

## “Morininaru” as a *re-ligio*

Shukai Kono

1

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you.

2

I would like to begin by saying that much of the inspiration behind “Morininaru” is based on the theory of “Planting through Potential Natural Vegetation” by Akira Miyawaki, Professor Emeritus of Yokohama National University. We should also note that the shorter term, Potential Natural Vegetation, or PNV, is a theory first advanced by [Reinhold Tüxen](#) (in 1950’s).

3

4 Before explaining what Morininaru is, let me introduce a vitally important project initiated by Professor Miyawaki in the Tohoku Region of Japan, including Fukushima, and how it ties in with my presentation:

5 On March 11, 2011, Japan experienced a devastating earthquake and  
7 tsunami, which has become known as “3/11.” It was a major blow for Japan, causing nearly 20,000 deaths and, as yet, incalculable  
6 environmental loss\*. (Let us take a look at this video for about three minutes)

Professor Miyawaki, however, is carrying out a magnificent plan—a unique and very effective breakwater system—to prevent, or at least minimize, future disasters of this kind. How is he doing this? Through  
8 the planting of countless thousands of native or indigenous trees along the affected coastline. His plan would apply not only to Japan, but also  
9 many countries of the world. In a sense, he is crafting a potentially  
10 global *breakwater of human awareness* arising from Japan’s 3/11 crises.

1 1

In 1945 the people of Japan designated Nagasaki and Hiroshima as  
1 2 twin sanctuaries of the 20th century by the prayers. It now seems  
1 3 equally appropriate that Japan should designate Fukushima as the  
1 4 sanctuary of the 21st century, not only as it applies this country, but to the whole world, because what happened here could happen anywhere. And as we continue to cope with this disaster, we ask you to share in your wisdom, your love, your power and prayers.

1 5 These ideas of *regeneration and sanctuary* bring me to Morininaru.

1 6 Morininaru is a concept of burial that at first may seem like a variation of “Green Burial,” which is an ecologically based form of burial. Morininaru, however, takes this ecological concept a step further by establishing an almost seamless bond or relationship between human existence and nature and life and death. But by life and death, I mean *current* life and *next* life—which is essentially a Buddhist point of view. Professor Miyawaki’s ongoing commitment to “Planting through Potential Natural Vegetation” is a reflection of these ideas, his latest—and perhaps greatest—example being the Great Forest Wall Project.

1 7 In Japanese Morininaru means “I will become a forest.” Morininaru is a  
1 8 movement suggesting that one who dies will physically become a  
forest by planting a tree while living in the present, thereby sustaining  
nature. However, the movement implicitly includes a thoughtful twist, or  
1 9 “trick,” so to speak, which reminds us that before we try to protect  
nature, nature is in fact already protecting us. Moreover, through this  
2 0 act, we are changing our relationship with nature by becoming a part of  
nature instead of subjecting it, which—consciously or unconsciously—  
we tend to do.

2 1 As a religious term, “Re-ligio” originally means to respect the  
relationship between human beings and what is sacred or, as I see it,  
to regain a connection with the spiritual world as well as nature. Hence  
the most vital function of re-ligio is to reawaken the spirituality within us,  
to empower us to rise above or transcend material existence, to  
reawaken our sense of oneness. If you have faith, all relationships will  
be restored, including the integration of language, consciousness, and  
behavior.

2 2 This movement can also be explained as a spontaneous spiritual  
growth, by which one’s individual consciousness expands to a broader,  
2 3 universal consciousness. In other words, this is a movement that offers  
a new paradigm within the sphere of individual consciousness and  
2 4 religious thought. Morininaru could thus serve as a practical philosophy  
by which we seek a new schema that transcends the dichotomization  
[divisions or separations] of all existing things in the material world.

In these ways Morininaru differs from “Green Burial,” which, while an important movement in itself, focuses mainly on its relationship with the

environment. Morininaru, on the other hand, is a special place where people with opposed concepts about religion, life, and death, including man's relationship with nature, all connect.

2 5 There are three ways in which "Morininaru" addresses these  
2 6 controversial, and seemingly irreconcilable, phenomena.

2 7 First, Morininaru's concern is with death, which everybody  
2 8 experiences—and since there is no discrimination against anyone in  
2 9 this sense, there is a grand opportunity to build relationships between  
people of all religions, cultures, and thoughts.

3 0 Second, Morininaru adds a brighter, more positive, and more  
3 1 productive image of the forest in contrast to the negative image of  
3 2 death that people generally hold. With this revised image of one's  
3 3 future, the reluctance to talk about death decreases. This becomes  
introduced by Professor Ozaki, the next presenter of this panel.

3 4 Third, "Morininaru" can serve as a means by which one experiences  
spiritual growth without any particular intension or purpose. That is, one  
3 5 may plant a tree for him or her self without actually thinking about  
contributing to global sustainability. Yet *in fact* this act is an act of  
contributing to the global environment. And upon one's death, those  
3 6 who are related or close to this person will sense his act of altruism and  
simultaneously realize Morininaru. This is how Morininaru fosters not  
3 7 only human co-existence with nature but also transcendental  
awareness. And through this altruistic state of mind we move towards a  
life of virtue.

Have you ever heard the sound of oneness?

Listen:

(Chanting:60min.)

Thank you.

## NOTES:

- Incalculable because the environmental effects are still pending.

- U.S. Military TV ad of the 1950s: **“If you would like to change the face of the earth, join the U.S. Army Core of Engineers!”**  
← an example of consciously subjecting nature.

Information checked by Hird:

A concept in vegetation science by Tüxen (1956)

Allesandro Chiarucci, et al.

[onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1654-1103.2010.01218.x/abstract](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1654-1103.2010.01218.x/abstract)

Alessandro Chiarucci<sup>1</sup>, Miguel B. Araújo<sup>2,3</sup>, Guillaume Decocq<sup>4</sup>, Carl Beierkuhnlein<sup>5</sup>, José María Fernández-Palacios<sup>6</sup>

Article first published online: 5 OCT 2010

Blue planet prize:

<http://www.af-info.or.jp/blueplanet/doc/essay/2006essay-miyawaki.pdf>