“Religion” in Practice:
Making the Mood of the Nation through
Tourism in Japan

by

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INTRODUCTION

Endo Sanae and Kawano Reiko are volunteer tour guides in Kamakura, the medieval capital of Japan about an hour away by train from central Tokyo. Endo is fluent in English and Spanish, and Kawano in English and French, as well as Japanese. Every Friday, their volunteer group, Kamakura International Guides (KIG), provides free tours to Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū Shinto shrine from the Kamakura train station for international tourists without prior appointments. It is a hot summer day in August, and today, Endo and Kawano are on duty along with a few others that each speak different languages. A train leaves, and the station becomes quiet. The tour guides stand outside the exit of the station, holding a sign that says “Free Guided Tours,” and wait for the next train to arrive that would hopefully bring foreign tourists that they could show around the city. Standing with them is a novice ethnographer that claims she studies religion.

ES: So, you’re a Religion major, right?
SY: Yes.
ES: That’s interesting. And I think Japan is interesting [for religious studies] because Japanese religion is not really about belief, but more like custom. […] When I bring my Spanish tourists to the shrine and teach them how to wash hands and worship, they are actually pretty willing to follow me and do the same.
SY: I noticed that in English tours as well. But why do you think that is?
ES: Because I tell them that this is what you are supposed to do in this space, then they’re convinced that this is what you do when you’re here with this deity. Also, I think they’re interested in Japanese customs because they’re visiting Japan. But some people do hesitate because of their religious

1 All names of individuals and organizations in this thesis are pseudonyms. All Japanese names (except my own) are spelled with surnames first. All names of places are original.
background, though.
KR: Hah, that’s interesting. Most French are Catholic, but I guess they’re not really faithful. So, they don’t care about their religion and usually try the practices with me.

For Endo and Kawano, their practices in the Shinto space are motivated less by their “belief” than by their knowledge of the proper performance in the particular space – that “this is what you are supposed to do” in the space. They take for granted the necessity of the performance, and the question for them is whether one actually performs or not, rather than whether one believes in the need. However, the practices, they observe, can come into conflict with religious belief for Christian tourists. The assumption here is that the two “religions” – Shinto practices and Christian belief – are comparable and mutually exclusive. “Religion” as an umbrella category brings these two traditions into this peculiar comparison and potential conflict. Further, the “religious” differences among the Japanese, Spanish, and French are understood to be bound up with their nationality. The “religious” practices in the Shinto space are of the Japanese nation, and whether the Christian tourists would hesitate to participate in them also depends on the “religiosity” of their nationality.

Throughout this thesis, I distinguish between my interlocutors’ practice at Buddhist or Shinto sites,2 and “religion” as a category that Endo and Kawano here use to characterize their practice. This thesis investigates the intricate entanglement of “religion” as a category with the nation in their discourses about the practice. How is this intersection produced, and what does it do? I argue that the tour guides’

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2 The Japanese language has different words for Buddhist and Shinto sites: (o)tera for Buddhist sites, and jinja for Shinto sites. Correspondingly, my English-speaking interlocutors referred to Buddhist sites as “temples” and Shinto sites as “shrines” in English, and this seems to be the convention in English-language materials for tourists in Japan. To reflect this differentiation among my interlocutors, I will distinguish Buddhist “temples” and Shinto “shrines” throughout this thesis.
discursive delineation of “religion” is embedded in their larger practices that affectively produce the nation.

0-1. “Religion” as a Category

Historical Constructions of “Religion” as a Category

Over the past couple of decades, scholars of religion have grappled with the realization that “religion” – their supposed object of expertise – is a modern scholarly invention. Religious studies as a discipline had long been grounded on the premise that religion is a naturally existing universal human phenomenon that can be clearly identified and functions the same trans-culturally and trans-historically. But it turns out otherwise. “Religion” is an anthropological category produced through historically specific Christian discursive processes.

One of the key historical factors that enabled the construction of this category, along with the Enlightenment and the Reformation, is European encounters with other cultures through colonialism. In “Religion, Religions, Religious,” Jonathan Z. Smith writes, “‘Religion’ is not a native category. It is not a first person term of a self-characterization. It is a category imposed from the outside on some aspect of native culture. It is the other […] who are solely responsible for the content of the term” (1998, 269). “Religion” as a bounded object of description arises only in comparative contexts, when two parties meet that do not share the taken-for-granted knowledge of the world, and colonialism created such a condition for cross-cultural comparison. Also assumed in the construction of the category is its universality: every society has a “religion,” and they are essentially the same, different only in expression (Smith
1998, 269; Masuzawa 2005). In this sense, “religion” is a relativizing modular category, and fundamentally a product of the specific history of Western universalist pluralism. It is a universalist category, but not universal.

If the construction of “religion” has in part been a response to colonialism, its effects have also spread through colonialism. To name a few examples, colonial scholars’ ‘discovery’ of Hinduism transformed the tradition in India, with Christianity as its prototype (King 1999). The ‘discovery’ of the lack of religion allowed the colonizers to deny the humanity of the colonized and justified French colonial rule in southern Africa (Chidester 1996). More recently, postcolonial theory has influenced the scholarship on this topic. It has shown that not only colonial scholars but also indigenous modernist actors have participated in the construction of the category (Josephson 2012; Kramer 2015; Sharf 1998).

Japan, in fact, is one of the well-studied cases within this body of postcolonial literature. Although Japan was never formally colonized, “religion” entered Japanese discourse through semi-colonial encounters with the West. No word equivalent to “religion” as a generic word for a delineated sphere existed in the Japanese language until the late nineteenth century. Before then, various localized forms of what have come to be called Buddhism and Shinto were practiced as an integral part of local communal life (Hardacre 1989, 18). Shūkyō, the standard translation for “religion” today, was adopted first in the context of the rise of the Meiji state and its modernization project beginning in 1868. Under the unequal power relations of

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3 Among intellectuals, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto were together considered as “Three Teachings” (sankyō). This notion originated in the Chinese thought (sanjiao) that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism are three modes of discourse that together form a unitary reality, rather than mutually exclusive schools of thought (Josephson 2012, 15).
imperialism, the state’s modernity project involved a double-edged task: consolidating its domestic authority through the creation of a unified nation, and seeking recognition from the West by adopting the modern state system. The need for religious freedom particularly posed a threat for the state, as its authority then rested on the emperor’s performance of what might appear as religious rites. Ultimately, by the end of the century, the state recognized, protected, and regulated “religions” including Buddhism and Christianity as private belief, while explicitly claiming the rites of the state held at Shinto shrines as “nonreligious” public national practices. By thus placing its public authority above the supposedly private realm of religion, the state authorized itself while also guaranteeing pluralism in principle (Josephson 2012; Maxey 2014; Shimazono 2005; Thal 2002). In other words, the state actors tactically adopted the foreign category of “religion” for their own benefit, as they navigated the asymmetrical landscape of power at the dawn of modernity.

Responding to this historical constructedness of the category of “religion” in the Japanese context, Timothy Fitzgerald states that to apply the category to describe Japanese practices would be a “category mistake” (2000, 181). Yet, as helpful as it is, such deconstruction only speaks to half of the picture. As this history illustrates, the construction of “religion” is not a purely intellectual business. It has been mobilized in response to historically specific power relations, with enormous sociopolitical consequences. Therefore, I contend that it is not enough for scholars to point out the historical constructedness of “religion” as a category. Even as scholars realize and despair at the historicity of the category, as is evident in my conversation with the

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4 For earlier, albeit much critiqued, iterations of this argument regarding the construction of religion in the Japanese context, see Fitzgerald (2000) and Isomae (2003).
tour guides above, regular people continue to mobilize the category in organizing and navigating their lives today. What may initially have been a Western scholarly category has diffused into the ordinary discursive practices of non-scholarly tour guides in Japan. What, then, does it do today? This thesis explores the contemporary consequences of the construction of the category.

*Mood and Mind: Making “Religion” Thinkable*

What makes the idea of “religion” conceptually possible? “Religion” is often defined as belief in the supernatural. Belief, for many scholars and my interlocutors alike, is the essence of “religion,” and practice, if considered at all, is typically reduced to mere expressions of the private belief. For example, anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s famous universal definition reads: A religion is “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence […]” (1973, 90). For Geertz, religion offers symbolic meanings that then go on to produce affective consequences. In this framework, religion is primarily a private mental phenomenon that stands outside the realm of the physical, social, and political. However, this kind of rationalistic understanding of the phenomenon we call “religion” has recently been critiqued for its particular underlying assumption about the relationship between subject and object (Asad 1993, 30; Bell 1998, 208; Daniel 2002). Below I take up anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel’s critique, as he offers a highly useful set of concepts that I will use throughout this thesis.

In “The Arrogation of Being by the Blind-Spot of Religion” (2002), Daniel
distinguishes two ontological modes: mood and mind. The two operate under different assumptions about the relationship between self and the world, subject and object, mind and body, and this difference has crucial consequences on the kinds of knowledge they respectively pursue. Mind, a characteristically Christian (or more specifically Protestant) way of being, distinguishes subject and object, and distances self from the world. This distantiation entails commitment to a particular kind of knowledge that he calls “knowing-about” or “theoretical knowledge.” This framework takes physical or embodied reality to “mean something,” to “represent something other than itself” (42). Knowledge becomes a mental phenomenon that is explanatory, articulable, and detachable from embodied subjects. Geertz’s meaning-based definition of religion above was born within this framework.

The ontological mode of mood, by contrast, imagines self to be embedded in the world among other beings. In this mode, one seeks to produce particular desired moods through an array of practices in the presence of other beings; knowing how to act is valued more than what things are and mean (44-45). Knowledge, therefore, is inseparable from embodiment in this framework, and formed experientially in the context of particular embodied practices in the company of other beings. As my conversation with the tour guides indicates, the practices of many Japanese visitors to my field sites primarily concern such production of mood based on the experiential knowledge of how to perform in particular spaces.

The idea of “religion” as private belief stems from the Christian ontological mode of mind, as reflected in its historical roots in Christianity. Implicit in the notion of “belief” is the assumed distance between the human subject that believes and the
object of their belief, and this distance creates room for human epistemological work in making and choosing the exegesis about the world to “believe” in. In other words, the belief framework reduces embodied reality into an object of interpretation. In mood, Daniel says, by contrast, “One takes [other beings’] being for granted, an ontological given, requiring no epistemological apperception” (36). The presence of other beings becomes deeply consequential in every aspect of life, and therefore inherently public (or, the very distinction between public and private would hardly make sense). The idea that there is a private sphere called “religion” that deals with personal belief is simply irrelevant in mood; it requires mind to become relevant.

0-2. “Religion,” Secularism, and Nationalism

As I mentioned above, the making of the idea of “religion” in Japan has been implicated in the construction of the modern nation-state. “Religion” and the nation also continue to entangle with each other in the discourses among my interlocutors today, as we saw above. This intertwining of “religion” and the nation in part stems from their shared relationships to the idea of the secular. Debunking the category of “religion,” Talal Asad argues that the modernist attempt to identify the unchanging essence of “religion” has conceptually detached it from the realm of power (1993, 29). This discursive depoliticization of religion has authorized a set of sensibilities, practices, and institutions that we associate with the secular, including the modern nation-state. In other words, “religion” and the “secular” are mutually dependent categories, even though the secular is often thought of as a residual space left after religion is subtracted, and secularism simply as separation of religion and
the state. The secular is filled with particular subjectivity, and the very idea of “religion” as a distinctly identifiable object is constitutive of such subjectivity (Asad 2003, 26).

Therefore, as this thesis aims to contextualize my interlocutors’ discursive delineation of religion, it would be instructive to consult the anthropology of secularism especially at its nexus with nationalism. To this end, this section will discuss some of the recent major findings from the field. Although this body of literature largely has not dealt with Japan, it provides a useful focusing lens through which to contextualize and further my inquiry.

The Secular, Modern State, and Nationalism

In Formations of the Secular (2003), Talal Asad argues that what characterizes the secular as a way of being is its assumption of human autonomy. This assumption enables the conceptual division of the world into two different realms: the secular realm that consists of the “real” on the one hand, and the religious realm that concerns belief in the “supernatural,” on the other (194). In this framework, religion becomes an imaginary constructed by autonomous humans. Note here the resonance with Daniel’s discussion of mind. Just as a mind-based subject distantly knows-about the world in pursuit of theoretical knowledge, a secular subject autonomously acts upon the world as a distant object. In fact, given that the secular differentiation of religion and the secular becomes possible only with the mind-based impulse to know-about the world, the secular is a way of being grounded in mind.5

5 Daniel himself also briefly touches upon secularism as a product of the ontological mode of mind: “[R]eligion,’ as we understand it today – i.e. where belief is an integral and indispensable part of it –
Secularism, with this particular construal of humanity, has shaped many modern ideas, practices, and sensibilities, most notably the modern nation-state.

The idea of the nation requires the secular assumption of autonomous human. The nation is imagined to be an exclusively human community. In this framework, humans are the sole agent of history, and the nation as a “sociological organism” moves through linear “homogeneous empty time” to make and own its shared history (Anderson 2006, 24, 26). The secular binaries of religious/secular, human/nonhuman, past/present are thus intertwined to make it possible to “‘think’ the nation” (Anderson 2006, 22). A national subject is, therefore, a mind-based subject, imagined to autonomously interpret and act upon the world.

Due to its importance for the idea of the nation, the production of secular subjects is vital to modern state’s authority. As the state is thought to represent the wills of the citizens, the modern nation-state draws its authority from the assumed autonomy of its citizens who together form the national community it rules. Therefore, to secure governmentality and legitimize itself, the state attempts to make national subjects and produce its own object of care, i.e. the national community.6 Since the idea of the nation requires the concept of the secular, such a project of governmentality in part involves the making of secular subjects through the rationalization of embodied religious practices. The secular state does not necessarily try to eradicate “religion.” It rather attempts to produce mind-based forms of “religion” acceptable to secular governance through secularism as a set of moral

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6 These citizens are usually implicitly imagined to be middle-class heterosexual cis men, and in Euro-American contexts, usually white (Fernando 2014, 86).

is Christian in origin and by and large remains, even in its reincarnation as secularism, a Christian affair.” (2002, 31)
discourses and disciplinary practices (Asad 2003, 134-143).

The recent literature from the anthropology of secularism demonstrates such modern state’s attempts to remake religious practices. For example, Saba Mahmood examines the American state’s project of reforming Islam in her article “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and the Empire” (2006). The state assumes a particular semiotic ideology in which language merely represents and has no ontological power (again, note the resonance with Daniel’s mind in which reality represents something else). In intervening in Muslims’ engagements with sacred texts, the state normatively attempts to produce secularized, Protestantized, rationalized forms of Islam.

Similarly, Mayanthi Fernando (2014) shows how Muslim women’s practice of veiling becomes deeply unintelligible in France. The secular assumption of individual autonomy makes it difficult for secular subjects to make sense of non-rational, embodied, affective religious practices, and marks them for regulation and rationalization. In other words, secularism entails more than just a simple separation of religion and the state. It produces an array of practices and sensibilities that make the mind-based idea of religion seem uniquely realistic.

The ongoing construction of “religion” as a category I examine in this thesis takes place in such a context of the state’s secularist project. The Japanese state today is a liberal secular state. Its current constitution, written by the American occupation

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7 The secularity of the state (i.e. the formal separation of religion and politics) is usually described as seikyō bunri (“separation of politics and religion”). This is a fairly familiar concept for most people, and I had several, if not many, conversations about seikyō bunri during my fieldwork. However, the “secular” as a category does not have as much discursive reality as “religion” in Japan. The academic word for cultural secularity would be sezoku (teki), but it hardly comes up in regular public discourses and I did not hear this word used a single time during my fieldwork. Unlike the word for “religion” (shūkyō), this word, sezoku, has existed in the language from before modernization. It was a Buddhist term that refers to the world, truths, desires outside of Buddhist monasteries (Krämer 2015, 121-124). A much more commonly used antonym for shūkyō today is mushūkyō, literally “nonreligious.” I reflect
government after WWII,\(^8\) guarantees a variety of rights to its citizens including religious freedom. Article 20 says, “Freedom of religious belief is guaranteed to all.”\(^9\) The state thus treats “religion” as a self-evident category, and protects its rational mind-based activity of belief only. I observed marks of such state project at my field sites – Sensō-ji temple in Tokyo and Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū shrine in Kamakura, both extremely popular tourist destinations. The state was present in many subtle ways in an attempt to rationalize, de-ontologize, and nationalize these legally “religious” sites. It designates some of the buildings and artifacts as Important Cultural Properties, treating them as historical and cultural objects of the nation rather than engaged spaces for affective sociality and worship (see also Covell 2005, 155-164). The state also licenses professional international tour guides, and the respective local state provides training for the volunteer tour guides I worked with.\(^10\) The Educational Committee of the respective local government also posts informational signs throughout the temple/shrine ground. These efforts of the state reflect its attempt to encourage the visitors to know-about the sites through mind-based meanings. These rationalization measures are also implicated in its attempt to nationalize the sites, as much of the information the state provides is framed in national terms. The two immensely popular sites that I worked at thus bear various hints of the state’s attempt to secularize and nationalize them.

\(^8\) The current constitution was drafted by the Allied occupation government in 1946, and has never been revised to this day since then.

\(^9\) This translation is mine. The official translation by the Prime Minister’s Office reads: “Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all.” I render this translation problematic because the original Japanese uses the word shinkyō (“religious belief”) rather than shūkyō (“religion”) (Cabinet Public Relations Office 2017, emphasis mine).

\(^10\) It seems to be a fairly common practice across Japan for local governments to train and certify volunteer tour guides, especially in regions that have well-known temples or shrines, such as in Kyoto.
Messy Realities of Secularism: Its Process and Affect

In short, the modern nation-state needs to produce mind-based subjects to authorizes itself, because the idea of the nation is grounded in the ontological mode of mind. Such a subject, ideally, fits into the idealized image of rational, disembodied, national citizen. The subject would also accept “religion” as a self-evidently delineated object. Yet, the reality of the secular project is messier – and this messiness is where my interest lies.

First, the project of producing such subjects often does not succeed. In my fieldwork, there was a significant mismatch between the focus on meanings that the state activities described above promoted or that the category of “religion” suggests on the one hand, and the practices of the visitors on the other. The Japanese visitors seek the vibrant mood of the space, and collectively produce this mood by performing a range of embodied practices (see chapter two). Even tours, which seemingly assign explanatory meanings to the sites, do not just produce meanings, but also generate pleasurable moods (see chapter three). Mood filled the space, and mind-based meanings the state seems invested in promoting does not grasp the whole picture.

However, perhaps success may not be the only thing at stake in the secular project. The ongoing effort to make secular subjects itself allows the state to assert its authority and reestablish the nation. In fact, the perceived gap between the idealized national subject and the embodied reality often becomes a productive space in which the state works towards producing ‘properly’ national subjects. Writing on French secularism (laïcité) and its exclusionary effects on Muslims, Mayanthi Fernando incisively states, “[D]etermining the signs of religion’s presence is a slippery and
always incomplete task. It continually raises new questions and creates the need for more decisions. […] The project is never finished, which is precisely what constitutes its regulatory force” (2014, 22-23). Benjamin Dorman (2012) also shows how, in modern Japan, the impossibility of the state’s complete control over “religious” organizations, especially new religions, has repeatedly given rise to advocacy for intensified state control over religion. The incompleteness of the secular project precisely reasserts and perpetuates the authority of the state that sponsors it, precisely because of its failure to produce mind-based subjects.

At my field sites, it was not the state that most actively engaged the gap between the normative view of “religion” and the practices at the temple or the shrine; the state was only minimally present in ways I described above. The tour guides I worked with were more interested in this gap, and engaged it through the mediation of the nation in their discursive practices, as can be seen in the conversation at the beginning of this introduction. In so doing, they continually construct and articulate the nation, as I will show in the following chapters. Just as the secular project authorizes the state through its incompleteness, the tour guides’ discursive mobilization of “religion” as a mind-based idea articulates the nation precisely because it does not completely flatten mood-based practices.

Furthermore, even though “religion” as a category stems from the mind-dominated impulse to theorize, this does not mean that the category exists in void of affect. I noted earlier that the ontological mode of mood produces particular affective states through embodiment. Yet, while mind-dominated subjects might not particularly pursue affect and often dismiss religious passion, they still produce and
experience moods. Insofar as the cultivation of secular subjectivity involves a set of norms and disciplinary practices, secularism also produces its own “affective commitments” (Mahmood 2009). The disgust towards religious passion is an example of such affect. After all, mind-dominated subjects are also embodied beings.

Nevertheless, secular affect is often unmarked and made invisible in secular(ist) circles. Let me first clarify what I mean by marked versus unmarked here, as I will rely on this vocabulary throughout this thesis. As Judith Butler has taught us, in order for our social bodies to be intelligible, it requires that our performance be recognizable in light of social norms (2004, 1-2). These norms mark practices that deviate from the norms for interrogation and exclusion. The embodied religious practices that become unintelligible under secularism discussed above exemplify such marked practices. The unmarked affective commitment involved in normative practices authorizes those very practices and further reinforces their normativity.

In examining the tour guides’ discourses on “religion,” this thesis investigates the unmarked affective aspect of the seemingly mind-based practices. Beginning with Asad’s assertion that the secular can be best studied from its “shadows” (2003, 16), anthropologists of secularism have primarily studied religious minorities to reveal the contradictions and pitfalls of the self-claimed peace-making project of secularism. For example, John R. Bowen (2011) and Mayanthi L. Fernando (2014) study the people Fernando calls the “Muslim French”: French citizens born and raised in France and practicing Islam. Saba Mahmood (2015) studies minority Christians in Muslim-dominant Egypt. These minorities experience secularism as an uncomfortable presence that makes their lives unintelligible to the unmarked others,
and these works compellingly show such violent exclusivity of secularism. For the Japanese context, Isaac T. Gagné (2013) also worked with religious minorities.\footnote{Gagné (2013), unlike in other case studies on religious minorities, did not find much conflict between the minorities and the unmarked secular culture.}

But such focus on religious minorities in the secularism literature raises the question: how does the unmarked majority, upon whom the state works much less explicitly, engage and experience secular normativity? If mind-based practices also produce affect, what kind of affect does the discursive delineation of religion produce among the unmarked? In other words, this thesis will examine how the category of “religion” is enmeshed in a specific set of practices, affect, and landscape of power not only for minorities, but for the unmarked majority, too. As I will show, the seemingly mind-based discourses on “religion” among the tour guides produce the nation not only semiotically, but also affectively.

**The Process and Affect of Secularism in the Japanese Context**

In sum, I will explore how the incomplete project of secularism produces the nation among the unmarked without transforming mood-based practices into mind-based, but precisely through mood. Japan provides a compelling case for such a study despite the scarcity of ethnographic attention it has received to this day from scholars of secularism. Although secularism often claims universality, its lived reality is context-specific.\footnote{Although many scholars agree that the experience of secularism is context-specific, they debate about the value of the concept of secularisms as plural and its potential danger of downplaying secularism’s globalizing force (see Asad 2003, 217; Casanova 2012, 61; Fernando 2014, 23; Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008; Mahmood 2015, 10).} Any study of secularism therefore must pay close attention to specific contexts while also acknowledging its globalizing force (Jakobsen and
Pellegrini 2008, 13). For the study of cases beyond the West, scholars have mostly studied some of the most conspicuous cases—most notably India, Turkey, and Egypt. This is often because secularism is explicitly contested in public debates in these places. But to study the unmarked affect of the incomplete secular project, it seems more apt to examine a place where secularism is not so publicly contested among the unmarked, like Japan.

On the one hand, secularism is not highly debated in Japan today. Many Japanese take pride in the nation as one of the few ‘success’ cases of religious pluralism beyond the West, because “religion” is usually not considered as a pressing social issue. To be sure, religious minorities have long suffered from discrimination, and politicians’ visits to controversial Yasukuni Shrine occasionally bring up the question of what it means to properly separate religion and politics. Yet, it is relatively rare to see discussions on “religion” in domestic news, and the multi-religiosity exemplified by the ‘coexistence’ of Buddhism and Shinto is often thought to be the nation’s unique attribute. According to the state statistics, Buddhism and Shinto are the two major “religions” of the nation without much conflict between them. They together constitute the “essence of Japanese culture” and “continue to be prime and moving sources of inspiration, culturally and esthetically, for the Japanese,” says an English-language guidebook for foreign tourists published by a governmental agency (JNTO 2012, 2). This pride in multi-religiosity is not merely a

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13 Yasukuni Shrine is a shrine in Tokyo where the spirits of Japanese nationals are enshrined who sacrificed their lives on the emperor’s behalf since the beginning of the Meiji era. It is controversial today largely because it also enshrines Class A war criminals from WWII. See Breen ed. (2008).

14 According to the latest survey from January 2017, out of about 120 million Japanese nationals, there are about 90 million Shinto “believers” (shinja) and 89 million Buddhist “believers,” making the total number of “religious believers” larger than the entire population and indicating dual religious identity as a common phenomenon (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2017).
state propaganda. Throughout my fieldwork, many of my interlocutors were puzzled yet proud of how Japanese people “practice Buddhism and Shinto together.” Many claimed that monotheistic nations, Muslim and Christian alike, have a lot to learn from Japan’s “generous” and “flexible” religiosity (see chapter four).

Despite such absence of conspicuous contestation against secularist pluralism, the Japanese state’s secular project has historically not necessarily succeeded in producing secular mind-based subjects. On the contrary, as I show in chapter one, its attempt to regulate “religion” has often stimulated the production of desired moods associated with the nation among the unmarked. I described above how the Meiji secular state tactically adopted the newly introduced idea of “religion”; by the end of nineteenth century, it declared Shinto a nonreligious civic duty, and guaranteed religious freedom within the limits of this public order. In the “nonreligious” public space created by regulating and privatizing “religions,” the state invented many rites of State Shinto to be participated in by its subjects. Though state-mandated, many seem to have enjoyed these rites, and the affective experiences of the rites played a crucial role in producing a sense of national unity (Hardacre 1989; Shimazono 2009).

State Shinto and its moods, however, ultimately fostered the Japanese imperialist atrocities of World War II. After the war, the Allied occupation government identified the previously “nonreligious” Shinto as a “religion.” Japanese people responded to this reclassification by producing desired moods through the mediation of the nation again. They explained their wartime suffering using this

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15 Scholars have long considered the Meiji state as ‘not secular enough’ because it promoted Shinto as public practice. See Baker (1998), Mullins (2012; 2015) for iterations of this argument. However, recently, in response to the growing body of secularism literature, many are beginning to consider the Meiji state a secular one. See Hardacre (2011), Josephson (2012), Maxey (2014).
“secret religiosity” of forced Shinto in order to generate hope towards the national future. In modern Japan, the discursive reality of the mind-based category has emerged and reemerged with the production of nation-authorizing moods.

This history shows the fluidity and the affective productivity of the arbitrary line between the religious and the secular in the Japanese context. Given this apparent ambiguity of the boundary, many analysts of modern Japan have explicitly or implicitly asked the question: Is Japan secular, or is religion still relevant? (Baker 1997; Bellah 1980; Gagné 2013; Mullins 2012; 2015; Reader and Tanabe 1998) Yet, I take issue with this very question, as it takes “religion” as a category for granted and assumes the singularity of secularity. As will become clear in the rest of this thesis, this simplistic binary analytically does not make sense in light of my interlocutors’ practices, although they keep on applying “religion” to talk about their own practices. Instead, I take the current conditions of Japan to be a sign and outcome of the ongoing workings of secularist power. Rather than using the notion of religion as an etic category, which we scholars now know is not analytically useful, I examine how my Japanese interlocutors use it as an emic category to navigate their lives.

0-3. WHY TOURISM?

In Japan, famous Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines attract many domestic and international travelers. To study the intersection of nationalism and secularism

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16 Long-distance pilgrimage to Buddhist and Shinto sites has a long history in Japan. See Thal (2005) and Reader (2005), for instance. John Breen (2008, 16) also mentions that Yasukuni Shrine quickly became a major tourist attraction in the Meiji era. Yet, as Stephen G. Covell points out, Japanese tourism to temples is understudied despite its clear significance in many regards, including as a major income source for many temples (2005, 144, 196). John K. Nelson also highlights tourism’s importance for Japanese temples when he touches upon the tendency among temples to “accommodate casual tourism” in response to financial hardships (2013, 19). As Covell notes, there is also a greater
in contemporary Japan, I chose tourism to popular Buddhist and Shinto sites as my object of observation for several reasons. First, tourism is a major site at which popular imaginations about the nation are articulated. National and local states as well as workers in the tourism industry present the imagined national culture and history to attract visitors in the forms of architecture, food, souvenirs, signs, and so on. Such articulation of nationalness has recently intensified with the state attempt to promote Japan as a destination of international tourism. With the extensive state support to the industry, the number of visitors to Japan has tripled over the past decade, and is expected to further increase toward the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 (Japan Tourism Agency, 2016). This makes tourism a suitable lens for examining how people imagine, encounter, and engage in national imaginings.

Additionally, the touristic practices at temples and shrines challenge the familiar binaries of religious and secular, affective and rational, mood and mind, inviting both my interlocutors and us scholars to rethink the category of “religion.” Tourism is often thought of as a quintessential secular practice. It turns local people and their culturally, religiously, and historically meaningful artifacts into an object of the tourist gaze (Urry 2002). The practice of tours could be also seen as a product of the mind-driven desire for theoretical knowledge about artifacts, people, and places. Scholars have also shown how tourism reinforces various modernist binaries such as urban/rural, modern/traditional, and the West/Rest (Bruner 2001; Ivy 1995; Picard

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gap in literature on established Buddhist institutions in contemporary Japan, and he critiques how religious studies on Japan has focused so much on medieval Buddhism and modern new religions (what I would call more “religion”-like practices and institutions) (4). Nelson also echoes this concern (2013, xvi). This thesis serves to fill in this general gap in scholarship, although it is not its primary goal. For a study of tourism to Shinto shrines, see Nelson’s Enduring Identities (2000), an ethnography of Kamigamo Shrine in Kyoto, although I take issue with this work in several regards. See chapter two.
1990). In this sense, tourism appears to be fundamentally a practice of the ontological mode of mind that involves constant objectification of cultures.

However, for many Japanese who go to Buddhist and Shinto sites for kankō (“tourism”; this is how many described the purpose of their visits), their visits do not concern “leaning about” or gazing upon the sites as pure objects. Mood is much more important for them. The tourist spaces are noisy, crowded, and vibrant. Many told me that they very much enjoyed this nigiyakasa (“liveliness” that comes from the chaotic co-presence of others; I elaborate on this concept in chapter two) of the space. At both sites, seemingly religious and secular practices coexist: monetary offerings, worship, purification rites, fortune telling, photographing, shopping, chatting, eating. These practices together produce the particular fun social mood of the space. Further, as these practices are deeply associated with the nation in the visitors’ imaginations, this mood affectively authorizes the imagined unity of the nation (see chapter two).

It turns out that the seemingly secular practice of tours also hardly produce abstract meanings only. Most tour guides I worked with, whether for domestic or foreign tourists, said that their primary goal is to “entertain [their] visitors.” Rather than considering the tour stories as representations of the sites, they see tours as a performative practice through which to produce desired moods. As their stories are often framed in national terms, the mood of the tours also ends up reinforcing the imagined unity of the nation both semiotically and affectively (see chapter three).

Most Japanese visitors thus obtain not (only) distanced theoretical knowledge, but an affective social experience in the co-presence of others. I will call these variously produced moods associated with the nation “nation-authorizing moods.”
These moods are by no means uniform, but experienced differently by different subjects. The collective presence and performance of the visitors and the tour guides produces a heterogeneous cluster of moods that affectively authorizes the nation. The mind-based distinction of the religious and the secular hardly make sense in this context where mood dominates.

My interlocutors are aware of this considerable gap in Japanese tourism between the category of “religion” and the “religious” practices. They negotiate this gap by comparing the practices with other “religions.” The diversity of visitors they encounter enables such comparison. For international tour guides, this usually means a comparison between the “religious” practices in Japan and other, most often Christian, nations. Domestic tour guides compare within the nation, between the practices at Shinto and Buddhist sites and of religious minorities. There was no consensus among my interlocutors as a whole as to whether Japanese people can be considered religious. For the domestic tour guides, the Japanese are not religious, nor have they even been. For those serving foreign tourists in primarily European languages, their practices are religious, and religion is “so deeply ingrained” in the “Japanese way of life” that they are not aware of their presence in their lives. These different conclusions about “religion” in Japan will shed light on how the semiotic and affective work performed by the category responds to specific larger contexts. As we will see in chapter four, the tour guides’ discourses defer exposition on their practices through the mediation of the nation.
In order to ultimately tackle these discourses, this thesis consists of four chapters. The first three chapters each describe and analyze different aspects of the world my interlocutors inhabit that I began outlining above: the historical construction of “religion” through the state’s secular project (chapter one); the practices and moods of the tourist spaces (chapter two); the narratives, practices, and moods of tours (chapter three). These chapters together present the historical, semiotic, and affective contexts within which the discursive practices around “religion” take place. Chapter four examines how the tour guides’ discursive delineation of religion is implicated in these larger contexts, and elucidates the work of semiotic and affective world-making performed by the category.

I contend that the tour guides’ discursive delineation of religion is enmeshed in their larger production of moods associated with the nation. My broader theoretical argument is that the incomplete category of religion can produce an affective presence of the nation by constructing a productive gap to be engaged between the practice and the category. Tourism becomes a productive site for such affective national imaginings because of the kind of practices and experiences that take place in that context. Moving beyond the binary of religion and the secular, I explore the intricate intertwining of mood and mind, embodiment and discourse, affect and meaning, all of which together produce the nation.

0-4. Fieldwork in Asakusa and Kamakura

I conducted fieldwork at two religious sites that are also popular tourist
destinations among both domestic and international tourists: Sensō-ji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo, and Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū shrine in Kamakura. The fieldwork took place from late May to August, 2016, although I had visited both sites several times before as I grew up in Yokohama, located in-between the two sites. I conducted participant observation and had casual conversations with domestic and international visitors about their experiences. I also worked with volunteer tour guide organizations from each area – Taito Tours (TT) in Asakusa and Kamakura International Guides (KIG) in Kamakura. I participated in their tours, attended their casual gatherings, and had casual conversations as well as formal interviews.

I chose the two sites because both are major tourist destinations yet differ in several potentially crucial ways in shaping the experiences of the visitors. Asakusa is part of Tokyo, and has traditionally been a largely working-class neighborhood since the Tokugawa era (1603-1867). The temple is the icon of the area. According to the official myth of the temple, it was established in 628 when two local fishermen found a statue of the Kannon deity in a river nearby (Sensouji 2016). Today, it is nationally known as a popular temple and is often associated with what is imagined to be the vibrant witty culture of the regular people of Tokyo (then called Edo) during the Tokugawa era.

Kamakura is one of many suburban towns in the Tokyo metropolitan area, about an hour from central Tokyo by train. The shrine is said to have been built and developed by members of the Genji clan, the warrior-class clan that ruled much of what is now Japan during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) and based its government in Kamakura (Tsurugaoka Hachimangu 2016). In addition to these
geographical and historical differences, the two sites diverge also in terms of their religious affiliations: The temple in Asakusa is a Buddhist site, while the shrine in Kamakura is a Shinto one. Despite these differences, the mood in the two spaces among their visitors turned out to be more similar than different, as they both have functioned as a central ritual hub in the neighborhood for a long time. Visitors did not pay much attention to these logistical details of the sites, but instead engaged in similar practices and enjoyed similar moods associated with the nation at both sites.

The two tour guide groups together provide a useful lens through which to examine how unmarked subjects with different relationships to the nation engage the category of “religion.” Both groups receive trainings from respective local states, and most members are local residents. But they also differ in productive ways for my purpose. KIG offers tours in foreign languages only, and constantly encounter tourists from outside the nation that they assume know little about Japan. Kamakura has also been out of the center of national history except during the Kamakura era. Such perceived geographic, cultural, and political peripherality of the city, as well as their constant encounters with outsiders, together draws their attention to national borders; they are invested in articulating and legitimizing the nation as a bounded community. On the other hand, the tour guides in Asakusa are more interested in the imagined content of the nation than in the borders. They serve mostly domestic visitors, and Asakusa is located in Tokyo, the political, cultural, and financial

17 They offer tours in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Chinese. I attended only English-language tours, but I was able to extensively interact with tour guides with other language abilities as well. The disproportionate representation of European languages and therefore culturally Christian visitors will have important implications in shaping the tour guides’ discourses (see chapter four). KIG does not accept any Japanese-identifying individuals to their tours, although I was allowed in because they knew that I was doing research.

18 To be more precise, they serve anyone that understands Japanese, but realistically this restriction
capital of Japan throughout its modern history. These factors together shape their view of the nation as self-evident reality within which they operate.

Notably, the state is only minimally present at the two sites, although it has certainly played a large role in establishing the structure the visitors and the tour guides inhabit. As mentioned above, the state attempts to rationalize and nationalize the sites by posting informational signs, training tour guides, etc. It has also historically defined and regulated “religion” for secular governance. However, the state as an active institution is largely invisible for most tourists and tour guides, since they mostly constitute the unmarked national majority. This perceived absence of the state allows us to examine the mobilization, reconstruction, and perpetuation of the paradoxical category of “religion” among the unmarked majority, upon whom the state does not act as explicitly as it does upon religious minorities.

My positionality strongly influenced my interactions with my interlocutors. Given the strong affective attachment many Japanese have to the nation that I describe throughout this thesis, my embodied recognizable Japanese with regards to my race, language ability, and bodily performance helped me get to know and engage in discourse with my interlocutors. Many of them expected me to have certain knowledge, experiences, and feelings in common with them as a fellow Japanese. Especially (but not exclusively) in my interactions with members of KIG, my status as a student in an American college seemed to help make them particularly comfortable sharing with me stories about their interactions with non-Japanese. In

makes their audience almost exclusively self-identified Japanese.
19 My interlocutors constituted the unmarked populations within the nation not only with regards to “religion.” Almost all tour guides were racially and linguistically recognizable Japanese, and socioeconomically relatively privileged (after all, they can afford to volunteer as a tour guide).
these ways, my presence not only allowed me to see, but also ironically reinforced their affective relationships to the nation.

Moreover, what was perhaps the most significant about who I am in the context of my project was that I am a Religion major and that I kept introducing myself to my interlocutors as such. This fact sparked a number of conversations about “religion” among them, including the one I quoted at the beginning of this introduction. My presence, as a person who belongs to a discipline that has shaped and been shaped by secularity, fostered their mobilization of the secular category. Ethnographic encounters like mine – I often wondered in retrospect – might have been how “religion” as a category globalized through neo/colonialism.

I was not comfortable with these effects of my positionality on nationalism and secularism given my political commitment and the current political climate in Japan. I acknowledge that this thesis is very much a product of these idiosyncratic encounters of mine with my interlocutors. Yet, as their discursive practices in my presence reflect their usual practices, I believe my task to be to explicate them as best as I can, now that the encounter has already taken place.

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20 Japan, like many other nations around the world, is currently seeing a rise of neonationalist discourse, and specifically political Shinto revival movements, especially under the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Mark R. Mullins (2012; 2016) has done a lot of work on this topic.
On February 11, 1889, the Japanese emperor held a ceremony in his Imperial Palace in order to make an oath to his divine ancestors. It was a national holiday to commemorate the founding of Japan by the mythical first emperor, Emperor Jimmu. Having offered a sacred branch at a shrine in the palace dedicated for Amaterasu, the sun goddess of whom he was said to be the direct descendent, he proclaimed to his ancestors the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution. This was the first modern constitution in Japanese history. After ceremonially passing the constitution to the prime minister, the emperor went out of the palace for a procession across Tokyo, the rapidly modernizing imperial capital. Along the street awaited him five thousand students, who shouted “banzai” and sang the national anthem as he passed in front of them. The enthusiasm lasted over a week in Tokyo, with colorful lanterns, bright electronic lights, and national flags celebrating the advancement of the sacred nation (Fujitani 1996, 107-111).

Perhaps contrary to this public quasi-religious ceremony, the constitution guaranteed religious freedom in Article 28: “Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief” (National Diet Library 2003). How did this religious freedom legally coexist with the public enthusiasm towards the quasi-religious rite? “Religion,” as it turns out, is not a self-evident category. It is crafted in response to
specific historical circumstances. It has its own history in the Japanese context.

This chapter takes up two historical case studies to examine how the Japanese state’s secular project of delineating “religion” has produced the affective presence of the nation among the unmarked population. In the introduction, I discussed E. Valentine Daniel’s distinction between mood and mind. “Religion” is a Christian-defined mind-based category insofar as it is centered upon the notion of belief. Since the category was brought to Japan in the late nineteenth century, the modern secular state has been at the forefront of Japanese actors in interpreting and adopting the unfamiliar category in order to negotiate its domestic authority and international recognition. As such, this chapter focuses on two crucial moments in which the state responded to the power of the Christian West by crafting a secular legal framework for regulating “religion”: 1) early to mid-Meiji period (1868-circa.1900), which culminated in the imperial constitution and 2) early postwar Allied occupation (1945-circa.1947), which produced the postwar constitution.

Specifically, I will attend to how the state created and engaged the gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and the mood-based practices to authorize the nation. As mentioned in the introduction, the continual secularist attempt to remake existing practices based on the normative notion of “religion” often reauthorizes the secular power. At the two moments examined in this chapter, the state actors faced the question of what counts as religion in Japan in comparison to Christianity as its prototype, and wrestled with the gap between them. This was a grave decision, since it corresponded to the question of what counts as private and what counts as public/national. Under their respective ideological vision of the nation,
the actors of the new regimes tactically engaged this gap to assert their legitimacy. The effects of the creation of these legal frameworks did not stay within the realm of theoretical classification only, however. I argue that the state’s repeated engagement with the gap between the category and the practice fueled the production of desirable nation-authorizing moods among the unmarked population.

1-1. Appropriating “Religion”: The Making of “Nonreligious” National Rites

Although much of the scholarship on the construction of “religion” as a category focuses on Western intellectual discursive processes, the term “religion” first entered the Japanese discourse as a diplomatic category. For over two hundred years, the Tokugawa regime nearly closed Japan’s borders, banning Christianity and allowing trade only with China, Korea, Ryukyu, and the Dutch. The situation began to change in 1852, when Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States arrived in the Tokyo Bay with a fleet of warships. He was soon joined by representatives of four European nations. As they all demanded commerce with Japan, the regime ended up concluding the Treaties of Amity and Commerce (so-called “unequal treaties”) in 1858, legalizing trade with these Euro-American nations. It was in the process of negotiating the treaties that Japanese officials first encountered “religion.” The Western side demanded Japan to recognize the “freedom of religion” of foreigners staying in Japan, although this demand was in reality aimed at proselytizing

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21 The Ryukyu Kingdom ruled today’s Okinawa as a (semi-)independent regime.
22 They are called “unequal” treaties because they granted extraterritoriality on foreigners living in Japan, and no tariff autonomy on the Japanese side. The revision of these unequal treaties became an obsession of the state throughout the Meiji period, as will be discussed below.
Christianity in Japan in disguise of religious freedom. At this point, the Japanese official translator interpreted “religion” simply as Christianity, as he was unsure about what “religious freedom” entailed (Josephson 2012, 78-92). Yet, this encounter with the Western imperialist power marked the beginning of the Japanese state’s struggles to understand and appropriate “religion” as a universalist category.

The legalization of trade soon led to the replacement of Tokugawa regime with the new Meiji state and the beginning of the Meiji Restoration in April 1868. The Meiji imperial state’s claimed legitimacy rested upon its twin principles of national polity (kokutai) and the unity of rites and politics (saisei icchi). The former posited that the Japanese nation was united under its shared tie to Amaterasu with the emperor as her direct descendent; the latter that such a unified nation can be (re)constructed through the state’s public ceremonies centered upon the emperor.23 For the state actors, these national doctrines constituted part of the modern, scientific truth that could combat the West (Josephson 2012). Under these ideologies, the state actors sought to restore what they claimed to be the authentic Japanese political system of the imperial court and initiated a modernization project.

The state initially utilized Buddhist and Shinto institutions to propagate its doctrines. However, this project was soon faced with domestic and international pressure to guarantee religious freedom, which posed a fundamental threat to the state’s authority. As its defining principles relied upon public ceremonies that some

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23 These ideas stemmed from the kokugaku tradition (“national learning”) from the Tokugawa era. Originally beginning as a philological study of ancient Japanese mythical texts, this school of thought searched for “pure” Japan before the arrival of foreign influence, i.e. Buddhism. Works by the Mito school scholar Aizawa Seishisai were particularly influential for the Meiji leaders. Although the Meiji state primarily utilized Shinto shrines for its rites and as the basis of its pantheon, the state’s doctrines, the principle of unity of rites and politics in particular, was heavily influenced by Confucian schools of thought. See Josephson (2012, especially chapter 4).
saw as “religious,” religious freedom would potentially place the state in the same realm as private religions. Thus, it was critical for the new state to establish the line between the religious and the nonreligious, in order to absolutize its doctrines and rites and consolidate its authority. By the end of the century, the state classified Buddhist temples and Christian churches as a matter of private “religious” belief, while claiming national rites at Shinto shrines as public and “nonreligious.”

By tactically engaging the gap between the category and the existing practices in this process, the state’s project of self-authorization legitimized the public national rites and galvanized the production of nation-authorizing moods among the unmarked.

**The Great Teaching Promulgation Campaign**

When the new regime set out to build a modern imperial state, they rejected existing institutions of authority, replacing them with Shinto-based nativist ones. Immediately after its establishment, the state issued a series of orders that mandated the removal of Buddhist elements from the ritual and material aspects of imperial life. This policy also prompted regular shrine priests to remove Buddhist elements from shrines in exchange for state recognition (Maxey 2014, 25-29; Thal 2005, 127-146).

Some 40,000 temples were destroyed across the archipelago by 1872 in this process (Ketelaar 1990, 90). Through this “separation of Buddhism and Shinto” (*shinbutsu bunri*), the state aimed to enlighten the nation by “restoring” what they imagined to

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24 In this section, I will use “temples” as a shorthand for Buddhist institutions and “shrines” for Shinto institutions. This corresponds to the respective Japanese words, *tera*, *jinja*, and *kyōkai*.

25 For instance, all Buddhist monks serving in the imperial court were ordered to laicize. The members of the imperial family and courtiers were no longer allowed to become Buddhist monks or nuns. At Shinto shrines, Buddhist titles for *kami*, such as *gōgen*, were prohibited (Maxey 2014, 29).
be pre-Buddhist Japan.

To further foster the ideological unification and enlightenment of the nation, the state established the Department of Divinities (jingikan) and launched the Great Teaching Promulgation Campaign (taikyō sempu undō) in 1870. This Campaign was in part a response to the rising threat of Christianity as missionaries accelerated their proselytizing efforts in Japan despite the continued ban of Christianity. Therefore, Department explicitly promoted national doctrines as a truer, purer, and better form of teaching (kyō) than Christianity, Buddhism, or other doctrines (Josephson 2012, 150-153; Maxey 2014, 32-47).26

The Department was soon abolished in April 1872, however.27 The Campaign had not proven very successful, and not many had abandoned their previous teaching institutions to “convert” to national doctrines.28 The state analyzed this outcome as due to its presentation of national doctrines as comparable to other teachings. Historian Trent E. Maxey (2014) calls this realization a “crisis of conversion,” as the emphasis on the functional equivalence between national and other doctrines in an attempt to encourage “conversion” inadvertently relativized supposedly absolute national doctrines. For the state to consolidate its authority in the presence of other doctrines, he asserts, the state needed “an ability to sequester difference based on ritual affiliation and doctrinal belief” (2014, 53). Though “religion” as a universalist

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26 To capture this claim of scientificity of national Shinto teachings by the state, Jason Josephson provocatively calls the set of ideas, sensibilities, and practices promoted by the state during this period, the “Shinto secular” (Josephson 2012).
27 To be more precise, Department of Divinities was first downgraded to the status of a ministry and renamed Ministry of Divinities (jingishō) in August 1871, before it was abolished (Maxey 2014, 50).
28 To be fair, the Campaign was somewhat successful in bringing people with different teaching affiliations together under the national teaching. Specifically, it provided an opportunity for members of new/minority sects to obtain recognition from the state and avoid persecution by presenting themselves as a version of the national orthodoxy (Hardacre 1989, 58).
category was yet to emerge among state actors, they began to recognize the detrimental relativizing effect of comparison and the necessity to elude it, through this initial failure of the Campaign.

The state changed its strategy and next explicitly set the emperor’s divine rites apart from the sphere of doctrines. In 1872, it replaced the Department of Divinities with two new institutions: the Bureau of Rites (shikibushō) which was in charge of emperor’s rites to enact the unity of rites and politics; and the Ministry of Doctrine (kyōbushō), which was in charge of shrines and temples as doctrinal institutions. This allowed the state to at least absolutize the emperor by separating his rites from the realm of doctrines. While this separation marked the end of the state’s attack on doctrinal institutions, it also marked the beginning of its subsumption of shrines and temples for the purpose of spreading national doctrines. The new Ministry created the Great Teaching Institute (daikyōin), and trained and certified Shinto and Buddhist priests as “doctrinal instructors” (kyōdōshoku) in order to have them teach national doctrines to the imperial subjects (Maxey 2014, 116-120; Shimazono 2009, 107).

Yet, the Institute was unpopular among both Buddhist leaders and some of the prominent members of the state, and it was in the context of critiquing the Institute that the emerging idea of “religion” began to obtain currency in national politics. Buddhist institutions were discontent with Shinto priests’ domination within the Institute due to the nativist nature of its doctrines. Buddhist leaders’ desire for authority was particularly desperate because the separation of Buddhism and Shinto at the outset of the Meiji Restoration had undermined Buddhist temples’ long-

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29 The Christian ban continued even after the disestablishment of the Department, but the state stopped enforcing the ban strictly in practice (Maxey 2014, 81).
standing tie to the state and the imperial court. Criticizing the Institute for its “confusion” of religion and politics, Buddhist leaders, most notably Shin sect cleric Shimaji Mokurai, called for the separation of shūkyō (“religion” or “sectarian teaching”) and chikyō (“politics” or “civic teaching”) and demanded religious freedom (Krämer 2015, Maxey 2014, 122-124).

Members of the state who were familiar with emerging Western notions on state-church relations also opposed the Institute. The state had sent some of its prominent founding members to the US and Europe as the Iwakura Embassy (1871-3), in order to negotiate treaty revisions and observe ‘Western civilization.’ During their trip, the embassy members were confronted with the Western demand for religious freedom as a condition for the revision. Along with the idea of religious freedom, the embassy also encountered theories on religion behind the principle of religious freedom. These theories posited that private religious belief can benefit governance as a tool for discipline and control. The rising threat of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement also amplified such an argument for a religiously neutral

30 During the Tokugawa period, Buddhist institutions enjoyed a strong tie to the state under the danka system in which the state required all people to register with a local Buddhist temple in part as a way of enforcing the ban of Christianity (Josephson 2012, 41). In addition, as reflected the felt need for the “separation” of Buddhism and Shinto itself, Buddhist teachings and rites had been playing an important role in the imperial court for centuries.
31 It is notable that words like “freedom” (jiyū) and “rights” (kenri) were also translated into Japanese around the same time (Josephson 2012, 198). Shimaji spent some time in Germany, so he was particularly familiar with concepts such as freedom of conscience. In addition, as Krämer (2015) points out, the Pure Land tradition of Buddhism, to which he belonged, had developed a particular focus on interiority throughout the Tokugawa era, perhaps making it easier for him than for others to accept the idea of religion as private belief. In fact, his idea on Buddhism as private religion faced some opposition from other Buddhist sects (Maxey 2014, 160).
32 The embassy comprised of many key actors in the state, such as Iwakura Tomomi and Kido Takayoshi. Writings by Kume Kunikutake, the official chronicler of the trip, were particularly influential with regards to religions policy. Their visit coincided with rapid changes in church-state relations in places like France and Prussia, and they witnessed the rising power of the modern secular state especially through public education through the weakening of the church’s authority (Maxey 2014, 86-88). These functionalist ideas on religion were debated among Meiji intellectuals, including Shimaji, also on platforms like the journal Meiroku Zasshi in the early 1870’s (see Josephson 2012, 205-221).
state among the state actors.\textsuperscript{33} In this context, religious freedom appeared to be fitting way to simultaneously respond to the West and strengthen the domestic state power (Josephson 2012, 202-205; Maxey 2014, 72-87, 163-169). The state ultimately declared the “separation of religion and politics” (seikyō bunri), with the removals of the Institute in 1875 and of the Ministry of Doctrine in 1877.

In sum, the first decade of the Meiji regime was characterized by its continual effort to establish its authority through the Campaign and the encounter with the universalist idea of religion. For the state to tame Buddhist institutions and gain recognition from the West, it turned out, it needed to avoid direct comparison or explicit involvement with temples and churches. The separation of religion and politics seemed like a promising solution in this context. Yet, the separation by no means meant that the state stopped engaging temples and shrines; as the question of what counts as “religion” remained within this religious freedom, the state subsequently spent the next decade clarifying this slippery line between religious and nonreligious through its continued engagement with them. Having recognized “religion” as a category, the state now embarked upon a secular project, engaging the gap between the category and the practice.

\textbf{Marking Religion, Unmarking the Nation}

In working to establish a line between national/public and religious/private, the state tactically engaged Buddhist and Shinto institutions differently in order to consolidate its authority: 1) privatizing, disembodying, and marking non-state –

\textsuperscript{33} The Freedom and People’s Rights Movement was a movement that demanded the establishment of the national congress started by a former prominent member of the state.
especially Buddhist – teachings and practices, and 2) raising and unmarking the public presence of national teachings and practices. Through this process, which took place in part contemporarily with the Institute’s activities, the former came to be increasingly labeled “religion,” while the latter was identified with Shinto shrines. I will discuss the former first.

As for Buddhist temples, the state attempted to moralize and rationalize them. Even after the abolishment of the Institute in 1875, the Bureau continued to certify Buddhist priests as “doctrinal instructors” through exams. As mentioned above, the state actors had learned to utilize religion for governance in the early 70’s. In continuing to set limits based on these ideas within which religious institutions were to operate, they hoped that religious leaders would help enlighten the nation (Maxey 2014, 133). Many Buddhist leaders, if not all, welcomed this new limited, yet restored freedom to reclaim their doctrinal and institutional authority. 34

In addition to rationalizing and regulating doctrines, the state also intervened in embodied practices of Buddhist sects as well as new religions. As part of the modernist project, the state increasingly persecuted, criminalized, and medicalized as “superstition” (meishin) many popular embodied practices in the 70’s and 80’s, such as seasonal rites, magical talismans, and healing rituals. Not only did many Buddhist clerics stop performing these practices, but they also attacked them themselves in order to maintain their status as state-recognized doctrinal instructors (Hardacre 2011, Josephson 2012, 164-186). 35 Thus, by working on the gap between existing

34 At the same time, many Buddhist leaders sought special protection from the state (and even attempted to make Buddhism a/the state religion) well until the end of the nineteenth century. See Maxey (2014, especially chapters 4 and 5).

35 Josephson points out that many of the practices banned during this period overlapped with what was
institutions and the idealized view of “religion,” the state made Buddhism increasingly like a private “religion,” even if it never succeeded completely (Shimazono 2005). In Daniel’s terms, the state’s secular modernist project increasingly made “religious” practices more mind-based.

While Buddhist institutions increasingly came to bear the label of a “religion,” the state classified Shinto as “nonreligious.” In 1879, it created two different categories for shrine festivals – “worship of the state” (kokusai) and “popular celebrations” (minsai). This, at least in theory, justified the holding of state rites at shrines, which were now supposedly religious and therefore independent from the state (Thal 2002, 105). To separate state-related shrines from the realm of “religion” even more decisively, the Bureau classified shrines into two different categories in 1882: Shrine Shinto (jinja shintō) and Sect Shinto (kyōha shintō). The priests at the former were now allowed to perform only national rites as nonreligious state servants, and the latter only to teach non-national doctrines as religious teachers (Maxey 2014, 161-2; Thal 2005, 207). This attempt to separate shrines from the realm of “religion” later culminated in the simultaneous creation of the Bureau for Shrine Affairs (jinja kyoku) and the Bureau of Religions (shūkyō kyoku) in 1900.

considered as heresy during the Tokugawa period, but he notes that the language around the persecution increasingly adopted the language of civilization rather than heresy (Josephson 2012, 179-186). Benjamin Dorman (2012) and Helen Hardacre (2011) emphasizes the role of the emerging secular media in enforcing such policing and civilizing efforts.

36 To priests that chose to be religious teachers, regulatory practices similar to the ones towards Buddhist temples were applied (Maxey 2014, 161-2; Thal 2005, 207).

37 This series of separations was in part, as Josephson (2012) and Thal (2002) argue, a continuation of the idea of the national doctrine as an enlightened truth that had informed the Campaign. However, specific events in the early 80’s also prompted this move. The process of crafting the constitution beginning in 1881 raised for the state the question of how to legitimately maintain the relationship with shrines under what was most likely going to be a religiously neutral constitution (Thal 2005, 207). In addition, a theological debate among Shinto priests in 1879-1880 demonstrated the importance of keeping direct control over Shinto institutions to maintain the national orthodoxy (Maxey 2014, 148-154). In this context, the state came to feel a stronger necessity to control Shinto shrines as a site for
This institutional separation of shrines from the increasingly rationalized realm of private “religion” coincided with the invention of various embodied national practices surrounding shrines. These new systems had a much stronger focus on the bodies of the Japanese subjects compared to other forms the propagation of the national doctrine took before. Though often dismissively called “State Shinto” today, for the people then, these systems created possibilities for the production of affective experiences associated with the nation.

For instance, the public schooling system was created in 1872, modeling on Western secular public education. Schools taught national doctrines, pantheon, and history, as well as basic skills like math, reading, and writing. The promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890 led to an even stronger further emphasis of national doctrines in education. Shrines played a major role in public education through school trips, shrine priests serving as teachers, and so on. Schools thus increasingly became one of the central sites for the cultivation of ethical and affective reverence to the emperor. Despite the pervasive presence of the emperor and shrines, the state persistently claimed the schools to be public and “nonreligious” (Josephson 2012, 155-158, 240; Shimazono 2009).

The invented bodily national practices also entered the realm of everyday life. The state created a calendar of national holidays and accompanying “nonreligious” shrine rites, as well as shrine-based rites of passage. It also took advantage of the

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38 Of course, teaching reading and writing in the “national language” (kokugo) also constitutes part of the project of creating a unified nation by standardizing language across the nation.
39 For the state, it was so important that it maintains the “non-religiosity” of school that religious institutions’ access to the education system became a big point of contention in the debates around the Religion Bill in the 90’s (Maxey 2014, 215-217).
ability of massive national rituals to bring together the populace. The 1880’s and 90’s saw many huge national ceremonies, such as the promulgation of the constitution and the prince’s wedding. The worship of the national war dead most famously at Yasukuni Shrine also rapidly grew in popularity during this period (Fujitani 1996; Hardacre 1989; Shimazono 2005, 1089-9; Shimazono 2009). These rites physically brought people together and had them participate in the collective production of shared events and experiences. Importantly, many of these national practices utilized the physical space of shrines and relied on the cooperation of shrine priests. They were also often held along with various other communal amusement shrine activities (Breen 2008, 14-16; Hardacre 1989, 91; Mullins 2010, 122). Thus, shrines came to be an integral part of the public national embodied practice of emperor worship, becoming less and less like “religion” with its publicity, physicality, and affectivity.

In sum, in its second decade and on, the Meiji state aimed to place itself above the realm of private religion by tactically engaging the gap between the category of “religion” and the practices. On the one hand, it worked to reduce the gap between the category and Buddhist practices, privatizing, rationalizing, and disembodying them. By contrast, it reclassified Shinto shrines as “non-religious” and worked to expand the gap between the category and shrine practices, publicizing, collectivizing, and physicalizing them. The religious freedom guaranteed “within limits” in the imperial constitution, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, became possible under this secularist project of marking “religion” and unmarking national rites.

40 For instance, in the annual festivals at Yasukuni Shrine were booming cannons, fireworks, sumo wrestling matches. Next to the shrine was constructed a race horse track, a lighthouse, and the now-controversial war museum, Yūshūkan (Breen 2008, 14-15).
Thus, the legal differentiation between the public/national and the private/reigious animated the collective production of mood through public embodied practices among the unmarked population. Shimazono Susumu, a prominent scholar of State Shinto, points out that there are two different definitions of State Shinto currently in scholarship: the narrow definition as the political system that separated Shrine and Sect Shintos; the broad one as a matrix of related “thoughts, attitudes, and practices” pertaining to reverence to the emperor (2005, 1093). Both narrow- and broad-sense State Shintos were initially organized by the state. But unlike the former, the latter diffused into people’s everyday life through the participation of various actors ranging from shrines priests, schools, event organizers, military, to mass media (1089-92; see also Thal 2005). But as this section has shown, it was the state’s experimentations and negotiations in the narrow-sense legal realm that allowed for such broad-sense popular State Shinto. The two State Shintos were not entirely disconnected; one enabled the other. As a result, public space was now filled with things national.

To be sure, not everyone was equally enthusiastic about the rites, the nation or the emperor, and the arbitrary boundary between the religious and the nonreligious continued to be contested. But even the dissenting voices further authorized the state by inviting the state to constantly articulate the slippery line (Thal 2002, 109-111). Thus, the state domination of public life elevated the felt presence of the nation in people’s everyday lives, and affectively authorized the nation. The state’s engagement with the gap between the category and the practices assisted such embodied production of nation-authorizing moods among the unmarked population.

While 1-1 examined the initial appropriation of the concept of “religion” to the Japanese context, this section concerns a major shift in its conception after the end of World War II. During the war, the state mobilized religious organizations to promote popular participation in the war effort, and subordinated private “religion” to the public “non-religious” State Shinto. The legal framework set up through the Meiji period legally justified such actions of the state (Hardacre 1989). After the war, the Allies viewed the wartime situation as a violation of religious freedom and declared State Shinto a “religion” in December 1945.41 They initiated a secular project as part of its larger democratization project, claiming to bring ‘true’ religious freedom to Japan that would enable ‘true’ democracy. Thus, the Japanese public once again faced the question of what counts as religion and what religious freedom entails – issues that the Meiji state had spent decades trying to understand and actualize.

What was different about the postwar, however, is the site for the debates on “religion.” While the state politics was the major arena for such debates during the Meiji era, the postwar debates transpired largely in the realm of public discourse, especially in the media. In reporting the process of the state’s creation of the legal regulatory framework for religious institutions throughout the Meiji period, the secular media came to function as a moral institution that polices “religious” institutions (Dorman 2012, 35-36; Hardacre 2011). The notion of religion had become a fairly familiar, if not an everyday, concept for many through the media by

41 “State Shinto” as a category is itself an American construction from this period. See Thomas (2014).
the end of the war. Consequently, much of the postwar debates on “religion” also took place in the media, as Japanese people sought to navigate the vast legal and social changes rapidly implemented under the Allied occupation.

For this reason, this section will investigate the media representation of “religion” in the context of SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers)’s legal reforms. I will specifically look at discourses on Shinto and Buddhism, the two traditions of my focus in this thesis, in two major newspapers, Asahi Shimbun and Yomiuri Shimbun, before “new religions” came to dominate the discourse on religion around 1948. Given that all newspapers were censored during the occupation, my sources exemplify not so much the voices of the Japanese people at the time. Rather, I consider the media discourses a modality of power to which the public was being exposed then. The newspapers mobilized the idea of religion to construct, articulate, and explain the nation’s wartime and postwar suffering, and present a national hope toward a democratic future. Engaging the gap between “religion” in Japan and the Christocentric notion of “religion” presented by the Allies, they identified the origin of the nation’s sufferings and sought to overcome them by modifying Japanese “religions.”

**SCAP’s Religious Reform**

The wartime state strictly surveilled and suppressed religious practices to

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42 These were two of the three most widely read newspapers at the time, and were read across Japan. Asahi had a circulation of around 2.5 million at the beginning of the occupation, and Yomiuri around 1.5 million. Both numbers continued to rise throughout the occupation, in part as the supply of paper recovered (Dorman 2012, 114). For the postwar media discourse on new religions, see Dorman (2012).

43 As represented by this fact of censorship, the Allied occupation of Japan was famously characterized by the irony of building democracy through non-democratic measures. For details on censorship during the occupation, see Dower (1999, 405-440).
contain them “within limits” of the public duty of State Shinto. The Religious Organizations Law (1940) played a pivotal role, as it gave the state the authority to systematically recognize and regulate “religious” groups. The state persecuted many self-claimed, often new, religious groups under this law throughout the war (Dorman 2004, 108; Hardacre 1989, 124-131). The law also prompted the creation of the Greater Japan Wartime Patriotic Association of Religions. The Association brought together most state-recognized religious organizations across denominations and was utilized to mobilize the populace for the state’s war effort (Dorman 2012, 94).

After the war was over on August 15, 1945, GHQ (General Headquarters [for the Allied Occupation]) considered it crucial to guarantee religious freedom for their project of democratizing Japan. Their project with regards to religion was twofold: 1) to establish religious freedom in the state structure, and 2) to “encourage the Japanese people to develop a desire for religious freedom” (quoted in Thomas 2014, 327).

GHQ’s primary concern with regard to the former was to disestablish so-called State Shinto. Contrary to the Japanese state’s claim of State Shinto as non-religious, the Allies regarded it as a religion that the state abused to subjugate the populace for its militarist agenda. This view culminated in the Shinto Directive (December 1945), which aimed to “free the Japanese people from direct or indirect compulsion to believe or profess to believe in a religion or cult officially designated by the state,” and to “separate religion from the state” (The Shinto Directive, 1960). The disestablishment of State Shinto took various forms in practice, from the privatization

44 Although this law is often seen as part of the totalitarian project of the state at the time, attempts to pass this law in the congress discussed bills for different versions of similar legislations a number of times since the promulgation of the imperial constitution (Hardacre 1989, 124-126).
of shrines to the emperor’s so-called declaration of humanity and public education reform (Mullins 2010; Thomas 2014; Woodard 1972). Yet, as reflected in the Directive, it is notable that GHQ saw the essence of the “religion” of State Shinto as belief, despite the various embodied practices performed under the name of “civic duty” before and during the war.

Despite the separation of religion and the state declared in the Directive, the occupiers actively engaged religious institutions in order to achieve their second goal. Based on the conviction that individual citizens’ belief in Christianity stabilized American democracy by keeping them moral, GHQ protected “religions” in Japan to foster their moral function.45 The Religious Corporations Ordinance (December 28, 1945) was precisely a product of such agenda. This Ordinance simplified the criteria and process of obtaining the status as a tax-exempt religious corporation (*shūkyō hōjin*), and facilitated the rise of “new religions” (Dorman 2012; Thomas 2014, 297).46 The Religions Division in the occupation government also publicized the moral function of religion through press releases, public lectures, and radio, and preached about the value of religious freedom as a universal human right (Thomas 2014, 332-336).47 In the name of the universal right of religious freedom, the occupiers claimed the legitimacy of their secular democracy project in Japan.

45 Many leaders of religious institutions, especially established religions, in fact resisted the liberalization because they sought to maintain their ties to and recognition from the state that they had obtained throughout the war (Dorman 2012, 97-106).

46 Properties of religious corporations were subject to tax exemption upon the state’s approval under the prewar system as well, but it was entirely up to the state whether a property becomes subject to taxation or not, allowing the state to privilege certain religious corporations over others even among the groups legally recognized as “religious” (Thomas 2014, 140). In this sense, the new Ordinance can be said to have been much more protective of religious corporations than the prewar legal structure.

47 Although there is emerging literature of critical study of human rights (see Moyn 2010), Thomas (2014) argues that the Allied occupation of Japan was one of the first historical moments at which religious freedom came to be conceived as a universal right that transcends nationality.
GHQ, most famously its supreme commander General Douglas MacArthur, was also invested in spreading Christianity in Japan as the true source of democracy. For him, the “spiritual vacuum” opened up by the defeat was an excellent opportunity for proselytization (quoted in Thomas 2014, 308). They brought in American Christian missionaries to engage in various humanitarian works. This emphasized the moral function of Christianity and constructed the public image that “religions” should serve as a private moral compass (Moore 2011; Okazaki 2010; 2012). 48

Thus, the Allies presented religious belief as a moral force necessary for Japan to attain democracy. Importantly, this idea on the role of “religion” in Japan stemmed from their view on Christianity as the prototypical religion. However, as many journalists I discuss below took note of, this abstract conception of “religion” did not correspond to the Japanese practices on the ground. This perceived gap between the category and Japanese “religions” crucially shaped the newspaper discourses on “religion.” Below I start with the discourses on Shinto.

Reinterpreting the Wartime Past: Shinto Becomes a “Religion”

Although the Allies expressed their intention to enforce religious freedom with the Civil Liberties Directive in October, 1945, they were unclear as to what would count as “religion,” and whether Shinto would count as one. In this context, newspapers presented no consensus on the relationship between State Shinto and

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48 While scholars like Moore (2011) and Okazaki (2010; 2012) see the Christianization project more as MacArthur’s personal project, Thomas (2014) shows how other members of the occupation regime, most notably the Religions Division chief William K. Bunce, also took it seriously. Not coincidentally, the early postwar period saw the state promotion of “religion” in the United States as well, as a means of heightening the “spiritual vitality” of the nation to combat the “godless Soviets” (see Herzog 2011).
“religion” at the very beginning of the occupation. Both *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* presented news stories about the ambiguous categorization of Shinto (*Asahi*, October 9, 1945; *Yomiuri*, November 17, 1945), and as if to respond to these reports, many op-eds were published on this topic during this period. A piece on *Asahi* by a regular citizen argued that Shinto had never been a “state religion,” and that Japanese citizens had been “proud of [their] religious freedom” since the Meiji Constitution (Takashima, *Asahi*, November 12, 1945). An editorial on *Yomiuri* suggested that Shinto might be a “religion,” and stated that “not only have the Japanese had no religious freedom, but we have not realized that we don’t have it” (October 11, 1945). At this point, whether State Shinto counted as a “religion” and therefore violated religious freedom remained an open question that invited debates. The wartime experience of State Shinto was perhaps still too close, too familiar, and too present to be analyzed.

It was with the Directive that the idea that Shinto may not be a “religion” disappeared from the public discourses, and Shinto as a state religion became an established explanation for the wartime national suffering. After the Directive, *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* each published an editorial that supported the Directive and denounced State Shinto as the wartime state’s means to subjugate the people for its agenda. *Yomiuri* argues that “the root cause of Japan’s suffering [from the war] was the incomplete ‘civilization and enlightenment’” that resulted from the “absolute belief” in the “Shinto ideology” among the state elites (December 18, 1945). *Asahi* similarly dismisses Shinto as a “myth” that the state deliberately mixed up with

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49 This shift was so stark that it makes me suspect the workings of intense censorship behind the scenes. Again, my focus here is the public representation of “religion,” and my argument is not that the Directive prompted change in people’s perception of State Shinto.
“history” inappropriately for the “era of the Enlightenment” for its militarist agenda (December 17, 1945). Resonant with SCAP’s argument, these pieces attribute the nation’s wartime suffering to State Shinto. In this framework, the state’s use of Shinto as the “state religion” prevented the nation from getting fully enlightened and allowed the state to “neglect” the people (ibid.). Assumed here, contrary to before the Directive, is the binary opposition between religious myth, belief, obedience, and totalitarianism, on the one hand, and secular history, enlightenment, freedom, and democracy, on the other. This series of secular modernist binaries enabled the theorization of the wartime past.

Yet, this explanation of the wartime experience did not stay only within the realm of theory, but provided hope in the future. Having thus diagnosed the wartime suffering, the articles proceed to propose a solution to the suffering: to reverse everything on the side of the war in this binary cluster, by separating the “religion” from the state, “democratiz[ing]” the state, and ensuring religious freedom. This would bring Japan a better future filled with “international fame” (Asahi, December 17, 1945) or “true courage and true sense of purpose” (Yomiuri, December 18, 1945). In equating State Shinto with “religion,” the binaries the authors evoked together provided an explanation for the national past and a vision into the national future. Mind-based exposition invited a mood of hope for the nation.

Such imagination of the national future often involved an explicit comparison between Shinto Japan and the Christian West. The Asahi article points out that Shinto is now subject to the “same religious freedom as other religions,” and calls for Shinto leaders’ “critical self-reflection” by comparing Shrine Shinto with Christianity:
Shinto might have a deep relationship with the Japanese nation, but that is [precisely] the problem here. That is, Judaism as a national religion… through the appearance of many prophets and the actions of Christ, eventually took off from its stubborn national-specificity and became a world religion, but no similar process has transpired in Shinto. … Without extensive self-criticism from the Shinto circle on this issue, Sect Shinto’s value as a religion will never be enhanced. (Asahi, December 17, 1945)

The author here critiques the national particularism of Shinto by comparing it to the universalism of Christianity (though she never says “Christianity” in the piece). This comparison allows her to propose the nation a path into the future in which Shinto becomes a proper universalist “religion” like Christianity. The shared category of “religion” that encompasses both Shinto and Christianity here proved productive in finding a way to move forward as a nation.

These discourses on Shinto and “religion” suggest hope by simultaneously reifying the imagined unity of the nation by presenting the future in national terms. They also do not eradicate Shinto from the nation, but simply shifts its relationship to the nation; while it had once been seen to transcend “religion,” it now became one of many “religions” in the nation. In a sense, therefore, the Shinto reform embodied the democratization process that the whole nation was undergoing then. Some articles depicted Shinto precisely in this way. For example, Yomiuri reported the first wedding ceremony between regular citizens held at Meiji Shrine, a state shrine that enshrines Emperor Meiji (January 21, 1946). Asahi wrote on the rise of “popular entertainment” at Yasukuni Shrine, although with nostalgia towards the past in which enthusiastic nationalistic visitors filled the space (February 1, 1946). These stories highlighted the shared experience of the wartime exploitation and postwar democratization between the nation and Shinto. Even after becoming one of many
“religions,” Shinto remained closely associated with the nation at least in the discursive realm – no longer as a national duty, but now as an embodiment of the current experience of the nation. Shinto proved to be a productive site for generating hope all the more for its persistent tie with the imagined community of the nation.

Reinterpreting the Postwar Present: Buddhism as a Private “Religion”

Like Shinto, newspapers used Buddhism as a category also to reflect upon the current situation of the nation and to find the necessary measure for a better future. Unlike Shinto, however, it was taken for granted that Buddhism was a “religion,” a notion inherited from the Meiji politics. It was also employed more often to make sense of the suffering in the postwar present than in the wartime past. This is in part due to the strong association between the war and State Shinto on the one hand, and the postwar and religious freedom on the other – associations that, as we saw above, are themselves a post-Directive construction. Yet, these differences aside, the discourses on Buddhism shared a similar logic as those on Shinto. The gap between the category of “religion” and the present conditions of Buddhism provided an explanation and a hopeful solution for the nation’s continued suffering.

As the occupation proceeded, newspapers attacked Buddhism for the public’s continual postwar suffering. The nation was in the midst of “spiritual confusion” (seishinteki konmei), which, according to these op-eds, Buddhism as a “religion” was supposed to heal (Asahi, January 31, 1946; Ishiyama, Asahi, February 12, 1946; February 17, 1947; Miyata, Yomiuri, November 13, 1946; Kishimoto, Yomiuri, September 15, 1947). Many also explicitly compared Buddhism to Christianity’s
“peace-lovingness” and “activism,” and criticized Buddhism for lacking these attributes and perpetuating the nation’s postwar suffering (Asahi, February 17, 1947; May 5, 1947; Yomiuri, October 15, 1946). With this identification of the problem, the articles also demanded Buddhism to function for the nation’s future as a “driving force” of “the civilized mind” (Yomiuri, November 13, 1946), or true democracy, civilization, and peace (Yomiuri, May 8, 1947).

For example, an editorial on Yomiuri titled “What Are Religious Leaders Doing?” accused “Buddhist leaders” for “powerless[ly]” failing to provide a “spiritual basis and the object of belief” to the masses. For the author, the nation is currently in the midst of a spiritual crisis “since the sacrality of the emperor is lost.” Contrasting current “ritualized” Buddhism to the “great philosophy” of historical clerics such as Hōnen and Shinran, she urges Buddhist leaders to “revive the great past” and “save” the nation (Yomiuri, October 15, 1946).

The author here offers hope in the future by identifying an origin of the present nation’s suffering and proposing a solution. What she calls for here is a transformation of Buddhism into a proper “religion,” with more emphasis on philosophical belief and less on ritual. The reference to Hōnen and Shinran deserves particular attention. They were both medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhist monks who popularized the idea of personal salvation through highly accessible practices.50 By evoking these well-known figures from the nation’s past concerned with popular

50 In fact, the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, to which Hōnen and Shinran belonged, is (in)famous for resembling Protestant Christianity in its emphasis on personal salvation to such a degree that, as prominent Buddhologist Richard John Bowring points out, some have explicitly called them “Japanese Luther” (2005, 252). Many thanks to Professor Takeshi Watanabe for drawing my attention to the significance of the reference to these figures (personal communication, February 26, 2017).
salvation and active proselytization, this reference calls for moralistic, “religion”-like actions of Buddhist institutions while also reasserting the imagined historical unity of the nation. For her, reducing the gap between idealized “religion” and the present situation of Buddhism will help the nation surmount the postwar suffering. The mobilization of the belief-based view of religion allows her to pin down the origin of the current suffering and invoke hope.

The hope presented in these Buddhism-accusing articles was often associated with the nation. The future they claimed would come after reforming Buddhist institutions includes, “awe of the entire world [toward Japan]” (Yomiuri, October 15, 1946), and the “further sophistication of the Japanese spirit” (Yomiuri, February 17, 1947). For them, the “corruption” and lack of activism in contemporary Buddhism is undermining the nation’s unique cultural attribute cultivated through its history, which can be restored by remolding Buddhist institutions. The mood of hope produced through the discourses around Buddhism thus reauthorized the nation.

Like in the discourses on Shinto, these critiques do not exclude Buddhism from the nation, but makes it a necessary part of the nation’s future building. In fact, despite the criticisms and disappointments, Buddhist institutions also often served as an intimate reference point through which to articulate and explain the postwar present struggles. In late 1945 and early 1946, many big Buddhist sects such as the Pure Land sect and the True Pure Land sect divided into smaller sects. Yomiuri described these events in an article titled, “The Buddhist circles are democratizing too,” highlighting the resonance between the experience of the Buddhist institutions and the larger transformation of the nation then (December 26, 1945, emphasis mine).
Asahi had an article on a Buddhist temple’s financial hardships under the acute postwar inflation, titled, “Temples [otera san] are short on money too” (October 17, 1948). It describes how the prestigious Kan’ei-ji temple in Tokyo, which takes care of Tokugawa shogun’s graves, decided to lend out the graveyard previously reserved for the shogun family due to its financial shortage. The piece is accompanied by a photo captioned, “monks [bō san] counting bills.” While the article thus makes fun of the situation of the supposedly dignified moral institution, it also evokes a sense of familiarity to the temple throughout. The use of suffix “san,” which is usually used after a person’s name to express respect and familiarity, as well as the emphasis on the shared experience of the temple in the title, reinforces this sense of closeness. Buddhist institutions were imagined to be experiencing the postwar present with the nation, and this imagination helped to articulate, make sense of, and endure the suffering in the national present.

Thus, early in the occupation, the media constructed and explained past and ongoing sufferings of the nation by constructing and engaging the gap between “religion” as a category and the realities of Buddhism and Shinto. Underlying their logic were the multiple related binaries associated with SCAP’s conception of “religion” – binaries such as past and present, present and future, suffering and freedom, religion and enlightenment, fascism and democracy, institutionality and morality. It is notable that these dichotomies all stem from the idea of human autonomy, which also enables the secular idea of “religion,” as discussed in the introduction. These related secular binaries made “religion” a particularly productive site for explaining national sufferings.
These explanations for the national sufferings presented a hopeful mood to the nation. The discourses on State Shinto and Buddhism led to the same conclusion: because the improper religiosity of Shinto in the wartime past and Buddhism in the postwar present caused the nation’s suffering, moralizing and privatizing them will help Japan attain a bright future of peace and democracy. Of course, this all took place within the realm of representation, and reality must have been much more complicated. Yet, at least in the discursive practices, the occupiers’ legal reconfiguration of “religion” provided the Japanese a model towards which to work on themselves, and animated the production of national hope.

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At the two crucial moments for the historical formation of “religion” as a category in Japan, the state’s secular project galvanized desirable moods associated with the nation among the unmarked through bodily and discursive practices. My argument here is not that the state actions inevitably generated the moods. Rather, as we have seen above, various actors that encountered the state-appropriated notion of “religion” engaged these state creations and participated in the production of moods each in their own way: from shrine priests, school teachers, and local leaders at the Meiji moment, to journalists and newspaper readers in the postwar. The state’s secular project created the condition for such possibilities.

This chapter has taken up only two moments from the complex history, and my examination of these two is by no means exhaustive. Yet, my interest here lies in the recurring pattern. Even though neither the process nor the outcome of state actions
the same between the two moments, the mismatch between the normative notion of “religion” and the existing practices proved productive of power, actions, and affect in both cases. As I will show in chapter four, this pattern appears and reappears in the ordinary discursive practices of my interlocutors today. The ambiguous category produces the affective presence of the nation precisely because of its fluidity and the creative potential the fluidity offers.
CHAPTER TWO
SENSING THE NATION

This chapter introduces my field sites, Sensō-ji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo, and Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū shrine in Kamakura. I will describe and analyze the practices of the visitors in the larger area surrounding the two “religious” sites, which I will call “tourist spaces.” By this I roughly refer to the area stretching between the main worship hall of the respective sites and the closest train station – the area that self-identified tourists visit most often. Despite many tours offered by the volunteer organizations I worked with and other commercial tour companies, most visitors to these sites come on their own, usually with a few friends or family members. This chapter examines the unorganized practices and experiences of these crowds.

In coining the term “tourist space,” part of my argument is that we can best understand the experiences of the visitors by examining their practices in the tourist spaces as a whole, rather than by arbitrarily identifying and focusing on “religious” spaces. Such an impulse to focus on what scholars might call the “religious” space characterizes John K. Nelson’s (2000) ethnography of Kamigamo Shrine, a touristic Shinto shrine in Kyoto. He begins his description of the visitors’ movements and practices from the outer gate of the shrine, tracing them only within the shrine ground. Contrasting, in my fieldwork, the boundary between the shrine/temple grounds and beyond was hardly relevant to the visitors. Wherever they were between

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51 This focus, I suspect, in part stems from the overall focus of his book, i.e. the shrine as an institution.
the train station and main building of the temple or the shrine, visitors constantly moved around, took photos, and stared at and spent money on things religious and nonreligious, chat, ate, and laughed with one another in the presence of countless excited strangers. They had a lot of fun, and mood clearly mattered. Therefore, the attempt to draw a mind-driven line between the religious and the secular hardly makes sense in light of their practices. In fact, as we will see in 2-3, the visitors, too, often noticed a gap between their theoretical knowledge about what they thought they were supposed to know about the “religious” site, and their experiential knowledge of how to perform there. Even on those occasions, they ultimately produced desired fun moods by playfully engaging this gap with their groups.

I contend that the visitors collectively produce desired moods associated with the nation through a range of bodily and discursive practices. Nelson argues that the shrine’s appeal for visitors lies at the “freedom” to “give expression to their inner mental or emotional states” that the unorganized nature of the shrine space allows for (2000, 25). Yet, as I will show below, the embodied and material reality of the tourist spaces does not merely express their inner states, but actively responds to and shapes their experiences. In making this argument, this chapter will focus on Japanese domestic visitors, although both of the tourist spaces welcome many visitors from

52 I agree with Nelson that there is a tremendous amount of flexibility in terms of the kinds of practices performed and accepted within the space, as my data below indicates. However, what he misses is that this flexibility is not completely “free,” but the visitors’ practices are implicitly expected to contribute to, or at least to not disturb, the collective production of the mood. See the end of this chapter. This aside, there is also an inherent epistemological problem in Nelson’s claim: how can we scholars ever verify that our subjects’ embodiment reflects their interior states, to which we never have direct access? (See Bell (1998) and Sharf (1998) for iterations of this critique.) The embodiment-based approach I take here allows us to avoid this problem and explore how sociality, materiality, and physicality interact with and shape the visitors’ performances.
outside Japan, and their presence surely influences Japanese visitors’ experiences. I deliberately make this decision, because this chapter, along with the next, aims to contextualize the kind of affective world the tour guides I worked with inhabit. The two chapters will help make sense of the tour guides’ discourses in chapter four.

2-1. Sensuality and Sociality: The Mood of the Tourist Spaces

Nigiyaka – lively, animated, bustling, thronged, populous, prosperous, thriving. This is the term that came up most often to describe the two sites and the surrounding tourist spaces in both Asakusa and Kamakura. Visitors, locals, and tour guides all agreed that their respective sites are nigiyaka. The term is highly positive, connoting the sheer abundance of people in the same space and the liveliness that comes out of their presence. Nigiyakasa (noun form of the adjective “nigiyaka”) is highly sought after, even beyond the context of tourism. If a city or a town is not considered nigiyaka, many expect the local government to take actions to bring nigiyakasa to the community by hosting events, building recreational facilities, advertising the community to the greater public, and so on. Kareki mo yama no nigiwai – says the proverb, meaning, it is better to have even an old tree than not for

53 I used the language each visitor spoke as the primary basis on which to guess where they came from. All my statements in this chapter regarding their nationality are based on language unless otherwise noted. While I acknowledge that their language does not necessarily correspond to their self-identification, this was the best approximation I could get especially given the chaotic and impersonal nature of my field sites.

54 This list of possible translations is adopted from Kenkyusha (2003, 1981).

55 It only takes a quick Google search to find articles from local newspapers about how the local institutions should or do make efforts to create nigiyakasa in the community, published a couple of times a week throughout Japan. For example: “Nigiyaka, Haru Iwau, Chūkagai / Kanagawa [Nigiyaka: Spring Celebrated in Chinatown, Kanagawa]” Mainichi Shimbun, February 5, 2017. Accessed on February 12, 2017. http://mainichi.jp/articles/20170205/ddl/k14/040/136000c (on the nigiyakasa of the lunar new year festival in Chinatown in Yokohama.)
the *nigiwai* (another noun form of “nigiyaka”) of a mountain. Nigiyakasa must be maintained by all means, even if that means using a nearly dead tree.

Nigiyakasa can be felt with all the senses, most notably through sound. A Japanese-Japanese dictionary defines nigiyaka as: “the state of being lively due to the gathering of many people and goods; the merriness due to the constant sound of human voices and other noises; the state of many people loudly talking with one another” (Shōgakkan 2006, 2014). Such intense sensual and affective experience in the presence of countless others characterizes many people’s experiences in both of the tourist spaces. “It’s just so much fun to be here. So many things to do, so many people, and very nigiyaka,” one visitor to Asakusa from a suburb of Tokyo told me. A tour guide in Kamakura said, “Kamakura has a lot of things to see, good food, and the beach, and it’s not too far from Tokyo. It’s very nigiyaka and fun and perfect for young people to come hang out, especially with partners.” Sensuality, sociality, and the mood of nigiyakasa together have enormous importance here.

As reflected in these comments, people constantly fill the tourist spaces at both sites.\(^{56}\) Especially on weekends and holidays, the space between the station and the main worship hall overflows with people. Crowds surround every curious thing. Almost everyone comes in a group. Friends laugh at each other’s stories and jokes, lovers hold each other’s hands and smile at each other, fathers carry children on their shoulders. As my fieldwork coincided with the high season for school trips, especially

\(^{56}\) The temple in Asakusa attracts about 30 million visitors every year, and the shrine in Kamakura about 13 million, according to locals and tour guides. I was later able to verify this number regarding Asakusa, but could not find any official statistics on Kamakura (Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2017). Unlike some touristic temples or shrines in Japan, neither of my field sites charge visitors for admission, which might contribute to their immense popularity.
in May and June, I also often saw excited school children.\footnote{It is customary for schools to take day trips or overnight trips as part of the education. Many of these trips go to ‘cultural’ or ‘historical’ sites. Asakusa and Kamakura were both extremely popular as a destination for such trips, and other common destinations include Kyoto, Nikko, Hiroshima, etc.} Most people’s visits are casual. They typically spend an hour or two in the space, before or after stopping at other leisure destinations such as nearby shopping malls in Asakusa, and the beach and other temples in Kamakura. They bring the excitement from these other weekend destinations as they move between them.

My two field sites both have similar spatial structures, and are visually intense throughout. Near the station stands a huge gate for the respective temple and shrine. The gates have an impressive aura, painted with bright red, a color said to ward off evil spirits. A crowd of people constantly surrounds them, as they are a particularly popular place to wait for and meet up with one’s group. Even the sheer sight of numerous people present and moving in one space is exhilarating. They point at, gaze at, talk about, and take pictures of the gate; chat about their everyday lives at school or work; look up places to eat and snack at on their phones and plan their day in the area; look at maps and call someone they are waiting for; bump into each other and apologize. In Asakusa, many also touch the bottom part of the iconic lantern on the famous Kaminari-mon gate, because the image of the dragon carved there is known to be auspicious if you touch it. The sight of the crowd around the dragon attracts an even bigger crowd; people try to go closer, take a photo, have their kids touch it, and accidentally touch each other in the process. It is hard not to feel the presence of others in this crowd.

In addition to such intense sight of the moving crowd, sound is a crucial
component of nigiyakasa. The crowd talks constantly, and some of these voices explicitly link the spaces to the nation. “This is that famous gate!” – “Wow, it’s so crowded!” – “I know, and so many foreigners.” “Yeah, there’s almost more foreigners than Japanese here. This is impressive.” – “Did you watch that show yesterday?” – “Look at those girls over there! They’re wearing yukata and posing for photos! So cute!” The presence of many non-Japanese visitors further reinforces such sense of nationalness of the space. I hear many excited voices in various languages – Japanese, English, various versions of Chinese, Korean, Thai, French, Spanish, and many others that I cannot decipher. There are also many other kinds of sounds. Vendors and souvenir shop owners on the shopping street behind the gate yell about discounts and seasonal specialties; glass windbells hung at souvenir stores make crisp sounds; babies cry; camera shutters are pushed on phones; announcements are made; birds come and fly away. These intelligible and unintelligible sounds dissolve into one another and create vibrancy associated with the nation. The visitors are immersed in this world of noises whether or not they as individuals are being particularly noisy.

After the gate is a shopping street, designated by the respective religious institutions as the official approach to the site. The street is full of colorful souvenirs, many of which are similar at both sites and stereotypically “Japanese”: chopsticks with images from *ukiyo e* printed on them;58 fans with designs of Mt. Fuji, cherry blossoms, geisha, or peacefully sleeping cats; *tenugui* towels with patterns printed on them of carp, sushi, and temples;59 replica weapons of ninja. Some of the souvenirs

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58 *Ukiyo e* is popular woodprints from the Tokugawa era. They were originally massively produced for regular people, but today are often popularly imagined to embody Japanese aesthetics and the culture of the Tokugawa period.

59 *Tenugui* are thin fabrics that are literally called “something to dry hands with.” Recently there has
seem to represent icons of the respective areas rather than Japan as a whole, such as the iconic lantern of Kaminari-mon, the main gate to Senso-ji, or the Great Buddha in Kamakura. Yet, even on these objects, their tags often say “Asakusa, Japan,” “Tokyo, Japan,” or “Kamakura, Japan,” linking the areas and Japan as a whole. The visual pleasure from the goods thus not only intensifies the sensuality of the tourist spaces, but marks the pleasure as a national one.

Smelling and tasting are also integral to such sensual experience of the nation in the spaces. Many of the foods on sale are nostalgic for many Japanese: dango (sweet rice cakes) whose sweet and salty sauce was my favorite as a child, green tea, rice crackers, pickled vegetables, fresh fruit juices, various flavors of ice cream including green tea. There are also sometimes food vendors within the temple/shrine grounds, filling the space with savory and sweet smells that remind me of summer festivals I went to as a child. These delicious experiences, like the material objects on sale, evoke the national past and childhood. I often run into visitors at both sites that enjoy their foods and drinks while walking or standing – a behavior usually considered inappropriate in everyday life. The energy and nostalgia of the tourist spaces appear to make it acceptable for many.60

Such intense pleasurable sensuality characterizes the tourist spaces. “This is a chaos! I can’t believe this is happening in this spiritual space!” a white visitor from Australia told me with a mixture of confusion and excitement. The spaces were so

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60 Many shop owners in the commercial district in both Asakusa and Kamakura complained to me about visitors eating and drinking while walking. There was clearly a tension between food and non-food shop owners – a politics that is beyond the scope of this thesis.
energetic that even simply being there all day often exhausted me. But I also had so much fun, I have to admit.

**Mood, Sociality, and the Nation**

In the introduction, I discussed the two different ontological modes, which E. Valentine Daniel calls *mood* and *mind*. The former seeks to produce desirable mood through embodied practices, while the latter pursues theoretical knowledge about reality. In the tourist spaces, as I hope is clear above, visitors emphasize the intensely pleasurable mood of the spaces over mind. Few seemed to care about historical, religious, or other explanatory meanings of the spaces. The respective religious institutions and local state post signs that provide such information. I used to read these signs early on in my fieldwork, thinking that the meanings may be relevant to the visitors. “The hammer the statue holds symbolizes the aspiration for Buddhahood…”\(^{61}\) But almost no one else read them, and many stared at me as if watching a strange creature.\(^{62}\) The spaces are meaningful more for their moods than their symbolic meanings, despite the institutions’ agenda.

The affective experience of the spaces, as shown above, comes primarily from the intense sensuality – sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste of the space as a whole – produced through the unorganized bodily performances, movements, and the intermingleings of the crowd. Writing on a temple festival in contemporary rural China, anthropologist Adam Chau (2006) describes a similar kind of mood, which he calls

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\(^{61}\) This quote is an excerpt from a sign about Hōzō-mon, the second gate to the main hall in Senso-ji.

\(^{62}\) Nelson (2000, 51) also says that most visitors to the Kamigamo Shrine in Kyoto pay, if not at all, little attention to the various signs placed in the shrine ground.
“red-hot sociality” based on a native Chinese term. His definition of sociality is useful in making sense of my two tourist spaces. He defines it as “the condition of social co-presence, i.e. the gathering of a group of people in one social space” (147). For him, such a condition does not necessarily require any prior meaningful relationships among the people; the sheer “collective production and consumption” of sensuality in the co-presence of countless people in one space generates a chaotic yet pleasurable experience, or what he aptly calls “sociothermic affect” (149, 163). The tourist spaces produce this kind of affect by attracting many excited strangers and providing a repertoire of sensual activities.

At my field sites, such social affective experience is associated with the nation. As mentioned above, many of the artifacts, architecture, food, and souvenirs available in the spaces resonate with the popular imaginations about the nation’s shared culture and history. Many visitors also made comments about the spaces that explicitly linked them to the nation. The linguistically and visually noticeable presence of non-Japanese visitors also reinforces the impression that the spaces are first and foremost “Japanese”; “foreign tourists” (gaikokujin kankōkyaku), many visitors and tour guides told me, should not miss out on these sites, because they embody “Japan.” The visitors experience the nation with all their senses in the company of countless strangers, and the vibrant social mood of the spaces affectively reasserts and reauthorizes the nation as a unified imagined community.

2-2. **Techniques of Mood Production**

As Daniel argues, a mood is produced through a range of embodied practices
that the subject experientially knows how to perform. As have been discussed so far, as the visitors walk from the train station through the shopping street (which are also the official approaches to the main hall at both sites), they generate particular desirable moods. The practices on the shopping street that produce this mood are primarily what observers may call secular: chatting, photographing, eating, shopping.

In this section and the next, I will further trace the movement of the crowd from the shopping street, and examine some of the practices that analysts could call religious rites, such as fortune telling, worship, and incense and water purification. First, this section will take the text-based practice of omikuji and the sensual practice of incense bathing as case studies in order to explore how the visitors produce desired moods through these practices. Then, in 2-3, I explore rites such as water ablution and worship that some visitors claim they do not know how to perform or what they mean. I show how they use such self-recognized lack of knowledge about the rites to further generate desired moods. Together, I argue that the visitors mobilize a range of theoretical and experiential knowledges to collectively produce desired moods through the rites. Even mind-based knowledge becomes an integral part of mood production and converges with the moods of seemingly secular practices.

**Omikuji as Mood Production**

In Senso-ji temple in Asakusa, omikuji (fortune telling) is one of the most popular activities among the Japanese visitors. The booths for omikuji are located in the space between the second gate and the main worship hall of the temple as well as inside the main hall. The booths are constantly surrounded by people, which prompts
even more visitors to try the practice.

Omikuji works as follows at this temple, and this remains mostly the same in Kamakura. First, visitors offer one hundred yen (roughly a dollar) into the built-in offering box in the booth. Then they take a hexagonal wooden column containing sticks that are each assigned a number between one and one hundred, shake it, and turn it upside down to let one of the sticks come out. The sticks in the box create high-pitched sound as the box is shaken, heightening the excitement. Finally, they check the number written on the stick that has come out, and get a small sheet of paper that corresponds to that number. Written on the paper is a fortune, which is classified into seven categories ranging from the best to the worst, accompanied by some explanatory comments.

The temple presents omikuji’s purpose as to provide a moral compass. The temple provides a short note at the bottom of the omikuji paper that contains, among other things, tips for applying omikuji to everyday life: “Even if you get a best fortune, if you are careless or boastful, the fortune can turn bad. Be humble and gentle to others. If you get a bad fortune, but if you are unafraid, patient, and sincere, your fortune will turn good.” The temple not only offers such moralistic lessons, but also expects the visitors to apply these teachings to better themselves. A temple staff enthusiastically said to me even though I did not particularly ask him, that it is actually better to get a bad fortune “because you can use it as an opportunity to […] change your attitude before going home.” For the temple as an institution, visitors must take the textual meaning of fortune papers seriously in order to intentionally

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In Kamakura, a shrine maiden will get the fortune paper for visitors.
transform their everyday practices accordingly. In Daniel’s terms, the temple assumes
the text to represent moral teachings that the visitors can then interpret and employ,
and encourages a mind-based approach to the text.

Contrary to such intention of the temple, most visitors’ engagement with the fortune papers is not limited to the realm of textual meaning. On the top part of the fortune paper is a short poem in Chinese, accompanied by a translation and explanation in Japanese. But most people do not engage with this part seriously and at most skim it. Below the poem is a list of vague predictions on several aspects of life: “wishes,” “illness,” “lost objects,” “the person you are waiting for,” “construction and moving,” “travelling,” “marriage and celebration.” Even though the comments are short and vague (usually just either “will work well,” “will work okay,” or “will not work”), this list often appeals to the visitors more than the previous part. They spend a lot of time and energy reading, interpreting, and responding to this part. Yet, even their engagements with this part of the text produces not so much explanatory meanings as desired social moods.

Some people produce such a mood by focusing on specific articles on the list relevant to the current situations in their lives. For instance, when a group of young women drew slips, one got a best fortune, which usually reads “it will work well” for all topics on the list. She seemed happy about the positive predictions, and started reading the list aloud to her friends. As she went over the list, she took notice of a specific article and responded: “Wait, ‘the person you are waiting for will come’?! That means I will get a boyfriend soon! Yay!” Everyone in the group celebrated her. Here, the woman produced optimism and joy by committing to one relevant portion
of the text despite all the other good predictions she also received. The textual meaning interested her not in its own light, but through the meaning’s implication for her personal matter, i.e., finding a new boyfriend, and its affective consequences.

Some people not only focus on specific relevant portions of the list only, but also approach the textual meaning with more skepticism. Another woman from the same group who got a bad fortune is a good example. While the prediction about marriage also caught her attention, she did not take the alarming meaning of the text for granted: “Mine says, ‘marriage will be okay.’ Isn’t it brutal to say that it’s just okay? What does it mean that a marriage is okay? Haha.” Another woman responded and cheered her: “Yeah… haha. Well, you have to find a boyfriend first before you get married, so it’s not a problem now.” Everyone laughed, as this comment brought their attention away from the unfortunate prediction and reframed her issue in terms of her own efforts to find a good person to date. Thus, by adjusting their interpretive tactics and levels of skepticism depending on the textual meaning, the two women ultimately left the booth with optimism and laughter despite their different fortunes. For them, the engagement with the text concerned not so much finding out its meaning as producing an optimistic mood; mood over mind.

Another common way to engage with the list of predictions on the paper is to read it aloud and play with the sound rather than the meaning. This is particularly common among the people who have got either a best or the worst fortune. Looking at the odd and humorous list of seven it-will-work-well’s or it-won’t-work-well’s in row, many jokingly read the entire list aloud to their group. For example, when a young man got a bad fortune, he started reading his list aloud to his friends. As he
reviewed the list, his voice became increasingly loud, high-pitched, theatrical, and funny. “Won’t come true, won’t be cured, won’t be found, won’t show up, bad, bad, bad’! This is really sad!” With his exaggerated performance of the shock at getting a bad fortune, the friend group started laughing, and he soon laughed along, too.

The man here laughed away and trivialized the bad fortune by dramatizing the sad and laughably monotonous list. This is not to say that he ignored the meaning of the text. Rather, he incorporated the text’s meaning, structure, and rhythm altogether into his performance in order to produce laughter out of the otherwise rather depressing predictions. The significance of the text here stemmed from the mood improvised through his mobilization of the combination of its meaning, the sound of the words, and his performance. In Daniel’s terms, mind-based meanings were mobilized for mood production.

Although I have focused on the practice of omikuji in the temple in Asakusa, the practice and mood that surround omikuji are strikingly similar in the shrine in Kamakura. In both Asakusa and Kamakura, it was rare to see visitors read their omikuji papers alone, and most people left the booth with a laugh and a smile on their faces. Thus, in most visitors’ practices at either site, omikuji does not bring about profound, mind-based (perhaps more “religion”-like) life-changing meanings despite the temple’s claim. They instead produce desirable joyful moods by bodily and discursively engaging with the text, just as they do by chatting, shopping, and eating on the shopping street. In this sense, omikuji is one of many resources for mood production available in the tourist spaces.
Incense Purification as Mood Production

Although my discussion of omikuji focused on the social and discursive practices around the text, the sheer sensuality of rites can interact with such social and discursive pleasure and amplify it. The rite of incense bathing provides a good example. In Senso-ji, a huge incense burner is placed in front of the main hall. The burner contains many bundles of burning incense. Even though my fieldwork took place during summer, the blazing sun and the almost brutal humidity of Japanese summer did not deter the curious visitors from approaching the burner. Many move their hands back and forth around their heads to get the smoke on their bodies. This is an intensely sensual experience, with the strong scent, heat, and smoke. The visitors have various understandings of the smoke’s benefits, although most of them do not see this variety as mutual exclusive. Many say that the smoke purifies their bodies before going up to the main worship hall. Others claim that it heals the parts of the body it is applied to.

As with omikuji, visitors often transform these efficacies of the incense into an object of jokes and laughter. “Hey, we should do this before we go up to the main hall to purify the body because we are so dirty. I mean, you’re so dirty!” “You’re so rude. Haha” – “Should I get the smoke on my entire body so I’ll just lose weight?” “That’s actually a good idea, but I wish losing weight was so easy and simple, haha.” The visitors’ mobilization of the articulable meanings of the incense rite here yields

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64 There is no facility like this where incense is constantly burnt in the shrine’s ground in Kamakura. It is more commonly found in Buddhist temples than in Shinto shrines in Japan. Visitors can purchase incense for a hundred yen per bundle at a booth next to the burner, but the proportion of visitors that offer incense themselves is relatively small, and many of them were Chinese-speaking. Most visitors simply bathe in the smoke from the incense offered by others.
laughter and a sense of co-presence.

Even without such explanatory meanings, however, the sheer sensuality of the space around the burner also allows the visitors to produce laughter and desired moods. For instance, when a group of young men entered the smoke, one started coughing after a while, ran away, and said almost theatrically, “Ugh, this is too much!” “Haha, you are so not devotional.” “But I just can’t do it! I didn’t know that it was this much of smoke! This is too much!” The group burst into joyful laughter. Here, the young man’s performance of a lack of tolerance to the smoke produced laughter in his group. By speaking about and performing the intense experience of the incense, he turned its sensuality into a resource for mood production. The space around the burner is in fact full of physiological and theatrical coughs and similar voices to tease and laugh at the coughs. Visitors can generate desired moods not only through speech as we saw in the example of omikuji, but also through intricate interactions among speech, sensuality, and bodily performances.

2-3. WHAT IF YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO?

So far, this chapter has emphasized the Japanese visitors’ mobilization of their experiential knowledge of how to produce desirable moods through bodily and discursive practices. However, during my fieldwork, I also saw many visitors who said they were unsure how to perform various rites. Many self-consciously did not know how to wash their hands before worshipping, bathe in the incense smoke, or worship at the main hall. This section will discuss how the visitors creatively employ the perceived absence of knowledge as a resource for pleasurable social interactions and the production of desired moods.
At both sites, after visitors go through the shopping street and the second gate to the main hall, there is a small pavilion for washing hands (chōzuya). At the center of the pavilion is a small water fountain surrounded by many dippers to scoop water. Most Japanese visitors stop here and wash their hands and mouths. According to the respective religious institutions, visitors are expected to “purify” their bodies here before going up to the main worship building.

While many Japanese visitors confidently know how to perform this rite, many overtly assert that they do not know how to perform it. Such open articulation of the perceived absence of knowledge often triggers a subtle yet intimate conversation. For instance, a middle-aged couple once came to the pavilion at the shrine in Kamakura, and said to each other, “I don’t remember how to do this.” “I don’t, either. There’s technically an appropriate procedure, right?” “Yeah, I think so, but I think it’s fine, it’s not a big deal.” “True, whatever. Haha.” They giggled, washed their hands quickly, and walked towards the main shrine. Here, the couple’s open statement of their lack of knowledge about the rite generated a sense of shared experience between them. They were not particularly invested in finding out the authoritative procedure, as illustrated by their improvisation. Rather, by speaking about their lack of knowledge to each other briefly yet intimately, they mobilized their awareness of their lack of knowledge in order to produce a pleasurable mood. Short conversations like this on the absence of knowledge abound at both sites.

Not only verbal but also bodily communication can assist such production of fun and intimacy through the perceived absence of knowledge. While reconstructing and improvising the rite as the couple above, many people make eye contacts with the
other members of their groups and giggle to one another. Even if visitors lack the experiential knowledge of how to perform the rite, they do have the experiential knowledge of how to collectively produce a subtle yet intimate moment of pleasure precisely by playing with the absence of knowledge.

This mobilization produces pleasure beyond the water rite, too. Although most rites performed at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines are generally similar, one of the widely-known differences between them is the procedure of worship. According to respective religious institutions, tour guides, and my parents, worship in both traditions begins by offering a small amount of money to the offertory box placed in front of the altar in the worship hall. Then, in Buddhist temples, you put your hands together in front of your chest and close your eyes, have a moment of silence to make a wish, and bow to mark the end of the process. In Shinto shrines, by contrast, you first bow twice, clap your hands twice, put your hands together in front of your chest and make a wish silently with your eyes closed, and bow once again in the end.65

While many visitors, whether following this standard procedure or not,66 worship without much doubt about their actions, many others look around unsurely to observe how others worship. Many ask basic questions about worshipping to their groups, and laugh at the fact that they do not know how to act in the middle of the crowd surrounding the offertory box. Is this a Shinto or a Buddhist site? What kind of deity is here? What is the appropriate worship procedure here, and what kind of

65 Although this is the widely agreed-upon procedure today, this distinction was invented in the Meiji era in the context of the state’s attempt to separate Buddhism and Shinto (Josephson 2012, 171; Thal 2002, 109).
66 It was not rare to see visitors who confidently worship in a way that does not agree with this standard procedure. Jokes abounded among the visitors about how they heard sounds of clapping that they were not supposed to hear at a Buddhist temple, and vice versa.
benefit will be returned through the worship? They excitedly and jokingly discuss these questions. If no one in the group has an answer, some even look it up on Google on their phones. “Wait, are you googling it? That’s so funny and brilliant!” “Of course, Professor Google will tell us everything, haha!” The anxious quest for explanations that leads them into the world of the internet thus quickly turns into an occasion for laughter and pleasure.

Visitors also often debate about the amount of money to offer. Five yen? Fifteen? Fifty? A hundred? Or, even more, perhaps a paper bill (a thousand or more)? Five, fifteen, and fifty are all associated with the Japanese word for good relationships with the deity because of the way they sound. In this framework, the acoustics of language produce efficacy, rather than the monetary value of the offerings. But will you perhaps get more benefits if you offer more? Is it appropriate for the deity to return benefits only if you offer a lot of money? Most visitors, however, ultimately do not pursue these questions. Many soon end the conversation with a joking “whatever” (“maa iiya”) and a laugh. The sound of coins being thrown into the offertory box echoes in the hall, and other unintelligible voices reinforce the excitement.

Through these conversations, the visitors produce desired moods by playfully engaging the perceived absence of knowledge. They might appear to be attempting to fill in the absence at first glance. Yet, since most of these discussions do not reach a

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67 Especially among young people, many Japanese call the act of googling “ask Professor Google” (gū guru sensei ni kiku) to joke about how much they rely on Google for information that they assume they are supposed to know.

68 Five, fifteen, and fifty yen are respectively pronounced as goen, jūgoen, gojūen in Japanese, all of which sound similar to goen (“good relationship”). One yen roughly equals one cent.
definitive conclusion, what ends up being produced is not so much mind-based meanings of the rite as a specific mood that comes out of the intersubjective experience. Underlying these discussions is the visitor’s shared presumption that the rites must be explainable, and that they are supposed to know those explanations. In other words, there is a gap between their shared theoretical knowledge about the rite – that it should have explanations – and their experiential knowledge of how to perform it. By playing with this gap and laughing it away, the visitors incorporate the knowledge of the absence into their larger mood-producing practice.

I observed such incorporation of the perceived lack of knowledge about rites into the mood production throughout the temple/shrine grounds regarding all kinds of rites. The performance of the rites by the people who openly asserted their lack of knowledge, however, typically did not differ substantially from those who performed them confidently. In other words, many of them do seem to know how to perform the rites. But they do not how to articulate and explain them. After all, they need not know how to speak about their practices in order to attain desired moods.

Notably, there is much less talk among the visitors on how little they know about practices like eating, photographing, shopping than about water ablution, incense purification, and worship. In other words, many presume that these site-specific rites require more explanatory meanings than other practices in the space. I also heard many visitors joke about their not being “faithful” or “serious” enough because they do not know about the rites and their meanings. These jokes indicate the visitors’ self-awareness of the gap between what the idea of religion might suggest and their embodied reality. In this sense, the mood-producing practices I have
described in this section can be seen as a response to the unstated association between the rites and the category of religion. Although the word “religion” does not explicitly appear in their discursive mood production, the connotations of the category seem to implicitly shape their discursive and bodily practices. Just like in the historical case studies we encountered in chapter one, the gap between the paradoxical category and embodied reality becomes an active site for mood production, though here more indirectly than in the previous chapter.

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Through a multitude of practices I have discussed in this chapter, the Japanese visitors to the tourist spaces produce the desired mood of nigyakasa. The mood in part comes from the sheer physical co-presence of countless strangers in the same space, but it is also largely produced through the diverse practices of this crowd. Some practices are performed intuitively, and others through the skillful mobilization of abstract meanings about the rites. Mind and mood are intricately entwined in order to ultimately produce desired moods.

This mood is variegated yet contagious. Every visitor performs differently in the space, and no central figure or institution orchestrates their practices. Some talk and debate more, perform more rites, or spend more time and money in the space than others. These differences shape the specific experiences of individual subjects in the space. Yet, even if one is not particularly invested in these practices, one is still immersed in the landscape of sensuality and affect created by others’ practices. I, for one, as an ethnographer, often found it fun to simply listen to and watch others have
so much fun. One also participates in the mood by virtue of one’s presence in the space. Insofar as the mood-producing practices are intrinsically public, their effects are also public. 69

Conversely, there is an implicit expectation not to disrupt the overall mood of the space among the visitors. If one performs in a way that undermines the public pleasurable mood, one would receive a curious and uncomfortable gaze from other visitors. For instance, when a white man determinedly walked fast from the main hall back towards the gate by himself with a serious face in Senso-ji temple, almost every visitor around him stared confusedly. The constant creation and re-creation of the desired mood of the space relies upon the participation of the countless strangers co-present in the same space.

This emphasis on mood over mind is also evident in the striking similarity in the practices and moods between the two sites. Although one is institutionally and legally a Buddhist site and the other a Shinto, the visitors at both sites generate similar kinds of mood, under a similar kind of spatial structure, architecture, foods, practices, souvenirs, and sociality. There are differences, of course, but the two spaces are much more similar than different; the denominational identity of the sites is largely irrelevant in the visitors’ experiences.

The two sites escape mind-based classification and explanation in large part

69 Nelson points out the impossibility for an ethnographer to nail down the motivation of the visitors to the shrine; a visitor that happens to be in the shrine ground can be a self-identified “tourist” (kankō kyaku) or a local resident taking a shortcut across the shrine ground (2000, 26). This issue also applies to my two field sites, but I would still say that the mood of the spaces is public and contagious. In fact, many tour guides at the two sites, most of whom are local residents, told me that they enjoy the space even when they simply cross it, although it also makes them a little tired. Regardless of each visitor’s motivation, the public practices that take place in the spaces have certain similar effects on their experiences.
due to their strong association with the nation. As discussed in 2-1, the sensual experiences at the sites often correspond to the popular imaginations about the shared culture and the history of the nation. In such familiarly national spaces, the visitors do not need to distantly know-about and mark the sites. The unmarked quality of the national tourist spaces enables the collective production of the desired mood, and the pleasurable mood further reproduces the felt realness of the nation. As we will see in the next chapter, the tours that my interlocutors give in these spaces, despite their seemingly meaning-producing function, also reproduce such desired nation-authorizing moods. The mood of nigiyakasa, after all, is many visitors’ favorite.
CHAPTER THREE
NARRATING THE NATION

In one of many Japanese tours I attended in Asakusa, the tour guide Inoue Hiroshi discussed the cheap kimono on sale in a souvenir shop as we walked on Nakamise shopping street. To most Japanese eyes, the kimono sold for a couple of dozens of dollars looked too different from “traditional” ones, which usually cost close to $10,000 today. Explaining this apparent cheapness, Inoue said, “These kimonos are for foreigners, and they are made of polyether and machine-washable. It’s weirdly slick and gaudy, right? That’s because they are designed for foreigners.” “Do they actually buy them?” one of the audience members jokingly asked. “They apparently happily buy them and wear them as pajamas or jackets,” Inoue answered and everyone laughed. “So, you can’t find expensive ones for the Japanese around here?” the participant asked. “Of course not,” Inoue replied, and everyone laughed again. Discussing what they saw as an inauthentic version of the national tradition somehow produced a pleasurable mood.

This chapter will shift our attention to the two tour guide organizations and examine their tour. In the introduction, I discussed how mind-based subjects also cultivate affective commitments through embodied practices and produces moods, despite their impulse to distantly explicate the world. We also observed in the previous chapter how seemingly mind-based practices are implicated in mood production among the visitors to my two field sites – through engaging with the text
of omikuji (2-2), and recognizing that they do not know about rites performed in the spaces (2-3). These mind-driven practices are enmeshed in the overall mood of nigiyakasa. This chapter will discuss how this pattern of the integration of mind into mood manifests in the context of tours and affectively authorizes the imagined unity of the nation. Insofar as tours take place in the context of the mood of nigiyakasa, its seemingly mind-based quality, as I will show below, integrates into the mood.

I participated in numerous Japanese tours to Senso-ji in Asakusa by Taito Tours, and English tours to Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu in Kamakura by Kamakura International Guides.\(^70\) Tours at both sites roughly follow the common path for visitors, and consist of many short stories about various artifacts, architecture, and practices in the tourist spaces, and these stories present representational meanings of the sites. In addition, even though the tours are allegedly about local sites provided by local volunteers, the tours often explain the sites by referencing the nation. The tour guides barely explained doctrines of Buddhism or Shinto, contrary to what one may expect in tours at these “religious” sites.\(^71\) This emphasis on national meanings in part reflects the state’s secular project as well as the tour guides’ own editorial decisions, as the respective local government trains the tour guides.

However, as is evident in the above exchange between Inoue and his audience, the practice of tours does not solely provide mind-based national meanings about the sites; the act of narrating and hearing those meanings also generates

\(^70\) All the tours I attended were free and recruited participants on a first-come-first-served basis, though both groups take reservations as well. The tour guides at both sites told me that the content of tours is mostly the same either way.

\(^71\) The tour guides recognize that they could discuss doctrinal meanings, but they feel neither qualified nor compelled to do so. See chapter four.
pleasurable moods. The tour guides at both sites often told me that the purpose of the
tours is to “entertain” the audience by offering “fun stories” (omoshiroi hanashi) the
visitors have yet to know. For them, the narratives are a resource with which to
produce desired moods.

Therefore, this chapter traces how the tour guides produce a desired mood
through the production of national meanings. 3-1 and 3-2 will thematically compare
narratives from the two sites and their semiotic performative effects, and show how
the narratives reassert the imagined unity of the nation through the production of
mind-based theoretical knowledge. This discussion of the national meanings will
bring us to the tour guides’ relationships with the nation towards the end of 3-2.
Anthropologist of tourism Edward M. Bruner (2001) argues that the meanings
produced through cultural performance for tourists are not homogeneous across the
industry, but influenced by the kind of audience targeted. Similarly, while tour
narratives at both of my field sites are framed in national terms, the tour guides’
relationships to the nation crucially shape their specific narrative engagement with the
nation. While the tour guides in Kamakura present the nation as a bounded unity to
foreigners, those in Asakusa tell stories within the framework of the unmarked shared
knowledge about the nation to their domestic audience. These relationships also form
their affective experience of the tours, as well as the discourses on “religion” among
them examined in the next chapter. 3-3 will then focus on the affective aspect of the
tours, and explore how the act of narrating national stories produces mood. Note that
my interest in this chapter does not lie in evaluating the accuracy of the stories,
historical or otherwise. I will instead attend to the ways in which the tour guides craft
the narratives and their consequences. I contend that the practice of tours affectively reauthorizes the nation through the production of explanatory knowledge. Mind constitutes mood here.

3-1. GODS AND MATERIALITY: TOURS AS MIND PRODUCTION

In the introduction, I discussed how the idea of the nation requires the secular conception of humanity. Since the nation is imagined as an exclusively human space existing in human linear time, the mind-based assumption of human autonomy is necessary for national imaginings. As the tour groups stroll in the space, the tour guides tell various stories about material objects associated with various nonhuman beings, from statues to carvings on buildings. Marks of nonhuman presences fill the spaces, which potentially destabilizes the idea of the nation as an exclusively human community. Yet, the narratives about materiality and nonhumans reproduce the condition in which the nation is thinkable by taming these presences into the realm of mind-based meanings.

In stories from the tours in Kamakura for non-Japanese visitors, the material objects are associated with nonhumans beings only at the representational level. In Kamakura, the tours leave the train station, walk through parts of the two shopping streets (Komachi-dori Street and Wakamiya-oji Street), and visit the main hall of the shrine. One of the stories brought up in virtually all tours I attended is about a pair of statues of guardian dogs called komainu. They are placed next to the first gate of the shrine on the main approach as the tour groups walk through the shopping street. On approaching the statues, the tour guides point out that one of them has its mouth
opened, and the other closed. They then explain this difference: “These mouths have special meanings. The open mouth is saying ‘a,’ and the closed mouth is saying ‘un.’ ‘A’ is the first letter in the Japanese alphabet, and ‘un’ is the last. So, this means that they know everything from the beginning to the end.” The details of this story differ slightly depending on the tour guide – Japanese alphabets sometimes become Sanskrit; the mouths sometimes signify that the dogs protect from the beginning to the end, and other times that they together represent the “entire universe,” and therefore “have a deep meaning.”

Despite these differences in details, the tour guides describe the statues as meaning something other than themselves. Whether protection, knowledge, or the universe, the mouths of the statues represent something abstract. This focus on representational meanings of the material reality erases the possibility that the statues might have any impact on the human world. In fact, no agents, either humans or the guardian dogs as beings, engage the statues in the narrative world. Materiality is abstracted into mental meanings, and the statues become inconsequential, disengaged, ahistorical objects.

This is a typical mind-based approach to material reality – treating materiality as representational, rather than performative. Such focus on the artifacts’ meanings as a representation of nonhuman being(s) was a recurring theme throughout the tours in Kamakura. Cat statues (manekineko) placed on Komachi Street as are presented as an expression of the shop owner’s desire for more money or customers; lotus flowers as a symbol for Buddha that represents the shrine’s past in which Buddhism and Shinto were practiced in the same space; and so on. By treating these material objects as
purely representational, the stories conceptually separate the material objects from both human and nonhuman agency. In Daniel’s terms, the narratives thus constrain materiality to the realm of theoretical knowledge, and rids them of their political and historical consequentiality.

By contrast, the tour narratives on material objects in Asakusa are much more complex, and concern more than simple representational meanings. The tours in Asakusa start at the Tourist Cultural Center across the street from the Kaminari-mon Gate, walk through Nakamise Shopping Street and the surrounding areas, the main hall of Senso-ji, and then sometimes visit the adjacent Asakusa Jinja Shrine. In stopping in front of Kaminari-mon, one of the best-known attractions of Asakusa, almost all tour guides point out that the gate has many images of dragons on it. There is a pair of statues of male and female dragon deities housed in the gate, and the bottom part of its iconic lantern also has a carving of an image of a dragon. As touched upon in chapter two, because these images are known to be auspicious, many independent visitors engage them by touching them – a bodily, sensual, mood-based approach. However, the tour guides engage with the images by telling a story. The following is representative of what most tour guides say: “There are so many dragons in this gate because dragons are the deity of water. In the past, fires broke out around here frequently because many Japanese buildings were wooden, and the previous Kaminari-mon [before reconstructed in 1960] was also lost due to a fire.” In addition,

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72 Asakusa Jinja is a small Shinto shrine that enshrines the founders of the temple. Although it is located next to the temple, most visitors do not visit this shrine.

73 While some tour guides did recommend participants to touch the dragons, virtually all tour guides told some version of the story. In other words, the tour guides encourage the participants mind-based encounters with the images more often than mood-based.
as fires “used to be extinguished by destroying adjacent buildings in the Tokugawa era to prevent them from spreading, fires were what residents of Edo were most afraid of.” For this reason, they put many images of dragons “so that there would be no fire on the gate” (mou kaji ga okinai youni).

Here, for the characters of the story, i.e. the people in the Tokugawa era, the images of the dragons in the gate have a this-worldly efficacy of preventing fires. The images do not simply symbolize their prayer for no more fire; the people placed the images “so that” there would be no more fire. In other words, they presumed the ontological capacity of the deities as well as the images’ performative effect of bringing their presence. The assumed presence of the dragons is also evident in the language the tour guides often used to describe them. As can be seen in the quotes above, they often do not distinguish the images from dragons as beings but use the same word for dragons (ryū) to refer to both. In addition, to say “there are so many [images of] dragons in the gate,” they use the verb for the presence of animate beings (iru) rather than for inanimate things (aru). The seemingly inanimate images are the animated deities; the dragons are literally present in the materiality of the gate. Thus, the narrative depicts a particular ontology in which a visual image as a nonhuman being has the capacity to influence the surrounding human world. While the narratives in Kamakura take a mind-based approach to material objects in search of representational meanings, the narratives worlds in Asakusa assume mood; the nonhumans are intimately involved in the lives of humans surrounding them.

However, while operating within this ontology, the narrative also distances itself from such a world by historicizing it: the people then needed to appeal to the
deities due to the particular historical condition in which fires occurred frequently.

The assumption behind this use of the historical context is the primacy of human agency in the interaction between humans and the dragons, as the historical context the tour guides employ to frame the installment of the statues is of human history. In this framework, although the deities have the potential to influence the lives of the people, it is the human decision to mobilize their capacity that activates their power. The nonhumans become a meaningful agent only after humans bring them into the narrative world. This historicization of the statues makes the narrative not so much about the beings or the images as about the people who appealed to them in response to the particular historical conditions. Even if the human characters in the story treat the nonhumans through mood, the tour guides’ explication reintroduces the mind-based assumption of human autonomy to the audience.

This historicization constrains the meaningful presence of the nonhumans to the particular past and detaches it from the present. My point here is not necessarily that all historicizations distance the past. Yet, in this particular case, the historical factor with which the tour guides explain the people’s decision to place the statues – that they worried about fires – does not apply to the tour guides’ lives today. The implication is that the dragons are no longer relevant. Some tour guides even discussed how the invention of reinforced concrete solved the problem of fires in Japan today, suggesting that the statues have no role in the modern era of advanced technology. As Marilyn Ivy (1995) and Robert Orsi (2005) both argue, the modernist sense of progress is dependent on and authorized by its claims of radical divide from the past. By attributing the importance of appealing to the presence of the nonhumans
to the temporal and situational otherness of the past, the narrative distances the past and authorizes the present. In this sense, the mind-based, human-centered story about the dragons not only presents humans as the primary historical agent, but also trivializes the mobilization of nonhumans in the past. The nonhumans were subordinate to humans to begin with, and no longer have a role to play today. The present is free from the influence of nonhumans.

Similar stories on the nonhuman presence in materiality appear throughout the tour in Asakusa: thunder and wind deities on Kaminari-mon; evil spirits in the red backdoors of Nakamise Street; “legendary” animals painted on the walls of Asakusa Jinja. The tour guides describe the objects as having been placed there in hopes of their efficacies. The thunder and wind deities would control the climate, guarantee good rice harvest, and prevent wars; the color would ward off evil spirits; the animals would bring peace. Yet, the tour guides explain the placement of these objects as a human response to particular historical factors that no longer apply today. Preventing wars was of particular concern then because a war had just burned down the gate; warding off evil spirits with the color was a self-evident Buddhist practice because the state protected Buddhism then; the third shogun of the Tokugawa regime, which was still relatively new, needed to ensure peace to stabilize the regime. The nonhumans are present, but their presence mattered only back then. By dispersing these stories on nonhuman beings and their historical relationships to surrounding humans throughout the tours, the tour guides constantly reestablish the secular human-centered conception of time and space. Despite the mood-based narrative world, the narratives from Asakusa also mind-fully reduce the nonhuman presence
into traces of human history.

Thus, through different avenues, the tour guides’ mind-based narratives tame the material objects and keep them from influencing the human world at both sites. In Kamakura, they detach materiality from temporality and consequentiality whatsoever, and focus on the artifacts as representational objects. In Asakusa, they describe the presence and capacity of the nonhuman beings residing in the material objects, but present the presence as representational of local human history. At both sites, the narratives de-ontologize materiality in the contemporary context and keep the present human world free from nonhuman interventions. The gods, spirits, and buddhas are constrained to their own homes. In thus trivializing materiality and nonhuman beings, the narratives assume and reproduce the imagination of the sites as a predominantly human space. As mentioned above, this reifies the condition in which it is possible to “‘think’ the nation” (Anderson 2006, 22). This tendency of the tour narratives to authorize the nation becomes even more evident as we turn our attention to the narratives on the history of the sites.

3-2. HISTORY, THE NATION, AND MOOD

In addition to being a human space, the nation is imagined to exist in linear human time, making and owning shared national history (Asad 2003, 193). Constructing a unified national history, therefore, plays a crucial role in authorizing the imagined unity of the nation. At both of my field sites, while stories on the historical development of the site are major components of the tours, almost all of the stories reference the dominant national historical narrative. This section will explore
how the historical narratives construct the nation as a historical unity by presenting the sites in national terms. The comparison between the two sites will also provide a useful lens through which to understand each organization’s relationship with the nation. Although both groups employ the nation in their stories, the kinds of connections to the nation they make differ considerably depending on these relationship to the nation. This difference will allow us to see how the narratives construct the nation not only through meaning, but also through the affective experience of presenting meaning before specific audiences. The seemingly mind-based practice of tours produces mood.

**Historical Narratives for International Audience in Kamakura**

In Kamakura, the tour guides emphasize the shrine’s direct connection to the national history over local history. In most tours, as the group walks from the train station to the shrine, the tour guides mention details about the shrine for the first time when they get to the entrance gate to the official approach. However, the narration here usually does not begin immediately with the shrine itself, but with general information about Kamakura and its place within Japanese history. The below story is a typical introduction:

We have a long history here in Kamakura. It was constructed more than 800 years ago, and it had a very important role in Japanese history. Before the Kamakura era, there was an emperor and Kyoto was the capital of Japan. The emperor and the aristocrats in the imperial court ruled Japan, and samurai warriors were just their guardians. But at the end of the 12th century, the first shogun, Minamoto no Yoritomo […] constructed the first samurai government here in Kamakura, so it’s quite important. Today’s Tokyo was also constructed by samurais, but Kamakura was constructed before Tokyo.

This account directly connects the city to the nation by highlighting its role in “the
history of Japan” by emphasizing the period during which it was the capital. Many tour guides also use a visual aid to narrate this story – a table that outlines Japanese history with the name, the capital location, and the ruling class during each period.74 By presenting the past of different places within the nation all on one table, this aid situates the city in the linear national narrative and claims the historical unity of “Japan.” In other words, the tour guides construct the city’s significance by simultaneously constructing “Japan” as a stable historical unity. Different parts of the nation come to represent the national history at different times, and for Kamakura, it is the Kamakura period that provides its national meaning.

The shrine itself finally appears immediately after the narrative establishes this direct link between the city and the nation. It is usually introduced in terms of the first shogun:

Yoritomo founded the government, and he also founded the Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu, the shrine we will be visiting today. Because he was a samurai, he enshrined the god of victory. Every time he went to war, he stopped by here and prayed for his victory and flourishing.

Although the non-Japanese audience would probably not know, the tour guides here refer to a series of intense battles over political power between the Genji and Heike clans in the twelfth century. The shrine was, in the above story, established in response to this national historical moment. Just as the city is important because of its history as the location of the first warrior class state, this narrative attributes the shrine’s relevance to its close tie with a national historical event. In Daniel’s terms, the shrine becomes worthwhile through the production of mind-based knowledge.

74 Japanese history is often divided into several different periods based on the ruling regime. “Kamakura period” and “Edo period” (aka Tokugawa period) are part of this periodization system.
about it in relation to the national history centered upon the state.

In fact, most tour stories on the shrine’s past similarly discuss various aspects of it as a product of the political desires and actions of well-known political figures in national historical events. About the two ponds next to the second gate to the shrine, the tour guides say that the number of islands Yoritomo decided to place in them reflected his sarcastic “secret message” to the competing clan – that he wishes their death and Genji’s prosperity. As for the dance stage in a worship hall located in front of the main hall, they say that the lover of Yoritomo’s half-brother was forced to dance there, when Genji’s victory became evident and Yoritomo sought to consolidate his power within the clan. The huge ginkgo tree, which used stand next to the main hall but remains only as a stump today, was where the assassin of the third shogun, Yoritomo’s second son, hid as he awaited him; this assassination marked the end of the Genji lineage and its rule over Japan.

These stories directly connect the shrine to well-known stories from national history that appear in history textbooks, national television, and popular historical novels. Most Japanese are so familiar with these stories that, in commercial Japanese tours I often ran into, domestic tour guides often assumed that the audience knew them and did not describe them in depth. Even though these stories are interspersed with other stories throughout the tours, when presented together in this order, they present a chronological narrative of the rise and the fall of the Genji clan in the

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75 According to the story, there are three islets on the “Genji pond” and four on the “Heike pond.” Since the word for “three” (san) is pronounced the same as the word for birth and prosperity, and the word for “four” (shi) is pronounced the same as the word for death, this design was Yoritomo’s “secret message” for the rival clan. Some tour guides say that it is his wife that designed the ponds, who is almost as famous as her husband as a strong woman and a determined political figure. Either way, the ponds are associated with important national historical figures.
national political arena: from their attempt to hold power over “Japan,” their internal conflicts after their victory over the rival clan, to the extinction of the lineage. These stories provide a snapshot of a portion of the national history represented in the shrine history. In fact, the tours have no substantial historical stories besides the ones on the clan – almost none from before or after their time. In the narrative world, the shrine history ends when it ceases to represent the nation’s political dramas with the disappearance of its founding clan from the national political landscape.

By employing portions of the dominant national historical narrative relevant to the shrine, the historical narratives in Kamakura attribute mind-based national historical meanings to the shrine. In this framework, the shrine becomes significant because it represents the national past, rather than in its own light. No one besides national political actors – such as the shrine itself as an institution, local communities, or nonhumans76 – contests or participates in the formation of the functions and the mood of the site. In thus treating the shrine as symbolizing the national past, the narratives naturalize and reauthorize the nation as a historical unity.

### Historical Narratives for Domestic Audience in Asakusa

Although national political figures come up in tour narratives in Asakusa just as frequently as in Kamakura, their narratives have multiple other meaningful human (though only human) agents. The nation does not dominate the temple history, and the actions of these multiple actors together construct the web of temple’s multiple

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76 Some may argue that the story on the origin of the shrine in which Yoritomo prayed to the deity for victory presents the deity as a meaningful historical agent. However, as in the stories on nonhumans in Asakusa, the deity gains agency only after Yoritomo turns to her. In this sense, it is still humans (national historical actors in particular) that dominate the course of history in the stories in Kamakura.
functions. For instance, while the introductory remarks on the shrine in Kamakura discussed above explicitly framed the shrine’s significance through its role in the national history, the origin myth of Senso-ji illustrates the multiplicity of actors surrounding the temple. According to the official myth, the temple was founded in 628 AD. One day, while two local brother fishermen, Hamanari and Takenari of the Hinokuma family, were fishing in the nearby Miyato river, now called Sumida river, they caught a small wooden Kannon statue in their fishing net.77 Because the uneducated brothers did not know what it was, they showed it to the knowledgeable village leader, Haji no Nakatomo. He could immediately tell that it was a statue of the precious Kannon deity, so he built a small altar in the village to enshrine it, and became a priest. This was the beginning of Senso-ji.

This story presents the temple as more than a mere object acted upon by national figures, unlike the presentation of the founding myth in Kamakura. The temple’s founding involves a chain of actions among multiple local actors, all of whom are embedded in an unequal power relation, yet make a distinct contribution. The story emphasizes the agency of these actors also by giving a name to each of them, rather than calling them simply the “fishermen” and the “village leader,” in which case the story probably would have still made sense.

The local actors’ agency, however, appears in the story only in relation to Kannon. Everything that happens in the story leads up to the statue’s enshrinement. In

77 In the footnotes for the historical narratives from Asakusa, I will provide information unstated by the tour guides but most likely unmarkedly shared among the Japanese tour participants. Kannon is a bodhisattva associated with compassion, and is the main subject of worship at this temple. It is the “most famous and influential bodhisattva in all of East Asia,” according to The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism (Buswell and Lopez eds 2013, 332).
fact, the story presents the identity and value of the statue as a priori, revealing its identity to the audience before the fishermen, its discoverers, find it out. It should be remembered here that this story, although narrated by the tour guides, is taken from the temple’s official origin myth and almost identical with the way the temple itself as an institution presents it. In this sense, the story reflects the temple’s agenda of authorizing itself by claiming its long-standing historical continuity.

However, the tour guides do not take this myth for granted. After telling this story, many tour guides provide their own interpretation of the myth beyond the temple’s self-representation:

So, this means that this temple has always been a popular temple from the very beginning, even though most Buddhist temples were usually funded and run by the state then, especially at this point in history yet. As you probably know, Buddhism is said to have just come to Japan in around 550, and there was a huge debate during the time of Shōtoku Taishi in Asuka whether or not the state should officially accept Buddhism. This story is from 628, so it’s around when Buddhism finally but slowly started spreading in Japan, but no regular people knew anything about it then yet. In that sense, we can say that this temple is one of the first popular Buddhist temples in Japanese history built by someone besides the imperial court or aristocrats.

This reading frames the event described in the myth with the dominant national historical narrative centered upon the state. The uniqueness of the temple now stems from its (lack of) connection to state actors, and the state’s acceptance of Buddhism enabled its founding. Thus, despite the temple’s claim as a historical authority, the tour guides overwrite this claim with the national history so that the state’s authority transcends the temple’s. In addition, by attributing the temple’s origin to an action of

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78 For the official myth presented by the temple, see its website (Sensouji 2016).
79 Shōtoku Taishi (Prince Shōtoku) is a potentially mythical political figure that is said to have been the regent then. He is known, among other things, for officially accepting Buddhism into Japan.
80 Asuka is in today’s Nara prefecture, near Osaka and Kyoto, and the central imperial government was located there in the narrative present of this myth.
the state located far away, this contextualization also constructs the nation as a unified space under the state’s influence. The production of the mind-based historical knowledge about the temple has authorized the nation as a historical unity.

As the tours go on, the tour guides discuss the further unfolding of the interactions among multiple actors and trace the temple’s development. Resonant with the foundation story, these stories take place with the national history as the unmarked background. Below, I have re-created a narrative on the temple under the Tokugawa regime based on stories collected from multiple tours. The tour guides usually narrate a version of this story while walking through the shopping street:

*Before the street became a vibrant commercial street like today, there used to be small sub-temples along the street, six on each side. As the Tokugawa regime was established [in Tokyo, called Edo then, in 1603], Edo’s population rapidly grew and the number of visitors to the temple increased rapidly as well. This made the street full of trash left behind by the visitors, so the temple decided to have local residents clean the street on a regular basis, but to give them in return the permission to run stalls on the street in front of the sub-temples. This is the beginning of the street today. The more popular the stalls grew, the more visitors came to the temple. In addition, after a city-wide fire in 1657, some of the major social venues for regular residents of Edo, such as kabuki theaters and Yoshiwara [the state-licensed red-light district that flourished during the Tokugawa era], were moved around here. This attracted even more people to the area. This way, the area around the temple became a popular place for Edo residents to hang out, because they could visit the temple,*

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81 Before this time, the central government was briefly located in Osaka, and before that was about a hundred-year long Age of Warring States.
and enjoy food and entertainment all in one place. Many of the popular restaurants
and dessert shops that still stand today were founded during this time.

On the one hand, the story is much more complex than the historical
narratives from Kamakura. It involves multiple actors from the temple as an
institution to local residents, and the temple’s functions also grow multiplicitous from
a simple worship altar to a vibrant social space that we see today, as discussed in
chapter two. The portrayal of various actors participating in the linear growth of the
temple constructs its linear historical progress.

Yet, in the story, this local process is triggered by a crucial shift in national
politics: the establishment of the new government in Edo. The second round of
growth is also enabled by the state’s order to relocate Yoshiwara. The local processes
created by the local actors respond to the state’s action, and take place under the
condition created by the state over the course of the national history. This imagery
asserts the deep historical tie between the state and the nation as a community
affected by its actions. Notably, although the narrative relies on national history, it
does not describe the national history itself unlike in Kamakura; the tour guides
simply assume that their audience already knows about it. The narrative asserts the
imagined historical unity of the nation by mind-fully contextualizing the temple
history with the nation as the unmarked explanatory background.

Stories like this, in which a multitude of local actors respond to each other and
contribute to the growth of the temple within the national framework, abound in the
tours in Asakusa. According to one story, in response to the stricter financial
regulation on Buddhist institutions under the fifth Tokugawa shogun, the institution
of the temple built sub-temples and sub-shrines with various efficacies within its ground, which further attracted visitors for both ritual and social purposes. In another story, after the state lifted the long-standing isolationist policy in 1853, local actors took advantage of the incoming Western culture industry and built the first movie theater in Japan, which again attracted more visitors to the temple. In these examples, though the processes among local actors shape “the temple,” it is ultimately the state’s creation of a nationwide historical change that elicits such processes. National historical conditions enable the agency of local actors.

Thus, the historical narratives from the tours in Asakusa construct the temple as a representation of the local processes that came out of the national history. The national history, for the tour guides, constrains, initiates, and shapes local processes as an uncontested and unmarked historical force. By explaining the temple’s linear growth towards the present in terms of the state’s actions, the production of the historical knowledge about the temple through the narratives reifies the imagined unity of the nation.

**Relating to the Nation through Narratives**

The historical narratives in the tours at both sites authorize the nation through the mind-based production of national meanings. However, the ways in which they mobilize the nation in their stories differ, as we saw above. In Kamakura, the

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82 The fifth shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, is known for his odd policies often informed by Buddhist doctrines, such as *shorui awaremi no rei* (“the Ordinances of Animal Protection”), which banned the killing of animals, especially dogs.

83 As mentioned in chapter one, Japan had no official diplomatic relationship with other countries except China, Korea, Ryukyu (now Okinawa), and the Dutch from 1639-1853, in order in part to ban Christianity.
narratives articulate and mark parts of the dominant national historical narrative staged in Kamakura. In Asakusa, the narratives do not explicitly emphasize the national history. They simply assume it as the background framework and operate within it as a matter of course. In other words, while the narratives in Kamakura describe the nation as a marked bounded object – what is in Japan, what things mean, what happened in Japan – those from Asakusa are about the nation as shared unmarked reality – how the shared national given has locally manifested. This pattern also appears in the narratives on material objects and nonhuman beings discussed above; the stories from Kamakura explain what the objects mean, while those from Asakusa describe how the people use them.

These different mobilizations of the nation reflect two different aspects of the idea of the nation. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson defines the nation as a “political community […] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (2006, 6). The nation is imagined to have clear boundaries, however arbitrarily defined and contested, on the one hand (6-7). Yet, despite its boundaries and imagined nature, he also writes, the nation obtains “self-evident plausibility” and becomes a “taken-for-granted [frame] of reference” in many places because it is imagined as a deeply tied horizontal community (12). The imagined shared content of the nation becomes profoundly real for its members.

The tour guides’ respective relationship to the nation shapes the aspect of the nation highlighted in the narratives at the two sites. In Kamakura, the tour guides’ relatively peripheral position in the nation with regards to geography, history, and the audience affects their decision to emphasize the bounded nature of the nation.
Kamakura appears in the dominant national historical narrative only as a one-time medieval capital during the Kamakura era. To be sure, it becomes the central arena for national politics during that era, which is why the tour guides are able to extract the portion of the shrine history that has a direct impact on the national history. But unlike Tokyo or Kyoto, it plays a relatively minor role in the overall dominant national historical narrative.

More importantly, the kind of audience they deal with also contributes to their urge to connect the shrine directly to the nation. They assume that their international audience have almost no previous knowledge about Japan, and are visiting the city to “enjoy and learn about Japan” rather than about Kamakura per se.\textsuperscript{84} They therefore feel that they have to “know and talk about Japan as a whole,” tour guide Hasegawa Fumiko told me. In fact, most KIG members have the national license as an international tour guide in addition to the certification as a KIG member issued by the local government.\textsuperscript{85} As they face outsiders of the nation, they are constantly reminded that their nation has boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.

This dual peripherality of their position within the nation motivates the tour

\textsuperscript{84} The tour participants in Kamakura were from various nations, such as the United States, United Kingdom, the Philippines, Russia, and Germany, and most, if not all, of them were white. This dominance of white people among the participants remained the same for non-English tours in Kamakura, except Chinese tours. Spanish tours were usually dominated by visitors from Spain rather than Central or Latin America (most Japanese people do not make a meaningful distinction between Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites). This pervasive whiteness of the audience seemed to play an important role in shaping the discourses among the tour guides in Kamakura in which they often considered Japanese “religions” in relation to Christianity. See chapter four.

\textsuperscript{85} The national license as an international tour guide can be obtained by passing competitive national written and oral exams on Japanese history, Japanese geography, “general topics” about Japan, and a foreign language of choice. Anyone who gets paid for “showing foreign tourists around in a foreign language” is legally required have this license (JNTO 2017). Since KIG members are volunteers, they are not required to have this license, legally speaking. Yet, many members study for or have obtained this license after joining KIG, which indicates the high level of interest in acquiring knowledge about the nation among them.
guides to outline and articulate the nation as a bounded community with a unified past. Many KIG members emphasized to me the importance of presenting Kamakura in direct relation to dominant national imaginaries. Hirokawa Yasuko said, “The best and only selling point of Kamakura is that Yoritomo founded the city and the shrine, so we focus on this part particularly [in the tours]. Especially for foreign tourists, the stories need to be as simple as possible.” The perceived peripherality in the nation prompts the tour guides to highlight portions of the shrine history that are also the national history. Importantly, this attempt to authorize the shrine by claiming its central role in the national history is grounded on the unquestioned authority attributed to the nation as a stable unified historical unity to begin with. The tour guides’ assumption of the self-evidence of the nation as a historical unity, as well as their awareness of their relative peripherality within the nation that stems out of this assumption, together shapes their narratives.

The tour guides in Asakusa, by contrast, assume the national history as the unmarked background within which local historical events take place. TT’s almost exclusively domestic audience enables this representation of the temple. For most Japanese, the events, institutions, and figures referenced in the narratives are familiar (hence the number of footnotes in this section). In this context, in order to satisfy the audience, TT members feel that they need stories beyond well-known national history. “Some even do independent research, and that’s good because they know all the things the audience doesn’t know,” Sone Ayako, a TT member, told me. In emphasizing local details, however, they frame them with the national history as the unmarked explanatory force. The unmarked shared knowledge about the nation thus
becomes the basis for the production of mind-based historical knowledge about the temple among TT members.

These comments show how the narratives respond to the tour guides’ particular relationships with the nation, rather than are produced for the sake of their own meanings. Their emphasis is not so much on the theoretical knowledge as on the experiential knowledge of how to present this information in the specific context of their relationship to the nation. This indicates the primacy of mood over mind in the tours, even though I have focused on the meanings of the narratives so far in this chapter.

In fact, when I asked tour guides at both sites what motivates them to volunteer, many of their answers brought up affective experiences rather than the meanings of the narratives. Their relationships to the nation shaped these motivations. In Kamakura, the two major responses were: 1) they enjoy meeting, helping, and interacting with people from other nations, and 2) they enjoy communicating in a foreign language. “My English is not even that good, but it makes me really happy when the tourists are interested in Japan and willing to listen to my bad English, and try to understand me,” Yuri Yamamoto told me. In other words, the meaningfulness of being a tour guide comes primarily from the experience of representing the nation to outsiders as a Japanese. KIG members’ relationship with the nation not only shapes their mind-based tour narratives, but also the kind of mood they seek to produce out of the act of narrating those stories.

Of course, this emphasis on the affective experience of tours does not make the mind-based meanings in the narratives irrelevant. Rather, it is precisely through
the production of mind-based meanings that mood comes out. Speaking about the story on the statues of *komaiunu* guardian dogs whose mouths are attributed various symbolic meanings based on their shapes, tour guide Hirokawa told me: “The story made me so happy when I first learned it [at the training session hosted by the local state], because I cannot help but imagine people in the past having fun coming up with word games like this. Japanese people have been having fun with words forever.” The production of mind-based knowledge about nationally shared symbolism becomes incorporated into the production of the nation-authorizing mood.

To attain this pleasurable mood through the presentation of the nation, KIG members prioritize not so much the amount of details they provide or their accuracy as successful authorization of the nation. “Tour giving is a constant tea muddling (*ocha o nigoshi nagara*),” Hirokawa told me. Just like stirred turbid tea, she constantly gives evasive explanations about the site or Japan for the audience. Their task as a tour guide is to tell “simplified basic stories” rather than “lecturing everything” they know, Endo Sanae said. “Otherwise, reality is so complicated that I can’t find neat endings for my stories.” They need simple national narratives to satisfy their audience and produce the desired mood. Mind-based knowledge is relevant only to the extent it helps them satisfy the audience by presenting the nation as a bounded object and produce pleasurable moods.

By contrast, many tour guides in Asakusa told me that one of their primary motivations is to “contribute to the tourism in Asakusa.” Sone elaborated on this:

SA: I became a tour guide here because I just like Asakusa so much. It’s a great place. […] I thought about volunteering as a tour guide [somewhere else], […] but I ended up here because this place just has so many people walking around, and it’s messy in a good way – more *nigiyaka*, interesting,
and fun than the other place. I like interacting with people, too. So, I really enjoy this, and I want other people to enjoy this, too.

For Sone, it is the social experience of participating in the mood of *nigiyakasa* in the temple space that makes her volunteer work meaningful. Many tour guides expressed a similar sentiment about the tourist space. “Asakusa is so lucky to get so many visitors, so I want to help them and participate in the tourism scene through TT myself,” Tanaka Hideo excitedly explained. The mood of the tourist space is attractive not only for visitors but also for the tour guides, who, too, desire to participate in the production of this mood with the visitors. As discussed in chapter two, the mood of the tourist space is strongly associated with the imagined shared past and culture of the nation. Yet, for the tour guides in Asakusa, such nationalness of the mood is unmarked as the background. They enjoy and participate in the nation as unmarked reality through giving tours without necessarily feeling its boundedness, due to their position in the nation.

Thus, the practice of tours reaffirms the imagined unity of the nation not only semiotically, but more importantly affectively. Insofar as the narratives are crafted and engaged in the specific context of the tour guides’ relationships to the nation, the practice gives rise to embodied experiences in addition to abstract meanings. Mind-based representational meanings produce desired nation-authorizing moods.

### 3-3. **Laughable Traditions: Tours as Mood Production**

Having considered what the tour guides themselves say about the experience of tours, I will now examine some of the conspicuous instances in which the pleasure of tours became particularly evident during my fieldwork. Many of the stories that
made the affective aspect of tours clearest for me dealt with national traditions. As such, this section will explore some of the narratives on national traditions and analyze how they produce the desired nation-authorizing mood.

As stated above, while the tour guides in Asakusa produce mood using unmarked knowledge about the nation shared with their domestic audience, those in Kamakura do so by presenting the nation to foreign audience. I will first discuss how the tour guides treat rites in the tourist spaces as an entry point for this comparison. As tours approach the main worship hall of the respective site, they encounter other visitors performing various rites I described in chapter two, such as worship, fortune telling, incense purification, and water ablation. The tour guides at both sites discuss these rites, but differently depending on their relationships with the nation.

In Kamakura, all tours I attended spent time explaining and demonstrating how to perform the rites. For example, showing how to wash hands before going up to the main hall, Tokiwa Akie said,

TA: Here we need to wash our hands and rinse our mouth. I will show you the traditional Japanese way to do this. You first hold your ladle with your right hand and wash your left hand, and then hold it with your left hand and wash your right hand, and then take a little bit of water with your left hand and rinse your mouth, and finally wash the handle that you used. After this, we are now all ready to go up to the main shrine.

This explanation resonates with what most other KIG members say about the rite in their tours. Her focus here is on the practice itself – what it consists of and what it means – and her explanation is strikingly mechanical. Just as other narratives from Kamakura do, this timeless presentation of the rite constructs the nation as a stably bounded unity and its tradition as fixed.

Then, after describing the rites, the tour guides ask participants if they would
like to try. If the answer is affirmative, the tour guides walk them through the rites step by step. However, performing these rites for the first time, most visitors’ performance ends up being awkward in the eyes of the tour guides. This often makes the tour guides happy and laugh. Yamamoto once told me after a tour speaking of the water rite, “It’s kind of cute when [the tourists] can’t handle the dippers well. I like it.” The assumption here is that there is a standard way to perform the rite that is not awkward or “cute” – an assumption that corresponds to their demonstration of the rite above. The timeless presentation of the imagined national tradition allows the tour guides to patronize the audience and produce a pleasurable mood.

In Asakusa, the tour guides do not explain the rites or their meanings. With the presumption that the audience knows them just as they do in historical narratives discussed above, they typically skip the rites and encourage the audience to perform them on their own after the tour. Yet, as the group walks past the booths for the rites, the tour guides often tell a brief anecdote on the rites. For instance, in discussing the incense burner in front of the main hall, the tour guide Hirose Miyuki brought up an adorable story on the elementary school pupils she had toured:

HM: I also often give tours for elementary school kids, so I tell them that they will get smarter [if they put smoke on their heads here]. Of course, no one would suffer hardships [as they actually do] if people can get smarter just with this smoke only, but this is still fun. I know there are certain traditional rules about how to do this, but I don’t think we need to be too strict. […] They generally have a lot of fun with this. For example, kids who play soccer would ask me, “Can I put smoke on my feet so I can run faster?” so I say, “Yeah, go for it!” It’s pretty cute. People usually put it only on their faces and heads, but I don’t think [putting smoke on the feet] is a problem, don’t you think so?

The audience members and Hirose laughed together after the story. This presentation of the rite centers upon the people who practice it, in line with the narratives on
nonhuman beings in Asakusa described in 3-1 and unlike the explanation for the water ablution rite in Kamakura above. The story reminds the audience of the tradition’s living nature, actively practiced and inherited by the younger generation in a way that fits their needs and tastes. This idiosyncrasy and the surprising ingenuity of the people engaging in the tradition (i.e. the children) produces laughter and affection towards them among the tour guides and the audience here; the thought of a familiar national tradition being engaged with creatively generates the pleasurable mood. Underlying this presentation of the rite is the unmarked nationally shared knowledge of how to perform the rite and what efficacies it has. Hirose created laughter and pleasure by playfully countering the nationally familiar knowledge with this story.

In sum, the tour guides at the two sites produce desired mood differently through their discursive engagement with the rites. The experience of successfully delineating and describing the nation as a bounded unity in Kamakura, and the experience of successfully sharing and working with the knowledge about the nation, respectively make it pleasurable to talk about the rites. Their relationships to the nation mediates this desired experience. The tour guides affectively relate to the nation through their mind-based engagement with the rites – through talking about it in Kamakura, and talking within it in Asakusa.

I often observed similar affective authorization of the nation in their discussion of other rites as well. In discussing the food on sale on the shopping street, KIG members emphasize their Japaneseness, brag about how tasty they are, and encourage visitors to try them during their stay in Japan; TT members focus on the
long history and expertise of the local shops of those national foods, and brag about how they are some of the most famous and delicious shops in Japan. In speaking about what they consider vanishing traditions, such as Shinto-style weddings in Kamakura and “authentic” “real” kimono in Asakusa, the former proudly describes to the audience the details of the vanishing “Japanese tradition”; the latter jokes about the vanishing of the tradition based on the shared notions on what kimono should look like, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter. The tour guides generate desired moods, though differently, by producing mind-based national meanings about various national traditions throughout their tours. In talking about/within national traditions in tours, the nation becomes affectively present for them.

It was through stories about national traditions that such affective experience of the tours became most evident to me, although the overall ambience of the tours was also casual. Some speculations can be made about the reasons behind this observation. As we saw in this section, many of the traditions mentioned are highly sensual, from bodily practices to food. This tangibility of the traditions might make it easier for the tour guides to play with them, compared to more distanced narratives about the meanings of material objects or history discussed in 3-1 and 3-2. Relatedly, many tour guides at both sites told me that they had learned the stories on objects and history in training sessions, while they mostly come up with those on traditions on their own and share among themselves. The former is more formalized and state-intervened than the latter. This lack of formality in the comments on traditions allows for more room for tour guides’ creativity and humor.
In this chapter, I have shown how the tour guides explanatorily and affectively authorize the nation by narrating stories about the sites. The tour guides’ relationships with the nation shape the way they know-about, mobilize, and relate to the nation through the tours: the nation as a bounded object in Kamakura, and the nation as unmarked reality in Asakusa. On the one hand, the practice of explaining the sites through tours presupposes the presence of representational meanings of some kind about the sites. As we saw in 3-1 and 3-2, the production of meaning most often takes place in national terms, and these mind-based stories together construct the nation as a stable historical and cultural unity. However, as I have argued in 3-2 and 3-3, the act of narrating the stories also articulates and cultivates the tour guides’ particular relationships to the nation, and produces desirable moods associated with it. Mind-based stories produce nation-authorizing moods. Through the practice of tours – an interplay of affect and language, mood and mind – the nation as an imagined cultural and historical unity becomes uniquely realistic in the experiences of the tour guides.

Such experiences of tours add to the impression of the sites as not “religion”-like among the tour guides in several regards. First, the tour guides construct the meanings of the sites in national, public terms based on the nationally shared, unmarked knowledge about the nation. In their understandings, therefore, the meanings articulated in the narratives are publicly self-evident rather than belonging to the realm of private belief. Some may argue here that the narratives on material objects in Kamakura discussed in 3-1, in which some of the objects are presented in terms of cosmological meanings, contradict this point and construct an “religion”-like
impression of the shrine. Yet, the pervasive emphasis on mood among the tour guides counters even such few instances where “religion”-like impression of the sites might emerge. Insofar as the practice of tours is filled with pleasurable moods in the experience of the tour guides, there is a fundamental gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and the mood-based practices. The practice of tours reveals this apparent gap to the eyes of the tour guides. As we will see in the next chapter, such impression about the gap between the sites and the notion of “religion,” as well as the relationships to the nation, crucially shape the discourses on the place of religion in the nation among the tour guides.
CHAPTER FOUR

DEBATING “RELIGION”

One day, I attended an English tour with KIG for a group of visitors from several East European countries. As we walked on the official approach to the shrine, a Slovakian visitor asked me, “So, how does this shrine work? Is it like the Catholic Church? … I mean, for example, people go to the church every week in Catholic countries, but do people here also go to this shrine every week?” I explained that there is no ceremonial event held on a regular basis at this shrine, and that if anything, many people visit here at the beginning of a new year. The conversation continued:

Visitor: [Confusedly] Okay...? So, at this shrine, people just come, pray, and leave whenever they want to?
SY: Pretty much.
Visitor: But is there a central figure in Shinto that makes ultimate decisions then?
SY: Um, I don’t think there’s anyone like that in Shinto.
Visitor: But who makes important difficult moral decisions? For example, for the abortion problem, in the Catholic religion, ultimately the Pope decides what we should do based on the Bible and Christian beliefs. Who tells you what to do about those very difficult questions in Japan?

Luckily for me, the conversation ended here as the tour guide started talking, although he asked the same question about morality to her as well later in the tour. He here attempted to understand the Shinto shrine by drawing a direct comparison to the Catholic Church: The Church holds weekly rituals and makes moral decisions, and therefore so should the shrine. “Religion” as a category enables and justifies this cross-cultural comparison for him, even though, as it turned out in the conversation, the shrine does not resemble the Church at all at least with regards to what he seemed
to perceive as its essential functions.

I began this thesis with E. Valentine Daniel’s distinction between mood and mind. I heeded his argument that the idea of religion as belief stems from mind, in that the idea of belief assumes distance between self and the world. It is mind-based also because it aims to comprehend reality by delineating and classifying it. Using the analytical distinction of mood and mind, I have analyzed the various ways in which the desired nation-authorizing mood is produced: historically through the state’s engagement in the gap between “religion” as a category and practices in its secular project (chapter one); by bodily and discursively engaging in unmarked practices in tourist spaces (chapter two); by telling narratives about the sites through the nation (chapter three). These chapters together show how mood prevails in the historical and contemporary contexts surrounding the tour guides; even mind-based practices that concern meanings are embedded in mood production.

This chapter will explore how these contexts together shape the discourses on the place of “religion” in the nation among the tour guides. As illustrated by the above conversation, non-Japanese tour participants in Kamakura often ask about Shinto, Buddhism, and Japanese “religions” in general. These interactions often spark conversations about “religion” among the tour guides afterwards. My interlocutors in Asakusa, too, shared their thoughts on religion on numerous occasions as we discussed their experiences as a tour guide. Specifically, at both sites, the tour guides take notice of and wrestle with the apparent gap between “religion” as a mind-based category and the mood-producing practices that take place in the tourist spaces described in chapter two. Their relationships to the nation cultivated through the
practice of tours that I showed in chapter three crucially shape their engagements with this gap. I argue that the tour guides’ discursive delineation of religion semiotically and affectively authorizes the nation by deferring exposition on their practices and reproducing their relationships to the nation.

4-1. “Religion” of the Nation

Before and after tours, many members of KIG gather for lunch, coffee, or beer, and socialize. They reflect on their tours, ask questions, and give advice to each other. Religion, as it turns out, is one of their favorite topics to discuss. As the above conversation shows, when tour participants in Kamakura ask questions about Japanese “religions,” their questions are often grounded in their Christian-informed views of religion: religion entails a belief in the absolute, provides an absolute moral code, and shapes an absolute identity. These Christian-informed questions about Japanese “religion” invite the tour guides for a mind-dominated theorization of the practices at Buddhist and Shinto sites, even though mood prevails in many Japanese people’s “religious” practices. They often tackle this task collectively in the after-tour gatherings. Most of the discourses I examine in this section took place in these gatherings that I attended numerous times.

Morality, Religion, and the Nation

86 I noted in chapter three that most tour participants in Kamakura were white, mostly from Western Europe or North America. It is therefore relatively safe to assume that most, certainly if not all, tour participants are Christian-informed.

87 Although I only described tours at the Shinto shrines with regards to Kamakura in chapter three, KIG also offers tours to some of the most famous Buddhist temples in Kamakura, such as Kotoku-in temple of the Great Buddha and Hase-dera. Consequently, conversations on Buddhism take place just as often as those on Shinto, and they are in fact often discussed together, as we will see below.
After the above tour in which the Slovakian tourist asked about morality and religion, the tour guide, Hirokawa Yasuko, brought it up during lunch with other members of KIG. Everyone was excited to discuss the issue, as many of them had tourists ask similar questions before. She began the conversation:

HY: I was asked a hard question today. So, Japan has a long history, sophisticated culture, and high morality, right? [Everyone nods.] He asked me about the driving force behind it, like why Japanese people are able to do this without having an absolute belief like in Christianity. I told him that Shinto doesn't have teachings but there is a moral philosophy separate from religion in Japan, and that we learn it from family and the neighborhood community.

I begin by observing that Hirokawa here considers Shinto a religion. As we will see below, the tour guides in Kamakura all agree that Shinto and Buddhism count as religions, which forms an important difference from those in Asakusa. This aside, what is notable about her description of what had happened is that the Slovakian visitor was not particularly interested in the uniquely “high morality” of Japanese people. His question concerned the im/possibility of morality without a single absolute God and an institution that authoritatively mediates God and humanity. Japan, for him, was simply one of many examples of places without the Church. But here, Hirokawa interpreted his question as about Japan and its unique virtuousness. Japanese people are, for her, already moral without a central moral institution like the Church, and the question that interests her is rather how this is uniquely possible in Japan. In chapter three, I showed how the tour guides in Kamakura relate to the nation as a bounded community in explaining the shrine in national terms. We already see, here, how this habit is reflected in their discourses outside of the tours as well. She now reframed the question on religion in terms of the singularity of Japan as a unified, bounded, and uniquely moral nation.
The tour guides at the lunch agreed that Japanese “religion,” specifically Shinto, does not function as a moral code in Japan. “Japanese religion has eight million gods (yaoyorozu no kami).” It doesn’t believe in one god like Christianity, so there are no such absolute moral teachings in Japanese religion,” explained Endo Sanae. The underlying assumption behind this statement is the Christian, mind-based model of morality. This model, as we see in the Slovakian visitor’s question, posits that the morality requires articulable “moral teachings,” which, in Endo’s and others’ views, Japanese religion lacks. After all, their “religious” practices primarily concern mood production. The tour guides’ mood-producing “religious” practices fail to fit into the Christian model of “religion” and morality. In other words, there is a gap between the category on which the question from the tourist is based, and the practices the question asks about.

Endo here takes notice of this gap and attributes the origin of this difference to the polytheistic nature of Japanese religion. It should be noted that the presence of multiple gods does not necessarily preclude Japanese “religion” from providing a moral code. I will discuss the implications of this logical leap later. But no one at the lunch minded this leap, and their attention quickly shifted to explaining what then fills this gap between the model of morality and Japanese moral practices. Everyone had a theory. One said that because Japan is an island nation and relatively homogeneous, people have inevitably come to value cooperation and harmony within such a closed community. Another explained that it is the shared respect for ancestors that keeps Japanese people virtuous. For yet another, rice farming, which she stated

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88 This word, yaoyorozu no kami, literally means eight million gods, but it is usually taken to mean a countless number of gods.
the Japanese have practiced from antiquity, has kept them moral by cultivating awe and respect for nature and the sun.

Despite the variety of accounts they came up with, common to all is the attempt to identify a single absolute factor shared in the nation that makes Japanese people moral. They all assume that morality requires an absolute principle that governs the judgement of good and bad, just as the Christian model does. In order to respond to the question that assumes the articulable nature of morality, the tour guides’ answers conformed to this mind-based Christian model.

Yet, in thus fitting into the mind-based model, all their theories name imagined shared qualities of the nation as such an absolute moral factor. The initial question about morality and religion has thus been displaced with that about morality and nationality, just as Hirokawa did above: Morality stems from religion in Christian nations, but from nationality in the Japanese nation. This mobilization of the nation to explain Japanese morality reauthorizes the nation as a moral unity by deferring the initial question on “religion.” The gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and the mood-producing practices thus proves productive in reifying the nation.

As I listened to this conversation, these accounts of Japanese morality struck me as abstract and superficial. They identify what might make Japanese people moral if not the presence of countless gods. But none explains what it means for them to be moral and how these factors might help them practice that specific morality, which I interpreted was part of what the Slovakian visitor was interested in. So I asked,

SY: I think what he wanted to ask was how people decide what’s the good thing to do at each moment. Respecting the sun or ancestors may make people moral, but this explanation doesn’t tell us what to do on each occasion like in the case of abortion, to use the example he used. I think he wanted to know
how Japanese people handle these complex issues with no clear-cut solutions. Their answers to this question about lived morality left behind both the Christian and national frameworks employed throughout the conversation so far. Hirokawa said, “Of course, we decide on our own based on many different things.” Another tour guide Yamamoto Yuri said, “When it comes to concrete issues like abortion, I don’t know what to tell [the tourists] because it obviously depends on the context and various factors.” She almost laughed at the self-evidence of her own answer.

For the tour guides, despite all their theories on Japanese morality, neither the Christian idea of a universal moral code nor the nation as a moral community are relevant for their practice of morality on the ground. Although the tourists’ questions as well as the tour guides’ answers to them are framed in the mind-based model of morality, their lived morality, at least in their accounts, utilizes their mood-based experiential knowledge of how to act in specific contexts. Hence the superficiality and logical leaps of the attempts to articulate their morality I noted above. After all, they need not know what makes them moral to know how to behave morally – until they encounter Christian-informed tourists.

In fact, because of this gap between explanation and lived practices, the tour guides were often not particularly convinced by their own explanations about Japanese morality. Yamamoto, for instance, said to me:

YY: It’s not that there is a single correct answer to this question [of the origin of Japanese morality]. We just need to convince the participants. … It’s important that we have an answer just to make them not think that Japanese people don’t have morality, but I think it’s enough if we have an answer.

This comment illustrates how the tour guides’ efforts to explain Japanese morality are not for their own sake, but for that of the tours. For Yamamoto, the explanatory
accounts of Japanese morality are a mere means to defend the nation’s impressions among the tourists. As we saw in chapter three, this practice of defending the nation produces desired nation-authorizing moods among the tour guides in Kamakura. Such mood production requires, as Daniel argues, the experiential knowledge of how to do so in the specific context of their relationship to the nation. Knowing how to defend Japanese morality in an intelligible way, however tentatively, to the tour participants constitutes part of such necessary experiential knowledge for the practice of tours.

Thus, the tour guides’ seemingly mind-driven discourses on morality and “religion” are enmeshed in their larger practice of the production of nation-authorizing moods. When faced with the apparent gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and their mood-based practice of morality, they naturalize this gap as a uniqueness of the nation. This explanation does not at all shed light on any lived details of their “religious” or moral practices; it simply authorizes the nation as a bounded community precisely by deferring elaborate explication. By defending the nation, the discourses reproduce their affective relationship to it.

Identities, Religion, and the Nation

KIG members employ nationality to explain away the seemingly paradoxical landscape of religious identities in Japan as well. During tours, they often cite state statistics and say that most Japanese people “believe” in both Buddhism and Shinto. This often surprises the audience because for many of them religion is a belief in the absolute and therefore mutually exclusive. In this framework, the seeming multi-religiosity of Japanese people requires an explanation.
For instance, Fukuda Michio was once asked about the differences between Buddhism and Shinto, and how Japanese people can believe in both. After this tour, he asked Yamamoto how she would answer this question. Her immediate reaction was: “I hate those big vague questions.” The tourist’s premise of the mutual exclusivity of the two traditions does not make sense to Yamamoto. The question is detached from her experiences and so hardly meaningful – though it would seem like a basic question to those concerned with classifying religions. This comment illustrates the gap between the mind-based question and her mood-based practice. On the one hand, the very idea that Japanese people have multiple religious identities is itself a mind-based one, attempting to know-about people through classification. On the other hand, the difference between Buddhist and Shinto sites is largely irrelevant for the mood-producing practices of most Japanese visitors, as we saw in chapter two. The tourist’s question, therefore, fundamentally fails to correspond to the practices.

However, Yamamoto ultimately accepted the notion of multi-religiosity and came up with an answer that fit into this paradoxical framework. But instead of directly addressing how it is possible for individuals to hold the two identities (which, again, they necessarily do not), her response employed national history to make sense of this phenomenon:

YY: Why Japanese people can believe in both? That’s a hard one, but I think I would give a historical explanation – Buddhism and Shinto used to be practiced together until the Tokugawa period, and the Hachimangu and Hasedera both have some traces of those times. The Meiji government forcibly separated them, but after [World War II] there was no longer the state religion. So, the past [in which Buddhism and Shinto were practiced together] remains in the spiritual structure of Japanese people, and today we value both

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89 As we saw in chapter one, the distinction between the two traditions is itself a Meiji-state invention.
90 Hase-dera is a Buddhist temple located in Kamakura and it is among the most popular religious sites in the city. Naturally, the tour guides often give tours at Hase-dera as well.
Yamamoto offers a historical narrative in through which the Japanese as a collective have come to hold multiple religious identities, rather than on the personal processes of acquiring and maintaining them. In this framework, multi-religiosity is no longer about the identity and practice of individuals, but about inheriting a national past. This explanation does not explicate any theological, cosmological, practical, emotional, or other lived details about either tradition. It simply explains away the Japanese religious landscape in the service of claiming the singularity of the nation.

The tour guides did not seem fully comfortable with their accounts of Japanese multi-religiosity, just as they were not with those of morality. Yamamoto, as we saw above, found the question itself almost nonsensical, and it seemed as if she simply repeated what she had studied to become a tour guide. Ogawa Hiromi also confessed to me, “To be honest, we can’t really explain the details of Buddhism or Shinto because I don’t know much about them, so we just say things we’ve learned.” The tour guides thus recognize and mark the apparent gap between their narratives that respond to mind-based questions and their mood-based practices.

Despite their awareness of this gap, unlike the accounts on morality, the tour guides often apply these accounts for Japanese multi-religiosity to comment on other issues. Their comments often claim the moral superiority of Japan over other nations. For example, Ogawa smilingly said, “I think that this generosity of Japanese religions is the reason why there hasn’t been any religious war in Japanese history. They may seem ambiguous if you look at it negatively, but they’re generous and accepting if you do positively.” She here applies the paradoxical language of multi-religiosity to
interpret the national past and asserts the supremacy of Japan.

Similarly, Yamamoto shared a Ted Talk with me by a Japanese Buddhist priest named Matsuyama Daiko at the end of our discussion on how to present Japanese multi-religiosity. In the lecture (2014), Matsuyama jokes about how he went to a Catholic school despite having been raised in a Buddhist monk family, and argues that Japanese religiosity is a helpful model for creating a peaceful world as it exemplifies “inter-faith” respect. Yamamoto mostly agreed with him and said:

YY: This talk reminded me that the basis of Japanese religiosity is Shinto and the belief that gods are everywhere. When Buddhism came to Japan, Shinto accepted Buddha as one of the gods. By contrast, monotheisms are so strict that they do not accept other faiths. Think about the burkini issue [in France], for example. They just don’t like things and people that are different from themselves because they are monotheists.91

She uses the notion of Japanese multi-religiosity to critique France and claim Japan’s superiority. What enables this comment is the assumption of the cross-national comparability of religions that underlies the construction of “religion” as a category. Just like for Ogawa, “religion” as a category, and the paradox it poses when applied to the Japanese context, proves useful in defending the nation. Thus, the tour guides’ mobilization of the contradictory notion of multi-religiosity replicates their relationship to the nation in a way that corresponds to their production of moods through tours. Even in conversations outside the tours, both Ogawa and Yamamoto seemed excited the whole time they made the above comments. This implies that

91 In summer 2016, during my fieldwork, over a dozen cities in France imposed ban on burkini – full-body swimwear that some Muslim women wear public beaches and pools. This ban became particularly controversial with the circulation of a photograph of an armed policeman ordering a woman who was wearing a burkini to remove some of her clothing on a public beach (Kim Hjelmgaard, “5 Things to Know about French Burkini Bans,” USA Today, August 25, 2016. accessed April 18, 2017. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/08/25/europe-burkini-controversy-france/89325642/). Yamamoto’s interpretation of the debate is a fascinating one given that many see this issue as that of laïcité, rather than the monotheistic religiosity of France.
these conversations also further cultivate their affective attachment to the nation. While the discourses on morality might have been largely defensive, those on multi-religiosity positively reestablish national pride.

Religion as the “Japanese Way of Life”

I have shown so far how the tour guides’ discourses on the paradoxical notion of “religion” produce desired moods by reaffirming the singularity of the nation. In response to the Christian-informed visitors, the tour guides naturalize the gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and their mood-producing practices by attributing functions associated with “religion” to nationality. This allows them to avoid directly explaining their complex lived “religious” practices. However, many tour participants also directly asked about the place of “religion” in Japanese people’s lives: If Japanese “religion” does not pertain to identity or morality, what does it mean and how does it function in the lives of Japanese people?

This question itself is a mind-based secularist one in that it demands the delineation, classification, and theorization of lived practices as “religion,” even though the practices mostly concern the production of desired moods, as discussed in chapter two. Due to this gap between the question and the practice in question, the question often puzzled my interlocutors. They tackled it often by considering the example of visits to Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples in New Year. Many tour guides visit my field site in Kamakura, Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine, for new year, since most of them live in Kamakura. This example was a particularly compelling one because its specificity of timing makes it appear to have obvious symbolic meanings.
compared to their other “religious” practices. For instance, Tokiwa Akie focused precisely on such symbolic meanings of this practice to respond to the question:

TA: I had never thought about why I go to Shinto shrines every New Year even though I had been going since I was a child. I guess I’d learned after repeating it ten times or so as a kid, that I just to have to go at the beginning of new year; it’s just what it is. But they actually have meanings. It’s because we need to get purified and greet new gods for the new year. … This is a Shinto event, but Buddhism is more about dead people and our ancestors and they also have meanings. The reason we prepare eggplants and cucumbers at home during Obon is so that the returning dead won’t get lost on their way. All of these events have meanings, and getting to know these meanings has made me feel their importance much more strongly than before.

Here, Tokiwa describes how she began to see certain seasonal rituals differently when she started paying attention to their meanings as a tour guide. For her, Buddhist and Shinto practices did not previously require explanation. She had experiential knowledge of how to act, but not theoretical knowledge of what the rites meant. That she did not used to pay attention to their meanings before becoming a tour guide was apparent also in the way she told me the story above: she constantly used the English word “purify” to explain the meaning of the rites to me, since she was probably more used to describing it in English for her tour audiences than in Japanese in everyday life. She thus responds to the mind-based question by shifting the tendency of the way she engages with the rites by paying more attention to their meanings.

Of course, her claims about her current practice do not necessarily correspond to her lived practices. In tours I attended with her, she also seemed invested in embodied performances, deliberately making eye contact with statues or seriously teaching her audience how to wash hands and worship. But at least in the way she speaks about herself, her practices take up a new dimension of symbolic meanings.

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92 Obon is a festival in summer during which the dead is said to returns to this world.
most likely since she became a tour guide.

For Tokiwa, the mind-based theoretical knowledge of meanings is strongly tied to the sense of national belonging. Since she studied abroad in Hawaii when she was younger, she told me, she came to strongly identify as Japanese. She enjoys being a tour guide now because “it gives [her] a chance to learn about what we as Japanese should know about and be able to talk about.” She even said, “Because not knowing about your country is the same as not knowing about yourself, I want to be able to talk about these things and communicate them.” For her, acquiring mind-based knowledge about Japan to transform her practices is a way to cultivate and live up to her Japanese identity. It should be noted here that, in Daniel’s framework, the notion of identity is also a mind-based one (2002, 51), in that it classifies people into categories rather than acknowledge others’ existence in the world and produce mood together. In seeking mind-based symbolic meanings about her practices as a tour guide, Tokiwa simultaneously pursues mind-based self-identification with the nation.

Most tour guides, however, do not respond to the question of the place of “religion” in their lives through mind-based explanations. Even in seemingly straightforward examples like new year visits to temples or shrines, they still had a great deal of trouble answering the question of what place “religion” has in their lives. Therefore, instead of directly responding to the question, many defer the question itself by attributing their practice to their nationality. For instance, after the group conversation on Japanese morality and religion’s lack of role in it mentioned above, Hirokawa said:

HY: Shinto is obviously not about teachings but it’s such an integral part of our lives. We go to shrines in New Year just because our parents told us to do
it, not because we “believe.” So, it troubles me when tourists ask me these questions, because I can’t explain it even in Japanese. So, I usually just evade it by saying that religion is a Japanese way of life [nihonjin no ikikata], because it’s just ingrained in our lives and I can’t explain it.

Here, Hirokawa responds to the question about “religion” not with theoretical knowledge as Tokiwa does, but with experiential knowledge of how to “evade” it through the nation. She first highlights the meaninglessness of the question about the place of “religion” in her life in light of her practices. As she points out, the parental authority behind her practices fundamentally contradicts the assumption of autonomous self that enables the notion of “religion” as private belief. Her decision to “evade” the question stems from this gap between the question and the practice. Faced with this gap, Hirokawa has learned how to defer the question rather than what the answer would be as Tokiwa does.

Many other tour guides used expressions similar to “Japanese way of life” to describe their “religious” practices. As we saw in the introduction, Endo excitedly said that “Japanese religion” must be interesting to study because it is more like “custom” (seikatsu shūkan). Ogawa said with puzzlement and pride that “religion” is “part of Japanese life” (nihonjin no seikatsu no ichibu) and therefore cannot be explained. Insofar as it is an “evasion” (gomakashi) as Hirokawa says, this phrase does not provide any concrete description of their lived practices. It simply naturalizes the nation by mobilizing it to mediate the deferral.

In this framework, the nation becomes not only a tentative explanation of the “religious” practices, but also a justification for not explaining further. For instance, Hirokawa continued after the above conversation,

**YH:** It’s unfortunate that I can’t tell [visitors] about the Japanese view of
religion; if I just tell them about the history of temples they might find it interesting at the moment but it probably doesn’t stay in their memory for long. So, I wish I could tell them about the Japanese view of religion because that’s the sort of thing Japan is most unique about. It’s also the hardest to talk about but most interesting. But again, I can’t explain it well even in Japanese.

By ascribing to the nation not only the “religious” practices per se but also the ineffability of the practices, Hirokawa denies the possibility of any careful communication about her lived mood-producing practices. Through claims of ineffable uniqueness of Japanese “religion,” phrases like “Japanese way of life” or “Japanese view of religion” set Japan apart from other nations with other “religions” and reestablishes it as a stable bounded unity. The ideas of religion and the nation thus co-construct each other through the deferral of explication, precisely because of the category’s mismatch with the practices.

Indeed, it might be precisely because Tokiwa, unlike other tour guides, does not reduce her practices into simplistic categories like “religion” or the nation that she turns to symbolic meanings in response to the meaning-craving tourists. Her motivation may be strongly tied to her national identity as I noted above, but she takes seriously the tourists’ demand for theoretical explication. This, as a result, has transfigured her approach to the practices, while most other tour guides defer theorization by mobilizing reductive labels like “religion” and “Japan.”

Such deferral of exposition on “religious” practices through the phrase “Japanese way of life” not only responds to Christian-informed tourists, but can also address other issues to defend the nation. In a conversation on the constitutional separation of religion and politics between Yamamoto and Ogawa below, they use the logic to assert its bounded sovereignty:
OH: I think we do Buddhist and Shinto practices without recognizing them. [...] So, even though the separation of religion and politics is the [constitutional] principle, religion is so deeply ingrained in Japanese lives and I don’t think it’s possible.

YY: I agree, I really think that religion is such a deeply integrated part of life in Japan. Because Shinto is based on the idea that gods are everywhere, I don’t think it’s possible to separate it from life or politics.

OH: Yeah. So, I think that ordinary people like us have nothing to do with the separation of religion and politics. It’s just something that only politicians need to be concerned about diplomatically.

YY: People bring it up only in the context of the Yasukuni Shrine issue anyways.

OH: Right, and that’s exactly where the separation doesn’t make sense, I think. China and Korea get mad every time [politicians] visit the Shrine, but I don’t understand why they do – this is just a Japanese way of doing things, and they shouldn’t be mad at it.

YY: That’s so true, haha! I totally agree.

Here they claim the uniqueness of Japan’s approach to politics and protect the nation from what they claim to be international interference in domestic affairs. Their argument is grounded in the essentializing notion of “religion” as the “Japanese way.”

By conflating a complex set of practices under the umbrella term of “religion” – from personal visits to local sites to politicians’ visits to a highly controversial shrine – and tying them all to the nation to justify the gap between the term and the practices, the practices lose their context-specificity in the discourse. This discursive erasing enables them to use the practices, now labeled “religion,” to claim the nation’s singularity, self-determination, and righteousness. The troubling category of “religion” proves useful in semiotically and affectively defending the nation beyond the context of tours, just as they usually do by narrating other stories in tours.

I would note that most KIG members’ responses articulate not so much their personal Japanese identity as the nation as a bounded collective, with a few exceptions like Tokiwa. Of course, it may be that these discourses reinforce their
personal sense of belonging to the nation, but the identity itself does not seem to be at stake. Yet, most tour guides do not voice their personal identities, practices, and feelings, and precisely avoid having to do so through the mediation of the nation. They seem to take for granted their personal national belonging, and produce desired moods by speaking about the nation without sparking about themselves.

“Religion,” the Nation, and Moods

This chapter has so far shown how the tour guides defer exposition on lived mood-producing practices through the mediation of the nation in response to the mind-based notion of “religion.” The question then becomes: why can the nation explain away the failure of “religion” as a category so well, and even perpetuate the paradoxical category? Some of the explanations have come up throughout this thesis. I noted in the introduction that both “religion” and the nation constitute secular governance. Chapter one has shown how the Japanese state’s secular project has repeatedly enabled the production of mood at the nexus of “religion” and the nation in history. To further my inquiry, I will here attend to the structural similarity of the two concepts. I argue that it is because both religion and nation are modular categories that assume the presence of equivalent and comparable others that my interlocutors are able to use the nation to defer exposition on “religion.”

In chapter three, I discussed how the nation is always imagined as limited. But Benedict Anderson states that the nation is not only a limited community, but also a modular one. Historically, the idea of the nation emerged in the context of the rise of secular horizontal imaginings through, among other processes, European encounters
with other cultures. These encounters relativized cultures, and made it possible to imagine the world as consisting of multiple comparable nations with clear boundaries (2006, 16, 36). Nations thus came to be imagined in a “modular” manner, in comparison with and in opposition to other coexisting and comparable ones (4). Therefore, the assumption behind the idea of the nation is that all nations ultimately work in the same way with variation only in expression. In the Japanese context, too, the nation has been imagined in a modular manner; much of the modernist project in Japan since the Meiji period has concerned adopting the Euro-American model of the nation-state, as we partially saw in chapter one (see also Sakai 1988).

Similarly, in the introduction, I noted that “religion” is a comparative modular category, constructed under the ideology of universalist pluralism. Like nation, underlying any attempt to define and identify “religion” is the notion that all “religions” ultimately function more or less in the same way across time and space. This assumption of modularity is, as we have seen, precisely what drives the discourses among the tour guides on “religion.” Because “religion” as a category assumes modular comparability across cultures, it demands explanation when it fails to correspond to the lived practices as in the case of the tour guides.

When KIG members defer explication on their “religion” to the “nation,” they mobilize this modularity of the two categories. In their logic, the failure of the category itself is a unique characteristic of Japan; religion of some nations looks like the idealized image of “religion,” but not at all in Japan. Drawing on the structural parallel between “religion” and “nation,” they subordinate the Japanese “religious”

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93 Here I use the quotation marks to emphasize the modular constructedness of “nation” just like “religion.”
difference to the “national” difference, and explain away the category’s paradox in order to highlight the singularity of the nation. The structural parallel of the two categories perpetuates the plausibility of each other, without explaining either.

This ability to draw the structural parallel of the two categories constitutes part of the tour guides’ experiential knowledge of how to produce nation-authorizing moods. As discussed in chapter three, the tour guides in Kamakura defend the nation as a unified bounded community and cultivate an affective relationship to it in order to produce desired moods in their tours. In this context, the discursive practices regarding “religion” and the nation outside tours can be seen as replicating the moods produced during the tours. In fact, their gatherings are full of smiles, vibrancy, intimacy, laughter, and jokes about the peculiarity of Japan. This implies that the gatherings allow them to re-experience moods similar to tours beyond the tours. “We like to gather after tours because it’s always good to exchange information, and it’s also just fun. I love it,” Endo once told me.

As this comment suggests, the gatherings also provide the tour guides a space in which to learn how to attain particular social moods in the tours. They often jokingly call the gatherings “review meetings” (hansei kai), marking them as a preparation for future tours (although they would then also laugh at how “reviewing” is just a justification for them to get together and chat). The tour guides need to know how to present the “religion” of the nation in a way intelligible to a mind-based perspective, however tentatively, in order to attain desired moods through tours. Through the conversations outside the tours, they rehearse so that they know, as best as they can, how to mobilize the parallel modularity of “religion” and the nation. The
discourse authorizes the nation both semiotically and affectively, by producing pleasurable moods in and beyond tours.

Moreover, this deferral of explication of the nation also protects the moods of their practices from theorization. As discussed in the introduction, in the ontological mode of mood in Daniel’s framework, one is enmeshed in the world rather than subjugates it for distant theorization in a mind-dominated manner (2002, 44-45). By deferring explication on the “religious” practices, the tour guides’ discourses protect and reproduce such a condition for mood production. In this sense, the discourses on “religion” are implicated in their larger mood production not only by defending the national borders like in tours described in chapter three, but also by securing the visitors’ mood-producing practices in the tourist spaces described in chapter two.

4-2. “RELIGION” IN THE NATION

In chapter three, I showed how the tour guides in Asakusa construct and participate in the nation as unmarked reality through tours to produce desired moods. For them, the tour moods are implicated in the mood of nigiyakasa produced through other practices in the tourist space. The discourses on “religion” among the members of TT examined in this section take place in this affective context.

Their relationship to the nation as unmarked reality will guide my analysis of their discourses in this section. Because of this relationship to the nation, they need not distance and present the unmarked national practices through the lens of the comparative category of “religion” as the tour guides in Kamakura do. For my interlocutors in Asakusa, as a result, neither Buddhism nor Shinto are a “religion.”
Therefore, I will call the tourist practices at the site “national practices” in this section, because they are imagined to be representative of the nation. While they are the same kind of practices described as “religious” among the tour guides Kamakura, I will use this term here to match my language to how my interlocutors in Asakusa speak about the practices. In excluding the dominant national practices from the category of “religion” and unmarking them, the tour guides in Asakusa secure and reproduce the mood of the tourist space.94

**Tourism, Non-Religiosity, and the Nation**

Because of the mood-dominant nature of the tourist space of the temple, all tour guides I spoke with in Asakusa agreed that visitors to Senso-ji Temple do not come for their religious belief, faith, or commitment. For example, when I asked tour guide Tanaka Hideo what he thinks brings people to the temple, he said:

TH: I think that they come here just as a tourist, just to enjoy the lively atmosphere of the area. You said you study religion, but it’s not about belief or anything. I honestly don’t think it even has anything to do with learning about the history, because Asakusa is historically not very important – I mean there is interesting history here but nothing that fatally changed the course of Japanese history happened here. So, it’s about tourism.

Tanaka’s statement resonates with my description of the tourist space in chapter two. For him, the significance of the space lies in not its religious or historical mind-based meanings, but its mood. On this ground, he later kindly warmed me that he was “not

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94 I seldom encountered the tour guides in Asakusa hanging out with one another outside of the tours during my fieldwork there. Consequently, all my data in this section comes from my personal interactions with them in the form of either casual conversations or formal interviews outside tours. The volunteer group hosts month study sessions in which its members come together and share their knowledge and experiences among one another. It is possible that conversations like the ones in Kamakura, on religion and other topics, take place in those sessions, but I was not allowed to join those sessions for participant observation. My data here is limited in this sense.
sure if Asakusa is really interesting for your religious studies paper, because there’s no religion here.” The none-explanatory, affective mood of the temple excludes it from the category of “religion.”

This claimed “non-religious” nature of the affective experience of the tourist space is deeply associated with the nationalness of the space. Reflecting on the relationship between the category “religion” and tourist practices, Yoshida Eiko said:

YE: Like in the story I told about the Tokugawa period during the tour, from long ago – and I think this applies today as well – this temple has never been a place to come to because you believe in something. People come here to have fun around here and then also to worship at the temple just because they’ve already come here. That way, you might accidentally receive benefits from the deities and cultivate religious faith, even if you didn’t necessarily believe when you worshipped. … So, I think that it’s fine [that people visit the temple without initial faith to begin with]. Japanese people don’t commit to a particular religion. They go worship and join their hands everywhere.

Although Yoshida here dwells longer than Tanaka on the potential religiosity of the tourist space, she ultimately concludes the “non-religiosity” of the space based on its mood-focused nature. To justify this conclusion, she brings up nationality and explains away “non-religiosity” of the visitors in national terms. In this framework, the lack of “religion” characterizes the nation as the unmarked reality within which she operates. By using the nation to mediate the exclusion of the practices from the category of “religion,” she naturalizes and reifies them as national practices.

I would make two related observations about the comments by Tanaka and Yoshida here. First, they both engage “religion” as a category in relation to the physical space of the temple. In Kamakura, as we saw in 4-1, my interlocutors almost unanimously conclude that religion is a “Japanese way of life,” equating religion with the nation as a whole. They take for granted religion’s existence in the nation, and are
invested in the question of what religion offers the nation in comparison to what it provides other nations. In Asakusa, by contrast, the tour guides mobilize the category in terms of where religion is located within the nation, and whether it is located in the space of the temple. Although “religion” is used as a comparative classificatory category, they engage in a comparison within the nation rather than between nations; the object of the mind-based classification and explanation is what is inside the nation. Just like in the tour narratives, they approach the nation as already unmarked reality, and classify within it.

Relatedly, in identifying “religious” spaces in the nation, they exclude the tourist space from the mind-based category due to its mood. As discussed in chapter three, the tour guides in Asakusa participate in the production of the nation-authorizing mood through tours in the context of their specific relationship to the nation as an unmarked background. Here, the tour guides’ exclusion of the tourist practices from the category of “religion” unmarks the national practices and protects its mood from interrogation, intellectualization, and relativization. In this sense, their discourses around “religion” resonate with their larger mood production through tours, and the relationship to the nation cultivated through it.

For comparison with Kamakura, the below comment from Tanaka illustrates the different approaches to the category of “religion” between the domestic and international tour guides at the two sites. Tanaka used to work in a job that involved frequent interactions with non-Japanese clients:

TH: I don’t think I – or most Japanese people – have a religion, but before I retired, I remember my boss always told me to never tell our foreign clients that I don’t have a religion. It doesn’t matter what it is, it can be anything like Buddhism or Christianity, but he just told me to be ready to answer the
Tanaka’s positionality offers a particularly useful perspective in explicating the different conclusions about the presence of “religion” in the nation at the two sites. According to his boss, only in dealing with foreigners does it become necessary to claim to have “religion.” The tour guides in Kamakura are constantly placed in the former context, while those in Asakusa are usually in the latter. For my interlocutors in Asakusa, there is no need to delineate nationally unmarked practices and call it a “religion.” It can even be dangerous, as it relativizes and marks what is otherwise unmarked – which is exactly the threat that the presence of religious minorities in the national space of the temple poses, as we will see next.

**Unmarked National Practices and Marked “Religions”**

As I mentioned, the tour guides in Asakusa agree that the tourist space has little to do with religious belief, faith, or commitment. However, this neither means that the category of “religion” is irrelevant to the tour guides in Asakusa, nor that the space is open to anyone regardless of religious identity. In my interactions with them, it was usually when discussing the presence of religious minorities at the temple that they took advantage of the category of “religion” to mark the minorities and unmark the national practices.

For example, Tanaka angrily told me the story below when the topic of our conversation shifted to his tours for elementary school children that visit the temple for school trips:
TH: Recently, new religious groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses have been a little problematic for us. Parents [who are followers of those groups] tell their children not to go in to Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines even in school trips, so every time we visit them [in tours] I have to ask all the kids and make sure that they’re okay with going in. If they’re not, I have to make them wait outside if the main building. Islam, on the other hand, is actually surprisingly tolerant about visiting these places. I brought a Muslim from Indonesia here the other day, but she totally went in to the main building with me. Among Muslims, Indonesians and Turkish are not very strict, so they are fine.

In discussing “religious” minorities, Tanaka assesses their conformity to the unmarked national practices in the tourist space in order to distinguish good and bad “religions.” The assumption behind his judgement is that the visitors to the space are expected to follow the unmarked practices and participate in the production of its mood regardless of their religious identities. The unmarkedness of this expectation is also reflected in the fact that he gives no justification for using the performance in the space as a basis on which to judge good and bad religions. Further, resonant with my findings in chapters two and three, he identifies these unmarked practices as national ones, in displeasedly addressing new religions and finding it surprising that Muslims are willing to participate in the practices.95 The national practices and their mood transcend individual religious identities because of their unmarked nature.

Such discursive marking of minorities among the tour guides in Asakusa is largely grounded in their public bodily practices. For example, Yoshida also complained to me about the people unwilling to act as others do in the space for “religious” reasons. She scolded them for refusing to “join their hands” at the temple, following their “charismatic leaders’ teachings that religions other than their own are

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95 Both new religions and Islam are most often excluded from national imaginings in Japan. “New religions” (itself a problematic category – see Hardacre 2007) have long suffered from discrimination in Japan. Muslims also have little public presence in Japan, making up at most about 0.1% of the total population (Tanada 2013).
all evil.” Her choice of the phrase “join their hands” (te o awaseru) rather than a word like “pray” is particularly telling of the logic behind Tanaka and Yoshida’s criticism toward certain “religions.” The two criticize new religious movements neither for identities, the content of their teachings, or anything related to Daniel’s mind. What bothers them instead is their reluctance to conform to the majority bodily performances in Buddhist and Shinto spaces, such as physically entering certain buildings and physically joining their hands together on proper occasions. The temple space, for them, demands its visitors to physically perform in appropriate ways regardless of “religious” identity. After all, bodily performance constitutes a crucial way in which the visitors collectively produce the mood of nigiyakasa. The minorities’ lack of participation in this collective production unsettles the tour guides and their nation-authorizing moods.

These claims about religious minorities presume the comparability of the minority practices to the unmarked national ones, even though they precisely argue otherwise. In fact, Yoshida blamed new religious groups for teaching that “religions other than their own is evil,” and attributes their followers’ lack of worship performance in the temple to this teaching. Insofar as they worry about minority presence in the space, the tour guides see something about the site in common with new “religions” that makes the temple comparable with them – even if they never explicitly call the temple “religious.”

It is not my intention to argue based on this that the temple is a secretly “religious” space contrary to my interlocutors’ claims of its non-religiosity. My

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96 This pattern is reminiscent of the Meiji state’s tactic in unmarking the national Shinto practices by claiming them to be “non-religious” as discussed in chapter one.
interest rather lies in what their claims do. By including the non-national practices within the category “religion” and excluding the national practices, I want to suggest, the implicit comparison between them reinforces the unmarkedness of the national practices. Below, Nakano Mieko illustrates precisely such unmarking of the national practices:

NM: Religion is scary. I think religion is why wars have never disappeared from this world. Like in Israel today, when people adhere to one absolute thing, that causes wars. It’s really scary, and I don’t want to say anything about religion because I don’t want to be accidentally wrong. While Japanese people, too, go to these Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines and pray, I don’t think they really are religious, because this is not a commitment. So it’s not scary.

She compares Japanese and non-Japanese practices in terms of the level of commitment entailed. By leaving the majority “Japanese” Buddhist and Shinto practices unmarked, Nakano distances and excludes herself from the “scary” traditions, which she marks as “religion.” This rhetorical distancing enables her to dismiss what she now labels as “religion,” and the national practice of visiting temples and shrines escapes the potential relativization through the category of “religion.” The category mediates her marking of the non-normative practices and unmarking of the normative national ones and their mood.

In order to understand the mechanism of this unmarking of the national practices through the mobilization of “religion” as a category, it would be instructive to revisit the categories of religion and nation once again. In 4-1, I noted the parallel modularity of the two categories. In Asakusa, a different kind of similarity between them seems to be at work in the tour guides’ claims about “religion”: not as modular categories, but as unmarked realities for insiders. I showed in chapter three how the
tour guides in Asakusa reproduce the nation as unmarked reality by participating the production of mood through tours. The nation, for them, is an unmarked background that they take for granted and work within. Similarly, “religion” also describes self-evident ideas and practices for its insiders. To return to Jonathan Z. Smith’s “Religion, Religions, Religious,” he writes: “In constructing the second-order, generic category ‘religion’, its characteristics are those that appear natural to the other” (1998, 269). “Religion” refers to an unmarked set of knowledge and practices for the people being described, although the category relativizes precisely such self-evidence. Religion and nationality are similar also in the unmarked realness of their contents for the people within them.

As the tour guides in Asakusa reauthorize the unmarked nation-authorizing mood through the mobilization of the category of “religion,” they mobilize this similar unmarked nature of religion and nation. As I noted above, they recognize that the national practices can be compared to, and therefore conceivably destabilized by, minority “religious” practices; the presence of non-conforming minorities in the space raises the possibility that the otherwise unmarked mood can be subject to the relativizing label of “religion.” This possibility potentially undermines the mood of the space. In this context, the tour guides protect the national practices from relativization by refusing to classify of them as “religion.” The labeling of the minorities’ lack of participation in the mood as personal “religion” further reinforces the unmarked quality of the national majority. The difference within the nation gets explicitly problematized, regulated, and suppressed through this process, in the
service of securing the nation-authorizing mood.97

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In this chapter, I explored how the tour guides’ discursive mobilization of the category of “religion” reproduces nation-authorizing moods. Their discourses take place within the context of, and respond to, the kind of relationships to the nation that the tour guides cultivate through their practice of giving tours to specific audiences. The nation is seen as an ontological given in a mood-based manner in both places, though differently.

Even though the category of “religion” is a product of the ontological mode of mind, the tour guides’ discursive practices produce desired moods. The discourses on “religion” emerge in comparative contexts – between nations in Kamakura, and within the nation in Asakusa. The categorical parallel between religion and nation enables their uses of “religion” – religion and nation both as modular categories in Kamakura, and as unmarked realities for insiders in Asakusa. As a result, the tour guides imagine “religion” in relation to the nation – “religion” as a national way of life in Kamakura, and as a marked non-national commitment that threatens the mood of the national space in Asakusa. The gap between the category of “religion” and the lived practices proves effective in unmarking the nation – the gap itself as the unique characteristic of the nation in Kamakura, and the gap as reason for not labeling the majority

97 The virtual absence of a positive definition of the opposite of “religion” in the Japanese language seems to reinforce this marking effect of “religion” as a category in these discourses on religious minorities in Asakusa. As I footnoted in the introduction, the technical term for the antonym of shūkyō, sezoku(teki), is not as widely used as shūkyō, and it never came up in my interactions with my interlocutors during my fieldwork. This absence of the antonym cements the assumption of “religion” as deviant from the unmarked national norm, as it masks the peculiarity of the national/secular practices and sensibilities.
practices “religious” in Asakusa. Thus, the basic processes run parallel: the tour guides’ discursive delineation of religion semiotically and affectively reauthorizes the nation in a way that is embedded in and reproduces their relationship to the nation.

Having thus attended to the tour guides’ discourses, we never explicitly hear what their practices at Buddhist or Shinto sites mean for them. After all these conversations, the tour guides in Kamakura reduce the practices to a “Japanese way of life.” Those in Asakusa label them as nonreligious national practices. They both take for granted the necessity of certain practices in certain spaces, but never elaborate on the practices per se. All we find out is that the practices somehow constitute the nation. But not in concrete terms. “Religion is a Japanese way of life.” “Japanese people are not really religious.” Through the mediation of these phrases, “religion” as a category simply explains away their practices and defers explication in conjunction with the nation. “Religion” allows them to not explain.

This is not to say that “religion” is entirely an empty signifier for them. Connotations of the idea of religion that the tour guides wrestle with – belief, commitment, morality, identity – are all rooted in the mind-based assumption of distance between the world and self and in the quest for sense-making fueled by this premise. Even when my interlocutors mobilize the category not to explain the world but to participate in mood production, they employ the category in accordance with these connotations. In particular, I have argued that its categorical resonances with the

98 Although my data in this chapter might remind some readers of nihonjinron (“discourses on Japan”) exemplified by figures like Maruyama Masao and Watsuji Tetsuro, this ambiguity and incompleteness of the exposition on the “religion” of/in the nation is one of the decisive differences between my data and nihonjinron. While the former is tentative deferral as we have seen throughout this chapter, the latter often involves a whole body of theoretical inquiry in pursuit of national identity. For a critique of nihonjinron, see Yoshino (1992).
nation enable the deferral of exposition. Insofar as it is the gap between the category and the practice that enables the deferral, the specific ways in which it fails to describe practices shape its specific mobilizations.

That being said, the impulse to know-about the world that underlies the category of “religion” is largely absent among my interlocutors. They simply know how to incorporate the failure of the category to produce their favorite moods, without normatively interrogating it or using it to interrogate their embodied reality. The idea is encountered, coped with, and lived with.99

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99 This phrase is loosely adopted from Talal Asad writing on the view on pain in the Greek tragedy of Oedipus: “The future is not made, but encountered and suffered” (2003, 99).
CONCLUSION

As I have argued throughout this thesis, the tour guides’ discursive delineation of religion authorizes the nation both semiotically and affectively. By engaging the gap between the mind-based category of “religion” and the mood-based practices, the tour guides produce desired moods through the mediation of the nation. Tourism becomes a productive site for negotiating this gap because of the kind of affective experiences that take place in that context.

Since this thesis opened with a lengthy discussion of secularism, it seems wise to return to it once again to see what we might learn about it from my interlocutors’ mood-producing practices. (After all, we are in an academic institution in which we must “learn-about.”) To recapitulate, in the introduction, I discussed how the construction of the category of “religion” is implicated in the larger project of secularism. I heeded Talal Asad’s argument that the idea of religion enables and authorizes the idea of the secular, and that nationalism requires the idea of the secular. Secularism and nationalism co-construct each other through the intertwinement of various mind-based differentiations – secular and religious, public and private, human and nonhuman, national and non-national.

This secular framework often operates as a normative force as secularists attempt to rationalize and disembody religious practices in order to produce the nation. “[M]ust all other ways of being in the world sooner or later be arrogated by
the blind-spot of religion?” (Daniel 2002, 52) E. Valentine Daniel, whose vocabulary I have relied on throughout this thesis, closes his essay with this pessimistic note. For him, the impulse to know-about the world, rather than to know how to act in the world, is beginning to dominate our rapidly globalizing world; mind is flattening mood, and meanings are flattening performatives. In fact, as discussed in the introduction, most of the literature on the construction of the category of “religion” and secularism documents examples in which the category normatively subjugates practices. The gap between the category and the practice becomes a site for the articulation of power and the continual attempt to mold mood-based practices into mind-based beliefs.

Such rationalization efforts have also been taking place in the Japanese context since the birth of the modern nation-state and its adoption of the category of “religion.” As discussed in chapter one, the Japanese state has employed the category to assert its modernity and autonomy in response to Western secular demands under semi-colonial relations. In order to construct the nation, the state attempted to regulate and reshape Buddhism in the Meiji era, and Buddhism and Shinto in the immediate postwar. The state actors thus sought to overcome the gap between the category and practice by transforming the latter in accordance with the former normativity.

However, I then stated in the introduction that I wanted to study the messy incompleteness and affect of what may appear to be the increasing global domination of mind through nationalism and secularism. In the two historical case studies in chapter one, the gap constructed between the category and the practices galvanized the production of nation-authorizing moods among the unmarked population. My
interlocutors today, too, engage the gap between the category and the practice not by prioritizing mind, but by incorporating it into the production of mood.

On the one hand, the tour guides live in a world that has appropriated many mind-based ideas and practices. They constantly give tours to explain the sites, and narrate secular stories about the nation. They encounter groups of people that are outside the unmarked national and therefore require classification, such as non-Japanese, Christian-informed tourists and religious minorities unwilling to perform dominant national practices. They also know the meanings of the idea of religion – its definition as belief and its categorical parallel to the nation – and take notice of its distance from the practices.

Such theoretical knowledge, however, does not prompt my interlocutors to remold the embodied practices into abstract meanings. Rather, the incorporation of mind-based meaning into mood production has been a recurring theme throughout this thesis. As I argued in chapter two, the visitors’ practices in the tourist spaces largely concern the production of the desired mood of nigiyakasa. In this context, we saw how some seemingly mind-based practices are embedded in the production of this mood: engagements with the text of fortune telling (2-2), the realization about not knowing how to perform certain practices (2-3), and the practice of tours (chapter three). These practices produce desired moods in the presence of the nation, and cultivate specific affective relationships to it among the visitors and the tour guides.

The discourses on religion among the tour guides examined in chapter four are situated in this broader context of mobilizing mind-based meaning for the production

100 With a few exceptions like Tokiwa in Kamakura, who said she began to search for the symbolic meanings of her own practices, as we saw in 4-1.
of nation-authorizing moods. Their discursive practices around “religion” draw on their affective relationships to the nation developed through their tour narratives about the nation. Their deferral of exposition on their practices through the mediation of the nation secures and reproduces the moods associated with it. Thus, the idea of “religion” becomes integrated into mood production. The tour guides mobilize the category not as a normative prototype as the conductors of the secular project above do, but as part of the world within which they produce desired moods. “[Ideas of] religion and worldview produce a specific kind of knowledge, *viz.*, theoretical knowledge. […] Does one need a worldview to find one’s way in the world?” (2002, 51-52) Daniel challenges us in critiquing the idea of religion. One does not need a religion or a worldview, my analysis suggests, even in a world that has already been infused with mind-based ideas and practices. Among my interlocutors, the practice accommodates the category, and the category opens up new possibilities for mood production.

As I stated in the introduction, this thesis has been a study of the unmarked. My interlocutors constitute the unmarked national majority, and their moods produce the nation. It is, I suspect, in large measure due to their unmarked position in the nation that my interlocutors are able to avoid the flattening of mood in the service of mind despite the presence of the secular power. As Mayanthi Fernando (2014) argues in her study of marked Muslims in France, the gap between the unmarked normativity and marked practices often gets attributed to the object of regulation rather than to the system of regulation that is the source of this contradiction. The “tensions of secularism […] are asymmetrically distributed,” and such continual displacement of
the tension authorizes secular power (21). The tension of secular normativity has been displaced to the marked in the Japanese context as well, as we have seen in chapter one. The Japanese state used the idealized notion of “religion” to act upon Buddhism and/or Shinto at different moments, and this authorized the state by producing the nation. 4-2 also showed how such exclusion takes place among my interlocutors towards religious minorities to preserve national practices.

My study of the unmarked suggests how the other side of such asymmetrical distribution of the tensions around “religion” can be sustained with regards to unmarked practices. In response to the tension, or what I have been calling the gap, my interlocutors avoid subjugating mood to mind by explaining away the tension as a unique attribute of the nation. In addition to unmarking the mood, this deferral also simultaneously perpetuates the contradictory category in the discursive space, maintaining the asymmetric distribution of marking and regulation. Secularist power perhaps operates not only by displacing its contradictions to marked minorities, but also by mobilizing the contradiction to unmark the dominant practices. Mood can be preserved even in the presence of the mind-based category, insofar as the mood produces the nation.

Although this thesis has concerned the Japanese context, it remains a question whether this affective productivity of the gap between the mind-based normativity and the mood-based practice extends to other contexts. After all, as Daniel states, the notion of religion as belief fails to describe most of the so-called religious traditions, even as the category itself acquires increasing discursive reality across the globe (2002, 45). How exactly does the secular project produce the nation? It seems that the
increasing dominance of mind – the impulse to know-about, classify, and theorize distantly – is not the only way the nation becomes present in the lives of people.

I think of what Yamamoto from Kamakura said to me towards the end of my fieldwork. We sat down to chat in a local coffee shop after a tour, and she said with puzzlement and excitement, “I’m honestly sometimes overwhelmed with the whole rhetoric around how cool and great Japanese people are. Buddhism and Shinto [practiced together]? Are we really that great, really? I never knew that, haha. But I guess it’s okay, because it does make me feel good even though I don’t really get it.” We giggled together. Nationalism and secularism take different forms and levels of exclusivity in different contexts. But for better or worse, at least among the people I met last summer, religion and the nation together mediate the production of their favorite moods.
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