

Why is Shinto Research Important Now? — My Point of View
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There is no need to argue that we are witnessing a momentous turning point in our history. Or we might call it the “formation of a new world” in a Shinto-like expression. But this is precisely one of the fundamental topics regarding Shinto cosmogony. So, Shinto has a word concerning the future of human destiny. And this is most important if we just consider the perils assailing us at present, i. e. the danger of a *univocally* defined globalization, in terms of one world-culture, one world-religion. It is right there where Shinto can contribute to a different model of globalization, that of a *plural* world culture.

In this context we should ask what must be the role of Shinto research. And perhaps the answer will be: in a pluralistic model of globalization, Shinto research itself should not lose the inner variety it possesses at present. Actually Shinto research has been conducted in many fields and through many methodological conceptions, along its own history. In my view, all of the topics raised and the methodological procedures taken have a meaning and we should not dismiss easily any one of them. There is a general trend in Shinto research nowadays to submit ourselves to the neo-positivism and historical scientism of disciplines like the sociology of religion. For instance, in the field of Shinto history, topics like Shinto and the state in modern Japan raise easily international attention, but on the contrary there is still very little research applied to Shinto during the Edo period, and less still concerning “old Shinto”. We can find another instance in my own field, that of comparative philosophy, where Shinto is usually related in recent bibliography to Japanese nationalism, and on the other hand very little attention is given to topics like the Shinto world-view or its variegated symbolic expression.

We find that today Shinto has a double image in the international sphere. On the one hand, we have a positive view, focused mainly on folklorist aspects, and on the other hand we perceive the shadow of the so called “State Shinto”. I think that it is a shared responsibility among us, Shinto scholars, to help overcome the bias projected by the wrong simplistic identification between “Shinto” and “Japanese nationalism”. Because of that, Shinto research is at present partially blocked by prejudices which once erased will give way to better results from scholarship. It is then that we will change the focus to more constructive topics, like for instance what is the fundamental structure of the Shinto world-view? Or what is the meaning of “*harae*” in the context of world

global changes? These questions are just a few hints of what should be thought about in the field of Shinto comparative philosophy.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of the Shinto research's contribution to a desirable world model of globalization, that here I propose to call the "plural paradigm".

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