Reexamination of *Miya-za* Theory of Kazuo Higo

ICHIKAWA Hideyuki

Kazuo Higo built the foundation of *miya-za* studies in his two books titled "Study of *Miya-za* in Omi" and "Study of *Miya-za*," and was a researcher of *Mitogaku*, ancient history, ancient mythology, etc. His *miya-za* theory has to be positioned in his entire work, but conventional studies have not evaluated his *miya-za* theory from such viewpoint. Higo started developing his *miya-za* theory because he felt something common to ancient myths in the rituals of *miya-za*. His interest in *miya-za* did not weaken even after he started large-scale investigations on *miya-za* around 1935 (Showa 10). His definition of *miya-za* changed a lot through his years of research. He had to clarify its definition because he needed to make students gathered for his research understand what *miya-za* was, and also because the word *miya-za* was still unclear even for Shinto priests and local government officials who were the target of his research. The most distinctive feature of Higo's *miya-za* theory is that it included so-called *mura-za* (where all houses in a village are its members) in the category of *miya-za*. While this obscured the concept of *miya-za*, his theory had a large impact on subsequent studies, making the ideas of "*miya-za* equals a village" or "*miya-za* symbolizes a village." Current *miya-za* studies are not free from those fixed ideas. Around 1935 (Showa 10) when Higo was absorbed in *miya-za* studies, theocracy (unity of religion and politics) derived from *Mitogaku*, with which he had been familiar from his childhood, was hailed as a political ideology to lead the time, and the *miya-za* theory of Higo, who was under the pressure of government officials in his mythological studies, was also in such restriction. In other words, *miya-za* as an organization of a village to support the theocratic nation required the participation by all houses, and for that reason, *mura-za* had to be included in the category of *miya-za*. Higo's *miya-za* theory was produced in the specific era of Showa 10s. Therefore, it must be read as something subject to the restraints of that time. The definition of *miya-za* will also need to be reexamined from such viewpoint.

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