

The illusion of Living God “Arahitogami” and “State Shinto”: What invoke Absolute God?

Part 2 The Illusion of “State Shinto”

【Supplement】

Chapter7 Were myths regarded as "unquestionable facts"?

Today's Common Sense about the Study of Pre-War Japanese Mythology

On March 14, 1872, Kume Kunitake was expelled from the Imperial University because he was held responsible for his article "Shinto is the Ancient Ritual for Heaven [神道は祭天の古俗 Shinto wa Saiten no Kozoku] ". The two journals in which he had published his article, *Shigaku-kai Zasshi* [史学会雑誌 The Journal of the Historiographical Society] and *Shi-kai* [史海 the Sea as the History] , were banned, and *Shishi-hensan-gakari* [史誌編纂掛 the Department of Compilation of Historical Documents] to which he belonged, was abolished. This was known as *Kume-Kunitake-Jiken* [the Case of Kume Kunitake] .

The key point of his article was that Shinto was not a religion indigenous to Japan, but merely one of the old customs of worshipping the heavens which existed in the East generally. When the article was published in *Shigaku-kai Zasshi* in 1894, no problems arose. However, when the article was reprinted in the following year in *Shi-kai* sponsored by Taguchi Ukichi, Taguchi provoked a fierce reaction from Shintoists and *Kokugaku* scholars [Japanese classical scholars] with the following statement: “I have read this paper and I think that those who hold Shinto dear in our country today should not remain silent about it. If they remain silent, they should be regarded as having been utterly defeated.”

In January 1940, Tsuda Sōkichi, a professor at Waseda University, was forced to resign, and in February of the same year, his four books (*Kojiki oyobi Nihonsyoki no Kenkū* [The Study on the Kojiki and Nihonsyoki] , *Kamiyoshi no Kenkyū* [The Study on the Age of Kami] , *Nihon Jōdaishi Kenkyū* [The Study on the History of Ancient Japan] , and *Jōdai Nihon no Syakai oyobi Sisō* [The Society and Thought in Ancient Japan]) were also banned. In March of the same year, Tsuda was charged with violating the Press Law for "desecrating the dignity

of the Emperor", and in May 1942 he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment and two years' probation. He appealed to the court, and was exonerated by the statute of limitations in 1944. This is known as *Tsuda Sōkichi Jiken* [the Tsuda Sōkichi Case] .

The immediate cause of the case was an attack by Minoda Muneki, Mitsui Kōshi and others on Tsuda's critical examination of the descriptions related to Prince Syōtoku in *Nihonshyoki*, including his existence, on the grounds that the examination was an act of desecrating the dignity of the Emperor. However, the essential reason why Tsuda was denounced was that he had always said: "It goes without saying that the history of the Age of Kami is not a history that tells the facts" (*Jindaishi no Atarashii Kenkyū* [A New Study on the History of the Age of Kami] , September 1913, *The Complete Works of Tsuda Sōkichi*, Volume 1, Tokyo: Iwanami-syoten, p.15), "The history of the Age of Kami is a story invented to explain the origin of the imperial family" (ibid. p.44), and that "the ancestral deities of the history of the Age of Kami are not factual ancestors but imaginary ancestors" (ibid.p.47).

These two cases have so far been understood as a clear demonstration of the fact that free mythological and Shinto studies were not possible under the pre-war "State Shinto". Murakami Shigeyoshi, a leading researcher on "State Shinto", wrote in his book *Kokka Shinto* [State Shinto] published in 1970 that the Imperial Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education ideologically established the "Doctrine of State Shinto" as the "Doctrine of the National Polity", and that since then the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshyoki* have been called *Shinten* [Shinto Scriptures] , and that the state power has positioned the myth described in them as the orthodox myth of Japan. The myth was regarded as a fact that could not be questioned" (p.142). In short, under the regime of the Imperial Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education, not only objective study of myths, but even questioning them was strictly forbidden, so he wrote.

Basically, Murakami's view is still accepted as a common theory today. For example, Ōtsu Tōru, a Japanese ancient historian, wrote the following in his book *Tennō no Rekishi 01 —Shinwa kara Rekishi e—* [The Emperor's History 01: From Myth to History] (Tokyo: Kōdan-sya) published in November 2010: In the pre-war *Kōkoku-shikan* [皇国史観 The Interpreting Japanese history with a focus on

the emperors] the Emperor was sovereign and he was the state. It was supposed that the emperor's lineage have been unbroken since the time of Emperor Jimmu, and its rule should be permanent and unchanging. The accession of the Emperor Jimmu to the throne was dated to 660 B.C., according to the chronology of the *Nihonsyoki*, and the myths of Japan described in the *Nihonsyoki* and *Kojiki* were taken as historical facts. Therefore, it was difficult to make them the subject of direct research. It is clear by the fact that Tsuda Sōkichi's works was banned, because he argued that the genealogical records and stories of the emperors of the olden times are not historical facts through scientific criticism of the "Kiki [*Kojiki* and *Nihonsyoki*] " and clarification of the date of the formation of the "Teiki [帝紀 Descriptions of the Emperors] " and "Kyūji [旧辞 Descriptions of Ancient Events] " (pp.14-15)

Itō Satoshi, a historian of Shinto, also wrote the following in his article " 'Shinto Kenkyū-shi Kanken [My Views on the History of the Study of Shinto] " (*Nihon Shisō Shigaku* [The History of Japanese Thought] , No.45) in October 2013: Under the State Shinto System, it was difficult to treat Shinto as a purely academic subject. It was clear by the case of Kume Kunitake, who was expelled from his professorship at Imperial University in 1892 because of an article he had published in *Shigaku-kai Zasshi* (Vol. 2, pp. 23-25) entitled " Shinto is the Ancient Ritual for Heaven" (pp. 51-52).

As can be seen from these papers, the "The Case of Kume Kunitake" in 1872 and the "The Case of Tsuda Sōkichi" in 1940 are the basis for the interpretation that "objective research into myths was not allowed before the WW II" and "belief in myths as fact was forced before the war". Until now, this common belief has never been questioned. However, if we pause for a moment to think about it, the historical sources cited before alone raise questions.

Tsuda's *Jindaishi no Atarashii Kenkyū* [A New Study on the History of the Age of Kami] was published in August 1913. However, it was not until 1940 that the book was banned. It means that his arguments were tolerated by the public for twenty-seven years. How was it possible when "criticism of orthodox myths, as well as objective research and the raising of questions, was strictly forbidden"? Furthermore, Tsuda wrote in 1913 that "it is needless to say now that the history of the *Jindai* [the Age of Kami] is not a history of facts". If he is right, then by

that time the situation arose such that he could say, "It goes without saying now." How could such a situation have arisen when "criticism of orthodox myths, as well as objective research and the raising of questions, was strictly forbidden"? What was the true state of research, discourse and education surrounding the myth? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to re-examine the articles and books of pre-war scholars.

Various facts about the study of pre-war mythology

Kume Kunitake, who was expelled from the Imperial University after writing "Shinto is the Ancient Ritual for Heaven", published an article entitled "Kokutai-ron [The theory of National Polity]" in the magazine *Taiyō* [The Sun] in February 1899, just before he was appointed as a lecturer at the *Tokyo Senmon Gakkō* (later Waseda University). In it, he acknowledged the importance of "the heartfelt connection between the sovereign and the people", but said that the "Tenjō-Mukyū-no-Shincyoku [天壤無窮の神勅, The divine decree given by Amaterasu to Ninigin to ensure that the Emperor's throne would last forever]" was not in "Seibun [正文 the authentic text]" of *Nihonshyoki*, which the editor considered to be a correct tradition, but only in "Issyo [一書 One of legends]" which recorded different legends held by various clans, and that it was "written in a Chinese style and had no deep meaning. It is a just compliment," he said, and denied the theory of National Polity as "just a superstition born of nostalgia for the past". Nevertheless, the article was not banned, nor did it prevent for him to become a lecturer at the *Tokyo Senmon Gakkō* accepting an invitation from Ōkuma Shigenobu (The Founder of the *Tokyo Senmon Gakkō*; Prime Minister from 30 June to 8 November 1898).

In the same year, 1899, in March, a Japanese author, Takayama Cyogyū, published a paper entitled "Kojiki Jindaikan no Shinwa oyobi Rekishi [The Myths and History of The Part of The Age of Kami in Kojiki]" in *Cyūōkōron* (Vol.14, No.3), in which he argued that the struggle between Amaterasu and Susanō-no-Mikoto in The Part of The Age of Kami of *Kojiki* was a struggle between the sun and a storm in the sky. He argued that the Izumo-zoku [The clan worshipping Ōkuninushi] and Tenson-zoku [The clan worshipping Amaterasu] both came to Japan on the Japan Current, and that, because of Japanese myths and legends similar to those of Polynesia, the home of Japanese people would be somewhere

in the South Pacific.

Takagi Toshio, a mythologist, wrote the following about Takayama's paper in a review entitled "Bunkai no Shin-gensyō [A New Phenomenon in The Japanese Literary Circles] " in *Teikoku Bungaku* [Literature of Imperial Japan] published in April of the same year (Vol.5, No.4) : "I have discovered a new phenomenon in the literary circles this year. It is with great pleasure that I propose to toast to this phenomenon for the literary circles of the Meiji period. The new phenomenon is the appearance of one paper as a result of the study of Japanese mythology. Since a certain No. of *Shigaku-kai Zasshi* was banned from sale, free research into the history of the Age of Kami has been virtually forbidden. For this reason, few studied it, and those who did refrained from publishing their theories. Some have discussed the methods of studying the myths, but none have made public the results of their research based on the methods. This year, a new study on the history of the Age of Kami by Takahashi Tatsuo appeared in *Nihonsyugi*, a new theory by Naitō Chisō was published in *Shin-Gakukai*, and Takayama's " Kojiki Jindaikan no Shinwa oyobi Rekishi " was published in *Cyūōkōron*. Naitō's theory may be called a new theory, but it is an old one, and Takahashi's work is not particularly noteworthy. However, Takayama's argument cannot be ignored, because, in my opinion, it is an application, albeit inadequate, of today's methods of mythological research. If this had been published a few years ago, it would have been condemned by the public. But now it has not received any criticism from outside the academic world. Looking at this situation, we may judge that the freedom to study the Age of Kami has been openly allowed. This is the first reason why I would like to propose a toast for the literary circles of the Meiji period." (pp. 108-109,). In other words, the fact that Takayama's argument was not condemned by the public led Takagi to believe that the freedom to study mythology was officially recognized.

This year also, "Susano-no-Mikoto no Shinwa-Densetsu [Myth and Legend of Susano-no-Mikoto] 1, 2, 3" by the religious scholar Anezaki Masaharu published in *Teikoku Bungaku* (Vol.5, No.8, 9, 11) . In which, he pointed out the social and ritual nature of myths. This article led to a controversy between Takagi Toshio and Anezaki over the interpretation of Susano-no-mikoto's nature as divinity in *Teikoku Bungaku* from the end of 1899 to the beginning of 1900. In response to this flourishing of mythological research, the following article entitled

"Jindaishi ni kansuru Kōkyū no Jiyū [The Freedom of Research on the History of the Age of Kami] " appeared in the October 1899 issue of *Shigaku-kai Zasshi*: "I am glad to see that while the historians have been silent on the subject, scholars in other fields have been steadily advancing in their own fields. I am sure that the work of these scholars will have a positive influence on the work of the historians. It is needless to say that anthropologists and linguists are making great progress in their researches, but more recently, comparative mythologists are advancing the study of our country's the Age of Kami. After Mr. Takayama's article on this field in *Cyūōkōron*, Mr. Anezaki's "Myth and Legend of Susanoo-no-Mikoto" published in *Teikoku Bungaku* attracted the attention of historians. I am very pleased to see that these studies have recently been published and are being carried out very freely, and I feel that the general society has broken away from the tendency of restricting the freedom of academic research as it used to be, which is very good for the progress of our national thought. Comparing this recent trend with that of the time of the "Shinto is the Ancient Ritual for Heaven", we can see that the change of the times is very great" (pp.115-116).

In short, the paper said that the development of research on the history of the Age of Kami in disciplines other than history (anthropology, Japanese linguistics, and comparative mythology) broke the public's shackles on the freedom of research. After that time, Takagi Toshio published a series of articles such as "Nihon Shinwagaku no Rekishiteki Gaikan [Historical Overview of Japanese Mythology] " and "Nihon Shinwagaku no Kensetsu [Construction of Japanese Mythology] " from May to November 1903, and published *Hikaku-Shinwagaku* [Comparative Mythology] in October 1905. This was the first book on mythology in Japan, in which he introduced the history and methodology of European mythology and divided myths into natural, human, flood, heroic and divine marriage myths. The fact that such articles and a book existed proves that the claim that "Needless to say, criticism of orthodox myths was strictly forbidden, but also mere objective investigation and even questioning", as Shigeyoshi Murakami put it, does not hold water.

In January 1907, *Nihon Kodaishi* [Ancient History of Japan] written by Kume Kunitake was published by Waseda University Press. This book was later added to the Waseda University's *Dai Nihon Jidaishi* [History of the Great Japan] and went through several editions. In this book, Kume considered the things told in

myths as "metaphors" and tried to place them as historical facts in the ancient history of Japan. This method of mythological interpretation is known as 'metaphor theory'. For example, Kume interprets the story of Izanagi and Izanami "birth" the land of Japan as a metaphor for "conquer" the whole land and "appoint" the sovereign. In this way he attempted to interpret all the stories told in myths as paraphrases of ancient historical facts. Since then, the 'metaphor theory' had become one of the mainstream of research into the history of the Age of Kami. On the other hand, overcoming the 'metaphor theory' became an important theme, prompting research in various fields.

In February 1909, the mythologist Takagi Toshio published an article entitled "Kojiki ni tsuite [On the Kojiki]" in the magazine *Tōa no Kōmyō* [The Light of East Asia], in which he argued that the founder of the school of theory that "All story written in the Kojiki is the ancient history of Japan", "the Kami are human beings" and "Everything written in it is events in human society" was the Edo-period Confucian scholar Arai Hakuseki (It is basically the same as the mythological interpretation called "euhemerism" advocated by Euhemerus, who was born in Sicily in the middle of the fourth century BC), but Takagi criticized it, saying, "Today his theory has already fallen into disuse" (*Nihon Shinwa Densetsu no Kenkyū* [The Research on Japanese Myths and Legends], May 1925, pp. 215-216). He even wrote, "It is a disgrace today for Japanese that the metaphor theory without any basis has life only in Japan" (p. 45) in an article "Densetsu no Shiteki Hyōka wo Ronjite Iwayuru Gōriteki Kaisyaku no Mō wo Benzu [To Clarify the Errors of so-called Rational Interpretation by Discussing the Historical Assessment of the Legends]" (*Rekishi Chiri* [History & Geography], Vol. 22, No. 1), published in July 1913.

In "On the Kojiki", Takagi wrote that there were four attitudes of scholars towards *Kojiki* at the time. The first was the attitude of Motoori Norinaga's school, that *Kojiki* was to be trusted, that it was a written record of the ancient legends of the Japanese people, and should therefore be believed as such and not subject to criticism. The second is the attitude of the "historical school" of Arai Hakuseki and Kume Kunitake, the third is that of the "comparative linguistics school" which tries to explain the origin of the Japanese people by comparing languages, and the last is the "mythology school" which tries to understand the ideas that ancient people had about natural phenomena (pp.215-216).

Afterwards, it was Tsuda Sōkichi who referred to the various theories of the time about myths. In his book *A New Study on the History of the Age of Kami* published in September 1913, he noted that since the Edo period there had been two ways of interpreting the history of the Age of Kami: Arai Hakuseki's interpretation that "the Kami are human beings" and that myths are "the history of the ancient times, expressed in metaphor and allegory", and Motoori Norinaga's interpretation that "we should trust the text as it is, as a record of the mysterious deeds of Kami as the superhuman". He said that "their [Norinaga's and his school's] views are no longer of any use to us nowadays," and that "it seems to be the usual view nowadays to regard the Age of Kami as a legend based largely on historical facts," while "new views have appeared which attempt to deal with it from the standpoint of modern comparative mythology. After reminding us that "there are two ways of interpreting the history of the Age of Kami at present", he pointed out that "with regard to the former, there is the problem of how to distinguish between those parts of the historical legends based on facts and those that are not, and what significance should we find in the non-factual parts?" As for the mythological interpretation of the latter, he pointed out that "the task is to give a clear interpretation of the structure of the narrative about the Age of kami, of the ideas underlying it, and of the relationship between the story and the historical facts".

In addition to these two interpretations of the myth, Tsuda wrote that "there is a new theory which has recently been advocated by Professor Shiratori [Kurakichi] (in a lecture given at the Research Department of the Oriental Society on May 9, 1913). He said that Professor Shiratori interpreted it as "a story conceived by a certain person at a certain time to reveal the dignity of the emperor. At the end of his preface, he wrote: "The new theory of Professor Shiratori and my own ideas are almost identical from a macroscopic point of view, but they differ considerably from each other from a microscopic point of view, so I would like to explain the main points. In other words, Tsuda agreed with the Oriental historian Shiratori Kurakichi's interpretation of the Age of Kami as a story artificially created to demonstrate the authority of the emperor, but there were considerable differences in the interpretation of individual stories in the myth, which was why he decided to write *A New Study on the History of the Age of Kami* and present it to the public.

What is noteworthy in Tsuda's account of the situation of studies about the Age of Kami at that time is that "their [Norinaga's and his school's] views are no longer of any use to us nowadays," and that "metaphor theory" and "mythological interpretation" as the two leading theories of the time. Tsuda's commentary would be not false. It is precisely because of this situation that, in *Kokutai-ron-shi*, published by the Shrine Bureau of the Ministry of Interior in January 1921, the compiler and Shinto scholar Kiyohara Sadao had no choice but to write: "If we want the people to understand and believe in this [theory of national polity], we should use a theory that is consistent with the scientific knowledge that most of the people have as common sense: Myths should be most respected as the ideals and spirit of the people: But Myths are only respectful, and it is dangerous to try to explain the dignity of our national polity on the basis of these: This is because the people who already have a preconceived notion of the Darwinism that is incompatible with the myth of the birth of the nation by Kami, are unable to believe in this myth" (p.373).

In relation to Kiyohara's statement, I would add the Shintoist Ashizu Uzuhiko's testimony of elementary and junior high school education around 1920 as follows: "In my junior high school, the Imperial Rescript of the Meiji Emperor was indeed recited, but the atheistic scientific education was not as gentle as the education provided by the teachers of the Japanese Teachers' Union today." "Enlightenment, militant scientism to break down superstition was very popular" "It is certain that materialistic scientific education was very thorough" (*The Selected Works of Ashizu Uzuhiko*, Vol.1, Jinjashinpō-sya, p.304)

The anthropologist Torii Ryūzō also wrote in the March 1924 issue of *Zinruigaku Zasshi* [Anthropological Magazine] (Vol.39, No.3): "Now that the people's knowledge has advanced, there is no one who believes in myths and legends as they are" ("Rekishī-kyōkasyō to Kunitsukami [History Textbooks and Kami of the Land]", p.131). Katō Genchi, a scholar of religion, published his lectures at the Military Academy in October 1924 under the title *Tōzai Shisō Hikaku Kenkyū* [The Comparative Study of Eastern and Western Thought] . In it he pointed out that there were three schools of the "interpretation of the Divine Scriptures of Japan": the reflecting historical facts school, the mythological school, and the Ideal reflection school (which believe that myths are the manifestation of

the ideals of our ancestors), and wrote: "I don't believe that there are any uncomprehending government officials today who would prohibit the theories of these serious scholars" (p.323). Furthermore, the folklorist Yanagida Kunio also wrote in his "Preface" of the book *Nihon Shinwa Densetsu no Kenkyū* [The Study of Japanese Myths and Legends] (1925) written by Takagi Toshio, "We [the researchers of folklore] are allowed to see the stories of the Age of Kami as myths, and we are no longer ridiculed for our attitude to discover the thought and cosmology of the ancient Japanese in the daily events of ordinary people in the countryside." (p. 2)

Regarding the school education at that time in such a state of professional research, Katō Genchi wrote the following in his book *Shinto no Sai-ninshiki* [The Reconceptualization of Shinto] published in October 1935:

"It is true that the Imperial Rescript on Education used to be recited in schools on days when ceremonies were held. However, how thoroughly were students taught that the Emperor Meiji, who issued the Imperial Rescript on Education, was an *Akitsukami* or *Arahitogami* as a present god? Also, to what extent were students taught that the Emperor's ancestors, who are referred in the Imperial Rescript on Education, had the characteristics of gods? Both the Emperor Meiji, who was a god, and the Emperor's ancestors, who were gods, were taught to students as mere human sovereigns. It is a pity that in my memories of my junior high school days, and even in my high school and university days, not a single teacher used even the word *Jinnō* [神皇 The Emperor as a god]" (p.310).

"The consistent flaw in Japanese education since the Meiji Era has been its positivism and scientific universalism, as well as its adherence to the West in terms of diplomacy and education. For this reason, the Emperor's ancestors [皇祖皇宗 *Kōso-Kōsō*] referred in the Imperial Rescript on Education was interpreted as nothing more than human ancestors, i.e, *Zinso-Zinsō* [人祖人宗], and no question was raised about it" (p. 321).

A factual enumeration of the state of research into the Age of Kami at the time in Japan would suffice so far. In the first place, in the Meiji period, there were already no scholars who studied the myths with the attitude of believing them as they are according to Motoori Norinaga's school. After the case of Kume Kunitake, there was a tendency in the public to consider the study of myths in the field of history at the University of Tokyo as taboo, but the tendency disappeared after

1899 as a result that the publication of the results of research in mythology, history, archaeology, anthropology, folklore, etc. in private research institutions was allowed. And by the end of the Taisyō Era, the situation had reached the point where a book published by the Shrine Bureau of the Ministry of Interior publicly declared that it was rather dangerous to preach the dignity of the National Polity on the basis of myths to a people who were learning the Darwinism.

What are the causes of the fallacy?

So many facts can be found with a little research. Why, then, have fallacies remained uncorrected such as "the government strictly forbade criticism of orthodox myths, as well as objective research and questioning" and "myths were regarded as unquestionable facts" under the Imperial Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education? There are five possible reasons for it.

The first is the general tendency of Japanese academia to emphasize research at public universities, mainly the University of Tokyo, and to belittle research at private universities and in the private sector. This preconceived notion may have led to the misunderstanding that the fact that the Imperial University abandoned the compilation of history books and switched to the compilation of historical documents under the influence of the Case of Kume Kunitake meant that free research into myths was prohibited. As a result, no attention was paid to the research outside the Imperial University, and Kume Kunitake's statements and researches after his re-employment at the *Tokyo Senmon Gakkō* (Later Waseda University) have been ignore.

The second reason is that the post-war historical studies have paid too much attention to the pre-war historical studies and ignored the progress of other fields such as mythology, archaeology, anthropology and folklore. It may be also related to the fact that the critical study of State Shinto has so far been limited to the fields of religious studies, history and constitutional law. The situation that scholars' interest of State Shinto were limited to these fields must have prevented them from noticing the results of various studies for the Age of Kami before the war.

The third is that there may have been a misunderstanding of the "metaphor

theory", which is "the idea that myths are metaphors paraphrased from historical facts." and the leading theory from the Meiji Era to the beginning of the Syōwa Era. It is highly likely that this theory was confused with the Motoori Norinaga school's theory of "believing in myths as they are" and the confusion formed the preconceptions of the postwar period. This situation can be understood from the draft of a lecture by the Oriental historian Shiratori Kurakichi, "Jindai-shi no Shin-kenkyū [A New Study of the History of the Age of Kami] " (*The Complete Works of Shiratori Kurakichi*, Vol.1, Tokyo: Iwanami-syoten), which he delivered at the Tōyō Bunko's "Oriental Studies Course" from October to November 1928. At one section in the lecture, entitled "Meiji-jidai no Gōriteki Setsumeitai [The Rational Explanation in the Meiji Era] ", Shiratori argued as follows. It is a few long text, but I quote it as it is because it is a valuable testimony.

“In the Meiji period, Western studies became imported and Japanese studies made remarkable progress in many fields. The study in relation to language, however, was stagnant and hardly developed at all. The study of the Age of Kami, for example, remained as it had been in the Tokugawa period, and no new ideas were published. However, they could not believe the Age of Kami as it was written in the Divine Scriptures of Japan according to Motoori’s school and Hirata’s school, so they tried to interpret it rationally. However, as mythology was ignored, their views were not much different from those of Arai Hakuseki and others of the Tokugawa period. While Arai and Yoshimi interpreted *Takamagahara* [A heavenly land of Kami] as being in *Hitachi* or *Yamato* region in Japan, many Meiji scholars interpreted it as being in a foreign country. The reason for this is that in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* it is written that Ōkuninushi-no-mikoto was the deity who ruled over the Land of *Ōyashimaguni* (Japan). If Japan was the territory of Ōkuninushi-no-mikoto, then it is reasonable to assume that the descendants of Amaterasu, who conquered it, were abroad. If this is the case, then the people of Japan were ruled by the Imperial Family who came from abroad. If the interpretation was correct, nothing could be more humiliating to the people of Japan. Yet the scholars of our country at that time had no doubts about it, and considered their interpretation to be reasonable. In accordance to the interpretation, our country had different races, such as the *Izumo*, *Yamato* and *Kumaso* races. Archaeologists and ethnographers adopted the interpretation and interpreted artifacts from archaeological sites according to this view.

Because the history of the Age of Kami has been interpreted in the same way

as ordinary history, and because it has been thought to be a metaphorical account of worldly events, it has come to be believed that the Japanese people is not a single race, but a complex mixture of indigenous *Izumo* race and foreign invaders. At the same time, the *Kamigami* [Deities] depicted in The Age of Kami were, of course, regarded as ordinary human beings, so that even Amaterasu, described in the Divine Scriptures of Japan as the supreme deity, is regarded as a human being like the emperors of later times. Therefore, it come to be regarded as a great impiety to think of her as a deity being above the heaven. For it is believed that to regard her as such a deity would be to claim that she was a conceptual being, an imaginary being who did not exist. This interpretation is still the influential view today.

Recently, however, there becomes a growing awareness that myths are not history, and our myths become treated and studied in the same way as those of other countries. Gradually, new opinions begin to be published, and the old 'rational interpretation' begin to be rejected. This situation is truly a welcome development in the academic world. "(pp. 535-537)

Shiratori was one of the first students to enter the Department of History at the Imperial University's College of Letters (graduated in 1890), upon graduation he became a professor at Gakusyūin, from 1904 he became a professor of the History Department of Tokyo Imperial University's College of Letters and he held the position until 1925. He also served as an official of the Imperial Household from 1914 to 1920, educating Crown Prince, Hirohito (Later the Syōwa Emperor). He was a pioneer in the field of history in modern Japan, and there is no one better qualified to speak of the pioneering period of the discipline than him, and there is no doubt about the situation of the discipline that he described.

To repeat his testimony again, the state of research on myths in Japanese historiography from the Meiji period to the early Syōwa period was as follows: The Motoori Norinaga's theory of "believing in the Age of Kami as it is written" did not fit in with the rational spirit of the Meiji Era and was abandoned early on, and the "metaphor theory" that "interpreted the Age of Kami in the same way as ordinary history " and considered it to be "a metaphorical writing of events that happened in the real world " dominated Japanese historiography now

I confess that I should be surprised by his statement that in Meiji historiography

it was common knowledge that *Takamagahara* was a foreign country, that the Imperial Family were an invader race from abroad, and that Amaterasu was a human being, and that to think of Amaterasu as a deity was regarded as "a great impiety", because it was the same as claiming that she was an imaginary being. However, his remark that the "metaphor theory" dominated Japanese historiography is entirely consistent with the following confession by Katō Genchi quoted earlier: "The consistent flaw in Japanese education since the Meiji Era has been its positivism and scientific universalism, as well as its adherence to the West in terms of diplomacy and education. For this reason, the Emperor's ancestors [皇祖皇宗 Kōso-Kōsō] referred in the Imperial Rescript on Education was interpreted as nothing more than human ancestors, i.e. Zinso-Zinsō [人祖人宗], and no question was raised about it" (p. 321). Therefore, if today's common belief that myths were regarded as unquestionable facts in the Japanese historiography before the war, was not completely false, we would have no choice without the assumption that the "metaphor theory", which considers myths to be reflections of historical facts, was confused with the Motoori Norinaga's school of theory that believe in myths as facts and it led the misunderstanding.

The fourth reason is that, indeed, in pre-war school education, the myths recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* were taught as they were. The anthropologist Torii Ryūzō, whom I quoted earlier, wrote in March 1924 as follows: "If you look at the history textbooks produced by the Ministry of Education, you will find on the first page the myth of the founding of Japan as a brief description of the Age of Kami as written in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*" (p.131).

" [The textbook] gives the myths and legends of the founding of Japan as they are written in *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. It is truly ridiculous" (p. 131)

"The textbooks are almost useless, because they teach only the myths and legends of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* as they are" (p.132)

Since there is no reason to doubt Torii's account, it seems that the myths was indeed taught as they were in the schools. But it does not mean that criticism of such myth education was not allowed. Nor does it mean that students believed the myths as they were taught. In fact, in the account cited above, Torii proudly criticized the education of myths, which taught the stories of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* as they were, calling it "ridiculous" and "almost useless". As for the situation of the students, he said, "Students in junior high schools and girls'

schools go to shell mounds or archaeological sites on their own, excavate strata containing relics of the Stone Age, collect them, and have many knowledges about them" (p. 132) and "The people's knowledge has advanced to such an extent that they no longer believe in myths and legends as they are" (p. 131).

The fifth and final reason is the enormous influence of the Marxist historians who have pervaded post-war historical scholarship. Their goal was the overthrow of the emperor system. So there was no reason to pay attention to any historical facts that did not accord with their ideological interests. To be sure, pre-war results of study and interpretation about myths in various organizations did not believe them as they were. At the same time, however, they were not anti-emperor. Therefore, from the point of view of Marxists who wanted to overthrow the emperor system, it was something that should be disregarded or ignored, rather than something that could be disregarded or ignored. Perhaps, for Marxist historians, any freedom of speech or research that was not anti-emperor, anti-state or anti-nation was not worthy of the name "freedom" in the first place.

In Japanese, there is a word as the "best taste" of research [Kenkyū no Daigomi]. It is a feeling of a certain moment you come across a completely different way of looking at research objects, and your whole perspective changes after being in the middle of something that doesn't feel quite right, or a vague question that you are trying to answer. The word expresses the delight of the moment. In a long period of research, such a moment rarely occurs. For me, that moment came when I was researching pre-war mythology and came across the writings of Shiratori Kurakichi.