners appreciate the strength and endurance of Japanese culture more than the Japanese do, thereby shaming his audience into embracing Mitogaku as a method of understanding and appreciating Japanese culture.

While Takasu was a significant figure in the early 1940s, he was not the only one writing about Mitogaku by far. Another notable was Sekiyama Nobu, who in 1941 published *Mitogaku Seizui* (The Essence of Mitogaku).⁽⁸⁰⁾ This was a collection of Mitogaku documents (in original *kambun* with a modern Japanese translation alongside), with an introduction and annotations by Sekiyama. As with Takasu’s *Mitogaku Jiten* and *Mitogaku no Hitobito*, this appears to have been intended as a tool for people interested in Mitogaku at the time, suggesting either an ongoing interest and/or an attempt by scholars to encourage such interest.

Sekiyama, like other scholars at the time, finds commonalities between the time of the Meiji Restoration and current “sacred matters.”⁽⁸¹⁾ The difference, he suggests, is merely that matters have become more complicated in terms of the scale of battles, economic issues, and trying to “achieve the actualization of guiding principles based on the imperial way.”⁽⁸²⁾ Now, of course, he admits, “[we] are trying to make foreigners

(78) Ibid.

(79) Ibid.

(80) Sekiyama Nobu, ed., *Mitogaku Seizui* (Tokyo: Seibundō Shinkōsha, 1941).

(81) Ibid., Sekiyama’s preface.

whose customs are completely different from ours respect our imperial virtue, so the difficulties cannot be compared.”⁽⁸³⁾ The solution is to deal with the foreigners with the great affection of the Tennō, so that, “In other words, we must be ready to devote ourselves to the enhancement of the imperial ways through being ever more passionate admirers of imperial virtue.”⁽⁸⁴⁾ Here, we no longer have just calls for the study of Mitogaku due to its being somehow relevant to the time: rather, there is an identification with a situation in the past used to argue for dealing with contemporary foreigners through ever-greater loyalty and service to the Tennō, something that directly correlates to what the Mitogaku scholars advocated at the end of the Edo Period. Sekiyama believes that,

If it is reverence for the imperial spirit from the time of Gi-Kō which contributed to that great achievement, the Meiji Restoration, then mastering the principles of Mitogaku is an urgent task for us nationals which must be done immediately.⁽⁸⁵⁾

For Sekiyama, the publication of his book itself represents a contribution to the state.

One particular book of note that appeared in 1942 was *Ishin Mito Gakuha no Katsuyaku* (The Activity of the Restorationist Mito School), by Hōjō Takejirō.⁽⁸⁶⁾ People might have been forgiven for thinking that it

(82) Ibid.

(83) Ibid.

(84) Ibid.

(85) Ibid.

(86) Hōjō Takejirō, *Ishin Mito Gakuha no Katsuyaku* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1997).

was a new book by a new author, but this was actually not the case. The book was actually a republication of the book *Mitogaku to Ishin no Fūun* by Hōjō Shigenao from 1932, with which the present article began. Hōjō Takejirō, who was presented as the author of the book, was actually the father of Shigenao, the original author. The reason why the book was republished is given in the preface by the elder Hōjō himself:

Mitogaku to Ishin no Fūun, which was by Shigenao and was published in 1932, became out of print, and as a result it was extremely hard to get the book; however, due to the recent annihilation of liberalism and the rise of nationalism, the fever for learning Mitogaku has become more and more keen....⁽⁸⁷⁾

In this situation, he continues, facing such a high demand for his deceased son's book (which he had originally edited), he revised the work and republished it under his own name.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Precisely why he decided to do this (making it look as if he were taking credit for his son's work) is not explained.

A brief comparison between the two books is thus in order. When we consider the tables of contents, they are almost identical, right down to the section titles and page numbers—except for two points. These differences appear in Chapter 10, and Chapter 56. In Chapter 10, while Shigenao discussed Fujita Tōko and prominent people in the nation, not limiting himself to Mito scholars, Takejiro's version contains only Fujita Tōko and Toda Hōken, who was also a scholar in the Mito Domain. The

(87) *Ibid.*, Takejiro's preface, 4.

(88) *Ibid.*, 4–5.

difference in Chapter 56 is more significant. Although Shigenao's book devotes this chapter to the activities of Katō Ōrō following the Meiji Restoration in Chōshū Domain, Takejiro deletes this completely, and instead discusses Takeda Kōunsai as a pioneer of the "expel the barbarians" movement. Toda and Takeda are not particularly well-known, especially when compared to Fujita Tōko or Aizawa Seishisai. However, Takejirō introduces them in the work, even though it meant deleting some of the discussion that his son Shigenao had originally included. Takejirō states that Fujita Tōko, Takeda Kōunsai, and Toda Hōken were called the "three Ta,"⁽⁸⁹⁾ and further states, peculiarly, that they enjoyed high popularity.⁽⁹⁰⁾

Why did Hōjō Takejirō make these changes to his son's book? Was it to emphasize the importance of Mitogaku and Mito scholars for the Meiji Restoration, given that comparisons to Bakumatsu were in vogue at the time? Even the new title of the book emphasizes Mito scholars and their activity in the Restoration. As we have seen, Mitogaku appears to have been held in high esteem at this time, so the changes may simply reflect the trends of the time celebrating Mitogaku. Adapting his son's book to suit these circumstances would certainly be a plausible decision for Takejirō to have made. For better or for worse, his version has since become the standard one, which is still being republished, and still under his name.

Another important work, which appeared in 1943 at the height of Mitogaku-related publishing, was Tatebayashi Miyatarō's revised *Mitogaku Kenkyū* (Mitogaku Studies).⁽⁹¹⁾ In the preface, Minema Shin-

(89) Since all of their family names carry a variation on "ta."

(90) *Ishin Mito Gakuha no Katsuyaku*, 536.

(91) Tatebayashi Miyatarō, *Mitogaku Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shinkōasha, 1943).

kichi⁽⁹²⁾ writes that,

Recently, there were the Ketsumeidan Incident⁽⁹³⁾ and the May 15th Incident caused by the members of the native-land-loving school. These incidents caught public attention, and many people who worried about the nation seemed to feel great sympathy. We can recognize that each of these incidents was somehow associated with the study of Mito.....Therefore, the demand to understand the essence and gist of Mitogaku has suddenly appeared in public.⁽⁹⁴⁾

This remark is helpful in that, thinking back to 1932 and the 300th anniversary of Mitsukuni's birth, the intersection between Mitogaku thought and political reality came to be seen as apparently bursting forth at that time in the form of young patriots inspired by, in part, Mitogaku ideology. This helps to explain why Mitogaku attracted more attention and became the subject of more and more studies as war loomed on the horizon prompting an even greater sense of crisis.

Tatebayashi, like Takasu Yōjirō, puts significant emphasis on Gi-kō. For Tatebayashi, the essence of Mitogaku is the spirit of Gi-kō, and he addresses Gi-kō as a representative of both humans in general, and the

Tatebayashi had produced a much earlier and less thorough version of the work, also titled *Mitogaku Kenkyū*, in 1917. It was one of the earliest works but remained largely unknown at the time.

(92) According to the table of contents, he was a professor at a college of commerce.

(93) The Ketsumeidan (Blood-Oath Brotherhood), a right-wing terrorist group, assassinated Dan Takamura (a powerful Zaibatsu head) in early 1932.

(94) Ibid., Tatebayashi's preface, 5.

Japanese nation in particular.⁽⁹⁵⁾ He sees Mitogaku not as a dead body of thought needing to be resurrected, but as a living one that persists; indeed, he states that “True Mitogaku is ‘Eternally-living Mitogaku.’”⁽⁹⁶⁾ As for what Mitogaku consists of, he indicates that it is the “True essence of the imperial way,” and that even the project of compiling the *Dai Nihonshi* was nothing but a method of showing the “way” which was the true intention of Gi-kō.⁽⁹⁷⁾

Tatebayashi also puts his work in its context by reflecting upon how Mitogaku scholarship and enthusiasm for it has developed in his own time. He writes, with great enthusiasm and nationalistic fervor:

About twenty-six or -seven years ago, when I published a book on Mitogaku, many people in the Mito area did not even know the name Mitogaku, let alone the general public. However, as I predicted that the time would again come for Mitogaku, which is the essence of the imperial way to control the minds of people, so now the Mitogaku spirit has suddenly made its appearance and it rings in the mind of true Japanese. Looking at such a situation, I cannot help but exclaim “Long live the Tennō! Long live the Great Japanese Empire!” In particular, the soul of the imperial military which brings us a succession of victories in the Great East Asian War today! This is surely the flower and fruit of the spirit of true Mitogaku.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Mitogaku, he continues, is the study that explains and theorizes academi-

(95) Ibid., 7.

(96) Ibid., 8.

(97) Ibid., 9.

(98) Ibid., 9-10.

cally how the soul of the Tennō is expressed in the daily life of the Japanese people.⁽⁹⁹⁾

A final point that bears consideration is his formulation of Mitogaku as something of a unifying force that brings together philosophy, Japanese nationalism, and political action into a totality made manifest in the creation of a new order:

Now Mitogaku is not only the guiding spirit of the Japanese minzoku, but also has become the pioneer of the spirit of the imperial way which controls the philosophy and beliefs of all humanities, as a guiding principle for building the new world along with the conducting of the Great East Asian War, and it has been appointed to the great responsible position of a guide.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

The use of Mitogaku in such a way may have contributed to its ongoing marginalization following the war, but the very fact that it was utilized to these ends suggests that further study of Mitogaku and how it has been interpreted over time would yield results beneficial to more than one area of modern Japanese history.

Another work that came out in 1943 was Kikuchi Kenjirō's *Mitogaku Ronsō* (Studies of Mitogaku).⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Near the beginning, Kikuchi, who had also written a preface for Sekiyama's book, makes reference to the preface of his own previous book, *Mitogaku Kenkyū*, as the "meaning of Mito."⁽¹⁰²⁾ *Mitogaku Kenkyū*, having apparently been published in 1916,

(99) Ibid., 10.

(100) Tatebayashi, *Mitogaku Kenkyū*, 154.

(101) Kikuchi Kenjirō, *Mitogaku Ronsō* (Tokyo: Seibundō Shinkōsha, 1943).

(102) Ibid., preface.

was, like the original edition of Tatebayashi's study with the same title, one of the earliest works on Mitogaku, but appears to have remained largely unknown at the time of its initial release. The 1943 *Mitogaku Ronsō* may have been Kikuchi's attempt to take advantage of the Mitogaku boom in the early 1940s to recycle his old material, even if he did not republish directly as Takasu Yōjirō did.

Of particular importance is the definition that Kikuchi offers for Mitogaku, which was particularly influential and continued to be frequently referred to by later scholars. It runs:

The term "Mitogaku" can be understood as having two different meanings. One refers to the complete studies which had been transmitted in the Mito domain since the first lord. The other refers to the doctrines and principles which were described in the Kōdōkanki (Record of Kōdōkan). From what I understand, the first definition should not be taken; there is no question that "Mitogaku" should mean the latter definition.⁽¹⁰³⁾

Many subsequent scholars orientated their own definition of Mitogaku in response to Kikuchi's, either endorsing or taking issue with it.

Although this work was published in 1943 and Kikuchi had other works and gradually gained influence over time, the principle elements in his view remained constant. What he focuses on is Mitogaku's spirit of reverence for the Tennō. For him, this is the single most important characteristic of Mitogaku, and he believes it is well-expressed in *Kōdōkanki*.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

(103) Ibid., 1.

(104) Ibid.

He also discusses Fujita Tōko's work and associates it with the representative view of Mitogaku. Haga Noboru, who has produced a helpful historiographical work on Mitogaku studies, states that at this point Mitogaku had been studied by focusing on Fujita Yūkoku and Tōko.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ In other words, Kikuchi's view of Tōko as the representative view of the Mitogaku school would not have seemed unusual at the time. "Modern Mitogaku scholarship could be called a history of the deification of Fujita Tōko," notes Haga, who considers Kikuchi's role within this history.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Indeed, he describes Kikuchi as a scholar who admired Tōko to the extent of following a sort of "Tōko religion" throughout his life, and who discussed Mitogaku through focusing on the *Kōdōkanki*.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Kikuchi Kenjirō's influence in the field was palpable. His name continually appears in discussions on Mitogaku scholarship, and he is regarded as having heralded a new epoch in the study of Mitogaku. His death, writes Haga, along with the end of the war, had a dynamic influence which changed the methods of dealing with Mitogaku that had been used through the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

The last work that I will consider in this section is Matsumoto Sumio's *Mitogaku no Genryū* (The Origin of Mitogaku), published in 1945.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ This book, as the preface by Hiraizumi indicates, was published as part of a royal history series.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Matsumoto does not fully reject Kikuchi's

(105) Haga Noboru, *Kindai Mitogaku Kenkyūshi* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shuppan Center, 1996), 16.

(106) *Ibid.*, 94.

(107) *Ibid.*, 97.

(108) *Ibid.*

(109) Matsumoto Sumio, *Mitogaku no Genryū* (Tokyo: Asakura Shoten, 1945).

(110) *Ibid.*, Hiraizumi's preface.

definition of Mitogaku, but he suggests that the latter presents a view grasping Mitogaku only from the sentences of the *Kōdōkanki*, without considering other aspects.⁽¹¹¹⁾ Matsumoto points out that the major writings of Mitogaku, such as the *Kōdōkanki* or writings by Fujita Tōko or Aizawa Seishisai, indicate that the origin of the spirit of Mitogaku dates back to the first and second lords of Mito (Yorifusa and Mitsukuni), and he is critical of Kikuchi for not rooting Mitogaku's origins in their era.⁽¹¹²⁾ It is very common in writings on Mitogaku, as several of the examples discussed so far have illustrated, for Mitsukuni to be presented as the origin of Mitogaku, but it is rare for Yorifusa to be included as well. For Matsumoto, however, Mitogaku begins with the birth of the Mito Domain itself, and so its origins are automatically associated with the first lord of the domain, Yorifusa. Matsumoto sees Mitogaku developing along with the history of the domain itself, simply defining Mitogaku as studies of the Mito Domain.⁽¹¹³⁾ Consequently, he emphasizes the importance of considering historical facts of the domain in order to understand Mito, rather than counting on Mitogaku writings alone.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ However, he is careful to indicate that although Mitogaku is strongly connected with the Mito Domain, this does not mean that any form of study that emerged in the area could be called Mitogaku—rather, the base of Mitogaku studies remains *sonnō-jōi*.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

To sum up, clearly from its inception scholarship on Mitogaku was varied and hotly contested. In the early 1930s, political crises coupled

(111) Matsumoto, 2.

(112) *Ibid.*, 2-3.

(113) *Ibid.*, 8.

(114) *Ibid.*, 313.

(115) *Ibid.*, 3.

with the 300th anniversary of Tokugawa Mitsukuni's birth sparked interest in Mitogaku, which up until that point had not been studied to any great extent. Scholars began publishing more, and the number of works increased throughout the late 1930s. Many of these works encouraged Japanese to turn to Mitogaku to resolve contemporary issues, while implying that Mito-inspired ideologies could usher in a new restoration as they reputedly had with the Meiji Restoration. In some cases, Mitogaku became associated with a romanticized form of Japanese nationhood and identity bound up with the "imperial way," which was offered as an alternative to excessive Westernization. This trend only intensified during the 1940s, when numerous works on Mitogaku were published. The onset of war led to the more direct association of Mitogaku with political action, as some writers drew upon it to justify imperialism and war while others elected to focus on textual analysis and distance themselves from political events.

With defeat, and the discrediting of Mitogaku as an ideology to save Japan from foreigners (it had failed to do so) and as a tool of nationalism (it was associated with those who led Japan into a hopeless war in the first place), it was perhaps inevitable that the energy poured into Mitogaku scholarship up until 1945 was to find new directions in the postwar era.

2. Postwar Scholarship on Mitogaku (1946—1995)

The early postwar period witnessed the development of new approaches to the intellectual history of the Edo period, but these still largely treated Mitogaku as a marginalized entity collapsed by mainstream intellectual historians into the categories of either Kokugaku or

Confucianism. Major works on Tokugawa intellectual history barely touched upon Mitogaku, almost incognizant of the achievements of pre-war scholarship. Was this in spite of the brief burst of popularity Mitogaku had enjoyed, or a dismissive reaction to it?

Chief among the leading intellectual historians in the immediate post-war period were Nakamura Hajime and Maruyama Masao, both of whom had works translated into English, and the latter of whom enjoyed immense influence on both sides of the Pacific. Both of these towering intellectuals, but especially Maruyama, set the tone and framework for postwar Tokugawa intellectual history, so their conceptualization of Mitogaku was profoundly important. It is unfortunate, then, that neither appears to have considered Mitogaku of much relevance.

In his monumental *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, originally published in the years 1948 and 1949 and then translated into English in 1964, Nakamura Hajime's treatment of Mitogaku was merely perfunctory.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ The Mito School, asserted Nakamura, was one school of Japanese Confucianism: there were Jinsai's school, the Kaitokudō school, and the Mito School, and "All of these three schools of Japanese Confucianism aimed at "no falsehood, no deception," as their ideal. Herein lies one of the characteristics of Japanese Confucian doctrine."⁽¹¹⁷⁾

Mitogaku fared little better in Maruyama's masterwork, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*. Because of the great influence that Maruyama exerted in the postwar era, both in Japanese scholarship and in English-language scholarship, it is important to briefly sketch his

(116) Nakamura Hajime, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), revised edition.

(117) *Ibid.*, 521.

view of Tokugawa intellectual history and how Mitogaku fits within it.

Maruyama's framework emphasizes a transition from theories of natural order to theories of invention. His assumption is that nature-based theories are premodern and more traditional in character, while invention-based theories are modern and progressive. Modern thinkers are therefore those who move away from nature and towards invention. Maruyama thinks that this transition could have occurred in the Edo period, with the thought of Ogyū Sorai. However, he did not go far enough, and then Kokugaku emerged and emphasized a 'natural order' again, delaying the onset of invention until the Meiji Restoration, when Japan could finally become 'modern.' All of the schools and thinkers Maruyama examines thus tend to be put into this framework of a transition from nature to invention.

This raises the question of how Mitogaku fits into this framework. For Maruyama, Mitogaku was one of the things that delayed the rise of invention (and therefore, delayed the onset of Japanese modernization). This was because of Mitogaku's emphasis on national unity against the foreign threat, and more importantly, the idea that the existing natural order (the bakufu and class system) should be strongly accepted in order to face said foreign threat.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ For Maruyama, Mitogaku serves a role akin to that of Kokugaku—a reactionary movement that prevented the onset of modernization that had, in his view, sparked briefly with Sorai.

He quotes Aizawa's *Tekiihen*, where Aizawa warns about the dangers should Japan copy other countries, namely, that Japan will cease to be a

(118) Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, 304–305.

superior and unique nation and descend into degeneracy like those foreign countries that are without order.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ With this as an example of *jōi* (“expel the barbarian”) thinking, he then turns to *sonnō* (“revere the Tennō”), with a further quote from the same work illustrating Aizawa’s emphasis on supporting the Tennō and Bakufu.⁽¹²⁰⁾ In contrast to many of the prewar writers on Mitogaku, this characteristic is for Maruyama wholly negative: “Thus, rather than calling for any transformation of the feudal order, it [*sonnō*] arose at first as an ideological reaffirmation of it. Typical of this trend was the Mito school of the late Tokugawa period.”⁽¹²¹⁾ Still another quotation from the same work illustrates how Aizawa’s views were rooted in a theory of natural order and not invention (“This is the great way of nature, it is not the invention of man...”).⁽¹²²⁾ Maruyama’s view of Aizawa, and his notion of Aizawa as representative of the Mito school in general, was widely influential; the key Mito text became Aizawa’s *Shinron*, which Maruyama claimed presented the “late Mito school position...most systematically” and was the “bible of the sonnō-jōi movement.”⁽¹²³⁾

To a considerable extent, this dismissive, largely negative assessment became the mainstream view of Mitogaku in Tokugawa intellectual history. This was likely one of the factors that led to the dearth of Mitogaku scholarship in the immediate postwar period, the other, more obvious factor, being the nationalist, even imperialist, connotations that had come to be attached to Mitogaku in the late 1930s and during the war. Haga

(119) Ibid., 304.

(120) Ibid., 305.

(121) Ibid., 304.

(122) Ibid.

(123) Ibid., 353–354.

points out that scholarship before and during the war had been focused on the division of the stages of development of Mitogaku, and the charting of the changes in its characteristics.⁽¹²⁴⁾

The postwar scholars, however, were in no condition to build on any of this work and take it in new directions. The largest difference with the prewar era was simply the amount of scholarship, which dropped after the war nearly to nonexistence. There was activity—as we shall see momentarily, there were several essays published not too long after the war—but in terms of dedicated monographs, there was basically an empty space lasting some two decades. What little Mitogaku scholarship existed had dropped out of the public eye and was likely so marginalized as to be nearly inaccessible.

Such a situation is well expressed by Nagoya Tokimasa in the preface to his *Mitogaku no Kenkyū* in 1975.⁽¹²⁵⁾ He starts by stating that, “studies on Mitogaku had been almost “frozen” for nearly 30 years after the war, but it has begun to come around [again] recently.”⁽¹²⁶⁾ We can speculate, of course, that the reason for this “freezing” was that Mitogaku had become deeply associated with the sort of “Long live the Tennō!” ideology such as that expressed by Tatebayashi Miyatarō. Moreover, in the postscript of his work, Nagoya mentions that “the articles in this book were, except one, written in the post-war period—and that is after 1954.”⁽¹²⁷⁾ It can be gathered that the gap between pre-war and post-war Mitogaku studies was significant when a scholar expressly sets out that his articles

(124) Haga, 93.

(125) Nagoya Tokimasa, *Mitogaku no Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Shintō Shigakukai, 1975).

(126) *Ibid.*, Nagoya’s preface.

(127) *Ibid.*, 506.

were produced more than ten years after the war, when the previous scholarship had immediately died out. Neither was this a coincidence. Nagoya sheds some light on one reason why this was the case:⁽¹²⁸⁾

Occupation policy, which tried to re-organize Japan by eliminating historical tradition, was particularly harsh towards Mitogaku. Mitogaku was reprimanded as if it was the root of the militarism; the related books were, not only made forbidden, but even received the calamity of being burned.⁽¹²⁹⁾

In other words, Mitogaku had suffered from its association with war-time ultranationalism to such an extent that it was suppressed by the US Occupation authorities. Having made this lamentation, Nagoya attempted to turn things around and return some life to the landscape of Mitogaku studies, becoming a leading scholar in the postwar scholarship.

Nagoya's aforementioned *Mitogaku no Kenkyū* was published in its

(128) Regarding why Mitogaku was not studied after the war for a while, Ienaga Saburō also made an interesting comment. He was a member of the generation brought up under the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education, and felt terrible psychological pressure towards “Kokutai ideology.” This ‘allergy,’ caused by his experiences as a youth, prevented him from beginning an intellectual examination of Mitogaku although he had read the major Mitogaku works. “How much meaning does Mitogaku have as intellectual wealth, aside from the empirical achievement of *Dai Nihonshi*?” he asks, “I could not find any clues to lead me to a positive answer.” (Ienaga Saburō, preface to Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu: Meiji Ishinshi no Saikentō* (Tokyo: Honpō Shoseki, 1986).

(129) Nagoya, *Mitogaku no Kenkyū*, Nagoya's preface.

present form in 1975. Even excluding the one article written in then war-time era (“Mitogaku and Kokugaku”, published in 1944), the year that each of the articles in the compilation was first published ranges widely, from 1954 to 1969. Thus, it is reasonable to understand this work as representing earlier scholarship than is indicated by the volume’s year of publication.⁽¹³⁰⁾ In his work, Nagoya takes up *FusoShui-Shu*, not the typical *Dai-Nihonshi*, to discuss the philosophy of Mitsukuni. He was later criticized for this, however, by Yoshida Toshizumi, who felt that his work was “not approaching Mitsukuni’s philosophy by analyzing the content of *FusoShui-shu*; it is just discussing the conditions of how it was edited and the people involved in it, and then connected the discussion with Nagoya’s own view of Mitsukuni.”⁽¹³¹⁾

Nagoya was not the only scholar publishing articles during the post-war dry spell in Mitogaku studies. In 1968, Tomo Kiichi published a significant article, “Kinsei Kōki no Shushigaku to Mitogaku tono Kankei: Shihai no Ronri wo megutte” (The Relationship of Neo-Confucianism and Mitogaku).⁽¹³²⁾ This piece was presented at a symposium that was dedicated to the role in East Asia of ideology in dealing with foreign pressure. Tomo does not just focus on Mitogaku in this article, as is evident from the title; he discusses Mitogaku and Neo-Confucianism in terms of

(130) This is just my speculation, but considering the fact that it took nearly 20 years just for some of these old essays to be reprinted as a volume, I wonder if while there might have been difficulties to publish a book on Mitogaku after the war, essays were more acceptable.

(131) Yoshida Toshimizu, *Mito Mitsukuni no Jidai: Mitogaku no Genryū* (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 2000), 222.

(132) Tomo Kiichi, “Kinsei Kōki no Shushigaku to Mitogaku tono Kankei: Shihai no Ronri wo megutte” *Shigaku Kenkyū* 103 (May 1968): 85-88.

their meaning as a ruler's ideology used to deal with national crises.⁽¹³³⁾ He also argues that, in contrast to the view that Mitogaku did not embrace action, late Mitogaku changed the way of warrior rule not only at the philosophical level, but also put it into action.⁽¹³⁴⁾

Another noteworthy article came out in the same year as Nagoya's book. Miyazawa Seiichi's "Bakumatsu ni okeru Tennō wo meguru Sishōshiteki Dōkō: Mitogaku wo Chūshin ni" (Intellectual Tendencies on the Tennō in Bakumatsu) discusses the Tennō by focusing on Mitogaku.⁽¹³⁵⁾ The reason why he limited his examination to Mitogaku, and especially late Mitogaku, is that he understands it as an intellectual prerequisite for Bakumatsu political history; furthermore, he thinks that late Mitogaku holds a key to understanding the political characteristics of the dissolution of the Bakuhan state system, and how the Tennō emerged as the focus.⁽¹³⁶⁾

Yoshida Masahiko also focuses on later Mitogaku in his 1980 article, "Kōki Mitogaku no Ronri" (The Logic of Late Mitogaku).⁽¹³⁷⁾ Yoshida was one of the first scholars to carefully organize previous scholarship in the field, classifying scholarly evaluations of Mitogaku into three large categories:

(133) Ibid., 85.

(134) Ibid., 86.

(135) Miyazawa Seiichi, "Bakumatsu ni okeru Tennō wo meguru Sishōshiteki Dōkō: Mitogaku wo Chūshin ni," *Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, November 1975: 138-146; 142.

(136) Ibid.

(137) Yoshida Masahiko, "Kōki Mitogaku no Ronri: Bakufu no Sōtaika to Tokugawa Nariaki," *Kikan Nihon Shisōshi* 13 (April 1980): 21-39.

1. The view that the philosophy of Mitogaku was essentially an ideology of supporting the Tokugawa Bakuhan system, and did not play any positive role in the Meiji Restoration (this view is represented by Toyama Shigeki and Yamaguchi Muneyuki).
2. The view that Mitogaku's function of unifying the minds of the people in Kokutai thought is effective not only during the time of the Bakuhan system, but also in the modern Tennō-system state (this view is represented by Ofuji Masahide).
3. A position between the first and second view. The view that the philosophy (concerning reverence for the Tennō, and the reformation of the military system) of late Mitogaku was succeeded, and further developed, by non-Mitogaku scholars, and became the intellectual foundation of the Meiji Restoration.⁽¹³⁸⁾

Yoshida points out that such disagreements in theory stem from the differences in the evaluation of two points, namely, what is the essence of Mitogaku, and whether or not its essential content could serve as the intellectual underpinning for the Meiji Restoration and/or the modern Tennō-system state.⁽¹³⁹⁾ This indicates that these issues were vaguely understood and served to divide views on Mitogaku.

In order to organize these disagreements in the understanding of Mitogaku, Yoshida tries to examine late Mitogaku from the perspective of considering whether a system-supporting political ideology formed in a time of peace could maintain logical consistency in a time of chaos, when the system was threatened by crisis and its believers had to assert influ-

(138) Ibid., 21.

(139) Ibid., 21-22.

ence due to changing circumstances.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Yoshida's answer is an emphatic 'no'; he recognizes that late Mitogaku underwent transitions, and that it changed depending on the situation and/or need.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ The principles of late Mitogaku in peacetime became split and further developed due to the transition of the political situation, producing plural theories in the "time of chaos"—in particular, he explains, there was a division into two conflicting ideologies, one anti-Bakufu in character and the other supportive of the Bakufu, so that in the Meiji Restoration Mitogaku actually played contradictory roles.⁽¹⁴²⁾ Yoshida's view therefore provides a corrective to previous approaches because he theorizes the complexity of Mitogaku and reveals that it was not a constant, monolithic ideology.

Haga mentions that the historical studies side of Mitogaku came to receive more attention in the postwar period.⁽¹⁴³⁾ One such work in this trend was *Mito Shigaku no Dentō* (The Tradition of Mito Historical Studies) by Kobayashi Kenzō and Yoshibumi Terunuma.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ The definition of Mitogaku, the authors argue, is those studies that were undertaken with history as their foundation.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ They argue that this "history" is very broad in scope, and are critical of the general view of the day that saw Mito historical studies as clearly delineating good and evil and punishing vice.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ They then redefine Mitogaku as studies that showed that cere-

(140) Ibid.

(141) Ibid.

(142) Ibid., 39.

(143) Haga, 160.

(144) Kobayashi Kenzō, and Yoshibumi Terunuma, *Mito Shigaku no Dentō* (Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1983).

(145) Kobayashi and Yoshibumi, 175–176.

(146) Ibid.

mony (*matsuri*), politics (*matsurigoto*), and philosophy were all one, namely the national essence (*kokutai*) of Japan, as described in the *Dai Nihonshi* and other works.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

In contrast to the perspective of much earlier scholarship, the authors state that the term “Mito historical studies” is not limited to meaning only a study of the local area; rather, “it represents the studies of Japan, and means those studies that were created by focusing on the editing of the *Dai Nihonshi* started by Mito Gi-kō.”⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Mitogaku valued historical studies, they continue, and emphasized empirical study—the Mito historical methodology was based on these attitudes and thorough historical examination.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ The Mito studies represented the highest academic level in terms of the historical research tradition as well, and so naturally always had a strong influence over other areas: indeed, the authors remind us, there was a tradition of Tokugawa historiography, and Mito historical studies in particular, that formed much of the foundation of the development of historical studies after the Meiji era.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Despite this key role of Mitogaku in the evolution of Japanese historical studies as a whole, however, most of the pre-1945 scholarship focused on late Mitogaku ideologies and considered Mito historical studies as either a different tangent or something completely separate from Mitogaku proper (Kikuchi, for example), complain the authors. The work seeks to offer a corrective by focusing on Mito historical studies and situating them within the broader framework of the Japanese historiographical tradition.⁽¹⁵¹⁾

(147) Ibid.

(148) Ibid., 175.

(149) Ibid.

(150) Ibid.

In 1985, Nagoya Tokimasa, by then one of the leading postwar scholars of Mitogaku, published *Mito Mitsukuni to sono Yokō* (Mito Mitsukuni and His Influence).⁽¹⁵²⁾ As with his 1975 work discussed above, it was a collection of essays, originally published from 1974 to 1983. One of the first things to notice is that Nagoya does not reverently call Mitsukuni “Gi-kō,” unlike almost all of the pre-1945 scholarship and much of the postwar scholarship. That being said, however, as a student of Hiraizumi Kiyoshi’s⁽¹⁵³⁾, who admired Mitsukuni as “the greatest person ever,”⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ Nagoya still understands Mitsukuni in a similar, idealized way: “I really think [Mitsukuni is] the leader of one hundred generations.”⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ At times this is problematic. For instance, in his portrayal of Mitsukuni as a person who respected the *kami*, Nagoya states that Mitsukuni had thoroughly carried out the separation of the *kami* and buddhas.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ However, this separation had not yet occurred in the time of Mitsukuni, at least not as a state policy. In other words, Nagoya’s view of Mitsukuni is not only based on an anachronistic viewpoint, but also shows his tendency to emphasize Mitsukuni as a supporter of Shintō. Nagoya depicts Mitsukuni as a person who respected Shintō, supported the court, and contributed

(151) Ibid., 197.

(152) Nagoya Tokimasa, *Mito Mitsukuni to Sono Yokō* (Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1985).

(153) In his preface, Nagoya himself indicates that he was taught by Hiraizumi for nearly 50 years. It was Hiraizumi’s “Kōkoku-shikan” (Tennō-centered view of history) that gave Ienaga Saburō his bitter memories (mentioned earlier) about Mitogaku.

(154) Nagoya Tokimasa, “Mito no Gakumon wo Kenkyū shite,” *Geirin* 49 (May 2000): 2-16; 15.

(155) Nagoya, *Mito Mitsukuni to Sono Yokō*, Nagoya’s preface.

(156) Ibid., 39.

to bringing the royal authority back to its original ancient form. In this regard, his view does not differ so much from that of the pre-1945 scholarship. Despite his efforts to distinguish himself from that legacy, it is not difficult to ascertain its influence in his work.

In the same year, Yoshida Toshizumi published *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu* (Introduction to Late Mitogaku Studies), a work to which I have already referred to at various junctures because of its historiography and excellent chronological tables. Yoshida affirms that through the prewar and postwar periods, Mitogaku has not been studied much.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ The important terminologies which express the various key concepts of Mitogaku—such as *meibun*, *kokutai*, *sonnō-jōi*—have rarely become the object of academic analysis, and this is even more the case with the contradiction and conflicts within Mitogaku, and the association of it with the modern era, all of which have been thoroughly neglected.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ Yoshida goes on to say that, as can be seen in the analysis by Yoshida Masahiko, Tōyama Shigeki's theory that Mitogaku was not an intellectual force behind the Meiji Restoration is considered to be the consensus view.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ For Yoshida, Tōyama's understanding is based on the assumption that Mitogaku did not hold the ability to harness the anti-feudal energy of the lower classes, an assumption of which Yoshida is critical.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

Yoshida argues that late Mitogaku must not be understood as constituting a uniform philosophy, but instead as having been in the process of being formed into a pure theory academically.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ He points out the pos-

(157) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Kōki Mitogaku Kenkyū Josetsu*, 182.

(158) *Ibid.*

(159) *Ibid.*, 183.

(160) *Ibid.*

(161) *Ibid.*, 182–185. Toyama believed that there was no intellectual connection

sibilities of various developments, and in this regard, presents something akin to what Yoshida Masahiko had suggested. Yoshida also situates himself against the trend in postwar scholarship that both heavily emphasized Aizawa's *Shinron* and also saw the process of overcoming Mitogaku as modern in character.⁽¹⁶²⁾ In other words, he positions himself squarely against Maruyama Masao's approach. As previously mentioned, Yoshida includes chronological tables of Mitogaku, covering the Mitogaku scholars and their works as well as historical incidents, making the work a particularly helpful resource.

Another scholar who, like Nagoya, published a collection of essays, is Arakawa Kusuo. His 1987 work, *Mito Shigaku no Gendaiteki Igi* (The Contemporary Significance of Mito Historical Studies), collects together essays from 1964 to 1984 that, like the work of Kobayashi and Yoshibumi, focus on Mitogaku historical studies.⁽¹⁶³⁾ Arakawa's work, however, is less empirical, and he tellingly still refers to Mitsukuni as Gi-kō. While he backs up his interpretation through primary sources, his reading is

between Mitogaku and the various military groups in Chōshū Domain, but, although it is prewar scholarship, Hōjō Shigenao discussed how that domain received a significant intellectual influence from Mitogaku. I wonder whether the negative attitude towards pre-1945 scholarship led to Hōjō's work being neglected. Also, Toyama's understanding strikes me as somewhat Marxist in terms of his emphasis on power from below.

(162) Ibid., 185. Note that while there are other works by Aizawa, only *Shinron* has been translated into English. Yet while other works have been neglected, there has actually been more than one translation of *Shinron*, suggesting the presence of the tendency (which Yoshida is against) in postwar scholarship to see *Shinron* as the core expression of the Mito school is present in English-language scholarship as well.

(163) Arakawa Kusuo, *Mito Shigaku no Gendaiteki Igi* (Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1987).

largely uncritical, to such an extent that his analysis proceeds largely from his assumptions. He praises Fujita Yūkoku as a person who learned his morality from Gi-kō, revived Mitogaku, and who, moreover, through teaching it to Tōko or Aizawa Seshisai, led the Meiji Restoration.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ On Fujita Tōko, he writes “In sum, Fujita Tōko has to be highly praised, as one of a few old philosophers who showed the indication of the correct studies of Japan brilliantly, as long as Japan exists.”⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Arakawa, in short, still understands Mitogaku as a single uniform philosophy with no variation, having persisted since the time of its creation under an idealized Mitsukuni.

Another work deserving mention is Katsurajima Nobuhiro's *Bakumatsu Minshū Shisō no Kenkyū* (Studies of Bakumatsu Popular Thought), which has a particularly relevant chapter, “Kokugaku to Kōki Mitogaku,” in which the author takes up a comparison between the titular schools of thought.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Katsurajima concludes that they had substantial differences, and it appears that in his view this fact had been missed because previous comparisons, of which there were many in the pre-1945 period, were biased by the “Tennō-centric view of history.”⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

In 1992, Nagoya Tokimasa published yet another collection of essays on Mitogaku, this one entitled *Mitogaku no Tassei to Tenkai* (The Achievement and Development of Mitogaku).⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ This collection consists

(164) Ibid., 165.

(165) Ibid.

(166) Katsurajima Nobuhiro, “Kokugaku to Kōki Mitogaku,” in Katsurajima, *Bakumatsu Minshū Shisō no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Bunrikaku, 1992), 243–265.

(167) Hoshiyama Kyoko points this out as well in an endnote to her article, “Kokugaku to Kōki Mitogaku no Hikaku: Tōchiron ni okeru Tami to Kishin wo Chūshin ni,” *Nihon Sisōshi* 47 (1996): 100–114; 113.

of essays he had published since his previous compilation volume, *Mito Mitsukuni to sono Yokō* (1985), along with some others from before. His scholarship remained largely consistent in perspective and methodology over time, but because the introduction to this book was written right when the book was published and summarizes his recent observations, so it warrants brief consideration.

Nagoya acknowledges that Mitogaku received stimulation from other schools as well as historical circumstances both within and outside the country, but he feels that these are all secondary, and that “the principle should be understood to have been developed through pursuing Mitsukuni’s will and ambition.”⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ The desires of Mitsukuni and Nariaki evolved into deeper thought in the form of Mitogaku, “and the ambitions of the old thinkers and students, who spread the teaching at the risk of their lives, were achieved in the time of Meiji,” he explains.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Nagoya thus still understands Mitogaku as a largely uniform ideology transmitted from Mitsukuni and Nariaki on down, with little diversification. Even now he retains this clearly idealized edge to this thinking. Reflecting on the place of Mitogaku in the present, he states that,

If we [present-day Japanese] are satisfied with only the development of economics, and the state has no ideals, and the people (kokumin) have no morals, then we Japanese of today must be afraid of the Dai Nihonshi now. We should sincerely think over the Way that the Mito protected since the time of Mitsukuni.⁽¹⁷¹⁾

(168) Nagoya Tokimasa, *Mitogaku no Tassei to Tenkai* (Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1992).

(169) *Ibid.*, 19.

(170) *Ibid.*, 23.

This emphasis on Mitogaku in the present, and how learning from Mitogaku could help alleviate a perceived national decline, clearly echoes the characteristics of the pre-1945 scholarship discussed earlier. Nagoya continues with this reasoning, stating that,

In the constant changes of world history, such as in Germany, Iraq, or the Soviet Union, even though Japan is a small country in Asia, it has had no revolution or collapse, and has lasted, being proud of [its] traditions which have not changed since the creation of the country. We should think how such a Japan still receives the expectations from each country and each people, even today.... In thinking about such a history of our country, although there are many things, the first cannot be anything but that great achievement, the Meiji Restoration.⁽¹⁷²⁾

Nagoya's view appears to be that, even today, Japan should serve as the model of the world, due to its (supposedly) ideal development until the present, rooted in traditions it has apparently preserved since time immemorial. The greatest achievement in this long history is the Meiji Restoration, which appears to Nagoya as directly emerging from Mitogaku. Here we have a romanticized notion of Mitogaku as some sort of pure, unchanging manifestation of a fundamental Japanese essence, situated within an equally romanticized notion of Japanese history that borders on the ahistorical. Ultimately Nagoya's view of Mitogaku, for all of his scholarly contributions, cleaved more closely to the romanticized notions of the pre-1945 era than the empirical and historical studies

(171) Ibid., 23-24.

(172) Ibid., 11-12.

approaches of the later postwar era. This should serve to remind us of the enduring power of such a mythic view of Mitogaku even today.

Finally, mention should be made of an article by Ogawa Tadashi in 1994, “Kōki Mitogaku to Taisei Hōkan” (Later Mitogaku and the Return of Political [Power to the Tennō]), that, amongst other things, reassesses the role of Mitogaku in the collapse of the Bakufu.⁽¹⁷³⁾ Ogawa sees Mitogaku as closer to the anti-Bakufu position, but from the perspective of the inside.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ He argues that it was the philosophy of Mitogaku, without question, that helped take down the Bakufu from the inside, decreasing the resistance among Bakufu supporters, and causing the Boshin War to develop favourably.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ This view of a more subtle, behind-the-scenes role of Mitogaku in the fall of the Bakufu is appealing and warrants further study.

Having traced the development of scholarship on Mitogaku from the end of the war into the mid-1990s in Japan, it would now be helpful to step back and consider a parallel trajectory of Japanese intellectual history: that of English-language scholarship, which was influenced by Japanese scholarship but developed along its own path.

3. English-Language Scholarship on Mitogaku (1964—Present)

Given the increasing amount of scholarship and translations pertaining

(173) Ogawa Tadashi, “Kōki Mitogaku to Taisei Hōkan: Gendai Nihon no Genryū wo Motomete,” *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* 1616 (October 1994): 84–98.

(174) *Ibid.*, 90–91.

(175) *Ibid.*

to Tokugawa Japan being published in English, it is unfortunate that the situation largely mirrors that in Japan in that there is very little to be found pertaining to Mitogaku. Nevertheless, there have been occasional forays by English-language scholars of Japanese history into the area, and here I will sketch a brief outline of that particular historiographical trajectory. Given that only J. Victor Koschmann's book is specifically concerned with Mitogaku, for the purposes of this section I will broaden my scope to include other works that touch upon Mitogaku only to a limited extent.

Likely the work through which many English-language scholars of Japan initially became acquainted with Mitogaku was *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, an edited volume first published in 1958 that included a variety of translated primary materials. It contained a section, less than twenty pages in length, which introduced "The Later Mito School" and included a translation of small parts of Aizawa's *Shinron*.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ This short piece is important because at the time of publication it was in all probability the *only* thing in English that most scholars, and definitely students, could find pertaining to Mitogaku. The rising political power of Mito, claims the piece, was due significantly to "the simple and forceful doctrines disseminated by its leading schoolmen," (some famous slogans such as "Bumbu-fugi" are provided as examples).⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ Mitogaku, the section continues, was an attempt to bring together political, religious, intellectual, and other elements in order, like the "Neo-Shintoists" (by which one can on only assume that they mean Kokugaku adherents), to unite the country against foreign threats.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ It appears that the editors (Tsu-

(176) Tsunoda Ryusaku, et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Volume II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 1964 two volume ed.

(177) *Ibid.*, 85.

noda, DeBary, and Keene) do not consider Mitogaku to be a particularly serious school of thought, and they largely reduce it to *sonnō-jōi*, just as Maruyama and other Japanese scholars had done.

Harry Harootunian's *Toward Restoration* was likely one of the first English-language intellectual histories of the late Edo period and the Meiji Restoration, and it also stands as one of the first books that touches on Mitogaku in English.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Harootunian situates himself to some extent as building on the work of Tōyama Shigeki but correcting his view.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ For Harootunian, Mitogaku did not directly lead to the Meiji Restoration (as much of the prewar scholarship on Mitogaku argued); activists, he argues, were initially inspired by Mitogaku, but they then proceeded to pick up other ideas instead, which became the key ideological tools for the Meiji Restoration.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ He writes, "...it is my purpose to show in this study that the intellectual sources of the Restoration did not originate in Mito."⁽¹⁸²⁾

Yet, continues Harootunian, if Mitogaku did not lead to the Meiji Restoration, then what was its meaning in late Tokugawa? Clearly, the Mitogaku scholars took the first steps; they felt that there were serious problems to be fixed, and they began a process of politicization to try and address those issues: crucially, they devised methods to adapt an ethical theory into action.⁽¹⁸³⁾ Even after their own particular solutions

(178) Ibid., 85–87.

(179) Harry D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

(180) Ibid., xxvii–xxix.

(181) Ibid., xxxi.

(182) Ibid.

were rejected, their *methods* were still being used by people in Bakumatsu times—these methods of politicizing thought into action comprised the Mitogaku heritage which, used by others, led to the Restoration and beyond.⁽¹⁸⁴⁾

He indicates that the Mito scholars were “mainly concerned with domestic economic failure, especially at the domainal level,” but this was largely because they interpreted economic failure as an indicator of a larger problem, namely moral failure in society.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ They believed that this could be corrected through moral rectification, which would then allow the domains to focus on the foreign threat.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ For Harootunian, Mitogaku was significant not as a set of ideas per se, but as an approach: Mito established a “tradition of discourse,” he explains, which had an enormous influence.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ While the Mito scholars were ultimately failures—they could not see what was happening or expand their view from the domain to the nation proper—their rhetoric and methodology became the standard for virtually everyone from that point on until long after they had themselves faded from view.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

Kate Wildman Nakai is another historian who has written on Mitogaku in English. In a 1984 essay, “Tokugawa Confucian Historiography: The Hayashi, Early Mito School and Arai Hakuseki,” she examined various methods of writing history in the Tokugawa era.⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Her essay is particularly meaningful in that, not only does she discuss the Mito school, but

(183) Ibid., xxxii–xxxii.

(184) Ibid.

(185) Ibid., 33.

(186) Ibid., 33–34.

(187) Ibid., 36–37.

(188) Ibid., 36–41.

her focus is on Mito historiography and the *Dai Nihonshi*, whereas even today most English scholarship on Mito has, just as was the case with early prewar Japanese scholarship, emphasized the philosophy of the late Mito school more than the historical work of the early Mito school.

Nakai examines the Chinese historiographical tradition, and the relation between Confucian concepts and Japanese historical reality. It is within this context that she situates her discussion of Tokugawa historiography. Her account of Tokugawa Mitsukuni's background, such as the famous account of his becoming inspired by the account of Bo Yi and Shuqi in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, closely follows the Japanese consensus at the time, although she raises the possibility of psychological burdens that Mitsukuni may have carried due to his initial illegitimacy and resulting tensions with his father.⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ She also identifies two factors concerning the situation of Mito: frustration that the Mito house was not on par with the other two branches (meaning that Mito scholars had a desire to prove themselves), and a sense that Mito had a special mission to defend the Tokugawa and the Bakufu.⁽¹⁹¹⁾ Mitsukuni's personal ideals and Mito's situation together drove the idea of Mito having a special mission, which came to be expressed through the *Dai Nihonshi* project.⁽¹⁹²⁾ Nakai also gives attention to issues such as the role of moralizing in Confucian historiography, and how the Mito scholars balanced this with the

(189) Kate Wildman Nakai, "Tokugawa Confucian Historiography: The Hayashi, Early Mito School and Arai Hakuseki," *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture*, ed. Peter Nosco (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 62–91.

(190) *Ibid.*, 73.

(191) *Ibid.*, 74–75.

(192) *Ibid.*, 75.

idea of legitimating and defending the Bakufu.⁽¹⁹³⁾

Given the extent to which postwar Japanese scholars had emphasized Aizawa's *Shinron* as the quintessential Mitogaku text, and English-language scholars followed suit, it is not surprising that a complete English translation was forthcoming at some point. One was published in 1986 and shortly became the standard, widespread translation. This was Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi's *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan: The New Theses of 1825*.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾

In his extended introduction, Wakabayashi, perhaps echoing Maruyama, says that the “[*Shinron*] was a virtual bible to activists in the “revere the Emperor, expel the barbarian” movement.”⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ Also like Maruyama, he notes in an endnote that Mitogaku for him means the late Mito school, not the early Mito school; the late Mito school he explains as the politicization of Confucianism, as expressed in ideas like the aforementioned *sonnō-jōi* and so forth.⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Mitogaku, he explains, was a final ideological attempt to support the Bakufu feudal system; this system and the Mitogaku ideas which supported it then had to be gotten rid of before Japan could undergo the Meiji Restoration, and experience the advance of industry and capitalism, and a powerful centralized nation-state.⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Here more than anywhere else we can observe Wakabayashi following a similar line of thought to that taken by Maruyama. For Wak-

(193) Ibid., 76.

(194) Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Anti-Foreignism and Western Learning in Early-Modern Japan: The New Theses of 1825* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991).

(195) Ibid, ix.

(196) Ibid., 283n.

(197) Ibid., 3–4.

abayashi too, Mitogaku defended the Bakufu and was a barrier to progress and modernization. He discusses a contrast between practical, open-minded Rangaku (Dutch Learning) scholars, and backwards-thinking, close-minded Mitogaku scholars.⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ He basically accepts this viewpoint, but says that in his work on Aizawa he is more interested in finding from where anti-foreign thought originated than in seeing how it underwent decline later.⁽¹⁹⁹⁾

One of Wakabayashi's most thought-provoking points is to remind us that we often think of *Shinron* as old-fashioned thinking, but this is largely from a Meiji viewpoint; in 1825 when the work was first completed, it was considered radical and dangerous because it was so *new*—Chōshū scholars, for example, were critical of this Mito thought as both lacking in precedent and outlandish in nature.⁽²⁰⁰⁾ This serves as a helpful reminder to remain conscious of the position from which we approach Mitogaku texts.

In 1987, what remains the only English-language monograph on Mitogaku was published: J. Victor Koschmann's *The Mito Ideology*.⁽²⁰¹⁾ Since this is a major work, it is best to begin by sketching out Koschmann's basic view of Mitogaku, and then moving on to how he situates his position in relation to those of Maruyama and Tōyama.

The Mito branch of the Tokugawa family was normally conservative and scholarly, but they became more reformist in outlook several

(198) Ibid., 6–7.

(199) Ibid., 8.

(200) Ibid., 11–12.

(201) J. Victor Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790–1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

decades before the Meiji Restoration, writes Koschmann.⁽²⁰²⁾ “...on the eve of the Meiji revolution, the Mito reformists turned to violence and rebellion,” he notes—they assassinated Ii Naosuke, and fought Bakufu troops, which in turn led to a civil war in Mito, several years before the broader, national war.⁽²⁰³⁾ The outbreak of national civil war meant that Mito reformers who were not already dead or in prison were pushed aside, but, Koschmann argues, if one is looking at the collapse of the Bakufu, one cannot ignore Mito.⁽²⁰⁴⁾ For Koschmann, the Mito scholars were akin to trailblazers who inspired much of the Meiji Restoration, even though by the time it actually came about they had been pushed from the scene.

Mito domain had long held prestige due to, first, the special status of the Mito *daimyō*, and second, the *Dai Nihonshi*, which not only made Mitsukuni famous, but

...also encouraged among generations of Mito retainers the development of high levels of national consciousness, emperor-centered loyalty, and expertise regarding the institutional foundations of the Japanese polity.⁽²⁰⁵⁾

Koschmann further states that for many later historians, “Mitogaku” referred to the practical reform writings that Mito scholars produced before the Meiji Restoration, rather than the *Dai Nihonshi* project.⁽²⁰⁶⁾

(202) Ibid., 1.

(203) Ibid.

(204) Ibid., 1-2.

(205) Ibid., 2.

(206) Ibid., 3.

Reflecting on the Japanese scholarship to this point suggests that this is not entirely correct: while the pre-1945 scholars certainly focused on the late Mito writings, they nevertheless rooted the ideas therein in Mitsukuni and his historical project.

Koschmann recognizes that Mitogaku was not fundamentally anti-Bakufu; rather, it emphasized the royal line, recognized threats to Japan, and proposed reforms—in fact, he states, it was because Mitogaku was not anti-Bakufu that it was criticized by postwar historians, who were looking for revolutionary ideas.⁽²⁰⁷⁾ While that would seem to fit the Marxist perspective employed by many postwar intellectuals in Japan, we have already seen that this was not in fact the primary reason that Mitogaku studies were shunned after the war. Koschmann has a dual-pronged approach to Mitogaku: he sees it as, on the one hand, the result of a broad “explosion of discourse in the eighteenth century,” while on the other hand, as itself a response to the disorder and relativism that was likely the result of the changes in Edo society that were at the root of said “explosion of discourse.”⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Mitogaku was thus both a product of early modern social change, and an attempt to respond to such change. Like Harootunian, Koschmann believes that the Mito interest in economic reform stemmed from their larger concern “with ideological rectification in the moral sense”—they sought, he says, to restore a natural order like that envisioned by Yamazaki.⁽²⁰⁹⁾ Koschmann’s primary concern is to link the theory and practice of Mitogaku, and to understand how ideology enabled people to act within the limits and challenges imposed by their historical context.⁽²¹⁰⁾

(207) Ibid., 4.

(208) Ibid., 13.

(209) Ibid., 16.

Koschmann sets his view in response to two major scholars, Maruyama Masao and Tōyama Shigeki, acknowledging their significance but also posing some problems with their views. For Koschmann, Maruyama is a major example of a scholar who interprets Mitogaku from the viewpoint of trying to explain the Meiji Restoration; he understands Maruyama's view of a transition in Tokugawa thought from nature to invention, discussed earlier, as a quasi-Hegelian framework into which Maruyama set everything.⁽²¹¹⁾ Koschmann is critical of this approach. He argues that Maruyama judges texts based merely on the degree of 'invention' he can find in them, neglecting the possibility that nature and invention could exist together in the text in their own right by instead seeing texts merely as constituting an 'incomplete transition' from one idea to the other.⁽²¹²⁾ While Maruyama situates late Mitogaku thought squarely in the 'nature' category, for Koschmann Mitogaku actually contains internal contradictions that are essential (for instance, he emphasizes the "contradictory combination" of a "degenerative concept of history" and the "possibility of a natural order," as well as a combination of thought and action).⁽²¹³⁾

As for Tōyama, Koschmann describes how he understood Mitogaku as one type of *sonnō-jōi* thought providing an ideological foundation for the Meiji Restoration, concerned more with ideal categories than transforming reality.⁽²¹⁴⁾ Tōyama also saw Mitogaku thought as merely supporting the existing political order, so that in order to become revolutionary it

(210) Ibid., 4-7.

(211) Ibid., 17-19.

(212) Ibid., 19.

(213) Ibid.

(214) Ibid., 20.

had to move away from ideal categories and connect to the reality of the problems faced by the non-samurai classes.⁽²¹⁵⁾ Only then could it contribute to overthrowing the Bakufu. Tōyama situates this transition as occurring at the time of the creation of the Kiheitai corps (which included non-*bushi*) in Chōshū Domain.⁽²¹⁶⁾ While Koschmann does not think this view is necessarily wrong, he thinks Mitogaku was never just about ideal categories, and was actually put into action much earlier than Tōyama holds to have been the case.⁽²¹⁷⁾ It is worth noting that in framing his perspective in response to Maruyama and Tōyama, Koschmann's approach dovetailed with a trend in Japanese scholarship at the time.

Another scholar who has touched on Mitogaku in English is Peter Nosco. In *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan*, he discusses Tokugawa Mitsukuni and *Dai Nihonshi*, and describes how in the early stages the project was assisted by a Chinese scholar, Chu Shun-shui, who escaped to Japan after the fall of the Ming Dynasty.⁽²¹⁸⁾ Nosco writes,

Mitsukuni's History of Great Japan epitomized both the Confucian notion of regarding history as a source book of vice and virtue and the patriotic Japanese conviction that moral lessons of equal validity could be gleaned from the study of Japan's own past.⁽²¹⁹⁾

(215) Ibid., 20–21.

(216) Ibid., 21–22.

(217) Ibid., 23.

(218) Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 46.

(219) Ibid.

In this regard, Nosco is similar to Nakai, who examined how Confucian historiography was adapted in Japan. Nosco also mentions Mitsukuni several times as a patron of scholarship, particularly in relation to the Kokugaku scholar Keichū; he emphasizes, “Tokugawa Mitsukuni [was] the greatest of all Tokugawa-period patrons of scholarship.”⁽²²⁰⁾

In a later essay, “Chinese Ritual and Native Identity in Tokugawa Confucianism,” Nakai herself turned to Mitogaku again as part of a study looking at the relationship in Tokugawa Confucianism between elements associated with China and those associated with Japan, through the lens of Confucian rituals.⁽²²¹⁾ Late Mito scholars agreed with Atsutane that some sort of spiritual element was needed to support social order, Nakai writes, but they disagreed with his solution, believing instead that the pursuit of a spiritual and moral structure would correct domestic problems and encourage the people to follow their superiors.⁽²²²⁾ They assumed that this structure would have to be based on Confucian social norms, she explains. They saw how Sorai and Shundai’s view of the Way as formulated by the sages enabled Kokugaku scholars to attack Confucianism as merely human-made and fallible; consequently, the Mito scholars were careful to emphasize that the Way and morals were natural, and applied not only to China but also to Japan.⁽²²³⁾ This view is effective in that it allows for diversity within Mitogaku, and debate with other

(220) Ibid., 244.

(221) Kate Wildman Nakai, “Chinese Ritual and Native Identity in Tokugawa Confucianism,” *Rethinking Confucianism: Past and Present in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam*, eds. Benjamin A. Elman, et al. (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2002), 258–291.

(222) Ibid., 279.

(223) Ibid.

schools, as well as indicating a degree to which Mitogaku responded to critics, creating a more complex picture of Mitogaku than the naïve group of scholars portrayed by Maruyama. According to Nakai, the Mito scholars claimed that in Japan, the moral principles had been expressed in symbolic form, unlike in China where the principles were explained through the Classics—thus, at the fundamental level, the Way of the sages and the original customs of Japan matched.⁽²²⁴⁾ The emphasis on people preserving ancient rituals (recalling Sorai to some extent) and the Mito position that rituals unified the realm, but that division had been created by people being excluded from the rituals, also hints at the complex role of rituals in mediating between people and government in Mito thought, and depicts a more popular-level element to Mitogaku that is usually neglected.

Clearly, while limited in amount and undertaken to a considerable degree in response to issues raised by Japanese scholarship, English-language scholarship has provided a range of different perspectives and helped point out elements of Mitogaku that have not necessarily been followed up in Japan. Hopefully, further English-language scholarship will build on this early work, as well as expand the audience for Mitogaku scholarship.

4. Recent Scholarship on Mitogaku (1996—Present)

The past two decades have seen some significant attempts to move beyond the scholarship of the pre-1945 era and postwar reactions to it. In 1996, Haga Noboru's *Kindai Mitogaku Kenkyūshi*, a solid historiographi-

(224) Ibid., 280.

cal reference mentioned above, was published. In the same year, Hoshiyama Kyōko's article, "Kokugaku to Kōki Mitogaku no Hikaku" (A Comparison of Kokugaku and Late Mitogaku) was published in the journal *Nihon Shisōshi*. As Hoshiyama observes, Kokugaku and late Mitogaku tended to both be understood as ideologies of the "Tennō System" in pre-war Japan, and have been categorized as the same type of thought because both developed a Tennō-centered view of history based on the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*.⁽²²⁵⁾ Therefore, the ideologies themselves have often been considered as self-evident, and it is rare for the intellectual differences between them to be discussed.⁽²²⁶⁾

In Hoshiyama's view, this is a mistaken perspective. She argues that Aizawa Seishisai rejected the idea of his philosophy being placed in the same line as Kokugaku, since he made serious criticisms of Motoori Norinaga's philosophy.⁽²²⁷⁾ She points out, furthermore, that there was a tendency among people at the time to distinguish between Kokugaku and late Mitogaku, and no matter how people wish to see the matter, this historical reality should not be ignored.⁽²²⁸⁾ In Hoshiyama's view, the political nature of late Mitogaku and that of Kokugaku were quite different. For example, Norinaga valued the common people, but Aizawa saw the people as ignorant and easily manipulated.⁽²²⁹⁾ The two intellectuals' understanding of the New Harvest Festival also illustrates the differences between them: while Aizawa intended to utilize it politically to unite the minds of the people, Norinaga had a higher evaluation of people.⁽²³⁰⁾

(225) Hoshiyama, 100.

(226) Ibid.

(227) Ibid.

(228) Ibid.

(229) Ibid., 105.

Hoshiyama's careful comparison is a helpful corrective to those who would categorize Kokugaku and Mitogaku together under some kind of "Tennō-centered historical perspective" heading. However, at the same time, her view could be problematic because her assessment of Mitogaku is overly negative, positing it as something that needs to be overcome. Another problem may be that in her discussion, Aizawa is taken as representing the late Mito school, which, as has been suggested previously, may neglect the internal diversity within Mitogaku. Hoshiyama's article may thus also stand as an example of Haga's point, in his analysis of postwar scholarship, that the scholarly discussion had become increasingly focused on Aizawa Seishisai.⁽²³¹⁾

Another article two years later, Asoya Masahiko's "Aizawa Seishisai no Kokka Shisō" (The National Thought of Aizawa Seishisai) discussed Mitogaku as characterized by both the eclectic nature of Confucianism and the belief in the native gods descended from Amaterasu.⁽²³²⁾ It broadly infused the ideology of *sonnō-jōi* and had great influence on many *shishi*⁽²³³⁾ in the Bakumatsu era, he notes.⁽²³⁴⁾ Asoya, in a direct contrast to some other scholars, outright denies the possibility that any

(230) Ibid.

(231) Haga, 19.

(232) Asoya Masahiko, "Aizawa Seishisai no Kokka Shisō (Jō): Meiji Ishin ni Sakegaketa Kōki Mitogakusha no Gakuseki," *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* 1630 (April 1998): 44-53; 46-47.

(233) *Shishi*: samurai supporters of *sonnō-jōi* who generally played key roles in the end of the Bakufu and the establishment of the new Meiji government.

(234) Ibid. Asoya offers Hōjō Shigenao's classic *Mitogaku to Ishin no Fūun*, which I discussed at the start of this paper, as the work which illustrated this influence empirically.

Kokugaku or Mitogaku thinkers had anti-Bakufu ideology.⁽²³⁵⁾ Moreover, he argues, it is a mistake to understand that any ideology that could be called “anti-Bakufu” even truly existed and led to the Meiji Restoration.⁽²³⁶⁾ Like Hoshiyama, Asoya differentiates Mitogaku from Kokugaku and other ideologies, but he too sees Aizawa as the representative thinker of Mitogaku, and focuses on *Shinron*. He states, in fact, that it was largely due to that work that Mitogaku came to be known outside of the domain.⁽²³⁷⁾

Also in 1998, a work specifically on the thinker Fujita Tōko was published by Suzuki Eiichi.⁽²³⁸⁾ Suzuki writes that investigating the actual image of Tōko as a human, as opposed to the ideal figure seen in so much early scholarship, would be helpful not only to deepen our understanding about the Mito domain or Mitogaku, but also as a clue to explore the ways in which the modern Tennō-state (i.e. the Meiji state) was established, as well as to explore people’s consciousness about the nation and the *minzoku* that supported this state.⁽²³⁹⁾ While in the pre-1945 much scholarship had focused on romanticized treatments of the Fujita father and son (Kikuchi’s scholarship being the obvious example), the dramatic postwar shift to Aizawa Seishisai offers a good opportunity to reinvestigate Fujita Tōko.

The following year, work on the relationship between Mitogaku and

(235) Ibid., 47.

(236) Ibid.

(237) Ibid., 49.

(238) Suzuki Eiichi, *Fujita Tōko* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998). This biography is one of the *Jinbutsu Shoso* series; it is noteworthy that Aizawa Seishisai is not yet included in the series.

(239) Ibid., 6.

Kokugaku thought was taken in a new direction by Kajiyama Takao's book *Mitoha Kokugaku no Kenkyū* (Studies of the Kokugaku of the Mito School).⁽²⁴⁰⁾ According to Kajiyama, Mitogaku was a type of study that sprung up in the Mito Domain during the Edo era, and was formed through the compilation of the *Dai Nihonshi* which began from Tokugawa Mitsukuni (note that Kajiyama does not refer to him as Gi-kō).⁽²⁴¹⁾ "The core [of Mitogaku] is history" he states.⁽²⁴²⁾ He proceeds to point out that the relationship between Kokugaku and Mitogaku has not yet been sufficiently examined intellectually, in spite of the fact that both have been understood as providing an ideological basis for the Meiji Restoration.⁽²⁴³⁾ So far, he continues, Mitogaku has been only discussed as an anti-Kokugaku philosophy in the history of the broader Confucianism-Kokugaku dispute; while on the other hand, its literary achievements have also received some attention.⁽²⁴⁴⁾ However, he asserts that "in the tradition of Mitogaku, there was [also] a force that tried to approach Kokugaku positively. We should not ignore this fact."⁽²⁴⁵⁾ Suzuki's book attempts to shed some light on these "Kokugaku-ish" elements, and is therefore another step towards articulating the complexity of Mitogaku thought.

Suzuki employs a diagram to chart the relations between Mitogaku and the two core factions (Hirata faction and Edo faction) of Kokugaku.⁽²⁴⁶⁾

(240) Kajiyama Takao, *Mitoha Kokugaku no Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1999).

(241) *Ibid.*, 3.

(242) *Ibid.*

(243) *Ibid.*

(244) *Ibid.*

(245) *Ibid.*

The Mitogaku and Hirata faction overlapped in the area of Shintō elements, while the Edo faction overlapped with Mitogaku in the area of literary elements; meanwhile, while what was common to all three schools of thought, Suzuki continues, was what could be called the core of Kokugaku, namely classical (historical and philological) studies, including an interest in Japanese poetry.⁽²⁴⁷⁾ The main differences between them were their respective research methods and the objects of their classical studies: Mitogaku utilized a historical method, the Hirata faction a “Shintōist” method, and the Edo faction a literary method.⁽²⁴⁸⁾ Of course, Suzuki notes, these are just their notable tendencies; there were actually more complicated relations between them as well—for example, although Mitogaku had a historical approach at its core, it also incorporated Shintōist and literary elements as well, suggesting that, if it were to have emphasized its Shintōist aspects more, it would have moved closer to the Hirata faction, and conversely if it had emphasized its literary aspects more, it would have come closer to the Edo faction.⁽²⁴⁹⁾ This sort of broader view of schools of Tokugawa thought, considering not only diverse positions and potential within a given school, but also relations between various factions of schools across what we normally assume to be clearly-marked boundaries, offers much potential for future scholarship.

In 2000, Yoshida Toshimizu published *Mito Mitsukuni no Jidai* (The Age of Mito Mitsukuni), mentioned previously, and which consists of a variety of essays. Yoshida notes that the evaluation of Mitsukuni has

(246) Ibid., 13.

(247) Ibid.

(248) Ibid.

(249) Ibid., 14.

been very high; he was called a wise ruler who governed the domain extremely well.⁽²⁵⁰⁾ Certainly, we can recall such an understanding of Mitsukuni, accompanied by the respectful use of *Gi-kō*, was predominant in much of the older scholarship. On top of that, continues Yoshida, the compilation projects of *Dai Nihonshi* and other works should be highly evaluated in the cultural history in Japan.⁽²⁵¹⁾ As a result of all this, there is plenty of scholarship available on Mitsukuni, but unfortunately, given as how Mitsukuni was idealized so much in legends, the amount of scholarship actually backed up by solid empirical evidence is much smaller.⁽²⁵²⁾ After analyzing Mitsukuni's governance, Yoshida concludes that,

Mitsukuni is said to have been a wise ruler. However, [the idea] that he was said to be a wise ruler was an illusion that Mitsukuni himself created. Rather, so long as we examine his reign, he would be much more suitably known as a bad ruler.⁽²⁵³⁾

Even with regards to the compilation of the *Dai Nihonshi*, which has helped to create the strongly positive image of Mitsukuni, Yoshida presents a contrary perspective. He suggests that the very compilation of the *Dai Nihonshi* itself consisted of violating royal prerogative since the compilation of a national history was the monarch's prerogative.⁽²⁵⁴⁾

Of the various chapters in Yoshida's book, the second is particularly striking. There, Yoshida presents his view that Mitsukuni's purpose in

(250) Yoshida, *Mito Mitsukuni no Jidai*, 5.

(251) Ibid.

(252) Ibid.

(253) Ibid., 25.

(254) Ibid., 300.

compiling the *Dai Nihonshi* was nothing other than to gain the reputation of a sage.⁽²⁵⁵⁾ An image of a far more cynical Mitsukuni emerges, an individual for whom crafting a positive image for himself as a wise person was apparently more important than actually behaving wisely. The *Dai Nihonshi* project was more important than anything for Mitsukuni, and Yoshida builds on this to explain the reason why Mitsukuni killed one of his loyal subjects, a decision that had long been a great mystery.⁽²⁵⁶⁾ Apparently, the subject, who had been associated with the compilation project, attempted to prevent the project going further due to the financial strain it imposed on the domain.⁽²⁵⁷⁾ This was evidently not deemed a sufficient reason for Mitsukuni to turn away from his life's work, through which the lord sought to build an edifice for the ages. Finally, the seventh chapter also deserves mention, as Yoshida argues therein that the image of Mitsukuni as a royalist is accurate, although the ideal view of the Tennō that Mitsukuni had in mind was a ritual monarch who had already lost political power.⁽²⁵⁸⁾

Yoshida published another work in 2003, the title of which was *Mitogaku to Meiji Ishin* (Mitogaku and the Meiji Restoration).⁽²⁵⁹⁾ Here too he criticizes previous scholarship for lacking a perspective on the differences within Mitogaku.⁽²⁶⁰⁾ He argues that Mitogaku was an intellectual force for the Meiji Restoration, but in a very different way from that

(255) Ibid., throughout Chapter 2, but see endnote on page 301 for summary.

(256) Ibid., throughout Chapter 2, but especially 123–124; also see endnote on page 301 for summary.

(257) Ibid.

(258) Ibid., 302–303.

(259) Yoshida Toshizumi, *Mitogaku to Meiji Ishin* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

of the conventional approaches seen earlier. The core was a view focused on the common people, a manifestation of which he finds in the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education. This perspective prompts us to think whether Mitogaku did in fact offer a conception of individuals such as that portrayed in the Rescript, and more broadly, to rethink how Mitogaku understood the existence of the common people and their customs.

Yoshida says that it is still somewhat futile to try to view Mitogaku and its meaning broadly in the context of Bakumatsu from modern times, due to our change in outlook. He points out that the Mitogaku that was utilized to mobilize a people to war transformed completely after the war, and almost no one has paid attention to it—rather, it seems that the stronger conscience people have, the more they hate Mitogaku.⁽²⁶¹⁾ Academically as well, he continues, Mitogaku was clearly assessed as a feudal philosophy, and the establishment of the Meiji Restoration has instead been discussed in terms of the process of overcoming Mitogaku.⁽²⁶²⁾ This established understanding of Mitogaku is indebted, he notes, politically to the work of Tōyama Shigeki, and intellectually to that of Maruyama Masao, reinforcing what was outlined earlier in the present article.⁽²⁶³⁾ Consequently, Mitogaku has been understood as feudal thought, rejected as an intellectual force of the Meiji Restoration, and is now rarely discussed in modern history as well.⁽²⁶⁴⁾ Yoshida emphasizes that there are few scholars who would deny the importance of Mitogaku from the

(260) Ibid., 2.

(261) Ibid., 4.

(262) Ibid.

(263) Ibid.

(264) Ibid., 5.

Bakamatsu era onwards, but it has been assessed as negative largely because it has not been recognized as having popular (or quasi-democratic) elements.⁽²⁶⁵⁾ In an attempt to correct this view, Yoshida proceeds to discuss Mitogaku in the context of popular elements. In particular, he is concerned with how Mitogaku has become a stereotype for feudal thought that must be overcome and denied.⁽²⁶⁶⁾ Rather, he points out that we need to research the intellectual basis Mitogaku drew upon, as well as how Mitogaku has been utilized in modern times.⁽²⁶⁷⁾

Finally, I will briefly touch on a 2005 piece by Imataka Yoshiya entitled “Uchimura Kanzō to Mitogaku no Shiika” (Uchimura Kanzō and the Poetry of Mitogaku).⁽²⁶⁸⁾ Imamura’s essay discusses the influence of Mitogaku on noted Christian intellectual Uchimura Kanzō. From within the scholarly tradition that considered Mitogaku merely in association with loyalists or *sonnō-jōi*, it simply would have been not possible to consider the association between Mitogaku and Christianity. Imamura’s essay thus symbolizes a new view and approach to Mitogaku, revealing as it does that there are not only political and historical sides to Mitogaku, but a cultural side as well, which deserves attention within its own context.

As Haga points out, there are a small number of scholars of Mitogaku who only work on the intellectual history of Mitogaku in the postwar period.⁽²⁶⁹⁾ He complains that there are not enough basic studies on Mito

(265) Ibid., 9.

(266) Ibid., 223.

(267) Ibid., 225–226.

(268) Imataka Yoshiya, “Uchimura Kanzō to Mitogaku no Shiika: Fukei Jiken wo Chūshin ni,” *Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyū: Kirisutokyō to Bunka* 36 (March 2005): 23–75.

—for instance, there are as of yet no geographical or practical studies— and works based on the Mito Domain itself are needed.⁽²⁷⁰⁾ Whether it is examining the neglected popular elements of Mitogaku thought, Mitogaku as a cultural activity, or calling for new approaches to Mito itself, current work in the field of Mitogaku studies is encouraging, and there remains much potential for future scholarship.

Conclusion

This article began by considering the rising interest in Mitogaku in the early 1930s, then tracing the emergence of more and more scholarship up through a zenith in the early 1940s, when the field appears to have hit the height of its popularity. From the beginning, there was a sense of Mitogaku's relevance to the present, and its political philosophy received attention as a way to address the perceived national crises confronting Japan at the time. Mitogaku was seen as a uniform, constant force over time for the scholars of this era, who, with a tendency towards holding up Mitogaku as an example of an authentic Japanese ideology passed down from before the days of Westernization, were not predisposed to consider the possibility of diversity and conflict within the school of thought. Scholars focused on Fujita Tōko as the representative Mitogaku thinker, while Tokugawa Mitsukuni was addressed as a magnificent, ideal figure.

Following the end of the Pacific War, Mitogaku became discredited through its associated with the militarism and imperialism that were

(269) Haga, 98.

(270) Ibid., 15.

blamed for the bitter defeat. Writings on Mitogaku were even suppressed by the Occupation. The result of this was a blank period in the scholarship, where for more than twenty years very little was written about Mitogaku. Early postwar thought, inspired largely by Maruyama's view of Tokugawa intellectual history, saw Mitogaku not as having inspired the Meiji Restoration (as the pre-1945 scholars had imagined), but as instead having been an obstacle that got in the way of Japan's modernization. This attitude may also have contributed to the neglect of Mitogaku more broadly. More recently, both in Japanese and in English-language scholarship, there has been a shift away from an emphasis on the political philosophy of Mitogaku to consider its historical studies. There has also been an increased move, particularly in more current Japanese scholarship, towards understanding the diversities and conflict within Mitogaku, while at the same time a reassessment of not only the ideas, but the idealized figures (such as Fujita Tōko or Mito Mitsukuni) who, when approached from a realistic human perspective, provide much new insight into Mitogaku. The range of approaches and methods represented by the scholars covered in this article reveal that Mitogaku is a fascinating and complex topic ill deserving of its academic marginalization. The encouraging trends among new scholarship suggest that the scholarly ground is ripe for a new generation of Mitogaku studies to emerge.

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