

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

### **Part 2 The Illusion of “State Shinto”**

#### **【Supplement】 Chapter8 What was the "State Shinto" theory?**

##### **The framework of the "State Shinto" theory**

In the light of the discussion so far, let us conclude with what the "State Shinto" theory is. It is an academic term and an ideological term with its own elements and period of time, constructed from deductive thinking, containing a kind of movement goal. In terms of period, it began with Katō Genchi, was formally expressed by Koiso Kuniaki, passed through Holtom, the "Shinto Directive", Fujitani Toshio, and was finally completed by Murakami Shigeyoshi. The following are assumed to be unique elements: the belief in the emperor as a monotheistic deity; the imperial constitution as the law guaranteeing the belief; the Imperial Rescript on Education as the scripture; Shinto shrines and school education as the infusion device of the belief; and the restriction of freedom of religion to protect the belief.

The evaluation of "State Shinto" as envisaged in the "State Shinto" theory is quite different in the pre-war and post-war periods. However, the theory itself is consistent in its intention to establish a concept of "State Shinto" that transcends reality, and to transform reality through it. In Kato's case, he wanted to overcome the situation where Amaterasu was taught only as a human ancestor and the Emperor as a human monarch. In Murakami's case, the aim was to advance democracy (actually communism) against the reactionary situation of politics as he thought (see the prefaces to *State Shinto* [Kokka Shinto] , *The Emperor's Rituals* [Tennō no Saishi] , *The Emperor System State and Religion* [Tennōsei-Kokka to Syūkyō] , and *State Shinto and Popular Religion* [Kokka Shinto to Minsyū Syūkyō] ).

How should the "State Shinto" theory with such a framework be treated in research in the future? I conclude that it is best not to use this term in future research that values positivity and objectivity, as a historical term that had existed

for a certain period in the history of research, because this term is too repressive against free ideas in research. If we want to perceive the colors of the outside world as they really are, we have to take off our colored glasses.

However, in contrast to me, there are some scholars who have modified the contents of this term and are actively trying to use it. Shimazono Susumu is a prime example. So, before I finish writing this book, I would like to examine Shimazono's new theory of "State Shinto". Since 1994, he has talked about his theory of "State Shinto" in a number of articles published in academic journals and in his books. A summary of those is *Kokka Shinto to Nihonjin* [State Shinto and the Japanese] , published in July 2010 (Tokyo: Iwanami-shinsyo, hereafter referred to as 'Iwanami 2010'). The following discussion will therefore proceed on the basis of this book.

### **The main points of Shimazono Susumu's "State Shinto" theory**

There are two reasons, Shimazono says, why he wants to continue using the "State Shinto" despite the fact that he thinks it is necessary to change the contents of the term. One is that there is a need for an "overall picture or view" of the "mental life of the modern Japanese", and that this "need" can be met by discussing "what State Shinto is" ('Iwanami 2010', viii). The other is that by "transforming the term that provoke emotional reactions into concepts that express historical facts as accurately as possible," it becomes possible to "face our past of modern history and modern religious history as it is" (Review of "Sakamoto Koremaru's *Kokka Shinto Keisei-katei no Kenkyū* [The Study of the Formation Process of State Shinto] , *Syūkyō Kenkyū* [Religion Study] , No.32, December 1994, p.199).

Shimazono's modifying work in 'Iwanami 2010' consists of three pillars: the redefinition of "State Shinto"; the rewriting of the history of "State Shinto" based on the redefinition; and the insistence on the continuation of "State Shinto" in the postwar period based on the rewriting. The gist of the work is given in the "Introduction" to 'Iwanami 2010'.

“ [State Shinto is] a form of Shinto which combined the reverence for the Emperor and the nation to achieve the unity of the people, with the veneration of the Japanese Kami, and which had become the mainstay of religious life" (p.i)”.

“State Shinto was promoted in the schools more than in the shrines. Most of the important Shinto rituals of the Emperor were held in the Imperial Palace, not only on the National Day but also on other national holidays before the war. Imperial Shinto, Shrine Shinto and school events were the main rituals of State Shinto. Through the Imperial Rescript on Education, moral education and history classes, children were introduced to the thought of National Polity and the dogmas of emperor veneration, which glorified the rule of the emperor as 'an eternal bloodline'”(pp. ii-iii).

“On December 15, 1945, the so-called 'Shinto Directive' was issued, and on January 1, 1946, the so-called 'Emperor's Declaration of Humanity' was issued. It have been understood that State Shinto was 'dismantled' by them" (p.iv). However, "what was 'dismantled' was the union of the state and Shrine Shinto, and the imperial Shinto were largely maintained” (pp. iv-v).

“After 1945, the State Shinto still continued to exist. The State Shinto was unfamiliar to the people of Japan in the early Meiji period. But, from the latter half of the Meiji period onwards, it was gradually supported by private movements linked to the veneration of the Emperor, and was strengthened in response to these private movements. After the war, the organization of Shrines and Shinto priests [Jinja Honcyō] , which was organized as a private association, has become one of the main players in the State Shinto movement" (p. V).

Following the chapter headings in 'Iwanami 2010', I will introduce the specific contents of Shimazono's description of "State Shinto". In the Chapter 1 of "What was the position of State Shinto?", Shimazono gives an overview of the history of State Shinto based on his own theory of the "dual structure" of State Shinto. The "dual structure" he refers to is as follows:

“The rituals of State Shinto were considered to be a public affair in which all citizens should be involved (*Saisei-icchi* [the unity of Shinto ritual and government] ). Religious groups, on the other hand, have their proper place in a dimension different from that of the national government, and are allowed to operate freely within this dimension (*Seikyō-bunri* [the separation of church and state] and *Shinkyō-no-jiyū* [the freedom of religion] ). This system corresponds to the situation in which 'State Shinto' is the norm in state events and schools, and 'religion' is the norm in temples, homes and traditional communities. Such a coexistence of 'State Shinto' and 'religion' may be called the dual structure of religion” (p.8).

In the Chapter 2 of "How has State Shinto been perceived?", he summarizes the main points of the conventional theories of "State Shinto" and points out what he considers to be the problems of them. One of the most important things he addresses is he criticizes Murakami Shigeyoshi 's theory of "State Shinto" as "a theory of State Shinto based on the wartime model" (p.65), arguing that "State Shinto does not presuppose the idea of *Arahitogami*" (p.70), and describing "the idea that Shrine Shinto is the basis of State Shinto" (p.73) as "flawed" (p.71). He also points out that the "Shinto Directive" played an extremely important role in promoting the idea that State Shinto = Shrine Shinto, but it was based on the "Protestant idea that a religion or religious group is founded on the union of individuals who have made a confession of faith based on their beliefs" (p.76), and because of this, "the existence of imperial rituals and Imperial Shinto was completely omitted" from the object (p.82).

In the Chapter 3 of "How Was State Shinto Created?", in order to prove his claim that "State Shinto, consisting of elements such as Imperial rituals, Shrine Shinto, and the theory of National Polity, has been formed under an integrated concept," he discusses the period from the immediate aftermath of the Meiji Restoration to the enactment of the Imperial Rescript on Education, with particular "emphasis" (p.98) on the "conceptual aspect (aspect of the theory of National Polity)". He proposes the existence of "Kōdō-ron [皇道論] as a new comprehensive philosophy" (p.166) and says that the " Kōdō [皇道] " that emerged at the end of the Edo period, came to fruition in the Imperial Rescript on Education, despite its twists and turns.

In the Chapter 4 of "How was State Shinto spread?", with regard to Murakami Shigeyoshi's four periods of State Shinto as "The Formation Period" (the first period), "The Completion Period of Doctrine" (the second period), "The Completion Period of the System" (the third period) and "Fascistic Period of National Religion" (the fourth period), he proposes to change the second period to "The Period to Become Established" (around 1890 - 1910) and the third period to "The Period to Penetrate" (around 1910 - 1931) (p.143). This proposal stems from Shimazono's belief that the problem with Murakami's argument is that "it sees State Shinto as something that the government forced on the people, and does not mention the aspect that the people were the bearers of State Shinto" (p.

139). The "Second Period" and the "Third Period", as he calls them, can be summarized as follows:

“The reason why I call the second period as “The Period to Become Established” is that I note the following points about this period: (1) a system of rituals related to the veneration of the holy emperor and imperial family was established; (2) the idea of the National Polity based on mythological representations was put into a form that could take root in people's daily lives, and the system of education and dissemination of the idea was established; and (3) a training system for the Shinto priests and a cooperative organization of the Shinto priests were established, and by them the contents of the Shrines Shino as a powerful component of State Shinto were fully equipped. As a result of these changes, the State Shinto was incorporated into the thought and practice of the people themselves. In other words, it became part of the mind and body of the people and create the basis a groundswell of calls from all sections of the population for the strengthening of State Shinto in the next period. Backed by these, in the third period of “The Period to Penetrate”, the movement from below grew stronger, and the government and the national leaders were forced to take the path of overcoming social tensions and achieving stronger national unity in the direction of strengthening State Shinto” (p.144).

In Chapter 5 of "Has State Shinto Been Dismantled?", the claim that "State Shinto has continued to exist even after 1945" (p. v ), is repeated frequently by "In fact, State Shinto has not been dismantled" (p.185), "State Shinto continues to exist" (p.211), "State Shinto has continued to exist even after the war" (p.213), "State Shinto has continued to exist even after the Second World War" (p.214), and "State Shinto continues to exist" (p.222), despite saying in “the Introduction” as "the main point I want to make in this book is not this claim" (p. V), Shimazono explains the reason for the claim as follows:

“The post-war State Shinto has two clear venues. The first is the imperial rituals, and the second is the movements to venerate the Emperor, which have been led by private organizations such as the *Jinja Honcyō* [ An organization that encompasses most of the shrines in Japan] . The former is the core of State Shinto within the existing legal system, although it is hidden from view, and the latter are the groups and movements that seek to expand the State Shinto system in order to strengthen the core. Supported by these factors, State Shinto has

continued to exist after the war to this day” (pp.212-23).

### **An Examination of Shimazono Susumu's Theory of “State Shinto”**

In this section, I shall examine Shimazono's argument while staying close to his intentions and discourses. First of all, I would like to examine whether the need for an "overall picture or view" of the "mental life of the modern Japanese" was satisfied by discussing "what is State Shinto". In conclusion, the fact that the "overall picture or view" has been confined to the narrow question "What is State Shinto?" fails to capture the complexity and dynamism of the "spiritual life of the modern Japanese".

As readers of Parts I and II of this book will already have understood, it is impossible to give a 'complete picture' of the 'mental life of the modern Japanese' without taking into account the following subjects: As regards religion, there are *Jyōdo Shinsyū*, Christianity and *Nichiren* Buddhism; In terms of ideology, there are the total war ideology, communism, Nazism and the block economy; When it comes to organizations, there are the police and the army; As for academics, there are history, mythology, anthropology, archaeology and folklore. Rather than a "double structure", the reality of the "mental life of the modern Japanese" would be a multiple structure or a multidimensional structure.

By setting up a narrow picture or view, many questions are excluded, and it becomes impossible to "face our past of modern history and modern religious history as it is". As long as the definition of State Shinto as “ a form of Shinto which combined the reverence for the Emperor and the nation to achieve the unity of the people, with the veneration of the Japanese Kami, and which had become the mainstay of religious life" is retained, researchers would not be able to focus on the aforementioned factors. This is the oppressive nature of the "State Shinto" theory against what I call free-thinking research.

What about his other intention of "transforming the term that provoke emotional reactions into concepts that express historical facts as accurately as possible"? About this too, contrary to his intention, his argument has provoked "intense emotional reaction". In response to Shimazono's focus on "the aspect that the people were the bearers of State Shinto," Koyasu Nobukuni wrote in his article

"Ikari wo Wasureta Kokka Shinto Ron [On The Theory of State Shinto that Forgets Anger" (*Chikyū-za*, October 10, 2010), "Eat shit, Shimazono! I will not allow State Shinto to be described without relating it to the sorrow and anger of the Japanese people", proving that it is impossible to remove the "emotional response" from State Shinto.

What about the redefinition of "State Shinto"? Shimazono criticizes Murakami Shigeyoshi's theory of "State Shinto" as "a theory based on the wartime facts as model" (p.65), argues that "State Shinto does not presuppose the idea of Arahitogami" (p.70), and calls "the idea that Shrine Shinto is the basis of State Shinto" (p.73) "flawed" (p.71). However, the origin of the theory of "State Shinto" lies in Katō Genchi, who advocated the theory of the emperor as Arahitogami, and the "idea of Arahitogami" cannot be removed from "State Shinto". If we removed the "idea of Arahitogami" and "Shrine Shinto", we would not be able to understand the meaning of the "Shinto Directive" and the "Emperor's Declaration of Humanity".

Shimazono says that his own redefinition "is not so far removed from the common usage of this term [State Shinto], which has been widely accepted since it was raised at the end of the 1950s" (p. 57). However, as Sakamoto Koremaru pointed out ("Kokka Shinto Kenkyū' no Yonjū-nen [Forty Years of Research on 'State Shinto']", *Nihon Shisō Shigaku* [History of Japanese Thought], No.42, September 2010, p.53), a check in *Kōjien* (the largest Japanese dictionary in general) shows that both in the second edition published in 1969 and in the fifth edition published in 1998, "Shrine Shinto" and "Arahitogami" are both listed as components of "State Shinto". However, neither the "school education" nor the "Kōdō [皇道]", which Shimazono emphasizes, are listed as components of "State Shinto".

Since his redefinition differs from both conventional theories and popular interpretations, in light of academic common sense, shouldn't he use a different name for his unique concept to avoid misunderstanding? For example, if he wanted to emphasize that Shinto covered the public sphere, he could use "Kōkyō Shinto [Public Shinto]". If he wanted say that the people were the bearers of the movement, he could call it "Kokumin Shinto [National People Shinto]". If he wanted to emphasize the importance of "imperial rituals," he could use "Kōgi no

Kōshitsu Shinto [Imperial Shinto in a broader sense] ". Since Robert Neelly Bellah's theory seems to have been in mind in the starting point of his argument, "Civil Religion" or "Shimin Shinto [Civil Shinto] " would be fine. At any rate, I think he should look for a name that accurately expresses his theory, and not use the term "State Shinto" to avoid confusion with previous theories.

Shimazono must have wanted to find a central idea of "State Shinto" to replace "Arahitogami". As a result, he brought up " Kōdō [皇道] " in this book. So, is his argument with the "Kōdō" at the core successful? Unfortunately, his explanation is full of contradictions and inconsistencies.

Shimazono says that while "Kokutai [国体 National Polity] " was a term strongly associated with political ideals and a political systems, "Kōdō" was a term that envisions an inclusive system that embraces various ideological and religious positions (p.11), and that it "contained a Shinto-like and religious flavor" (p.113). Shimazono writes, "The Imperial Rescript on Education played the role of embodying the 'Kōdō' and spreading it widely among the people" (p.112). It could be said that he brought up "Kōdō" as a bridge between the Imperial Rescript on Education and "a form of Shinto which combined the reverence for the Emperor and the nation to achieve the unity of the people, with the veneration of the Japanese Kami, and which had become the mainstay of religious life", which he proposed as a redefinition of "State Shinto", in order to prove his claim that the later came to fruition in the former.

Unfortunately, however, the term "Kōdō" is not used either in the *Shinron* of Aizawa Seishisai, which was the bible of the theory of the reverence for the Emperor at the end of the Edo period, or in the Imperial Rescript on Education. Rather, it is "Kokutai" that was commonly used in both. If the term "Kōdō" was used at the time as a term that "contained a Shinto-like and religious flavor," as Shimazono says, it must have been impossible to use "Kōdō" in light of Inoue 〱 Inoue Kowashi's policy of drafting the Imperial Rescript on Education to avoid words such as "worship and respect deities or *Ten* (Confucian concept)" in order to avoid being involved in "religious disputes," as discussed in Part I, Chapter 2.

Shimazono emphasizes the argument that "reverence for the emperor" was spread through "school education," "national events," and "mass media" as a



component of State Shinto" existing in before the war. However, after the war, the Imperial Rescript on Education was abolished and Shrine Shinto has been separated from the state. There are no national events aimed at spreading the Emperor's worship, and the media has treated the Emperor's existence rather negatively. Nevertheless, based on the continuation of the "Emperor Reverence Movement" in the private-sector that emerged in the third period and the continuation of the imperial rituals, he claim that "State Shinto" has continued to exist even after the war. If we accepted the claim, "school education," "national events," and "mass media" could not be regarded as essential components of "State Shinto," and the foundation of his argument would collapse, and the definition of "State Shinto" should be redefined from the beginning.

Both "Kōdō" and "school education" are at the heart of Shimazono's theory. Any inconsistency in their explanation is fatal to the theory. Moreover, it is a simple contradiction of facts and definitions. How could he not have noticed these serious flaws? Perhaps it is because of the basic nature of the theory of "State Shinto", which contains a kind of movement goal, constructed from deductive thinking. Taking a bird's-eye view of Shimazono's argument, we could see his real purpose of claiming that "State Shinto still continues." It is the achievement of his campaign goal that separating imperial rituals from the state.

When the research method of inductively constructing a theory by accumulating empirical studies is not adopted, the problem of contradiction between the facts, the theories, and facts and theories often arises. However, since the real purpose of such research is not to "face the past as it is", but to achieve the goals of the present movement, it is rarely that such problems are taken seriously and efforts are made to solve them. In Shimazono's case, in spite of the many contradictions point out, he has not abandoned the term "State Shinto", which he considers to be of great use to his movement, but has answered only those questions which are easy to answer for him, and has only made corrections to the extent that they do not interfere with the achievement of his movement's goals. It is not surprising, therefore, that he does not notice the serious careless mistakes which I have pointed out earlier. Incidentally, when he first began to advocate the modification of "State Shinto", he placed the term "Chikyō" [治教 Teachings useful for politics] at the center of his theory, but before long it ceased to be used and was replaced by "Kōdō".