

Thoughts on State Shintō Research

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Abstract

Shimazono Susumu and Nitta Hitoshi have produced rigorous scholarship critical of the State Shintō paradigm as represented by the work of Murakami Shigeyoshi. Additionally, in his work “The State and Rites (*Kokka to saishi*),” the historian of Japanese thought, historian Koyasu Nobukuni introduces discourse on the past and present of State Shintō. He further establishes a new paradigm for State Shintō and puts forth his own hypothesis on current theoretical research.

However, the bulk of this theoretical research on State Shintō perhaps is largely theoretical construction lacking in historical corroboration that has been characterized by arbitrary treatment of sources (i.e historical documents) and the neglect of developmental process and temporal progression of actual historical circumstances. Such National Learning research is a far cry from Kobayashi Tatsuo’s call to avoid from producing “mere static works on Shintō and Japanese culture.”

Thus, this article will re-examine contemporary trends, notably those found in Koyasu’s work, that primarily focus on the validity of discourse surrounding State Shintō theory in relation to Ise Jingū. Also, it will apply a comparative analysis for the methodology of theoretical research related to Shimazono’s paradigm of State Shintō, what should certainly be referred to as the traditionally accepted view of Murakami’s State Shintō theory upon which the former is based, and recent Shintō scholarship stemming from these theories. Finally, this article will raise some issues and problems in State Shintō based on Kobayashi’s advocacy for National Learning Research.

Keywords: State Shintō, Ise Jingū, Bruno Taut, Revisionist State Shintō, the Modern Imperial State, *Hakkō ichiu*

Section One – Introduction

In October of 2002, the Shintō Studies, Japanese Literature, and Japanese History divisions of the Literature Department at Kokugakuin University Graduate School along with the Japanese Culture Research Center submitted a application for the “Establishment of a National Learning Institute for the Dissemination of Research on Shintō and Japanese Culture,” which was accepted by the Ministry of Education’s 21st Century Center of Excellence (COE) Program. Since its conception, study and research related to the program has steadily progressed and there have been considerable results from both domestic and foreign researchers. So then, what is the intent and objective of this program? And moreover, what is meant precisely by the phrase “National Learning Institute for Shintō and Japanese Culture?” (For an outline of the ideals and goals of the project as well as a summary of current research, go to the Kokugakuin University 21st Century COE Program website at URL <http://21coe.kokugakuin.ac.jp/>).

Even though we say “Shintō and Japanese Culture,” arriving at an overall understanding of these broad terms and determining their conceptual scope is an extremely difficult task. Therefore, to adequately discuss the difficulties and limitations of a “National Learning Institute for Shintō and Japanese Culture” it is necessary that I explain my own understanding of the phrase. Regarding the “National Learning Institute for Shintō and Japanese Culture,” the head of the program, Kobayashi Tatsuo, states:

In accordance with the goals of this program, research into “Shintō and Japanese culture” does not mean a mere static description of Shintō and Japanese culture. Rather it means that ‘the original Japanese culture that arose from Shintō is a symbol of Japanese culture and the Japanese worldview.’ Achieving this goal begins with the awareness that the formation of culture in the nation of Japan or that of the Japanese archipelago is not merely something to be placed side by side with other cultures of past and present, but formed on its own through the integration of the universal and exclusive aspects of human culture. (“Address by the Program Leader,” in *Establishment of a National Learning Institute for the Dissemination of Research on Shintō and Japanese Culture – Research Report*, Kokugakuin University, 2003.)

Based on this research, I will attempt to define this program’s methodology and outlook. In other words, to form “a distinct Japanese culture or Japanese worldview rooted in Shinto, as a symbol of Japanese culture” is “an endeavor to actively integrate both the universality of human culture with a distinct particularity when analyzing the cultural form of the Japanese nation or the Japanese archipelago, rather than to simply position it as one of the various cultural forms of ancient and contemporary times—that is, to engage in mere static depiction.” To conduct surveys and research with an endeavor to achieve the abovementioned integration and to communicate the results both within and outside this country is what we mean by “National Learning Research.”

The purpose of this article is to discuss some of the problems and issues brought up in Murakami Shigeyoshi and Shimazono Susumu’s work on so-called State Shintō as well as Koyasu Nobukuni’s analysis of “discourse.”¹ Furthermore, this article, by analyzing the aforementioned scholarship on State Shintō as well as my own occasional input, is a study of the progress of the “National Learning Institute for Shintō and Japanese Culture.”

Section Two – Koyasu’s “State Shintō Discourse” on Ise Jingū

The Grand Shrine of Ise (hereafter I will refer to this by the colloquial phrase “Ise Jingū”) is a prime example of what Kobayashi refers to in his statement, “the original Japanese culture that arose from Shintō is a symbol of Japanese culture.” Few would argue against the fact that this is common sense in contemporary Japan. However in regards to the debate on Ise Jingū, there are those who remain hesitant to discuss the relation of Shintō and Japanese

culture and reject this common sense as a product of modern “State Shintō.” A scholar who represents this type of thinking is Koyasu Nobukuni.

In the second chapter “A Return to Original Incantations – Ise Jingū at Present” in his recent work, Koyasu claims the following about discourses on Ise Jingū:

The old model that has been sought as the pure form of the Jingū was formed in the restoration-oriented discourse of the early Showa era along with the ideals of “Japaneseness,” “what constitutes the Emperor,” and “the concept of an Imperial State.” As a rejuvenation of the Jingū, the *shikinensengū* accordingly becomes a place of Japanese regeneration. Institutionally, Ise Jingū, which is just one religious body, still continues to have a hold on Japan’s political administrators because the Jingū is endowed with the prerogative of ceaselessly regenerating the national identity. This is obvious in the opening ceremony of the 61st annual *shikinensengū* in 1991, which stated that the Jingū’s *shikinensengū* is a place where “the Japanese people return to their roots and face their true selves. (Koyasu Nobukuni, *Kokka to saishi – kokka shintō no genzai*, Seidosha 2004, 54)²

Koyasu postulates that the idea being held by many on what constitutes a jingū as a perfection of Japanese art and emblem of Japanese culture came about in the early Showa era through “a restoration-oriented discourse seeking the old model of Ise Jingū purity.” Also this period saw the emergence of discourses on the meaning of “Japaneseness,” “what constitutes the Emperor,” and “the concept of an Imperial State.” Through these discourses the *shikinensengū* at Ise Jingū acts as a stage for the regeneration of “Japaneseness,” which ensures the prerogative of endless regeneration of “Japaneseness” as a form of national identity at Ise Jingū. Moreover, he claims that even though in the post-war era Ise Jingū assumed the status of a legally incorporated entity, as the holder of such prerogative, it continued to bind political administrators and political hopefuls in contemporary Japan. Is there really any validity to this proposition?

Let us examine these statements more closely. In the opening of the same article, Koyasu states the following:

On New Years Day of this year (2003) an article in a small newspaper caught my eye. At first I wondered why, and then I began to think about the extent to which Ise Jingū has already had a hold over politicians. The article reported that Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) representative Kan Naoto had gone to Ise Jingū on January 4th. Unlike the constitutional debate that would be caused by the Prime Minister’s annual visit to Ise Jingū, Rep. Kan’s visit follows the already established status quo. Why did Rep. Kan, who ought to be critical of Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni, visit Ise Jingū? Was it because his visit would not cause diplomatic trouble with foreign nations but would only be regarded as a domestic issue? Or, is it proof for DPJ representatives that they have the qualifications to be administrators? Anyway, we are aware that Ise Jingū has and continues to have a hold over political officials and for those who intend to become political leaders. (Koyasu, 20-21)

I read this and the following is my interpretation of Koyasu’s statement. First of all, I personally think that his use of the conjunction “anyway” to jump from the question “Why did Rep. Kan, who ought to be critical of Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni, visit Ise Jingū? Was it because his visit would not cause diplomatic trouble

with foreign nations but would only be regarded as a domestic issue? Or, is it proof for DPJ representatives that they have the qualifications to be administrators?” to the shocking conclusion of “we are aware that Ise Jingū has and continues to have a hold over political officials and for those who intend to become political leaders” is a rather crude technique.

In the post-war era, Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichiro began the custom of annual visits to Ise Jingū in 1955. Since then, with the exception of Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato, successive Prime Ministers, (including Murayama Tomoichi) made annual trips to Ise Jingū. Also, LDP representatives who hoped to become administrative leaders began making trips to Ise Jingū, such as Hatoyama Yukio’s visit to pray for “change of government” in January 2002 and Rep. Kan Naoto’s visits this year (2004) in January following on from his visit last year.

Based on these incidents, Koyasu asserts that not only “current administrators” but even LDP representatives have come under the “hold” of Ise Jingū to pay their respects to the shrine. However, there is no basis for this conclusion. Koyasu may be free to make subjective conclusions about Rep. Kan’s visits to Ise Jingū as being due to “Ise’s hold over him” (though whether Rep. Kan, who is neither Prime Minister nor Cabinet member, chooses to visit Ise Jingū or not is a matter of his freedom of religion). However for the sake of Kan’s dignity as an individual, the soundness of Koyasu’s claim must be objectively verified. This is because what Koyasu actually claims regarding DPJ representatives visits to Ise Jingū is, “If Ise Jingū, as a religious institution, is still blessing political administrators who are important to the nation, then this means that politicians are still under the influence of Ise in the sense that State Shintō had a hold over people” (Koyasu, 32). Of course, among these politicians who were under “State Shintō-style influence of Ise” was Rep. Kan, the political administrator hopeful at the time.

At a press conference on January 6, 2004, Rep. Kan touched on his visit to Ise Jingū in the following statement:

Since last year I have been visiting Ise Jingū. Last year I was re-inaugurated as a representative and along with Mr. Okada, who was inaugurated as Secretary General, felt deeply honored. Accordingly, I went to the Secretary General’s local shrine at Ise on hatsumōde and since last year have continued to go to Ise Jingū.

First of all, due to the fact that problems dealing with the Prime Minister’s visits to Yasukuni and my visits to Ise Jingū are completely separate issues, I do not think that such heated debate is appropriate. Like I said before, at the end of last year I was re-inaugurated as a representative and for hatsumōde I visited Ise Jingū to show my appreciation. At the end of December, many people celebrate Christmas. On New Years, it is a custom to visit a shrine. I went to Ise Jingū because of its natural beauty and because it is representative of Japanese history.

At least last year and this year, it was in such a spirit that I visited the shrine. As for next year, I do not know what position I will have on the matter. However if there is time, I hope to visit the shrine as it is a place

where I personally experience a pleasant and refreshing feeling. (Minshudōyakuinshitsu, ed., Associate Press, January 4, 2004)

The preceding statement by Rep. Kan indicates the following. In regard to Koyasu's surmise, ①“perhaps it was due to the fact that the latter's visit to the shrine held no implications for causing external trouble and that the issue was one that was seen to be contained within the domestic sphere,” the possibility cannot be denied that Rep. Kan in part believed the visits to Yasukuni Jinja and Ise Jingū to be “completely separate issues...I do not think debating about them on the same terms is appropriate.”

Koyasu further speculates that DPJ representatives visit the shrine to prove their qualifications to become party leaders. However, at least in the confines of what can be seen in the statement, is he not cleverly trapping Rep. Kan by reading too much into the situation? Granted that politicians such as Rep. Kan and Hatoyama may go to a typically Japanese shrine like that of Ise Jingū on hatsumōde to “be refreshed” or to “pray for political reform,” but Koyasu has no right to accuse them of being under “State Shintō-style influence of Ise.”³

These deliberations of course hold no significance for those like Koyasu, but the problem with Koyasu's argument is that he wants to say something to the effect of, “Anyway, Ise Jingū has a hold over DPJ representatives.” Is it not possible then that he is reading too much into Kan's statement by using the term “Ise's hold”? This has to do with how he interprets a statement like, “However if there is time, I hope to visit the shrine as it is a place where I personally experience a pleasant and refreshing feeling.” In short, the difference is between interpreting Kan's statement in a way similar to Koyasu, as deriving from “Ise's hold over politicians,” and interpreting it as being expressive of “the pleasant and refreshing feeling that he experienced at Ise Jingū as one agential individual while being at the same time a politician.” Yet, even if Kan visited Ise Jingū for its “pleasantness” and to “refresh,” such feeling nevertheless “come from the scenery of the shrine grounds of a modern Jingū” (Koyasu, 50) and Koyasu would probably dismiss Kan's argument by saying that this in itself is indicative of “the hold of Ise.” It is precisely an instance of Ise Jingū Theory, Japanese Cultural Theory and State Shintō Theory that constitutes “static depiction of Shintō and Japanese culture” as mentioned by Kobayashi Tatsuo.

In brief, what Koyasu wants to say is that Kan Naoto's notion of the Jingū being a place to relax and “refresh,” a view held by many people, is “discourse” for a revival of the early Showa era search for “Japaneseness” in Ise Jingū and that the cause of this is the continuation of “State Shintō-style influence of Ise.” In order to make this argument, he seems to have discovered the incomparable “Japanese beauty” at Ise Jingū touched on by Bruno

Taut in the quote below. The following is a rather long quotation, but Koyasu's course of argument in his "Methodology for Research on the History of Japanese Thought" is an inexcusable display of misrepresenting a quotation. Regarding Bruno Taut's evaluation of Ise Jingū, Koyasu writes:

For Taut, Ise Jingū was very much a symbol of original "Japaneseness." As he claims, "Original Japanese culture reached its perfection in Ise Jingū." Then for Taut, what exactly does "Japaneseness" mean? "Japaneseness" is defined as being architecturally something other than "Chineseness" and other "later influences," such as the Shogun architecture at Nikkō marked by excessive "ornamentation," and thus a primordial Japanese uniqueness is discerned. Taut states:

1. In Japan, materials are used to construct the ultimate form of wood and thatched roof. At Ise Jingū, the important thing is that all the materials in their unprocessed state become artistic in themselves, and in no particular area is there a concentrated display of technique. There is fresh unadorned wood that has been thoroughly smoothed. 2. Plain form, fresh materials, this radiant and open structure reaches the perfection of simplicity. This is what Ise Jingū reveals to the Japanese and to us.

Discourse on "Japaneseness" by foreign researchers familiar with "Chineseness" and "other influences," is structurally similar to the discourse of nativist and Japanese cultural theorists. Moreover, I am shocked by how similar the "Japaneseness" of Ise Jingū revealed in the quote by Taut is to that the nativists' discourse and discourse of the *Araragi-kei Manyō* doctrine. This similarity can be found in the discourse of nativist Kamo no Mabuchi and, through his poetic lineage of the *Manyō* doctrine, the discourse of the modern poets Shimaki Akahiro and Saitō Mokichi. Does not the use of terms such as simple, spirit, plain, and radiantly open follow the mentality of *Manyō* poets? This was the original nature of the Japanese, before its contamination by civilizational extravagance. This is what Taut sees as the primordial nature of Ise Jingū. Taut states:

3. Truly Ise Jingū is absolutely Japanese. And in Japan, there is no greater representation of "Japaneseness." What exists at Ise is a case of true architecture not mere buildings constructed by engineers.

Nativists, Japanese spiritualists, and Japanese cultural theorists, to put it bluntly, resemble the discourse on race and culture dogma of the fascist period. This resemblance is found in the writings of Taut, who as a European intellectual produced the most influential proposition on Ise Jingū as reflecting a primordial and authentic Japan.

The phrases numbered 1, 2, and 3 are actual quotations (translated quotations) from Taut. However, Koyasu arranges the "quotations" like this in order to support his "discourse" argument. I cannot help but view Koyasu's use of Taut's words as "deceptive quotations" (on page 12 of his book, Koyasu uses the term "deceptive historical discourse"). In order to clarify these quotations let us examine the entirety of Taut's remarks on Ise Jingū.

Ise Jingū differs from other shrines like the Great Shrine at Izumo and has not adopted any of the elements of Buddhist architecture, though the trivial motif of being able to see into the shrine from railing at the top of the steps (*kōran*) is an exception. 3. Truly Ise Jingū is absolutely Japanese. And in Japan, there is no greater representation of "Japaneseness." If this is the case, what is the main characteristic of Ise Jingū?

Above all else, Ise Jingū does not include arbitrary components that go against human rationality. The structure is primitive, but has its own logic. Japanese architecture following the construction of Ise Jingū does not hide the thatching of roofs, but in its structure forms an element of natural beauty. For this reason, pillars and other materials do not necessarily have to follow a vigorous pattern. 3. What exists at Ise is a case of true architecture not mere buildings constructed by engineers. In this way Ise Jingū is very similar to the Parthenon. Just as marble was used in Greece, 1. materials are used to construct the ultimate form of wood

and thatched roof in Japan. The Parthenon with its balance and contour catches the calm and serene climate of Greece. Ise Jingū reveals the humid and rainy climate of Japan.

While each of these provide for fundamentally different conditions, both are the case of the human spirit endeavoring to create a genuine structure. 1. At Ise Jingū, the important thing is art as it is, particular techniques are not concentrated on a single place. There is fresh unadorned wood that has been thoroughly smoothed (Bruno Taut, *Nihonbi no saihakken*, Shinoda Hideo, trans., Tokyo: Iwanamishinsho 1962, 17-18. The underlined sentences are quoted by Koyasu. The line labeled “2” in the Koyasu quotation is from the same text “The International Wonder of Japanese Architecture,” 34-35. There is nothing particularly strange about Koyasu’s use of this line).

Examining Taut’s statement, it becomes quite clear that he is not as a “foreign researcher” comparing “Japaneseness” to “Chineseness” or “later influences.” Instead he claims that, “Ise Jingū reveals the humid and rainy climate of Japan,” noting “above all else, Ise Jingū does not include arbitrary components that go against human rationality. The structure is primitive, but has its own logic,” and Ise Jingū is expressed as being “absolutely Japanese” comparable to the place the Parthenon holds in Greek architecture. For the architect Taut, the use of the term “Japaneseness” is merely a way of describing Ise Jingū in comparison to the Parthenon.

If we look at the full quote from Taut, his view of “Japaneseness” at Ise Jingū becomes clear. I need not repeat myself, but Koyasu himself indicates this fact by expressing gratitude to Isozaki Arata. Koyasu writes, “In his work, Isozaki Arata gives some valuable suggestions not only regarding the history of architecture, but for the viewpoint of Ise Jingū being a problem of contemporary thought (Isozaki Arata, *Kenchiku ni okeru ‘nihon no mon,’* Shinchōsha 2003; and, *Shigen no modoki – japanesu kise-shon*, Kashimashuppankai 1996)” (Koyasu, 200).⁴ To cite Isozaki directly, “Taut is not discussing anything complex. He simply ranks Ise Jingū along side the Parthenon of the Greeks” (Isozaki Arata, *Shigen no modoki – japanesukizeshon*, Kashimashuppankai 1996, 6).

Nevertheless, for Koyasu it is necessary to insistently postulate that Taut’s statements are “discourse on ‘Japaneseness’ as opposed to ‘Chineseness’ and ‘later influences.’” He then sweepingly states that Taut’s “discourse” is “structurally similar to the discourses of the theorists of National Learning or Japanese Cultural Theory” and then soon after stating thus, interjects with “however” and proceeds to wonder at “the similarity of *Manyō* doctrinal language” of the “National Learning scholars” and “*Araragi* poets.” He does so simply out of theoretical expediency.

In other words, this connection is necessary for him to say, “In short, this statement by Taut, who was speaking as a European intellectual, gave strong certification to the hypothesis that the true Japan originated with Ise Jingū; which was emblematic of the nationalistic cultural discourse of the fascist period.”

In fact, Koyasu notes, “Taut’s certification of ‘Japanese beauty’ is not only influential in the evaluation of Ise Jingū by Japanese architects and architecture historians, but forms the basis for contemporary Jingū ideology

surrounding Ise. Looking at Ise Jingū, Taut and Tonybee are warranting a Jingū theory” (Koyasu, 199). This is the limit of his evaluation of Taut. However, are architects and architecture historians are being lured by the “hold” of “Taut’s certification of Japanese beauty” as much as he claims they are? I do not think this is the case, but let us attempt to verify this by examining the words of Isozaki Arata. As a representative of “international architects” in modern Japan, Isozaki states, “Taut is consistent in the way he evaluates the architecture of Ise Jingū by giving all of his description of the shrine by comparison to the Parthenon.”

He then touches on the architect historians representative of modern Japan, Itō Chūta and Hariguchi Sutemi in the following statement:

When architecturally evaluating Ise Jingū, even if these two scholars were able to point out the uniqueness of this architecture in the world, they no doubt must have faced difficulty in speaking about it according to the standards of Western architectural evaluation. When doing so, even if Taut’s comparison with the Parthenon was without any basis, that probably nevertheless provided a serendipitous clue...In the modern era, the idea that the Parthenon was “architecture as art” was a commonly accepted fact. Based on this notion, Ise Jingū is compared to the Parthenon; and, through the law of comparison, this evaluation was made to be verifiable by western criteria. (ibid. 7-8)

I need not dwell on this point any further. Taut’s certification of “Japanese beauty” did not set the direction to jingū evaluation by theorists of Japanese architecture and architectural theory, but rather, Itō and Hariguchi reconfirmed their own already espoused approaches to jingū evaluation by observing that: “Taut evaluates the architecture of Ise Jingū by giving all of his description of the shrine by comparison to the Parthenon.” Rather than setting the direction to approaches of “jingū evaluation,” Taut allowed them to become convinced anew of their already espoused “direction of jingū evaluation.”⁵ Such evaluations are the same as the “discourse” of Kawazoe Noburu, who is representative of “the typical Japanese cultural theory discourse that is contrasted to the view of Ise Jingū as bearing the marks of ‘Chinese-style’ architecture”⁶ As Isozaki notes, “The architecture critic Kawazoe Noburu has produced a number of works on Ise Jingū architecture, and in a recent work, he states the following...At this point, a Saigyō-style description of Ise Jingū evaluation should suffice. Kawazoe Noburu later on gives an appraisal of Taut, but does so merely to emphasize that Ise should be treated with awe” (ibid. 9-10).

As I have demonstrated thus far, Koyasu misconstrues Taut’s words and argues that Taut’s discourse is “discourse on ‘Japaneseness’ by a foreign researcher familiar with ‘Chineseness’ and ‘later influences.’” He then shows his contempt for Taut’s Ise Jingū theory, concluding that it is nothing more than the “nationalistic and cultural theory discourse of the fascist period of Japan.”⁷ Furthermore, Koyasu to Taut in the following manner: “The discourse of Ise Jingū, reminiscent of Japanese spirituality theory or Japanese cultural theory warranted by Taut and

stated in a way sympathetic to Taut was something that was produced by the Ise Jingū that had newly emerged as the ancestral mausoleum of the Imperial State. It was not a product of the original Ise Jingū" (Koyasu, 44).

Partly in response to such insistent statements as those by Koyasu, Kobayashi Tatsuo has developed his Jingū theory calling for researchers not to produce "mere static description for both Shintō and Japanese culture." When he says "the original Ise Jingū," to what period and just what kind of Ise Jingū is he referring to? He notes that in the pre-war period "the fact that Ise Jingū was the ancestral mausoleum of the Imperial family and at the same time a major shrine of the Imperial state means that Ise Jingū occupied a central place in State Shintō and positioned as the top religious institution." He goes on to say that similarly in the post-war period, "Ise Jingū is an official religious institution recognized by top state administrators. These politicians continue to be lured to the shrine by State Shintō-style influence of Ise" (Koyasu, 31-32). In order to prove this, he sets the contemporary Ise Jingū in opposition to an "original Ise Jingū." Koyasu's argument, to borrow a phrase from Isozaki, should be called an "original pseudo-discourse."

Between the adoption of evaluation standards of "Taut-style Western architecture" and the subsequent inclination toward Saigyō-style evaluation standards emphasizing uniquely Japanese appreciation of nature, a thirty-year period had passed including the Second World War. That was a period in which "things Japanese" surmounted Western modernity whereby Japan came to take pride in the possibility of accomplishing its own distinct cultural formation. In the early period, there was resistance to nationalist perspectives but in the latter period in the aftermath of overcoming modernism, displays of nationalism started to become conspicuous. That was also the turning point from the Ise as depicted by Taut to the characterization of the shrine from a political viewpoint as "imperial" and further to one characterized from a cultural viewpoint that discerned the uniqueness of the Ise shrine (Isozaki, 10-11). More so than Koyasu's "discourse" on Ise Jingū and Taut, I think Isozaki's point poses an important research problem on "State Shinto" for the "Shintō and Japanese Culture National Learning Research" on "State Shintō."

Section Three - Murakami's "State Shintō Theory" as a "Mirror"

As mentioned above, for Koyasu Ise Jingū was a center for "State Shintō" before the war and continues to serve this function. He states:

The visits by prime ministers to Ise Jingū to worship at the beginning of the New Year have already become a regularized public ceremony. Public visits by prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine are also about to become established, despite the objections of neighboring countries. ... Keeping this kind of situation in mind, the definition of “State Shintō” offered by the recently infamous Murakami Shigeyoshi—that is to say, a definition that views it as a reformulation of shrine Shintō; a ritual system with characteristics of a national religion through the formation of an imperial state combined with imperial ritual—has now surpassed Murakami’s historical limitations, which view State Shintō as having continued for roughly eighty years, from the Meiji Restoration to the end of the war. By maintaining some sort of life-pulse in this way, State Shintō seems to be making a resurgence. It is not merely something that one must seek in the past. (Koyasu, 10)

However, the problem with Koyasu thinking that Ise Jingū is a part of contemporary “State Shintō” is that it has already been addressed by Murakami, who may not appreciate the way that Koyasu draws a connection between his definition of State Shintō and a “life-pulse leading to a resurgence of State Shintō.”⁸ Instead of getting angered by Koyasu’s excessive rhetoric, “the recently infamous Murakami” might simply tell Koyasu to seriously read his book.

More than thirty-four years ago, in 1970, Murakami wrote:

What exactly was State Shintō to the Japanese people? This question is not merely an interest in the facts of the past, but rather a contemporary problem in the Japan of the 1970s, where the reemergence of State Shintō is becoming a very real problem (Murakami Shigeyoshi, *Kokka shintō*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho 1970, 223)... The reemergence of State Shintō and the protection of democracy becomes a relationship characterized by an unavoidable dilemma. Pursuing and elucidating the nature and function of State Shintō should very much be considered a contemporary problem. (ibid. 227)

To further state the case, before this statement by Murakami, as a person “who takes a divergent historical stance” Ashizū Zuhiko raised the issue of “investigating the nature and role of State Shintō as a contemporary problem.” In 1966, he wrote:

Looking at the increasing desire to place Yasukuni Shrine under state protection, and the constitutional disputes regarding the treatment of Yasukuni as a religious institution twenty years after the war, it is still felt that the confusion surrounding these concepts are far from being straightened out. Regarding both contemporary and future problems concerning Shintō, I think it is necessary to make sure we are clear about what exactly Meiji State Shintō was. The problems I survey in *Shrines and Religion in the Age of the Imperial Constitution* are intended to contribute to the investigation of one aspect – mainly the legal aspect – of Meiji “State Shintō.” (Ashizū Zuhiko, “Teikoku kenpō jidai no jinja to shūkyō,” in *Ashizū Zuhiko zenshū: tennō, shintō, kenpō*, Jinja Shinpōsha 1996, 418—419. Originally published in *Meiji ishin shintō hyakunenshi daikan*, Shintō Bunkakai 1966)

In response to the facts stated above, Koyasu writes: “When the evaluation of history in Murakami’s State Shintō is considered to make up the dominant historical view of post-war Japan, a revisionist theory based upon a differing historical stance that takes State Shintō as its powerful but warped subject is argued” (Koyasu, 12-13). This statement is representative of the emptiness of Koyasu’s “discourse” argument, which neglects historical fact, and makes clear the origin of this emptiness. The following statement speaks for itself. Koyasu writes:

Finally, relating to the issues dealt with in this book, I would like to say the following in regard to the concept of State Shintō. I am not thinking of this as anything with a substantive basis in modern history; that is to say,

a notion based on the chronology of institutional history. This is a concept constructed in accordance with my topic of interest (*mondai kanshin*); namely, the condition of the modern Japanese nation-state and its existence. This study examines how the ritual aspect of the nation-state, or the religious nature of the state itself, developed in a modern nation-state. My focus, which takes as its premise this ritual aspect of the modern nation-state as a universal problem, attempts to determine how Japan developed its religious and ritual nature as a modern nation-state. The concept of State Shintō is constructed following my topic of interest... I treat the issue of State Shintō in correlation with the problems of the ritual and religious nature of Japan's modern nation-state. (Koyasu, 26—27)

Here, Koyasu's statement that "one must admit that we are conspicuously behind in empirical and objective studies regarding the actual circumstances and role of State Shintō. The vast majority of the works dealing with State Shintō or shrine problems that have been published in recent years have been written from the stance of protecting or legitimizing State Shintō" gives no consideration to Murakami's research on State Shintō in the post-war era. Murakami wrote: "The issue of what State Shinto and its formative premises will be studied from an empirical and objective approach (Murakami, 'Preface')."

In the first place, I am not interested in the epochal rhetoric of "the discursive strife surrounding State Shintō" into which Koyasu attempts to enter (the book jacket states: "A main player in the history of Japanese thought stakes his mission on entering the discursive strife surrounding State Shintō"), but rather in the pursuit of the discourse on "what constitutes fact" that this "discourse" implies. I think that the currently popular word "discourse," let alone phrases such as "the discourse surrounding State Shintō" ultimately become thought of as a final product of research in and of themselves by scholars and intellectuals, myself included, and we never proceed beyond the theoretical. In other words, as Murakami states:

State Shintō is a state religion conjured up by the modern imperial state, and it held psychological control over the Japanese people during the roughly eighty years from the Meiji Restoration until the end of the Pacific War. The new Japanese state religion that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century was created by fusing together shrine Shintō (*jinja shintō*) and imperial Shintō (*kōjitsu shintō*) and was developed from the construction of rituals at shrines (*jingū* and *jinja*) based upon court ritual. (Murakami, 1)

When he wrote this, his interest in the pursuit and verification of the structural elements and actual facts created this type of "discourse." Murakami's "discourse" itself is merely the expression of his ideas and ideology based upon his pursuit and verification of the "facts and structural elements of State Shintō." Based upon these thoughts, I wrote that "the Shintō of State Shintō was brimming with a particularly spiritless, secular rationalist, limp, ineffective—and finally—deceptive 'conception of the national polity'" ("Kindai no kōshitsu saigi to kokka shintō," in Ōhara Yasuo and Sakamoto Koremaru, *Kokka to shūkyō no aida – seikyōbunri no shisō to genjitsu*, Tokyo: Nihon Kyōbunsha 1987, 305).

Responding to this portion of my "thoughts," Koyasu wrote:

I have already touched upon the unfavorable evaluation of State Shintō as a real image of modern history conducted by Sakamoto and his ilk, but their malicious objection to State Shintō is odd. For example, Sakamoto describes “the Shintō of State Shintō as brimming with a particularly spiritless, secular rationalist, limp, ineffective—and finally—deceptive ‘conception of the national polity’” (ibid.) as if he is cursing it. This abnormal tirade, or rather the intention of this extraordinary utterance, gives one cause to think. (Koyasu, 196)

Setting aside his use of such words as “abnormal” and “curse,” what I find more suspicious about Koyasu is whether or not, to repeat myself, he has really ever seriously read Murakami Shigeyoshi’s *On State Shintō*. My aforementioned statement that in his assessment was “abnormal” and “cursing” was an effusion of thought triggered precisely as if Murakami Shigeyoshi’s *On State Shintō* were a mirror. In brief, whether or not the definition of and paradigm for this State Shintō is arbitrary or if there is actually any value in criticizing it, is something to be examined and categorized. I have merely come to these observations and conclusions through the use of Murakami Shigeyoshi’s State Shintō theory as a “mirror.”

For example, Murakami writes: “For the roughly eighty years from the Meiji Restoration to the defeat in the Pacific War, State Shintō comprehensively influenced Japanese religion as well as all aspects of citizens’ consciousness regarding daily life” (Murakami, “Preface”). “State Shintō is a state religion conjured up by the modern imperial state, and it held psychological control over the Japanese people during the roughly eighty years from the Meiji Restoration until the end of the Pacific War” (Murakami, 1). In these statements, on the one hand Murakami stresses the psychological influence of State Shintō on citizens, but on the other hand he also notes:

The doctrine and rites of State Shintō were called the spirit of the citizenry, but from the middle of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century they could not help but wind up as an artificial and empty idea that was unable to fully penetrate the daily life and thought of the Japanese people, unavoidably being completely out of touch from start to finish. (ibid, 224)

So, why would Murakami give what could only be called a contradictory appraisal of State Shintō? The answer lies in Murakami’s understanding of State Shintō:

(State Shintō) was not a substantial political ideology or concept such as democracy or socialism, but was rather a spirit of “*kannagara no michi*” (the way of the *kami*) standing in a pre-theoretical mythology. While this was the contradiction of State Shintō, it was also its strong point. This was because the power of the nation-state, responding to political needs of the time, was able to liberally add arbitrary content to *kannagara no michi*. (ibid, 224)

Pointing to this, Ashizū writes:

What becomes known as State Shintō originated as an ambitious hypothesis by serious Shintoists before the Meiji era. However, the combination of powerful anti-Shintō political and religious forces hindered the Shintoists from enacting this plan. Neutralized by these forces, State Shintō became an empty, spiritless, secular rationalist “limp and ineffective” concept. (*Kokka shintō to wa nani datta no ka*, Jinja Shinbōsha 1987, 213)

I also evaluated State Shintō in this manner, viewing State Shintō as “brimming with precisely a spiritless, secular rationalist, limp, ineffective—and finally—deceptive ‘conception of the national polity.’” This “evaluation,” what Koyasu refers to as a “slandorous statement,” is a product of my reading and personal examination of the aforementioned “State Shintō theory” of Murakami Shigeyoshi.

Addressing the results of my examination of Murakami’s “State Shintō theory,” Koyasu writes: “We learn from this complicated debate that what is identical about the definitions of State Shintō by both the criticizer and the criticized is that they question what exactly is deserving of critical re-evaluation” (Koyasu, 11—12). At the same time, he also states: “When the evaluation of history in Murakami’s State Shintō is considered to make up the dominant historical view of post-war Japan, a revisionist theory based upon a differing historical stance that takes State Shintō as its powerful but warped subject comes is argued” (Koyasu, 12—13). If we discuss State Shintō theory in the language of Koyasu, then it truly is an unspeakably “complicated debate.” Yet, I still have doubts about Koyasu’s understanding of Murakami’s definition of State Shintō; that is to say, “A definition that views the creation of State Shintō as the reformulation of shrine Shintō into a ritual system of national religion through the fusion of imperial ritual with the creation of the imperial nation-state.” According to this view of State Shintō, it is obvious that there is nothing identical between State Shintō theory and State Shintō. However, what I find to be more significant in terms of Murakami’s conceptual elaborations regarding State Shintō theory is the following statement.

The doctrine and rites of State Shintō were called the spirit of the citizenry, but from the middle of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century they could not help but wind up as an artificial and empty idea that was unable to fully penetrate the daily life and thought of the Japanese people, unavoidably being completely out of touch from start to finish.

Although State Shintō had an “existence completely detached from the people,” as long as the ideal was *kannagara no michi*, the power of the nation-state “responding to political needs of the time, was able to liberally add arbitrary content to *kannagara no michi*,” and this was its “strong point.”

Murakami states, “(State Shintō) was not a substantial political thought or concept such as democracy or socialism, but was rather a spirit of “*kannagara no michi*” standing in a pre-theoretical mythology. This was the contradiction of State Shintō.” Although he claims that the ideal of State Shintō was “*kannagara no michi*,” he does not further elaborate on why exactly it is “the contradiction of State Shintō.” Pursuing this topic that Murakami bequeathed to us is no small task and it should not be dismissed as in Koyasu’s attempts to do in statements like “a revisionist argument based upon a differing historical stance that takes State Shintō as its powerful but warped

subject.” Nor is it a question characterized by slanderous rhetoric like, “a question reduced by Shintoists, that is to say, a question looking for a Shintō reality in history” (Koyasu, 26). Koyasu should carefully reread Murakami’s “State Shintō theory,” and try to “pick out from within this complicated debate which things ought to be critically reexamined.”

Furthermore, Koyasu proclaims, “If the word ‘State Shintō’ that Ashizū and Sakamoto slander as the ‘State Shintō’ of modern history and if they do not desire the revival of the use of this term, then we may as well call it ‘Shrine Shintō as state religion’” (Koyasu, 22). From Koyasu’s own words, we can conclude that the critical examination of “a definition that views the creation of State Shintō through the reformulation of shrine Shintō into a national religion and ritual system that fuses imperial ritual with the creation of the imperial nation-state,” that is to say, “the definition of ‘State Shintō’ offered by the recently infamous Murakami Shigeyoshi” and represented by Murakami’s “State Shintō theory” is already finished.

In actuality, it seems that Koyasu feels no need to seriously examine Murakami’s “State Shintō theory” or the “definition” of State Shintō. Because “the concept of State Shintō becomes constructed following (Koyasu’s) topic of interest,” any other “concepts and/or definitions of State Shintō” become meaningless to him and powerless to influence his thought. However, the greatest doubt I hold regarding Koyasu’s “concept of State Shintō” is ultimately the fact that “without thinking of State Shintō as a substantive concept, the development of which can be found in a chronology of institutional history; that is to say, having a substantive basis in modern history,” whether one can truly construct a discussion on “State Shintō” or its “discourse.” The “concept of State Shintō” formed out of such a position ignores "history" and is ultimately is not a “history of thought” at all: it is nothing more than an “effusion of one’s personal thought and discourse” that transcends time and space. At the very least, many studies are of a radically separate dimension than Murakami’s “State Shintō theory” with its emphasis on verifiability and objectivity. The “concept of State Shintō” that “becomes constructed following (Koyasu’s) topic of interest,” stresses the individuality of Koyasu’s argument. However, this is nothing more than a senseless “State Shintō theory” that patches together parts of the “State Shintō theory” established by the work of Ashizū Zuhiko and Murakami.⁹

Section Four - The Meaning of “Revisionist State Shintō Theory”

In the previous section, I provided an overview of Koyasu’s “discourse” surrounding State Shintō and its questioning of “the present nature of State Shintō” in contrast to Murakami Shigeyoshi’s “State Shintō theory.” Despite this critical analysis of Koyasu, there are certainly scholars who highly value his “discourse” argument. One such scholar is the religion scholar Shimazono Susumu, who has recently been vigorously advancing an argument that can only be referred to as a “revisionist theory of Revisionist State Shintō history.” Shimazono highly values Koyasu’s argument writing, “The fact that (Koyasu’s) view counters the direction of theory on State Shintō theory and the modern religious system by Shintō historians until now, who have tended to pushed towards a nationalistic defense, is extremely significant.” Furthermore, he claims, “A narrow interpretation of State Shintō with a systematically historical tone such as ‘national and imperial shrines (*kankoku heisha*) and provincial shrines (*kensha*) as having the status of nationally-run shrines managed directly by the nation-state’ is predominant. The author severely criticizes this mode of thought, mostly promoted by Shintō historians, as ‘a revisionist history based upon a view that places Japan at the center, and plots to not only pardon State Shintō but also to return it to power’” (“Kahokushinpō,” 22 August 2004; this is based upon the instruction of Fujita Taisei). Undoubtedly, I am among those being severely criticized for proclaiming “a Japan-centric revisionist history that plots to not only pardon State Shintō but also to return it to power.”¹⁰

Definitely, I have taken as my primary subject of study a “State Shintō” that is one dimension of “shrines that have taken on a national and public character due to a close connection with the emperors of the past.” Moreover, this dimension of “State Shintō” is not what Murakami simplistically—as if one could make such a comprehensive claim—described:

State Shintō is a state religion conjured up by the modern imperial state, and it held psychological control over the Japanese people during the roughly eighty years from the Meiji Restoration until the end of the Pacific War. The new Japanese state religion that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century was created by fusing together shrine Shintō (*jinja shintō*) and imperial Shintō (*kōjitsu shintō*) and was developed from the construction of rituals at shrines (*jingū* and *jinja*) based upon court ritual.

Rather, the doubt that arises from such statements led me to critically examine “Murakami’s State Shintō theory.” This kind of doubt does not differ so much from Yasumaru Yoshio’s indication regarding “Murakami’s State Shintō theory,” namely, that “one feels the hastiness of trying to chase several phenomena into one cage” (Yasumaru, Yoshio, *Kindai no tennō zō*, Iwanami Shoten 1992, 199).

Labeling my criticism as “Revisionist State Shintō theory” is Koyasu’s right, and therefore he may conclude that “that which is being revised is not State Shintō at all.” He also has the right to make agitating statements with the following exclamatory tone, “The definition of State Shintō that lies at the heart of the problem is not one that is reviewed. Precisely because of this, it is a new indication of a State Shintō that retains a desire for restoration of power and continues to maintain a life-pulse. The confirmation of this fact is highly important. We must not be deceived by the trickery of revisionist theory, which permeates historical discourse” (Koyasu, 12).

To express it in a somewhat grandiose way, it seems to me that this appearance of “the case of Koyasu Nobukuni’s ‘State Shintō’ theory” is no accident. How exactly did this view come about? Of course, the primary reason is Koyasu’s position expressed in the following words:

This anachronistic worship at Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi is, however, enjoying a considerable amount of discursive support. This support is the support of historical revisionists who proclaim the glorious history of the Japanese people. ... The Prime Ministers' visits to Yasukuni, with the support of these historical revisionists behind them, have taken place openly and repeatedly as if to provoke our Asian neighbors. In response to these provocative acts, I too must advance a critical reply regarding this historical revisionist theory and “State Shintō” revisionist theory. (Koyasu, 219)

However, Shimazono’s interpretation differs somewhat:

What is “State Shintō?” I do not know exactly. However, this term is important. It cannot be avoided when discussing the Yasukuni problem. When discussing the characteristics of the modern Japanese nation-state system, this term is completely necessary. However, there is an avoidance of tackling the significance of this term head-on. This is timid. The tools of argument have not been collected. As if he has become impatient with this situation, this radical scholar (Koyasu) of Edo period intellectual history tackled the problem of State Shintō and Yasukuni head-on. (“Kahokushinpō,” preface)

Thus, it seems that Shimazono perceives Koyasu as collecting the “necessary tools” to engage in such debate.

Nonetheless, we cannot forget what the sensible Shimazono carefully indicates next, for while he says that “the analysis of the intellectual origins of this sort of State Shintō is illuminating and is a noteworthy endeavor by this sharp scholar of modern intellectual history,” he continues to say that, “in contrast, the portion that illustrates religious systems in the modern world and the true nature of State Shintō that brings in a comparative analysis has a strong flavor of an exploratory essay.” Really, to Shimazono, who adds this kind of comment, what indeed does “illustrating the true nature of State Shintō” mean? Does it not mean to reject “the question trivialized by Shintoists, in other words, a question that searches for a Shintō reality in history”? Is this not a position or stance that does not conceptualize State Shintō as a “substantive concept, the development of which can be found in a chronology of institutional history; that is to say, not as anything having some sort of substantive base in modern history?” Is this

not the same as Koyasu's "State Shintō theory," that is based on "a constructed concept (of State Shintō) that simply follows his topic of interest"?

Koyasu's subjective condemnations, such as "a question trivialized by Shintoists," can be disregarded. What should be seen as problematic is the direct attempt to answer "a question looking for a Shintō reality in history" while also expressing "a question regarding the modern state itself." Shimazono is positioned at the very forefront of such work, vigorously presenting "discourse" relating to State Shintō. In fact, does he not make the following statement?

In contrast to Murakami Shigeyoshi's broad definition of the concept of "State Shintō," Yasumaru Yoshio raised a question of doubt, stating that "one feels the hastiness of trying to chase several phenomena into one cage." In response to this question, I would like to argue that imperial ritual and imperial worship, along with the practice and discourse connected to national shrines, formed one large conglomeration. To support this stance, a large number of demonstrable examples regarding the connections between the nation-state, Shintō, and ideology throughout the period lasting from the beginning of the nineteenth century until 1945 are necessary. ... One method scholars use for showing that this broadly conceived State Shintō is not an arbitrary conceptual framework is to show that this framework that created what could be called "State Shintō"—that is to say the principle axis of the compound cosmology *cum* ideology that was the State Shintō system—really existed. Also, there is a need to show that such a framework actually took shape, forming an effective system. In fact, from the latter part of the Edo period such a framework took shape, and its influence quickly expanded, so that by the beginning of the Meiji era, through the political process, it became an established concept of the new political authority. Afterwards, one can see that it became actualized in religious, educational, and social policies. (Shimazono Susumu, "Ichikyū seki nihon no shūkyō kōzō no henyō," in *Iwanami kōza: kindai nihon no bunkashi 2 kosumoroji- no kinsei*, Iwanami Shoten 2001, 11-12; underlining added for emphasis)

Here, in complete opposition to his supposition that "there is an avoidance of tackling the significance of this term head-on. This is timid. The tools of argument are not arranged," Shimazono takes a stance of "tackling the significance of this word head-on." If this is the case, not entrusting "the absolute critique of postwar State Shintō theory represented by Murakami" (Koyasu, 192) to "Revisionist State Shintō thinkers," both Shimazono and Koyasu should try again to conduct an "absolute examination" that is not "the absolute critique of State Shintō" as represented by Murakami.

For example, how does Shimazono evaluate the following citation of Murakami's argument on "the height of State Shintō" and go on to critique it?

Fascist national religion period: The period from the Manchurian Incident (1931) to the end of the Pacific War (1945) is a period when State Shintō was a part of imperial fascism. Japanese militarism moved from the invasion of China to the military control of all of Asia, and in these Japanese territories shrines were built one after another. On the 2600th Anniversary of the Founding of the Nation, the Institute of Divinities (*jingūin*) was established and State Shintō's footing as the national religion was reaffirmed. Each religion was fully controlled by the state through the Religious Organizations Law (*shūkyō dantai hō*) and compelled to cooperate with the war effort. State Shintō doctrine pushed expansionist thought to the forefront in parallel to militarism. This concept took Japan to be a sacred nation, and established the claim of *hakkō ichiu* to turn invasion into holy war, which was established as the central pillar of national polity doctrine. State Shintō thus surpassed the stage of its height, deploying values without regret and ultimately became the weapons that psychologically controlled the populace. (Murakami, 80; emphasis added)

Shimazono wants to say that he takes the word and concept of “State Shintō” as “imperial ritual and imperial worship, along with the practice and discourse connected to national shrines, forming one large conglomeration.” But if this is the case, what Murakami calls “(taking) Japan as a sacred nation and establishing the claim of *hakkō ichiu* to turn invasion into holy war,” that is to say, the *hakkō ichiu* ideology of “State Shintō doctrine” and “national policy” existed from the early Meiji era, through the first Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, and into the first decade of the Showa era.

According to Nitta Hitoshi, the four character phrase “*hakkō ichiu*” was contrived by Tanaka Tomomichi around 1914 and was first recorded on August 1, 1940 in a public document on the “Basic Principals of National Policy (*Kihonkokusakuyōkō*)” issued by the second cabinet of Konoe Fumimaro. On May 27th of the following year, the term was used in the “Imperial Decree of the Tripartite Axis Pact” and in the July 1942 issue of the Department of Education’s publication *Shinmin no michi* (The Way of the Subject) (Nitta Hitoshi, “*Arahitokami*” “*kokka shintō*” to *iu gensō*, Tokyo: PHP kenkyūsho 2003, 53, 91). Nitta gives a reasonable account of these facts, but the problem remains as to why at this stage (1940) is the term “*hakkō ichiu*” employed by public sources and imperial documents. Could we not say that it is perhaps due to the fact that the 2600th Anniversary of the Founding of the Nation took place that year?

It is unclear to me as to how Konoe Fumimaro, or the mind of Konoe, may have perceived the term “*hakkō ichiu*” with a spiritual connotation. However in his publication memorializing the 2600th Anniversary of the Founding of the Nation and the building of Kashihara Jingū, Uda Ikashimaru notes, “If the nations of the world comply with the spirit of *hakkō ichiu* and together we progress toward this goal, true world peace will begin to be realized” (Uda Ikashimaru, *Kashihara no Totsumioya*, Tokyo: Heibonsha 1940, 170-172). Furthermore on the day immediately following the holiday celebrating the Empire (February 14th), a question and answer session was held at a Lower House budget meeting on the term “*hakkō ichiu*,” and it is around this time that the phrase is explained in terms world peace and diplomacy. This use of the term is thought to have come from a February 1939 speech by sitting Prime Minister Hiranuma Kiichirō.¹¹ Really, is it correct to perceive the activities and use of this term during this period as “discourse and doctrine of State Shintō?” The aforementioned case is perhaps trivial, but I would like to make it clear that an effort to prove Murakami’s position is not an easy job. As Shimazono aptly notes, “Numerous arguments on the ideology of the relationship between the State and Shintō are necessary.” Therefore, the task at hand is not, as

Koyasu claims, a “Revisionist State Shintō theory,” but a question of “defining State Shintō and what it means in modern and contemporary Japan.”

Section Five – Ōkuma Shigenobu’s View of “State Shintō” – toward a Conclusion

As argued above, the majority of discourses surrounding State Shintō, starting with Murakami's work, are State Shintō theories premised on a view of State Shintō as a substantive concept that can be "found in a chronology of institutional history; that is to say, as having some sort of substantive base in modern history." In other words, they constitute State Shintō discourses. In contrast, we can see just how different Koyasu's State Shintō theory and his discourse on State Shintō are compared to the State Shintō research up until now.

Even if Shimazono kindly evaluates Koyasu's State Shintō theory saying, “the portion that illustrates religious systems in the modern world and the true nature of State Shintō that brings in a comparative analysis has a strong flavor of an exploratory essay,” it has been my point that we simply have to take Koyasu's State Shintō research at face value as theorization "structured by [his] topic of interest" that neglects many theories on State Shintō. This is the way in which I have located Koyasu's State Shintō theory in the overall context of State Shintō research history.

I believe what is more important than theorization “structured by (Koyasu’s) topic of interest” as “State Shintō theory” or “Revisionist State Shintō theory” is the following statement, which should be referred to as the “manifesto” of the former Head of State Ōkuma Shigenobu. From this statement we see what elements make up the image of “State Shintō.”

The *Daijōe* is held only once during an emperor’s reign, but the *Jōe* is held every year. The celebrations of *Kan’ame* and *Shinjō* are the custom of spreading rituals to worship the imperial family throughout the country, reaching even the most remote mountain villages through the festivals at the shrines of our ancestral *kami*. These celebrations are centered on the imperial household as a place of filial growth and the place from which our nation and nationality sprang forth. The bestowed wisdom of this custom continues to the present day. Truly, the beginning of Japanese custom is the shrine. This by no means has a religious connotation. In certain time periods, in the contemporary as well, there is somewhat of a religious meaning to the term. However, for the sake of distinguishing this from total religion, after the restoration at the *kyōdōshoku*, shrines and Shintō-related religion were completely separated from total religion. Through this proclamation, our place of worship is the imperial shrine. All other shrines as well as Christians, Buddhists, and others regardless of their own faith, should participate in national reverence of the Emperor. For this reason, I have held that shrine reverence is important for national custom, national formation, and connected to morality. (“Jinja wa kokutai no hongen tari,” in *Zenkoku shinshoku kai kaihō no. 188*, June 1928)

This statement is saturated with “State Shintō” related issues; such as shrines, shrine festivals, celebrations for the imperial household, ritual, non-religious shrines, religious Shintō, national formation, nationality, shrine

reverence, morality, and custom. It is possible to refer to this as a view of “State Shintō” based on the actual experience of Ōkuma. Shimazono states, “Within the transformation of the religious framework that persisted throughout the nineteenth century and the unity of religion and state in the body-politic, that is, the formation of the religious system of the State Shintō establishment became an important switch to decide the future direction of this system.

The religious structure, thought, and form of belief in contemporary Japan have still not been liberated from that strong influence.” (cited above, “Ichikyū seki nihon no shūkyō kōzō no henyō,” 47). What was the nature of modern Japan that formed this “State Shintō” view of Ōkuma, who not only survived the nineteenth century but also lived 20 years into the twentieth century (even if as part of the later generation, they sound as a “list of empty words” to me)? To continue to inquire into this question is my State Shintō research and the nature of “the National Learning Institute for Shintō and Japanese Culture.”

Notes:

¹ This article is based on a presentation given on October 18, 2003 at Kokugakuin University’s 26th Annual Japanese Culture Research Workshop on “Knowing Japanese Culture.” I formulated this presentation into a paper giving consideration to the recent work of Koyasu Nobukuni. The presentation can be found in, “Kokugakuin daigaku nihon bunka kenkyū” 40-46, released in March of 2004.

² This book first appeared in *Gendai shisō*, Seidosha, 2003 but was later published as part of the series *Kokka to saishi*, Seidosha, 2004.

³ Secretary General Okada Katsuya released an “activity report” in January 2003 stating that he “made a visit to the shrine to pray for political reform with Rep. Kan.” He again stated in January 2004 that he “visited Ise Jingū with Rep. Kan. This time he was told by another visitor at the shrine that they were glad he came to Ise Jingū to pray for political reform.”

⁴ If one reads Isozaki’s work, he/she will recognize how the phrase “valuable suggestions” has been adapted by Koyasu. In the published manuscript of his *Isejingūron*, Koyasu does not comment on the “*modoki*” of Isozaki’s *Ise – shigen no modoki*.

⁵ Koyasu writes, “A long time ago Itō claimed, ‘The notion that Japanese shrine architecture is ancient and something inherent in Japan that is uninfluenced by Buddhist architecture is the height of stupidity.’ Itō’s inversion of the view of shrine architecture began in 1915 with the construction of Meiji Jingū and continued to be promoted through the works of Itō and Igarashi Tarō. With Bruno Taut’s statement of rediscovering ‘Japanese beauty’ during his 1933 visit to Japan, Itō came to assert this inverted view” (Koyasu, 40). Here Koyasu is not claiming that Itō Chūta’s “view of evaluating the Jingū” is “the certification of ‘Japanese beauty’ given by Taut,” but states “Itō began to assert this inverted view.” Anyway, if we examine in detail Koyasu’s quoting of Taut and Itō, we can see the irony in Koyasu citing Itō Chūta as being representative of “the view on evaluations of the Jingū” by architects and architecture historians. Like his mentor points out in (Igarashi Tarō, *Sensō to kenchiku*, Shōbunsha 2003), Kishida Hideto notes the dichotomy of Taut lies between Taut’s simple and clear-cut architecture theory and the strong influence it has had on other scholars.

⁶ Here Koyasu cites (Kawazoe Noburu, “Shiniki to shikinensengū,” in Ueda Masaaki, ed., *Ise no ōkami*, Tokyo: Chikumashobo 1988) and writes, “There is one sentence that is a typical description of the modern Ise Jingū. From the vagueness of modern descriptions, we should probably say that they stem from the time of the architect Taut’s discovery of original ‘Japanese beauty’ at Ise Jingū. The reason we can say this description is typical is because from the 1930s to the writings of Kawazoe Noburu the information on Jingū does not change.” He also goes on to cite (Japanese Ministry of Railroads, ed. *Kami maude*, Tokyo: Hakubunkan 1934) mockingly pointing out, “In any case, the unifying description of

the quiet nature of the approach to the sublime Jingū comes from a poem by Saigyō.... thus repeating a quote from an artistic description” (Koyasu, 49-50).

⁷ It is unclear to me why Koyasu shows such contempt in his interpretation of Taut. However, we can image that the reason relates to what Isozaki explains as, “Taut came to Japan in the middle of his life for asylum. When he began discussing Ise and Katsura, it was the first time these two things had ever been grouped together under one architectural evaluation. Other fields of study also became involved in researching this, but it should be noted that they intentionally extracted the notion of ‘Japaneseness.’ The dichotomy between Taut’s actual writings and those developed based on this work happens within this context. For this reason, we should note that there developed a fairly strong interest in Taut” (Isozaki, 5).

⁸ Murakami points out that, “In 1960, Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato, in replying to questions from Liberal Democratic Party representatives in three prefectures, stated that the title of the deity Yatanokagami is in the imperial family. This reply opened the way for Ise Jingū to become a national shrine and ceremonies at Ise Jingū performed for Yatanokagami were acknowledged as having a public nature” (Murakami, 219).

⁹ Koyasu’s “discourse” directly demonstrates this fact (Koyasu 124-125). Koyasu stipulates that Japan as a modern secular nation is reconstructing the relationship between secularism, the nation and “Shintō and the shrines where such rites take place.” Also, he claims that this reconstruction is changing a “Shintō nation” into “national Shintō” and “has created State Shintō.”

¹⁰ Koyasu concludes, “Recent revisionism is the realization of State Shintō in modern history and its historical analysis.” The “State Shintō” left un-revised by Sakamoto and his ilk “is on the formation of Japan’s modern nationalist state and the issue of how State Shintō is being reconstructed as a national and ethnic religion.” Also he writes that through my “revisions” of previous State Shintō “a demand for the resurrection of the still beating life-pulse (of State Shintō) is beginning to spawn a new movement” and that he is aware of this attempt to conceal the true nature of contemporary State Shintō stating, “Revisionism is by no means State Shintō... We are not fooled by the trickery of revisionist theory and its use of historical discourse” (Koyasu, 12).

¹¹ This speech was given on February 5, 1939 at a meeting to address the promotion of Japanese spirituality, discussing “*Shinmin no michi*” (Cabinet Information Department, ed., *The Weekly no. 121*, Feb. 8, 1939). For more research related to discourse on *hakkō ichiu*, see “‘Kokka shintō,’ kenkyū no genshō” in footnote 1 above.

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