

Group II

Research on the Formation and Development of Shinto and Japanese Culture

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Research on the Formation and Development of Shinto and Japanese Culture, the area of research for Group II, lies at the heart of the *Establishment of a National Learning Institute for the Dissemination of Research on Shinto and Japanese Culture* program. Our research is based on and implemented via textual studies, which have been fostered since the foundation of Kokugakuin University many years ago.

Textual studies are the backbone of National Learning Research, one of the main themes of the overall program. By National Learning Research, we do not mean to imply a specific field of study, but instead a specific form of engagement and individuality employed in our research, which strives to produce highly objective and detailed evidential studies. Given that the term *Kokugaku*, or National Learning is a central part of our university's name, we feel a strong need to be involved in research on and dissemination of works regarding National Learning.

Our main topic of research concerns Shinto as a historical phenomenon. As Shinto has had a great influence had on the formation, development, and preservation of Japanese culture, we are focusing our attention on this relationship between Shinto and Japanese culture, attempting to clarify the relationship primarily through textual studies. In doing so, we aim to produce evidential and historical research on the nature of Shinto and its social functions. This is the main research focus of Group II.

While Shinto has a fundamentally consistent pattern of belief at its core, it has also been influenced by the various events of each time period, thus developing in a historical fashion. In other words, although Shinto has been expressed through historically determined phenomena, it also exists as a fundamental part of the Japanese spirit. Hence, it is a vitally important task to elucidate how the world of Shinto has both changed throughout history and how it has managed to preserve its essence.

Research on Shrines and Shinto: From Past to Present

The following is an outline of the structure of our *Researches on the Formation and Development of Shinto and Japanese Culture*. When we inquire as how to study Shinto, the conventional form of research is to focus on the shrine as the topos within

which the belief in divinities (*kami*) developed. While this research has generally been undertaken upon the foundation of a firm understanding of phenomena such as festivals and annual rites, such comprehensive research on shrines has not necessarily produced adequate results. Accordingly, this is why the collecting of shrine-related texts is at the core of our research.

1. Through the *Collection, Analysis, and Research of Fundamental Data Concerning Shrines and Shinto* (Ancient/Medieval Shinto: Professor Okada Shoji, Pre-modern/Modern Shinto: Professor Sakamoto Koremaru), we are collecting, categorizing, and analyzing fundamental textual materials concerning shrines in the ancient, medieval, pre-modern, and modern periods. Our model for compiling this data is based on the *Kojiruien*, a massive compendium compiled by National Learning scholars in the Meiji period. Currently, our attention is focused on the ancient/classical period; focusing on the so-called Six National Histories of Japan, we have collected basic textual data on approximately 500 shrines (mainly those categorized as “great” shrines in the *Engishiki*, devoted to deities of the Fourth Rank or above). In order to understand the religious role of shrines through time, we are utilizing a diverse array of methods. The framework for our analysis and research includes a consideration of essentialist notions of Shinto, previous research on Shinto, and the history of the study of Shinto texts. Likewise, we will also consider theories concerning the origins of shrines, sitology, environmental studies, festival studies, the economics of shrines, and the role of shrines in local areas. We intend to further our research by examining the medieval and pre-modern/modern periods in order to bring the overall picture of Shinto into greater resolve, and are also currently working on an expanded version of the *Wagakusha sōran* (“Compendium of Japanese Scholars”). Finally, in order to understand the role that National Learning played in shrine and Shinto research in the modern period, we are creating a database on scholars of National Learning. These scholars played a vital social role in the period known as *bakumatsu* and in the Meiji Reformation.

We are also examining the historical development of shrines and their various activities via the following research:

2. The *Research into Medieval and Pre-Modern Pledges and Protective Talismans* project (Professor Chijiwa Itaru) aims to collect and research magical talismans and votive tablets that were distributed at shrines and temples and to clarify the

religious beliefs of the Japanese people from the medieval period onward.

3. The *Pre-modern Festival and Ritual Data Collection and Analysis* project (Professor Negishi Shigeo) examines the festivals and rituals of the Edo Bakufu, notably those of Nikko's Tōshōgū.

4. The *Shinto and Shugendo* project (Professor Miyake Jun) project is surveying the nature of the Shugendo relationship to shrines. This project is closely involved with the *Collection, Analysis, and Research of Fundamental Data Concerning Shrines and Shinto* project. We expect that this project will provide a wealth of data.

In addition to these projects, we are also carrying out focused research on specific regional areas, in the hopes of concretely elucidating religious sentiments directed toward shrines..

5. The *Research Based on Materials Concerning Shrines in the Izumo Region* project (Professor Mitsuhashi Takeshi), through the use of published materials and research on Hinomisaki Shrine, Shimane prefecture, aims to clarify the reality of shrines operating at the local level. This group also plans to use their findings in this region in a comparative fashion with shrines in other areas.

The above shrine-based research forms the main component of the research being carried out by Group II. Additionally, the following research is designed to provide a greater degree of overall integration:

6. *Survey of Materials in Kokugakuin's Library project*

7. *Research into Definitions of the Concepts of Shinto, Japanese Culture, and National Learning projects*

The *Survey of Materials in Kokugakuin's Library* (Professor Aoki Shuhei) project focuses on surveying and researching the Takeda Yukichi Collection, which is housed in the Kokugakuin University library. Through this research, we intend to clarify the study of classical texts and methods of interpretation used by our Kokugakuin predecessors and the academic history of Kokugakuin University.

The *Research into the Definitions of the Concepts of Shinto, Japanese Culture, and National Learning* (Professor Asoya Masahiko) project is an integrated research project that also involves Groups I and II. This project is designed to address all of our individual research projects in a collective manner.

While the above descriptions provide an overall outline of our work, a great many other areas remain for research. Notably, one cannot overlook Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, all of which have had a long relationship with, and great influence on, Shinto. By working with outside researchers, we intend to further enrich our group's research into shrines and further understand how Shinto has been influenced by outside forces.

Research in Group II is done in collaboration with Group I and, in doing so, helps to form the overall structure of our institute's research. The findings of our research and further studies into the current state of Shinto will be disseminated by Group III, completing our overall research framework.