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Klaus Antoni, Julia Dolkovski
Louise Neubronner (eds.)

Japan's Imperial Mythology

The Dynamics of Sacred Narratives
in History and Politics



BUNKA - WENHUA

Tübinger Ostasiatische Forschungen
Tübingen East Asian Studies

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Klaus Antoni, Viktoria Eschbach-Szabo,
Robert Horres, Achim Mittag,
Monika Schrimpf, Gunter Schubert,
Hans Ulrich Vogel

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Contact:

Fresnostr. 2 D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-62 03 20 Fax +49 (0) 2 51-23 19 72

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Preface

Since their creation in ancient Japan, the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720) have undergone continuous processes of sacralization and desacralization that influence their status even in contemporary Japanese society. To examine these complex historical developments, the international symposium titled “Japan’s Imperial Mythology – De/Sacralization in the Context of Exegesis, Politics, and Folklore” was held at the University of Tübingen in November 2023.

The symposium took place in the framework of our research project “Sacred Narrative – The Political Dimension of Japanese Mythology,” which was part of the DFG research unit “De/Sacralization of Texts” (FOR2828). At this symposium, we examined the strategies employed throughout history to imbue Japanese imperial mythology with inviolable authority. Our project specifically focused on Japan’s imperial mythology as preserved in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. In this context, “sacralization” denotes the attribution of authority and relevance by specific communities of practice, while “desacralization” represents the process by which these attributes are removed from texts. The symposium aimed to deepen our understanding of these processes of sacralization and desacralization through the analysis and comparison of diverse case studies.

The *Kojiki*’s historical trajectory exemplifies these processes in relation to Japanese imperial mythology. Originally conceived as an instrument of imperial legitimization, the text lost prominence in the centuries following its completion. It was not until Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 and the Kokugaku movement’s rediscovery of the work—effectively constructing what scholars sometimes term a “new” *Kojiki*—that it regained significant cultural importance. By positioning the *Kojiki* as central to Japanese identity, the Kokugaku movement deliberately sacralized it as a fundamental source of Japanese thought, an interpretation that continues to bolster the text’s sacrality today.

The conference proceedings presented in this volume primarily examine two critical dimensions: exegetical analysis through textual discourse and

the political legitimation of rule. These proceedings reflect our project's core research objective, which was to investigate the evolving interpretations of Japanese imperial mythology from the pre-modern to the contemporary period. Guided by a historical-hermeneutical framework, we explored the construction of Japanese cultural identity through these foundational texts. The symposium's contributions encompass a wide range of scholarly perspectives, offering both focused analyses of Japan's imperial mythology and innovative comparative approaches that illuminate new theoretical horizons in the field.

This volume is arranged in reverse chronological order, beginning with contemporary interpretations and moving through historical periods to early Japanese mythology. The first section, "Myth in Contemporary Japan," delves into modern reinterpretations and applications of ancient mythology. Kikuko Hirafuji examines the relationship between the *Kojiki* myths and postwar nationalism through the lens of Jōmon period archaeology. Julia Dolkovski's chapter investigates the sacralization of imperial mythology in a modern translation of the *Kojiki* by right-wing author Takeda Tsuneyasu 竹田恒泰. Jun'ichi Isomae's contribution offers a critical analysis of mythology and ghost stories in relation to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and Daniel Schley concludes this section by examining concepts of nature in the mythological theories of Miki Kiyoshi 三木清 and Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男.

The second section, "Myth and Nationalism in Modern Japan," addresses the intersection of mythology and the formation of national identity. Marcin Lisiecki analyzes the *Kojiki*'s role in sacralizing political power using the example of the *Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義, and Michael Wachutka discusses the editorial compilation and dissemination of *Shinten* 神典, "Shinto's sacred scriptures." Sarah Rebecca Schmid's contribution rounds out this section with an analysis of Jingū kōgō's 神功皇后 representation in Meiji period media.

The volume's third section, "Myth in Early Modern Japan," focuses on the Early Modern Period and Kokugaku scholarship. Judit Árokay investigates the relationship between spoken and written language in Edo period poetic discourse. Louise Neubronner examines Peter Kempermann's work on the supposedly divine script called *jindai moji* 神代文字. Matthieu Felt

offers a fresh perspective on Motoori Norinaga's interpretation of *Nihon shoki*, and David Weiss analyzes the incorporation of Wu Taibo 吳泰伯 as a progenitor of the imperial line within Confucian state mythology.

The final section, "Myth in Premodern Japan," begins with Klaus Antoni's investigation of the Jinmu Tennō 神武天皇 myth and the establishment of 660 BCE as a foundational date. Raji C. Steineck gives an analysis of mythological elements in Zeami's 世阿弥 *Golden Island*, while Maral Andassova explores the relationship between emperors and local deities in the *Kojiki*. The volume concludes with Kazuo Matsumura's reconsideration of mythology about goddesses, with particular attention to the dual role of sun goddesses as both celestial deities and protectors of imperial authority.

We especially, and first of all, thank the authors for their contributions to this volume which offer invaluable new insights into the field of Japanese imperial mythology. Further, we express our profound gratitude to the institutions that have made both the conference and this volume possible. The German Research Foundation (DFG) has provided generous funding for our research project, as well as substantial support for the conference and the publication of its proceedings. Additionally, the Tübingen Forum for Science and Humanities kindly offered their beautiful venue and exceptional support throughout the planning process. We are also grateful to the administration of the University of Tübingen for their continued backing of our endeavors. Moreover, we wish to acknowledge the fundamental theoretical expertise shared by the members of the research unit "De/Sacralization of Texts." Finally, we sincerely thank our student assistants for their tireless work behind the scenes.

Tübingen, May 2025

Klaus Antoni, Julia Dolkovski, and Louise Neubronner

List of Abbreviations

HAZ	<i>Hirata Atsutane zenshū</i> 平田篤胤全集
MKZ	<i>Miki Kiyoshi zenshū</i> 三木清全集
MNZ	<i>Motoori Norinaga zenshū</i> 本居宣長全集
MOAG	<i>Mitt(h)eilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens</i>
NKBT	<i>Nihon koten bungaku taikai</i> 日本古典文学大系
NKT	<i>Nihon kagaku taikai</i> 日本歌学大系
NKBZ	<i>Nihon koten bungaku zenshū</i> 日本古典文学全集
NOAG	<i>Nachrichten der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens</i>
NST	<i>Nihon shisō taikai</i> 日本思想体系
OSBK	<i>Ōkura seishin bunka kenkyūjo</i> 大倉精神文化研究所
OSZ	<i>Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū</i> 折口信夫全集
SNKS	<i>Shinchō nihon koten shūsei</i> 新潮日本古典集成
SNKBZ	<i>Shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshū</i> 新編日本古典文学全集
UAZ	<i>Ueda Akinari zenshū</i> 上田秋成全集

MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Kojiki Myth and the Jōmon Period in Relation to Postwar Nationalism

Kikuko HIRAFUJI

*The Jōmon Period represents a pivotal era in Japanese prehistory, encompassing a sophisticated hunter-gatherer civilization from approximately 14,000 BCE to the fourth century BCE. During this formative period, artisans crafted intricate clay figurines and pottery that are now recognized as the foundational expressions of Japanese artistic tradition. In the post-World War II scholarly landscape, archaeological research on the Jōmon Period gained considerable momentum, generating nuanced theoretical interpretations. A particularly intriguing scholarly perspective emerged, drawing comparative analyses between fragmented archaeological clay figurines and mythological narratives. Specifically, researchers identified potential correlations between excavated artifacts and divine feminine figures such as Ōgetsuhime from the *Kojiki* and Ukemochi from the *Nihon shoki*, suggesting profound mythological continuities within Japanese cultural memory. The philosopher Umehara Takeshi developed a provocative theoretical framework that positioned Jōmon culture as the primordial wellspring of Japanese civilization. He audaciously characterized the Jōmon Period as harboring the “oldest culture in the world” and posited the existence of a remarkably advanced religious culture. Umehara’s argument was fundamentally intertwined with a nationalist narrative that sought to elevate and celebrate Japan’s cultural sophistication. The scholarly discourse linking Jōmon clay figurines to mythological goddesses became a complex intellectual endeavor, interweaving archaeological evidence, mythological interpretation, and nationalist cultural constructions. This chapter critically examines the intricate relationship between Jōmon clay figurines and the mythological narratives of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, as well as the dynamic interactions between post-war Japanese nationalism, archaeological interpretation, and mythological representation.*

Introduction

Jōmon culture, represented by Jōmon figurines and pottery, still captivates many Japanese people today. In bookstores, one will find numerous books on the Jōmon era and discussions about the mysterious patterns on Jōmon pottery and figurines—what they represent and the underlying philosophies behind them—are also lively. The trigger for the growing fascination with Jōmon culture and the Jōmon era in post-war Japan is said to have been the artist Okamoto Tarō's 岡本太郎 (1911–1996) “discovery” of the Jōmon era. Okamoto, known for works such as *Asu no shinwa* 明日の神話 (“The Myth of Tomorrow”) at Shibuya Station, expressed his astonishment at encountering Jōmon pottery in 1952 (“Yojigen to no taiwa” 3). Through his discovery of the beauty of Jōmon, Jōmon pottery not only became a starting point for Japanese art from an archaeological perspective but also claimed a position as the origin of the Japanese aesthetic consciousness.

Many prominent people, including Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 (1899–1972), became fascinated with Jōmon pottery and Jōmon clay figures, and discussions about Jōmon gained momentum. Some individuals, such as the philosopher Umehara Takeshi 梅原猛 (1925–2019), even sought to celebrate the virtues of Japanese culture through the praise of Jōmon culture. This can be seen as one manifestation of post-war Japanese nationalism.

In the year 1950, when Okamoto Tarō encountered Jōmon pottery, scholars of Japanese mythology, too, encountered the concept of the “Jōmon era.” Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, this field of study has consistently focused on clarifying the genealogy of Japanese mythology. Using comparative approaches, scholars sought the origins of mythological motifs and the divine characteristics of gods in other regions and cultures, considering the development of these elements while referencing non-mythological material culture as well. Of course, the question of “when” is an inherent part of these discussions. However, in Japan, discussing when mythological motifs and divine entities in Japanese mythology arrived in the country was, until a certain point, a challenging task.

This difficulty arose because Japanese history had been depicted as starting from the Age of the Gods or the mythical past. Let us look at the beginning of an elementary school history textbook from 1943 (*Shotōka*

kokushi; fig. 1). The narrative begins with a myth, which leads to the story of the successive emperors. Within this historical framework, discussing eras before the Kofun period posed challenges in both the study of history and mythology.

This situation changed in 1945. With the so-called Shinto Directive, edu-

<p>第一 神國</p> <p>一 高千穂の峯</p> <p>大内山の松のふどりは、大御代の御榮えをことほぎ、五十鈴川の清らかな流れは、日本の古い姿をそのままに傳へてゐます。遠い遠い神代の昔、伊弉諾尊、伊弉冉尊は、山川の眺めも美しい八つの島をお生みになりました。これを大八洲といひます。島々は黒潮たぎる大海原に浮城のやうに並んでゐました。つづいて多くの神々をお生みになりました。最後に、天照大神が天下の君としてお生まれになり、日本の國の基をおさだめになりました。</p>	<p>目録</p> <p>二 太宰府……………六十九</p> <p>三 鳳凰堂……………七十六</p> <p>第五 鎌倉武士</p> <p>一 源氏と平家……………八十四</p> <p>二 富士の巻狩……………九十二</p> <p>三 神風……………百二</p> <p>第六 吉野山</p> <p>一 建武のまつりごと……………百十四</p> <p>二 大義の光……………百二十五</p> <p>第七 八重の潮路</p> <p>一 金閣と銀閣……………百三十九</p> <p>二 八幡船と南蠻船……………百四十六</p> <p>三 國民のめざめ……………百五十六</p> <p>年表</p>
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Fig. 1. Excerpt from the *Shotōka kokushi* 初等科国史, 1943.

cational content that blurred the lines between mythology and history was eliminated from the school curriculum. Consequently, in the post-war era, new chronological divisions such as the Jōmon and Yayoi periods were adopted to categorize the prehistoric era liberated from the mythical age.

The word *jōmon* 縄文 originated in 1879 when Edward Sylvester Morse (1838–1925) used the term “cord marked pottery” in his investigation report on the Ōmori Shell Mound—*jōmon* being a translation for “cord

marks,” this type of pottery later became known as “Jōmon-style pottery.”¹ After the war, it was incorporated into history education as a chronological division. Archaeologist Yamada Yasuhiro 山田康弘 states: “The historical concepts of periods like the Jōmon and Yayoi eras that we use today were, in a sense, politically created under the new Japanese national system after the war to tell a new history of Japan” (*Tsukurareta jōmon jidai*, 61). Subsequently, Japan’s mythology also adopted the chronological division of the Jōmon era.

Japanese Mythology and the Jōmon Period

Research on the origins of Japanese mythology has been conducted since before the war. Representative researchers such as Matsumoto Nobuhiro 松本信廣 (1897–1981) and Mishina Shōei 三品彰英 (1902–1971), when discussing the “when” of lineages, only use terms like *jōdai* 上代 (“ancient times”), *kamiyo* 神代 (“Divine Age” or mythic times), and *kodai* 古代 (“ancient times”), and they do not clearly elaborate on chronological divisions.

The situation is different with Oka Masao 岡正雄 (1898–1982). He studied historical ethnology in Vienna under Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954) since 1929. Historical ethnology is a research method that analyzes mythology, religion, material culture, social forms, etc., establishes the regional “cultural circle” (“Kulturkreis”) shared by all of these, and historically clarifies their spread and development. From 1930 to 1933, Oka wrote his dissertation, titled *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan (Cultural Layers in Ancient Japan)*, based on Schmidt’s cultural circle theory. In this work, he postulates cultural layers I to VII, identifying VII as the Kofun period. Prior to that, he classifies I as Mesolithikum (Middle Stone Age), II to V as Neolithikum (New Stone Age), and VI as Aeneolithikum (a later phase of the New Stone Age). In the Neolithikum layer (III), Oka mentions myths related to the killing of an agricultural goddess by water, sea, and moon deities, as well as the origin of grains (*Kulturschichten* 1040–43).

¹ For the usage of “cord marked pottery,” see, e.g., Morse, *Shell Mounds of Omori* 36.

Furthermore, his dissertation asserts that Japanese culture and mythology are polygenetic and multilayered.

During Oka's time in Vienna, the term "Jōmon" did not appear in his research. In 1940, he returned to Japan and, missing the opportunity to return to Vienna, dedicated himself to establishing an ethnic research institute in Japan. In 1942, the decision was made to establish the *Minzoku kenkyūjo* 民族研究所 as a research institute directly under the Ministry of Education, and it was officially inaugurated in 1943. Oka became the director of the general affairs department and played a central role in the institute until the end of the war. During this period, Oka largely abandoned the historical-ethnological research he had conducted in Vienna and instead collaborated with Japanese authorities on ethnic policies, conducting research for the purpose of governing ethnic groups.² After the war, the institute was disbanded, and Oka secluded himself in his hometown in Nagano Prefecture, where he led a self-sufficient life.

The decisive moment for Oka's return to the academic community was the roundtable discussion titled "The Origin of Japanese Ethnicity and Culture and the Formation of the Japanese Nation" ("Nihon minzoku: Bunka no genryū to nihon kokka no keisei" 日本民族: 文化の源流と日本國家の形成) held in 1948 with Egami Namio 江上波夫 (1906–2002), Yawata Ichirō 八幡一郎 (1902–1987), and Ishida Eiichiro 石田英一郎 (1903–1968).³ This discussion was based on a report concerning the contents of Oka's dissertation and marked Oka's encounter with "Jōmon."

During the discussion, Oka revisited the theory of cultural amalgamation he had presented in *Kulturschichten in Alt-Japan*. He roughly proposed the following explanation for the complex cultural interactions that occurred in Japan:

² For a detailed discussion of Oka Masao's research during the fascist era, see Hirafuji, "Shokuminchi teikoku nihon no shinwa."

³ The proceedings of this roundtable were first published in 1949 under the title "Nihon minzoku: Bunka no genryū to nihon kokka no keisei – Taidan to tōron" 日本民族: 文化の源流と日本國家の形成 – 對談と討論 in the journal *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 民族学研究 and later republished as *Nihon minzoku no genryū* 日本民族の源流 in 1995.

(I) Matriarchal Society: Characterized by village communities, matrilineal families, and a tendency towards polygamy.

(II) Matriarchal Society: Characterized by village communities, large matrilineal extended families, and female leaders. It is somewhat influenced by patriarchal elements.

(III) Patriarchal Society: Village communities organized by age groups. The society consists of huts for young people, huts for menstruating individuals, and huts for childbirth. Public ceremonies mark the transition to adulthood. Some influence of matriarchy is still observable.

(IV) Patriarchal Society: A society of large families, structured into three social organizations. It engages in marriage with external groups, has groups based on professions, and maintains a military-like organization. This society experiences the emergence of slavery and dynasties. (Egami et al. 207–77)

Oka's statements prompted archaeologist Yawata Ichirō to emphasize the importance of considering issues related to Jōmon and Yayoi cultures. In the second part of the dialogue, Yawata provided detailed explanations about Jōmon and Yayoi cultures, including discussions on the distribution of excavated artifacts, which led to a thorough exchange of questions and debates. In response to this explanation, Oka shared several insights regarding the overlap of Jōmon and Yayoi cultures with the cultural circle theory and their relationship with mythology. It is undeniable that Yawata's observations during this roundtable provided a Jōmon perspective to Oka's cultural circle theory.

Later, Oka revisited his theory and in 1958, in “Nihon bunka no kiso kōzō” 日本文化の基礎構造, he presented an almost finalized diagram of cultural amalgamation.⁴ It was as follows:

⁴ This revised version of Oka's theory was republished in his book *Ijin sono hoka: Nihon minzoku – bunka no genryū to nihon kokka no keisei* 異人その他: 日本民族 – 文化の源流と日本国家の形成 in 1979. All citations are taken from this later edition.

(I) Matrilineal, secret society, and taro cultivation – Hunter-gatherer culture.

Jōmon Period, Middle to Late Phase.

(II) Matrilineal, upland rice cultivation – Hunter-gatherer culture.

Jōmon Period, Late Phase.

(III) Patrilineal, “xara” clan, field cultivation – Hunting, livestock-raising culture.

Yayoi Period, Early Phase.

(IV) Male-oriented, age-stratified, paddy rice cultivation – Fishing culture.

Yayoi Period, bearing significant elements considered southern in nature.

(V) Patrilineal, “uji” clan-based – Dominant culture.

Cultural traits of the ruling families, centered around the Imperial clan, around the third and fourth centuries. (Oka, *Ijin* 19)

These cultural amalgamations were not only based on archaeological artifacts and material culture but also considered various festivals, customs, as well as myths recorded in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). Oka’s discussion thus brought the viewpoint of “Jōmon culture” into the discourse on the origins of Japanese mythology. This hypothesis would later be recognized by post-war mythologists as a starting point for the systematic study of Japanese mythologies. Among them, Ōbayashi Taryō 大林太良 (1929–2001) and Yoshida Atsuhiko 吉田敦彦 were notably influenced by Oka and went on to conduct systematic research on Japanese mythology, incorporating the “Jōmon” perspective into their studies.

Hainuwele and Ōgetsuhime

In interpreting the myth of the slain goddess, scholars of Japanese mythology have come to grapple in earnest with the problem of Jōmon culture.

Japanese mythology tells of the incarnation of crops from the corpse of a slain goddess. According to the *Kojiki*, when Susanoo asked Ōgetsuhime for a meal, the goddess produced food from her nose, mouth, and buttocks, cooked it, and offered it to him. When Susanoo saw this, he became angry and killed Ōgetsuhime. Then, silkworms and crops were born from her dead body. Almost the same story is told in the *Nihon shoki* about Tsukiyomi's killing of Ukemochi.

Regarding this type of crop-origin myth where life emerges from the body of a goddess, Oka proposes that it was introduced to Japan during the late Jōmon period as part of the cultural amalgamation of “Matrilineal, upland rice cultivation – Hunter-gatherer culture” (II). This myth was first discussed in relation to the origins of Japanese mythology by German ethnologist Adolf Ellegard Jensen (1899–1965), who studied the world of the Altpflanzer, a people who did not cultivate (or did not know about the cultivation of) grains, potatoes, fruit trees, and other crops. Jensen conducted research on the mythology and rituals of the Wemale people on the island of Ceram in eastern Indonesia. He argued that a central theme in this cultural sphere was a myth where crops originate from the body of a slain deity. This myth, associated with the name of the slain female in Wemale mythology, came to be known as the “Hainuwele-type myth” (Jensen).

According to Wemale mythology, Hainuwele was a girl born from a coconut palm who had the uncanny ability to excrete plates and other objects of value to people. At first, people were happy to receive her excrement, but gradually they began to think she was creepy, buried her in a hole, and killed her. Her adoptive father Ameta found Hainuwele's body, chopped it into pieces, and buried it in the square. Then different kinds of potatoes were produced from the various parts of the corpse. They became the staple food of the Wemale people. Jensen believes that the myth of killing the goddess and praying for the harvest of crops was also expressed in the form of rituals that evoked the killing of the goddess. He stated that the practices found among the early cultivators, such as rituals involving offerings, cannibalism, and headhunting, were reenactments of the myth.

Ōbayashi Taryō and Yoshida Atsuhiko regarded Adolf Ellegard Jensen's research as a valuable reference when interpreting the myths of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi. They both focused on the similarities between the

myths of Ōgetsuhime, Ukemochi, and Hainuwele, noting the parallels between them. Initially, Ōbayashi Taryō, in 1961, expanded on Oka's theory that the myths of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi were introduced to Japan during the late Jōmon period as part of the cultural amalgamation of "Matrilineal, upland rice cultivation – Hunter-gatherer culture" (II). He pointed out the cultural similarities shared by Japan with the slash-and-burn cultivation communities in southern China and northern Indochina, such as the Miao and Yao people. For instance, he discussed the Yao mythology, which includes a story of upland rice originating from the goddess's body (milk), drawing parallels to the myth of Ōgetsuhime (Ōbayashi, *Nihon shinwa* 24).

Yoshida, on the other hand, published a paper entitled "Les excréments de la déesse et l'origine de l'agriculture" in France in 1966. He points out that the myth of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi is a myth of the Hainuwele type. He then introduces Oka's theory that Melanesian culture was brought to Japan in the mid-Jōmon period, suggesting the possibility that what Jensen characterized as archaic cultivator culture had come to Japan during this time (Yoshida 717–28).

Subsequently, while Ōbayashi agreed with Yoshida's assertion that the Ōgetsuhime-type myth is of the Hainuwele type, he concluded that this myth is not associated with the ancient cultivation culture of the Altpflanzler but rather linked to slash-and-burn cultivation culture. He argued that its arrival in Japan was at the end of the Jōmon period (Ōbayashi, *Inasaku* 96–98). Both Ōbayashi and Yoshida thus agreed on the point that the Ōgetsuhime myth is of the Hainuwele type, but they differed regarding when it arrived in Japan, its associated culture, and beliefs.

In 1976, Yoshida published the book *Nihon shinwa no genryū* 日本神話の源流, in which he suggests the possibility of an "early agriculturalist culture" in mid-Jōmon period Japan and proposes that the Ōgetsuhime myth was present in that culture. In doing so, he paid new attention to "broken" Jōmon clay figurines.

It is generally accepted that hunting, fishing, and gathering were the main livelihoods of the Jōmon period. However, some archaeologists have argued that agriculture was practiced in the Chūbu and Kantō regions during the mid-Jōmon period. One of them, Fujimori Eiichi 藤森栄一 (1911–

1973), based on his research at the Idojiri site in Nagano Prefecture, developed the theory of Jōmon agriculture, noting the presence of clay figurines that were destroyed in the process (197). Numerous broken clay figurines have been excavated from mid-Jōmon period sites. Many of these figurines can be interpreted as female, and some show signs of deliberate burial. Fujimori believed that the treatment of these damaged clay figurines was similar to the myths of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi. Yoshida, taking these archaeological interpretations into account, argues in *Nihon Shinwa no genryū* that the Hainuwele-type myth may have arrived in Japan during the mid-Jōmon period, accompanying an early agriculturalist culture (75). He then considers Izanami, who produced fire from her body and various useful deities from her vomit and excrement when she died, to be a goddess of the Hainuwele type. He also proposes that the figure of Yamamba (*yamauba* 山姥, “mountain hag”), who is mentioned in old tales as a man-eater but also as a fertile woman, has the same characteristics. Additionally, Yoshida compares Izanami’s myth of the origin of fire with myths from Melanesia, where fire is believed to exist within a woman’s body, and concludes that both share origins in early agriculturalist cultures. Regarding Jōmon culture, he points out that the human-faced figurines with hanging handles (known as Jōmon lamps) from the mid-Jōmon period were representations of Izanami and Hainuwele (Yoshida, *Chiisa ko; Mukashi banashi*).

While this theory was being presented, a large number of broken clay figurines were found among remains from the late early to mid-Jōmon period at the Shakado site in Yamanashi Prefecture, where excavations began in 1980. These figurines, numbering over a thousand, were mostly found in a shattered state (fig. 2), and based on excavation conditions, it was deduced that they were intentionally broken. The continued discovery of these shattered figurines seems to have heightened interest in the theory connecting the origins of Ōgetsuhime, Izanami, and even the mountain hags from folktales to Jōmon culture—an issue that is widely discussed alongside the mystery of the broken clay figurines even beyond the field of mythology.

Archaeologists were divided in their evaluations. Some favorably assessed Yoshida’s theory as suggesting a possible interpretation of Jōmon-



Fig. 2. Shakado Museum of Jomon Culture, Yamanashi, photographed by the author.

period clay figurines. On the other hand, Esaka Teruya 江坂輝弥 (1919–2015) expressed a cautious stance when linking Yoshida’s and Mizuno’s theory of broken figurines to goddess-killing rituals. He states, “From the standpoint of archaeology, which emphasizes empirical evidence, there still seem to be some issues that need careful consideration” (Esaka 256). In 2009, the British Museum held a large-scale exhibition titled *The Power of Dogu*, which brought significant international attention to Jōmon figurines. To commemorate the return of these figurines, the Tokyo National Museum organized the exhibition *Kokuhō: Dogū ten* 国宝: 土偶展 (2009–2010), where various “Venus figures of Jōmon” were gathered, attracting a substantial number of visitors and generating discussion. In the exhibition catalog, Inoue Yōichi 井上洋一 discusses multiple theories about the role of figurines, including the theory proposed by Yoshida and others which identified them as Hainuwele-type goddesses. He states the

following: “Both perspectives are fascinating. However, they are primarily based on societies with agriculture as a foundation, and there is some hesitation in applying these interpretations to the Jōmon society, which was at the stage of a hunting and gathering economy” (Inoue 119). Associating the broken Jōmon figurines with Hainuwele-type goddesses inevitably links to the theory of agriculture during the Jōmon period. This is a point that is not easily accepted in current archaeology.

Regarding how far one can trace the gods and the flow of mythology as conveyed by the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, Mishina Shōei, a mythologist who conducted comparative studies of Japanese and northern myths, expressed the following in 1973:

I believe that the beginning of rice cultivation, or the Yayoi period, is the start of the Chronicles’ mythology, and that the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* also contain old elements from that period. I do not have much knowledge of the Jōmon period, but I cannot think of any myths from the Jōmon period. At the very least, I believe that the Yayoi period, when rice cultivation began, represents the era when mythological seedlings took root and the nascent forms of myths started to develop. What about the Jōmon period? The Jōmon period seems to be so long ago that it does not seem to be connected with our history. (Suenaga et. al 16)

When it comes to Shinto, it is evident that from the Yayoi period onwards mirrors and *magatama* 勾玉 beads were used. There are also descriptions in the third-century *Wajinden* 倭人伝 that evoke the concept of *misogi* 禊, a form of purification. Therefore, it is considered possible to trace the origins of Shinto back to the Kofun period, extending to around the Yayoi period. Considering the gap between Jōmon period *dogū* 土偶 figures and the later Shinto rituals from the Yayoi period onward, Mishina’s observations seem plausible. Studies attempting to find mythical elements in Jōmon *dogū* figures include the works of scholars like Nelly Naumann (1922–2000) from Germany and Ōshima Naoyuki 大島直行 (Naumann, *Naki isachiru kami Susano* and *Hikari no shinwa kōko*; Ōshima, *Tsuki to hebi*). However, it can be said that these discussions rarely touch upon the realm of

archaeology. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the variety of affirmative, negative, and mixed opinions from various fields, including archaeology.

The discussion presented so far leads to the following conclusion: The myth of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi is told by the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, compiled in the eighth century. It is similar to the Hainuwele myth, and there is no dispute that it is, in fact, a Hainuwele-type myth. However, Jensen, who discussed the Hainuwele-type myth, associated it with the culture of early agriculturalists. If this is the case, it suggests the presence of an early agriculturalist culture in Japan as well. We thus arrive at the following questions: Are the broken Jōmon figurines representative of Hainuwele-type goddesses? Does this imply that the prototypes of the Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi myths originated in the Jōmon period? And does the existence of these figurines serve as evidence that agriculture was introduced to Japan during the mid-Jōmon period, indicating the practice of early cultivation? We cannot make such a judgment here. However, what can be asserted is that the discussions stemming from Japanese mythology have expanded beyond the subject matter, with scholars delving into theories regarding the origins of Japanese culture.

Jōmon Nationalism and Mythology

Let us now return to Okamoto Tarō. In *Nihon no dentō* 日本の伝統 (1956), he writes the following:

To the modern mind, this may seem bizarre, but this overwhelming sense of beauty was the pride of our Japanese ancestors. It still lies deep in the undercurrent of our blood.

Can you not feel the shuddering resonance that it evokes?

These intensely powerful aesthetics, seemingly non-Japanese, are something we may want to reclaim as our own once again. (2)

Okamoto “discovered” the beauty of the Jōmon earthenware, asserting that this aesthetic consciousness has been inherited by contemporary Japanese people. His emphasis on the continuity between Jōmon culture and the

present is notable, and this impressive discourse on Jōmon culture has influenced not only art history but also cultural history, the history of civilization, and discussions about Japan in general. One can find a typical example of this in the work of the philosopher Umehara Takeshi.

Umehara, known for his extensive writings on Japanese culture, stage plays, and novels, began discussing Jōmon culture in the 1980s. He emphasized that it is the foundational culture of Japan. For instance, in his 1983 work *Nihon no shinsō* 日本の深層, he referred to Jōmon culture as the “oldest culture in the world” and stated that “there is no doubt that there was a fairly advanced religious culture in the Jōmon period.” Umehara went on to express that “in a sense, the culture of the Jōmon period has become the basic culture of Japan. Without understanding this Jōmon period culture, one cannot truly comprehend Japanese culture” (Umehara 20).

The mythology of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* includes one episode which revolves around the negotiation between the Heavenly Gods, led by Amaterasu, and the Earthly Gods, led by Ōkuninushi, over the transfer of the land known as Ashihara no nakatsukuni. This negotiation ultimately leads to the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild, Ho no Ninigi. Regarding this mythology, Umehara interprets the Heavenly Gods as representing a farming and agricultural society, while the Earthly Gods represent the Jōmon people. He conceptualizes the antagonistic coexistence of Jōmon and Yayoi elements as constitutive elements of Japanese culture.

In this way, the attitude of contrasting Jōmon and Yayoi and placing higher value on Jōmon is emphasized, as seen in a dialog with the writer Nakagami Kenji 中上健次 (1946–1992). In this dialog, titled *Kimi wa yayoi-jin ka jōmonjin ka* 君は弥生人か縄文人か (1984), Umehara identifies Jōmon in the atmosphere and background of the Kumano region’s festivals. Regarding the fire festival, he states:

Izanami no mikoto, the goddess, gives birth to the fire god Kagutsuchi and dies by being burned. The current festival of *Otō matsuiri* on Mount Kamikura is also, after all, a festival of the fire god. So, I think the worship of the fire god is fundamentally Jōmon. Such places still preserve that. (Umehara and Nakagami 32)

Concerning Izanami, Yoshida points out in *Mukashi banashi no kōkogaku* 昔話の考古学 (1992) that she was a goddess of the Hainuwele type, dating back to the culture of the archaic cultivators, as she produced fire and various useful deities from her vomit and excrement from within her body when she died. He argues that the presence of mid-Jōmon period *tsurite* 釣手 earthenware with a handle in the shape of a human (Jōmon lamps) represents Izanami as well as Hainuwele. Along with the myths of Ōgetsuhime and Ukemochi, Izanami therefore also dates back to the Jōmon period (Yoshida, *Mukashi banashi*). Umehara further claims that this belief in Izanami has continuity with modern festivals in Kumano.

Later on, Umehara contrasts Jōmon culture (civilization) based on hunting and gathering with agricultural and pastoral civilization, considering the latter as the “path to destruction.” He emphasizes the need to reclaim the worldview of the Jōmon people in the present (Umehara and Nakagami 113–14).

The culture of the Jōmon period forms the foundation of Japanese culture, with the Yayoi culture from other regions overlapping it and becoming the dominant culture. Since this situation is said to continue to the present day, praising the Jōmon civilization leads to criticism of modern civilization. It can be said that the theory of Jōmon culture led to the theory of Japanese culture and the Japanese people and became a single ideology.

It should be noted here that Umehara Takeshi and others who developed the cult of praise for Jōmon also argued in favor of animism around the 1980s. Umehara discusses the value of animism and polytheistic civilizations in opposition to monotheistic Western civilizations on various occasions. According to him, monotheistic religions like Christianity contribute to environmental destruction by considering humans as superior to the natural world. Umehara advocates for the revitalization of animism, particularly in Japan, and praises the enduring value of animism in Japanese civilization. This can be seen as a perspective that transforms “animism” into nationalism.⁵

⁵ For a discussion of this issue, see my chapter “Animizumu” in the 2017 volume *Shūkyō no tanjō*.

Umehara considers animism, along with totemism, to be constitutive elements of Jōmon culture (civilization). In his view, the discourse on animism and Jōmon culture (civilization) was set in contrast with Western civilizations or incoming cultures, becoming something that contemporary Japanese people should reclaim.

Conclusion

In the postwar period, when Japan's economy was experiencing dynamic growth, the source of the force that made Japan an economic superpower was analyzed from a variety of perspectives. A notable example is Ezra Feivel Vogel's (1930–2020) work *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (1979), which examines Japan's success from different angles. During this time, discussions about the nature of the Japanese people also emerged, with a focus on culture and religion, particularly animism and Jōmon culture (civilization). Mythology also played a supportive role in this discourse.

Okamoto Tarō's "discovery of beauty" in Jōmon pottery and the "discovery of the goddess of Japanese mythology" in Jōmon clay figurines through the study of mythology stimulated scholars' imagination about prehistoric Japan beyond the space of their respective specialized knowledge. While many archaeologists maintained a cautious approach based on the careful research of excavated materials, Jōmon culture theory evolved into an ideological movement that involved intellectuals. This movement coincided with the desire to unravel the origins and source of Japanese culture. While researchers of mythology primarily discussed the continuity between Jōmon culture and Japanese mythology, in the 1980s, it unintentionally became part of an ideological movement that sought to believe in the connection between modern Japanese culture, the Japanese people, and the Jōmon period.

In 2021, the Tono Municipal Museum held an exhibition entitled *Tōno monogatari to tōno no jōmon bunka* 遠野物語と遠野の縄文文化. It explained how traces of Jōmon culture could be found in *Tōno monogatari*, written by Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875–1962) in the Meiji period. Two years

later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was criticized for posting a message about the Jōmon period on *X* (formerly *Twitter*), claiming that it was a rare time in human history when people lived by hunting and gathering in harmony with nature (*Gaimushō*). This is not surprising, because if we consider the history of the world, most regions lived for a long time as hunter-gatherers in harmony with nature. This is by no means limited to the Jōmon period in Japan. Jōmon nationalism thus continues to persist until this day, and Japanese mythology is still being utilized as part of it. It is pivotal to engage with mythology in an academic manner while keeping an eye on these movements.

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Connecting Japan to its Mythological Past A Discussion of Takeda Tsuneyasu's *Gendaigo Kojiki*

Julia DOLKOVSKI

The contemporary discourse surrounding Kojiki and Nihon shoki is marked by two contrasting approaches to the two texts: On the one hand, these ancient sources of Japanese mythology serve as a wellspring of inspiration for creatives to supplement their stories in varying degrees, be it in a written or digital format. On the other hand, the two texts have not yet lost their ideological potential. They can therefore serve as building blocks for an idealized Japanese past and a unique Japanese identity.

One example for this approach to the mythology of Kojiki and Nihon shoki is the conservative author and YouTuber Takeda Tsuneyasu. In his various publications and videos, Takeda promotes a history of the Japanese people more ancient and sophisticated than any other—a history centered on the idea of an unbroken imperial lineage and built on a fundament constructed of myths. This chapter aims to showcase the most prominent arguments presented by Takeda in his modern translation of the Kojiki titled Gendaigo Kojiki and contextualizes them before the background of discourses surrounding a cultural identity of Japan. Ultimately, it will become apparent that Takeda's Gendaigo Kojiki stands as a poignant example for the sacralization of especially the Kojiki in contemporary Japan.

Introduction

Japan's imperial mythology as portrayed in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720) is marked by a history of countless exegetes forming their own interpretation of the work. After remaining in the shadows of the *Nihon shoki* for some centuries following its compilation, the *Kojiki*

was positioned at the center of Japanese superiority and identity by Kokugaku scholars like Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) as well as by political powers since the Meiji period.

Given the ideological significance established by Kokugaku scholars and built upon since the Meiji Restoration, conservative circles in contemporary Japan still point to episodes found in both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* when arguing for their viewpoints (Antoni, “Political Mythology” 25). The right-wing author and YouTuber Takeda Tsuneyasu 竹田恒泰 is a poignant example for this. He promotes, among other adjacent topics, the sovereignty of the imperial family and the importance of the *Kojiki*. As this chapter will show, Takeda actively uses his *Gendaigo Kojiki* 現代語古事記 (2011), a modern translation of the ancient text, to connect the Japanese people and imperial family of today with their mythical counterparts. After introducing Takeda as a person and author, the aim will be to trace his line of argumentation regarding the unique nature of Japan and the Japanese imperial line in the *Gendaigo Kojiki* and contextualize it within the larger discourse on the *Kojiki* as a source for a Japanese identity. The analysis of the *Gendaigo Kojiki* will focus on the commentary at the end of each translated section, because this is where Takeda formulates his ideas about the importance of the *Kojiki* for contemporary Japan.

Takeda Tsuneyasu as Author and YouTuber

Born in 1975 as the oldest son of the businessman and former president of the Japanese Olympic Committee Takeda Tsunekazu 竹田恒和, Takeda Tsuneyasu is a member of a former imperial branch family (*kyū miyake* 旧宮家). The Takeda branch family was founded during the Meiji period by Takeda’s great-grandfather Takeda no miya Tsunehisa and his wife Masako, the imperial princess and sixth daughter of Meiji Tennō,¹ but lost its imperial status in 1947 (Takeda, *Katararenakatta kōzokutachi no shin-jitsu* 6–7). Nevertheless, Takeda’s descent from the imperial line seems to

¹ The full titles for Takeda’s great-grandparents are Takeda no miya Tsunehisa-ō 竹田宮恒久王 (1882–1919) and Tsunehisa ōhi Masako naishinnō 恒久王妃昌子内親王 (1888–1940).

function as an integral part of his credibility (Hall 155–56). His heritage is proudly mentioned in author biographies for his publications and whenever he is introduced in articles and interviews.² In his book *Katararenakatta kōzokutachi no shinjitsu* 語られなかった皇族たちの真実, Takeda discusses not only the history and purpose of imperial branch families, which he sees in the preservation of the male line,³ but also his views on the emperor system as a whole and his own role within it. He, for example, seems to derive great meaning from his few interactions with the imperial family and expresses great pride in being a fourth-generation descendant of Meiji Tennō (Takeda, *Katararenakatta kōzokutachi no shinjitsu* 10, 23).

Takeda's wish to support Japan and the imperial family takes shape in his *YouTube* videos and publications, many of which touch on the subject of the emperor in one way or the other. Aside from books on popular science and history, Takeda also repeatedly attempted to publish middle school history textbooks, but all except the latest installment from 2024 were rejected by the Ministry for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, Monbu kagaku shō 文部科学省).⁴ His *YouTube* channel faced similar rejection in March 2018 when it was banned in the course of an online campaign against right-wing creators on *YouTube*, the so called *Neto uyo haru no ban matsuri* ネットウヨ春の BAN 祭り (“Internet Rightist Spring Ban Festival,” Hall 150, 157). This was only a temporary

² See, for instance, the *Tōkyō Shinbun* article “Takeda Tsuneyasu-shi no haiso kakutei wo uke” 竹田恒泰氏の敗訴確定を受け, which describes a lawsuit between Takeda and a scholar of military history, Yamazaki Masahiro 山崎雅弘, and “Tsuneyasu Takeda: Protecting the Unique Story of Japan’s Imperial Line” by Jason Morgan, associate professor at Reitaku University. In his article, Morgan reflects on and praises Takeda’s speech during the Reitaku Open College special speaker series (*Reitaku ōpun kareiji tokubetsu kōenkai*, 麗澤オープンカレッジ特別講演会) in 2022.

³ The main purpose of these families was, indeed, to ensure the continuation of the direct male lineage without the need of adoption (Sugiyama Lebra 59). Although this is purely speculative, Takeda’s fixation on maintaining the male lineage, for example expressed in *Katararenakatta kōzokutachi no shinjitsu* (34–51, 68–80), might be connected to this heritage.

⁴ Takeda’s textbooks from the years 2018 through 2021 were published as *Monbu kagaku shō kentei fugōkaku kyōkasho* 文部科学省検定不合格教科書, using their rejection as a prominent selling point.

setback, however, as the viewer count on his new channel “*Kōshiki Takeda Tsuneyasu channeru 2* 「公式」竹田恒泰チャンネル 2 recovered quickly and has grown steadily since then (Shino et al.; Hall 155, 157). On this channel, Takeda discusses a variety of subjects including the imperial system, politics, environmental issues, and culture. He has also produced a series of videos titled *Takeda gakkō* 竹田学校 in which he aims to teach his viewers about the history of Japan. This series not only includes videos on the historical periods of Japan but also touches on the mythical age as recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. The two texts, especially the *Kojiki*, are treated as indisputable sources containing not only “truth” (*shinjitsu* 真実), but historical “facts” (*jijitsu* 事実) (Takeda, “Takeda gakkō: Rekishi nyūmonhen (3); Takeda, “Takeda gakkō: Rekishi nyūmonhen (8)”). The same approach to the two ancient sources can be seen in the *Gendaigo Kojiki* as well as in other publications by Takeda and plays an integral role in understanding their sacralization.

Considering the sheer number of Takeda’s videos and publications, there are many parts of his narrative surrounding Japan’s early emperors, the myths, and their significance for modern Japan that cannot be discussed here. Recurring issues that are of great importance to him are the wish to return to what Takeda understands as traditional Japanese customs and values, the wish to protect the emperor system, and the lament that Japanese history and culture is not taught accurately in school. They are connected to the idea of Japan being different and superior to the West in a cultural, spiritual, and moral sense. In *Nihon wa naze sekai de ichiban ninki ga aru no ka* 日本はなぜ世界でいちばん人気があるのか, Takeda uses Japan’s global popularity as a starting point to explain what makes Japan so special and noteworthy to foreign observers while the Japanese people themselves feel little pride in their country (3). To do this, he highlights six reasons for Japan’s popularity in the respective chapters of the book: Japanese food, craftsmanship, and language, as well as Japan’s spirit of harmony and peace, its harmony with nature and the kami, and lastly the importance and

special status of the emperor.⁵ For a foreign audience, popular culture such as anime and manga can function as an easy entryway to all things Japanese, eventually leading to an understanding of the “Japanese spirit” (*nihon seishin* 日本精神). This in turn would help Japan to take on an important role internationally (Takeda, *Nihon* 27).

When it comes to his Japanese readers, however, Takeda wishes for them to adopt the country’s traditional value system again. If they were to do so, the “Japanese civilization” (*nihon bunmei* 日本文明) could be rediscovered and Japan could shine in its old glory. One important step towards this goal, Takeda explains, is learning about the country’s history and myths (*Nihon* 207).

This special connection between the myths and the preservation of Japan as a flourishing nation is highlighted in the introduction to the *Gendaigo Kojiki*.⁶ Here, Takeda quotes a statement supposedly made by the English historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975): “A people will fall to ruin without exception, when the children have not learned its myths by the age of twelve or thirteen” (十二、十三歳くらいまでに民族の神話を学ばなかった民族は、例外なく滅んでいる; *Gendaigo Kojiki* 6). It has to be noted that as of writing this chapter, it was not possible to trace this assessment back to its supposed origin. Takeda and other proponents of this quote remain silent on the exact work by Toynbee that this quote was taken from and the National Diet Library’s (NDL) Collaborative Reference Database, too, was unable to identify the correct source in 2013.⁷ Further investigation is needed, but for now, the observation that this supposed statement by Toynbee is referenced in several publications without properly citing the

⁵ See the chapters “Itadakimasu” いただきます (いただきます) (32–56), “Takumi” 匠 (たくみ) (58–83), “Mottainai” 勿体無い (もったいない) (86–113), “Nagomi” 和み (なごみ) (116–41), “Yaoyorozu” 八百万 (やおよろず) (144–68), and “Sumeragi” 天皇 (すめらぎ) (170–98).

⁶ All references from the *Gendaigo Kojiki* are taken from the “Pocket Edition” (*Pocketto ban* ポケット版) of the book published in 2016.

⁷ The National Diet Library’s Collaborative Reference Database gives two examples for publications where this quote is given in a similar manner to Takeda: Tomatsu Keigi’s 戸松慶義 *Seizon hōsoku ron* 生存法則論 (1959) and Yoshikawa Masafumi’s 吉川正文 *Shishi shintō to jinja* 志士神道と神社 (1986). Another more recent example is the book *Kojiki no monogatari* 古事記の物語 by Kobayashi Seimei 小林晴明 and Miyazaki Midori 宮崎みどり (264).

original publication must suffice, especially since its purpose is evident. The notion of a people perishing if their myths are forgotten functions as a motivator for communicating the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* to a wider audience. For this, Takeda's *Gendaigo Kojiki* serves as a prime example. Takeda appeals to every Japanese person to read the *Kojiki* at least once regardless of whether they like its myths or not because it is through reading the *Kojiki* that the people can rediscover their pride as Japanese and Japan can be saved from certain demise (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 6).

Learning about the Japanese Past and the Emperor in the *Gendaigo Kojiki*

Takeda begins his *Gendaigo Kojiki* with contemplating the lack of connection a contemporary readership might feel towards the *Kojiki*. This is a misconception, he states, as the *Kojiki* is connected to each and every Japanese person (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 3). In the following paragraphs, he gives a short overview of the *Kojiki*'s history and highlights its sources, structure, and date of completion, coming to the conclusion that "to read the *Kojiki* means knowing the origin of the emperor, that is, knowing what Japan is and what the Japanese people are" (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 5). The text is portrayed as conveying the Japanese views on nature, life and death, as well as history, and as the most reliable way to understanding what Takeda calls the "traditional spirit of the Japanese people," the *yamato gokoro* 大和心 (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 5). In this evaluation, Takeda follows Norinaga who, as he puts it, elevated the *Kojiki* to the status of the text which best communicates the "emotions" (*shinjō* 心情) of the ancient Japanese (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 5). In order to convey this aspect of the text more effectively, Takeda not only translates the text into modern Japanese and highlights the names of important figures but also supplements each passage with explanations. These sections are, however, less focused on an academic discussion or possible origins of the myths and more on how the respective myth reflects the legitimacy of imperial rule as well as the uniqueness of Japanese traits and customs.

The introduction to the *Gendaigo Kojiki* stands exemplary for the remaining book: The *Kojiki* is constructed as something important to contemporary Japan, because through this text alone, the true nature of the country and its people can be understood. Being the ultimate source for knowing Japan and the (supposedly) accurate history of the imperial family, the *Kojiki* is elevated to a status of absolute spiritual and political authority. Takeda argues that its myths, namely Amaterasu commanding Ninigi no mikoto to rule over the land during the *tenson kōrin* 天孫降臨 episode, even formed the basis for Article 1 of both the Meiji and the modern Japanese constitution (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 126).⁸ Thus, many parts of his explanation serve but one purpose: justifying the divine status of the imperial family.

Legitimizing Imperial Rule: Why the Heavenly Deities Rule the Land

The majority of Takeda's argumentation sets out to explain why the descendants of Amaterasu are the rightful rulers over Japan, instead of Ōkuninushi who finished the creation of the land. For this, he gives four reasons, all rooted deeply in the *Kojiki*'s mythology.

Firstly, Takeda maintains that Ashihara no nakatsukuni, the Central Land of the Reed Plains, follows the same order as Takamagahara (Plains of High Heaven). He finds proof for this in the Ama no iwato myth, where both worlds are affected in the same way by Amaterasu hiding in the cave (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 72–74).⁹ Because of this, Amaterasu's claim, legitimated by Izanagi appointing her as ruler over the Heavens, extends to both (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 115). Secondly, Ōkuninushi is not fit to rule over the land because, as Takeda argues, he is too far removed from Amaterasu in the line of descent. His claim to the land is therefore far weaker than that of Amaterasu's direct successors despite his active role in finishing Izanami's and Izanagi's creation (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 82–83,

⁸ For the *Kojiki* version of Amaterasu's command, see *Kojiki* 127; Antoni, *Kojiki* 77; Chamberlain 129.

⁹ For the Ama no iwato episode, see *Kojiki* 81–83; Antoni, *Kojiki* 38–41; Chamberlain 63–65. For Izanagi appointing Amaterasu as the ruler of Heaven, see *Kojiki* 71–73; Antoni, *Kojiki* 32; Chamberlain 50.

115). Following this, Takeda turns to Sukunabikona's involvement in the creation of the land as his third argument for the sovereignty of the heavenly lineage. He proposes that Sukunabikona unites both the *amatsukami* 天つ神 (Heavenly Deities) and *kunitsukami* 国つ神 (Earthly Deities) in his being because he is both the kami of Miwa in Yamato and a descendant of Kamimusubi, one of the three deities of creation (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 113). Through him the *amatsukami* are actively involved in creating the land.¹⁰ Lastly, Takeda highlights that Ōkuninushi owes his life to the *amatsukami*, because they have revived him every time his brothers killed him during the Izumo cycle of the myths (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 115).¹¹ Takeda infers from this that Ōkuninushi might have finished the land as a tribute for the *amatsukami*, not for himself (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 117).

Accordingly, Takeda concludes that the rule of Amaterasu's descendants was established a long time before the Heavenly Grandson Ninigi no mikoto descended from the heavens, namely by Izanagi during the *kuni zukuri* 国作り portion of the myths. In addition, Izanagi himself was directly chosen by the *amatsukami* to create Japan together with his sister-wife Izanami.¹² The tennō's rule is therefore directly legitimated by the *amatsukami* in the beginning of Japan's mythical history. Takeda continues to elaborate that in Shinto, kami are nature itself, which makes the imperial rule the "will of nature" (*daishizen no sōi* 大自然の総意; *Gendaigo Kojiki* 126). By way of anchoring the imperial reign not only in mythical history but also in nature itself, Takeda positions the tennō as an unshakable and inviolable authority at the center of his understanding of Japan.

The mythical narratives buttressing the imperial rule then find their culmination in the figure of Jinmu Tennō 神武天皇. Takeda argues that through the wives of Jinmu's ancestors, all important aspects of nature, that is the primordial deities, the mountains, and the ocean, are united with the

¹⁰ For the passages on Ōkuninushi and Sukunabikona, see *Kojiki* 107–9; Antoni, *Kojiki* 64–65; Chamberlain 103–106.

¹¹ For the dispute between Ōkuninushi and his brothers, see *Kojiki* 93–95; Antoni, *Kojiki* 48–49; Chamberlain 83–84.

¹² For the passage in the *Kojiki*, see *Kojiki* 53–61; Antoni, *Kojiki* 17–24; Chamberlain 19–29.

lineage of the sun goddess in Japan's legendary first emperor (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 181).

The Founding of Japan and the Figure of Jinmu Tennō

For Takeda, the enthronement of Jinmu Tennō, this first emperor who unites all parts of the natural world, marks the foundation of Japan (*waga kuni no kenkoku* 我が国の建国; *Gendaigo Kojiki* 207). This occasion is famously celebrated as *kenkoku kinen no hi* 建国記念の日 (National Foundation Day) on February 11, a date based on Jinmu's enthronement in the *Nihon shoki* and firmly situated in the realm of speculative calculations and ideology (Antoni, "Der erste Tennō" 36–40). According to Takeda, no other date would suffice for this occasion, as it marks the beginning of the unbroken line from Jinmu to the modern emperors (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 207). He concludes:

The tale leading up to Jinmu's enthronement, as recorded in the *Kojiki*, is the tale of the founding of Japan. The palace of Kashihara, from which Jinmu Tennō ruled over the land below the sky, is the first imperial palace and the first capital of our nation. (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 207)

Such remarks on the figure of Japan's legendary first emperor necessitate a discussion of whether Jinmu existed in reality or not. The topic of Jinmu's historicity has been discussed in detail by authors like Klaus Antoni (e.g., "Der erste Tennō") and John S. Brownlee (e.g., *Japanese Historians*), and the supposed date of his enthronement receives ample analysis in this volume's chapter "*Kōki* 皇紀 – the 'Imperial Calendar'." For these reasons, it should suffice to say that the legend surrounding this supposed first emperor of Japan should not be regarded as a historical fact upon which the narrative of an unbroken imperial line could be built. And yet, Takeda is of the conviction that "Jinmu's existence is truth and fact at the same time" (私は神武天皇の存在は「真実」であると同時に、「事実」でもあると考えています, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 222). Despite holding that the stories

about Jinmu are genuine history, Takeda maintains that the factuality of the stories compiled in the *Kojiki* is of little importance because they are true regardless of whether they actually happened (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 221–23). It therefore does not matter to Takeda if Jinmu, as described in the *Kojiki*, did exist, it only matters that there was a first emperor who founded Japan's imperial line. He further argues that Jinmu being mentioned in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* alone is enough to eliminate any doubt in his existence: "At the very least, that what is written in the official histories should not be disavowed without good reason" (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 222).

The same holds true for the debates surrounding the existence of the second emperor Suizei Tennō 綏靖天皇 as well as the *kesshi hachidai* 欠史八代 ("Lost Eight Generations"). If they had not existed, there would have been no reason to include them in the *Kojiki*, so their factuality should be assumed as well (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 222–23, 226–27). By stating that it is much harder to find evidence for someone not existing than it is to prove that they did, Takeda aims to discredit all arguments against the existence of Japan's early emperors (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 222). The strong resemblance between this line of thought and discussions on the burden of proof prevalent in religious debates will be touched upon in a later part of this chapter.

Takeda also highlights that burial sites of the early emperors are mentioned in the ancient sources, for example when Tenmu Tennō 天武天皇 supposedly visited Jinmu's grave in the year 673 during the Jinshin war (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 515). Antoni also addresses this account when discussing the historicity of the Unebi Goryō, Jinmu's supposed tomb near mount Unebi in Kashihara, but instead uses it to highlight the political dimension associated with the figure of Jinmu ("Der erste Tennō" 29–30). He argues that Tenmu Tennō understood the immense potential of a rule based on an unbroken divine line. By visiting Jinmu's supposed burial site, Tenmu managed to anchor the myths in reality and successfully used them to buttress his claim as a descendent of Amaterasu. This is underlined by the fact that the place for this supposed tomb was revealed to a district official during a trance, a fact that Takeda conveniently excludes in his *Gendaigo Kojiki*. Antoni therefore comes to the conclusion opposite to Takeda: there was no burial site of Jinmu in the seventh century CE ("Der erste Tennō"

30). In fact, he shows with reference to the Japanese scholars Harunari Hideji 春也秀爾 and Takagi Senshi 高木専志 that the construction of the modern Unebi Goryō only started during the late nineteenth century (“Der erste Tennō” 28–29).¹³

Despite conclusive arguments against the historicity of early emperors such as Jinmu, Takeda maintains that the accounts given in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* should not be questioned (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 515). Nevertheless, what is truly important when it comes to Jinmu is that he was the *first* emperor of Japan. In Takeda’s opinion, it should therefore not be asked if Jinmu existed—that is a given—but when he existed (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 517), a question that is directly connected to arguments in favor of Japan’s superiority based on its long history.

The bansei ikkei 万世一系 and Japan as the Longest Democracy in the World

In order to construct a narrative of ancient Japan convenient to his argumentation, Takeda combines the records compiled in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* with Chinese sources and archeological findings. He proposes that the first country established by Jinmu encompassed only a small region and was expanded by great figures like Yamato Takeru and the *shidō shōgun* 四道將軍¹⁴ which, according to Takeda, correlates with Chinese sources from the second century CE (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 517). At least in regard to one stronger state subsuming smaller ones, this is indeed the academic consensus (Barnes, *State Formation* 5, 18–19). From these Chinese

¹³ See Harunari Hideji 春也秀爾. “‘Jinmu-ryō’ wa itsu tsukureta no ka” 「神武陵」はいつつくたのか. *Kōkogaku kenkyū* 考古学研究, vol. 84, no. 21/4, 1975, pp. 59–82, and Takagi Senshi 高木専志. “Kindai ni okeru shinwateki kodai no sōzō: Unebiyama Jinmu-ryō, Kashihara jingū, sandai ittai no Jinmu ‘seiseki’” 近代における神話的古代の創造: 畝傍山・神武陵・橿原神宮・三代一体の神武「聖蹟」. *Jinbun gakuho* 人文学報, vol. 83, no. 3, 2000, pp. 19–31.

¹⁴ According to the *Nihon shoki*, the *shidō shōgun* were four military leaders hailing from the imperial house who were dispatched to all four directions to unite the country (*Nihon shoki* 243, 248–49; Aston 155–56, 159–60).

accounts and the oldest burial mound found so far at the Makimuku 纏向 site in Sakurai (Nara Prefecture), Takeda concludes that a Yamato court that ruled over the entire Kansai region must have existed at least 1800 years ago (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 517–18). Accordingly, the Yamato reign must have started at the beginning of the third century CE, if not some centuries earlier. Jinmu as the first emperor would have lived around 1,800 to 2,000 years ago. These dates are, however, only the latest possible dates for Jinmu's existence. For the other end of this spectrum, Takeda again turns to the ancient sources: While the *Kojiki* gives no information on Jinmu's reign, the *Nihon shoki* dates his enthronement to the year 660 BCE, about 2700 years ago (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 518). It has to be noted that this date is purely speculative, a fact that is discussed in detail in Klaus Antoni's aforementioned chapter "*Kōki* 皇紀 – the 'Imperial Calendar'."

The Makimuku site did indeed rekindle discussions surrounding early Japanese history. Walter Edwards, for example, examines the way in which the site recontextualizes the Chinese accounts of the Yamatai chiefdom and the reign of Queen Himiko 卑弥呼. While Edwards comes to conclusions similar to Takeda's in that Yamatai was situated in modern-day Yamato and held a pan-regional authority, he rejects the idea of a historical Jinmu. Instead, he proposes that a shift in leadership from Kyushu to Kansai could have been the "primordial model for the mythic account of Jimmu's eastward conquest, fashioned in later centuries to bolster the imperial line's claim to transcendental authority" (Edwards 14–15). Edwards also makes a reference to Gina L. Barnes' speculation on a Queen Mother of the West cult in early Japan which might have supported female rulers like Himiko. While this idea cannot be discussed further in the present chapter, Barnes, too, includes Jinmu in her discussion of ancient Japanese history. She describes him as the leader of a migrating people but makes it clear that the traditional date for his enthronement is purely fictional and that the idea of "elite rulers" at this point in Japanese history is not supported by archeology ("A Hypothesis" 6; *State Formation* 89). She also poses the interesting question of whether Yamato hegemony during the mid-third to mid-fourth centuries even encompassed the entirety of the Nara basin or was limited to only a certain part of the region (Barnes, "A Hypothesis" 4). While Joan R. Piggot is doubtful about Barnes' theories

on a Queen Mother of the West cult in early Japan, she does seem optimistic about interpreting Jinmu as a warrior chieftain (415–16).

Notwithstanding the fact that scholars like Piggot, Edwards, and Barnes consider the possibility of a shift of power between Kyushu and Kansai as a blueprint for the Jinmu narrative, neither entertains the idea of a powerful Yamato state existing as early as 660 BCE. It is thus almost ironic that Takeda ultimately returns to this conservative speculation about the date of Jinmu's enthronement, despite seemingly opening up the discussion to new interpretations.

His arguments for the special status of the Japanese nation shed light on why tracing back the country's history as far as possible is of utmost importance. Singling out Japan as the country with the longest tradition in almost everything that makes up a culture is a constant in Takeda's work. While he is focused on the imperial line in the *Gendaigo Kojiki*, he connects this idea to the topics of food, craftsmanship, and language in *Nihon wa naze sekai de ichiban ninki ga aru no ka*. For all of these topics, he argues that Japan has a longstanding tradition far more ancient and sophisticated than any other modern nation. On the Japanese language, he for example notes that it originates in the earliest history of humans on the Japanese islands. No other indigenous people in the entire world, Takeda declares, can lay claim to a national language and nation of their own (*Nihon* 106–7).

The political system of this unique nation, too, is the oldest of its kind. According to Takeda, Japan should be regarded as the first democratic country in the world, because since the foundation of the country, the government and politics were supposedly always centered around the people. Other than in China or the West, the people were not regarded as mere subjects or the property of their rulers but as a great treasure (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 374). Interestingly, Takeda sees the political system of Japan, a democracy indirectly ruled by the tennō, mirrored in Amaterasu's reign over Takamagahara. He explains that the compilers of the *Kojiki* applied the governmental system of their time onto the heavenly plains and thus cemented the tennō's indirect rule as the central principle of Japanese politics. Even before the Asuka period (592–710 CE), Japan was allegedly governed through a quasi-parliamentary system—a form of rulership that

would not change for the entirety of Japanese history (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 127). Within Takeda's line of thought, the reign of Jinmu not only marks the beginning of this longstanding political system but also set the precedent for the country's uniquely long and peaceful history (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 520).

The "spirit of the country's foundation" (*kenkoku no seishin* 建国の精神), as Takeda calls it, is expressed in Jinmu's ambition during his Eastward Campaign to establish a "peaceful rule over the land" (*heiwa ni tenka wo osameru koto* 平和に天下を治めること, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 519). He proposes that Jinmu's goal was to end the ongoing war that was afflicting the land, and powerful clans were moved by his kind heart wherever he went. A small country was established at the end of this campaign and continuously expanded not by war but, as Takeda highlights repeatedly, through conversation.¹⁵ It is this spirit of a peaceful rule which would go on to shape the national polity of Japan (*wagakuni no kokutai* 我が国の国体) for the following 2000 years (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 520). This calls to mind the numerous military conflicts throughout the history of Japan, and amongst all of them the question of whether Emperor Hirohito 裕仁 (1901–1989) is to blame for Japanese war crimes during the Second World War. Takeda addresses these issues but eloquently downplays the emperor's involvement in any direct decisions regarding the national policy (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 128). In an attempt to highlight the peaceful nature of the imperial line, Takeda again begins his argumentation in the time of myths, where it was not Amaterasu who killed the rebellious deity Ame no Wakahiko but his own impure heart (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 129). Takeda also exempts Emperor Hirohito from all decisions regarding the war. The only exceptions are the suppression of the coup d'état of February 26, 1936 and the tennō's attempt to avert the Second World War via what is known as his "clean slate massage" (*hakushi kangen no goshō* 白紙還元の御詔, Butow 301–2).¹⁶ Neither

¹⁵ For the account on Jinmu's Eastward Campaign (*Jinmu tōsei* 神武東征) in the *Kojiki*, see *Kojiki* 148–61; Antoni, *Kojiki* 94–105; Chamberlain 159–78. For the *Nihon shoki* version, see *Nihon shoki* 188–214; Aston 109–33.

¹⁶ In this "clean slate massage," the emperor advised the cabinet to proceed with caution regarding diplomatic relations with the United States of America in 1941. For an in-

of these two instances is relevant, Takeda writes, as they do not constitute “issues of national policy” (*kokusaku no kettei* 国策の決定; *Gendaigo Kojiki* 141).

Through this kind of argumentation, Takeda sets out to absolve the imperial line of any possible war guilt. Since the time of myth and through the entirety of Japanese history, Amaterasu and her descendants followed the ideal of a peaceful rule and governed the land indirectly in an unbroken line. Everything needed to understand this path of the ideal emperor and the true nature of the tennō is handed down in the ancient sources, first and foremost in none other than the *Kojiki* (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 5, 374–75).

Sacralizing *Kojiki* as the Ultimate Source for Japanese Identity and History

As seen in the discussion surrounding Jinmu and the other early emperors, Takeda brushes aside the question of whether the *Kojiki* is true or false and cements it as an indisputable truth. It is “sacred text” (*seisho* 聖書) and “myth” (*shinwa* 神話) at the same time, and as such its true worth does not lie in its historical factuality (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 510–11). In *Nihon wa naze sekai de ichiban ninki ga aru no ka*, this approach is extended to the *Nihon shoki*, when Takeda writes:

The statements in the *Nihon shoki* are deemed true regardless of whether they are facts or not. The term “to deem” means that they cannot be overturned even if they are disproven. Truth is not necessarily consistent with fact. The existence of Emperor Jinmu, too, is true, and factuality is not an important issue. Throughout the long history of our country, Jinmu has been engraved in the collective unconscious of the Japanese people. This is more precious than the actual existence of Emperor Jimmu. Truth outweighs fact. (Takeda, *Nihon* 178)

depth analysis of the events surrounding the message, see the chapter “Wiping the slate clean” in Butow’s *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (262–309).

Nevertheless, Takeda puts much effort into underlining that the text corresponds with archeological and scientific findings. He, for example, points towards the discovery of the Inariyama Kofun 稲荷山古墳, which supposedly proved the existence of the eighth tennō Kōgen 高原文天皇 (trad. 273–158 BCE) because the name of his son is allegedly engraved on a sword found in the tomb (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 511). The same holds true for the *kuni yuzuri* 国譲り myth, as it supposedly is congruent with archeological findings on the peaceful integration of Izumo into the hegemony of Yamato (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 512).

Aside from archeological findings, Takeda also compares the *Kojiki* to other texts which could be considered similar in function. When it comes to the credibility of the Japanese sources, he references historical writing from China that agrees with Japanese descriptions of the tennō. However, he reaches a very different conclusion regarding the trustworthiness of the Chinese sources. Their descriptions of the tennō should be taken with a grain of salt, he argues. They could, after all, include a negative bias towards Japan in favor of their country of origin, as is often the case with national histories and similar texts (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 407). The notion of a positive bias towards the imperial family in the *Kojiki* that could undermine its credibility, in contrast, is never entertained by Takeda.

As noted previously, Takeda's argumentation is reminiscent of discussions on the burden of proof. Originally a term taken from the studies of law, the burden of proof describes the necessity of one party, usually the persecutor, to produce sufficient evidence to prove their case (Lorkowski 29). In religious debates, for example between a theist stating that the Christian God exists and an atheist arguing the opposite, both parties may claim that the burden of proof falls on the respective other. Chris M. Lorkowski questions whether a burden of proof is needed in religious debates, or as he calls it, "God debates." Yet, as a naturalistic atheist, he comes to the conclusion that if a burden of proof was required, it should fall upon the theist as they make a positive claim regarding the existence of God. The one making negative claims, in Lorkowski's case the atheist, should only hold the burden of proof if what they claim to be non-existent is clearly observable or falls under scholarly consensus (33–35). Sacred texts, he argues in a footnote, do not suffice as observable evidence, as

their content is part of what is debated and can therefore not be taken as a given (Lorkowski 36n14).

Lorkowski's argumentation on the burden of proof has to be assessed before the background of his own bias. Nevertheless, it can serve as illuminating input when evaluating Takeda's statements about whether the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* can be questioned. When looking at Takeda through this lens, his position is similar to a theist arguing for the existence of a God that can only be validated through a sacred text whose credibility is under attack. Yet the burden of proof, in Takeda's eyes, should fall on those questioning the ancient sources. Until sufficient proof against their narrative is given—begging the question if any acceptable evidence could ever be found—the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* remain an inviolable truth shaping the way Japanese history should be interpreted. This constitutes one way of sacralizing the *Kojiki* as per the definition of sacralization used in this volume.

Interestingly, the similarities to religious discourses do not stop here. In *Nihon wa naze sekai de ichiban ninki ga aru no ka*, Takeda brings up another topic frequently discussed in conservative Christian circles: Darwin's theory of evolution. Here, he attempts to prove that the Shinto belief according to which the Japanese people are descendants of nature and therefore of the kami agrees with scientific explanations for the origin of humankind. He argues that Darwin's theory of evolution has humans evolve from life that originated in the sea. They therefore emerged from nature itself which, Takeda states, would agree with the Shinto belief that humans descended from the kami, because nature and kami are the same (*Nihon* 153–54). However, Darwin's theory is only one possible explanation and contested even in the scientific world, Takeda maintains, as there is good evidence against it (*Nihon* 154). In favor of his own argument, Takeda neither elaborates on the evidence he has in mind, nor on the fact that Darwin's theory of evolution remains the scientific standard today after it has been repeatedly revised and updated since it was first proposed in 1859. Instead, Takeda sheds doubt on the theory of evolution. If the biblical account, according to which humans were created by the Christian God in his image, can be deemed a possible alternative to Darwin's theory, so could the Japanese explanation: the Descent from Heaven (Takeda, *Nihon*

155). On his personal belief, Takeda states that “if *tenson kōrin* was factual, a lot of things would make sense” (*Nihon* 155). Thus, it could be inferred that Takeda leans heavily toward the Heavenly Descent as the Japanese answer to creationism. To his own conviction he adds the observation that, no matter which of these approaches might be true, they all support the Shinto idea that humans originate in nature and therefore in the kami. This, he writes, is not a religious discussion but a scientific one (Takeda, *Nihon* 155).

Although the theory of evolution is not directly mentioned in the *Gendaigo Kojiki*, this discussion connects to several ideas included in the text. Firstly, it helps Takeda to cement the divine origin of the emperor. If the *tenson kōrin* episode is a viable explanation for the origin of humankind, the divinity of the emperor, too, would be a given. Accordingly, Takeda maintains that the imperial line only lost their immortality when Ninigi rejected Iwanaga-hime (*Gendaigo Kojiki* 164).¹⁷ Nevertheless, the emperors did not lose their divinity and are still endowed with the nature of a kami (*kami toshite no seikaku* 神としての性格). In addition, Takeda connects his ideas on the divine origin of humans with the way Japanese people supposedly live in harmony with nature (*Nihon* 167). He proposes that the belief which the Japanese people held about their origin in nature and their descent from the kami prompted their traditional values and way of life. The emperor serves as the link between kami (nature) and the people since the foundation of the empire two thousand years ago (Takeda, *Nihon* 167; Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 134). As discussed above, Takeda argues in the *Gendaigo Kojiki* that this rulership is legitimated by the will of nature itself (126). In this line of argument, the *Kojiki* is not only positioned as the one true source about the nature of the emperor (Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 5), it also records the Japanese worldview and includes the most

¹⁷ After descending from Heaven, Ninigi no Mikoto wished to marry Konohana no Sakuya-hime, the daughter of the mountain deity Ōyamatsumi no kami. He is also offered her older sister Iwanaga-hime as his second wife but finds her so unappealing that he refuses her. However, the union with Iwanaga-hime was supposed to ensure the longevity of the imperial line. Ninigi's rejection thus functions as an explanation for why the emperors have a normal human lifespan despite their divine heritage. For the passage in the *Kojiki*, see *Kojiki* 131–33; Antoni, *Kojiki* 82–83; Chamberlain 140–142.

accurate depiction of the laws of nature amongst the world's mythologies (Takeda, *Nihon* 161–62; Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 5).¹⁸ The text thus serves as a legitimate form of knowledge about the world and the nature of Japan as well as its people.

This interpretation of the relationship between nature, the Japanese people, and the emperor substantiates the sacralization of the ancient texts on the one hand and connects Takeda's ideas to pre-war and wartime ideology on the other. It is none other than the *Kokutai no hongī* 国体の本義 (1937), a text so infamous for its political potential that its circulation was forbidden after the Second World War (Gauntlett and Hall v–vi), which promotes identical ideas on the emperor and connects them to the ideals of filial piety and loyalty. The *Kokutai no hongī* portrays the emperor as the head of the state as well as the patriarchal figure of Japan as a figurative family (35–37, 46–49; Gauntlett and Hall 81–83, 89–92). In Takeda's *Nihon wa naze sekai de ichiban ninki ga aru no ka*, loyalty and piety make way for mutual love and appreciation but the metaphor of the emperor as the father and the people as his children remains the same (188–89).

In addition, Takeda's utter glorification of Japan as superior in comparison to other nations is reminiscent of the ideological discourse on Japanese national identity, *nihonjinron* 日本人論. As Harumi Befu describes, within this discourse physical symbols of national identity were replaced with immaterial ones that could be used to explain what Japanese identity is and why one could be proud of it (43–44). These new symbols were flexible and could be adjusted depending on the circumstances of the time, yet they still relied on ideas of “blood, purity of race, language, [and] mystique” (Befu 44). Although modern *nihonjinron* usually tries to avoid the

¹⁸ Takeda describes Amaterasu as the deity of the sun who rules the Heavens and especially highlights her myth as a representation of the importance of the sun to all life forms. Similarly, the myth of Ōgetsuhime represents the cycle of life, i.e., food being produced from the soil, being eaten, and returned to the soil. He does not, however, comment on the existence of similar mythologies in the rest of the world, like other sun deities or the Hainuwele myth (Antoni, *Kojiki* 547–48). In this regard, the similarity of Amaterasu to other sun goddesses, discussed in this volume's chapter “Reconsidering the Mythology of Goddesses” by Kazuo Matsumura, is of great interest.

imperialistic elements of its predecessors, it still mirrors similar ideas of Japanese superiority based on homogeneity and uniqueness (Befu 44).

Befu's description in "Symbols of Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*" is based on observations of the early 1990s, and it seems that the rhetoric of *nihonjinron* might have shifted again. Takeda's publications are a case in point, as he does not shy away from associating with prewar and war time ideology. In stark contrast to previous discourse, his adoration for the imperial family is as undeniable as his wish to return to the way Japanese myths and history were understood and taught before the end of the war (Takeda, *Nihon* 29–30, 206; Takeda, *Gendaigo Kojiki* 512–13). Nevertheless, his objective perfectly mirrors Befu's assertions on modern *nihonjinron*, as Takeda takes every opportunity to accentuate Japan's exceptionalism amongst the nations of the world.

Regarding the search for the wonderful and unique Japanese civilization of the past, Takeda for example highlights the Japanese language or *yamato kotoba* 大和言葉 which, he argues, transports a belief and moral system unparalleled in the whole world (*Nihon* 86). Even though *yamato kotoba* was shaped by various influences over the past millennia, even children, he argues, can understand old poems to a certain degree and all Japanese can read the texts written during over two thousand years of Japanese history. The reason for this, according to Takeda, is that *yamato kotoba*—a language that is supposedly believed to have been brought down from the Heavens by the kami—has been preserved together with its associated worldview since at least the Jōmon period (*Nihon* 104, 106).¹⁹

This is remarkably evocative of Norinaga's idea that the Japanese heart (*yamato gokoro* 大和心) is accessible through the Japanese language (*yamato kotoba*) recorded in the *Kojiki* (Antoni, *Kojiki* 414; Burns 71–73),²⁰ and just like Norinaga, Takeda imagines an ideal Japanese past. On the one hand, he argues that with the Meiji Restoration, Japan lost its own

¹⁹ On the ideological implications connected to the proposition of an unbroken Japanese identity and culture since the Jōmon period, see the chapter "Kojiki Myth and the Jōmon Period" by Hirafuji Kikuko.

²⁰ The search for an authentic Japanese language from the past by Kokugaku scholars like Norinaga is discussed in detail in this volume's chapter "The Power of Language" by Judit Árokay.

branch of civilization (*nihon bunmei* 日本文明) which had only truly begun to shine during the Edo period. During this time, he states, everybody lived happily according to the Japanese worldview (Takeda, *Nihon* 200, 202)—a stark contrast to Norinaga who criticized his own time period as deeply flawed due to Chinese influences (Burns 73). In *Gendaigo Kojiki*, on the other hand, the ideal Japanese past and worldview is expanded to the mythical times of the gods contained in the *Kojiki*. Thus, for both Norinaga and Takeda, the *Kojiki* functions as a gateway to return to the idealized Japan of old.

Conclusion

In the *Gendaigo Kojiki*, Takeda Tsuneyasu fashions his source material, the *Kojiki*, as an accurate depiction of not only the Japanese worldview and culture of the past but of the present as well. At the forefront of this is the imperial family as the undisputed center of Japanese society since the ancient times. According to Takeda's understanding, the enthronement of the first emperor Jinmu functions as a starting point for an unbroken line unmatched in the history of humankind. While the question of Jinmu's historicity is marginalized by Takeda's emphasis of the *Kojiki*'s nature as true, sacred myth, he at the same time presents Jinmu's divine lineage and the descent of his ancestors from Heaven as a viable alternative to Darwin's theory of evolution, thereby essentially historicizing the figure of Jinmu. In addition, Takeda proposes the legendary date of Jinmu's enthronement in 660 BCE as a plausible starting point for the history of Japan. The fact that these stories are compiled in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* alone is enough for Takeda to render them indisputable.

Not only does Takeda envision the myths of the *Kojiki* in particular as a legitimate source for the country's history and a wellspring for ideas of Japanese identity, but he also argues that the contents of the *Kojiki*, if understood correctly, can save Japan from falling to ruin. If the Japanese people were to find their way back to a peaceful nation indirectly governed by the emperor, as depicted in the *Kojiki*, Japan would reclaim its special status among the nations of the world. The emperor is absolved from any

association with violence by reframing Jinmu's conquest and the unification of Japan as peaceful events and the myths are washed clean of their imperialistic past. Yet at the same time, Takeda constantly returns to pre-war and wartime ideology when constructing the mythology of the *Kojiki* into an identity-forming and inviolable truth. In such a way, Takeda's *Gendaigo Kojiki* stands as a prime example for the sacralization of imperial mythology in contemporary Japan.

In this chapter, only the main points of the *Gendaigo Kojiki* could be discussed and there is much more to be found in Takeda's countless publications and videos. Aside from the *Gendaigo Kojiki*, there are many works by other authors which highlight the *Kojiki*'s prominence and importance for an (imagined) Japanese past. Books like *Kojiki no monogatari: Hieda no Are ga kataru yukai na "nihon no shinwa"* 古事記の物語: 稗田阿礼が語るゆかいな「日本の神話」, as well as websites like *Ranobe Kojiki* ラノベ古事記 aim to make the text accessible and interesting for an audience who might not yet see a relevance for the *Kojiki* in their own lives. To varying degrees, these texts sacralize the myths as the ultimate sources for understanding what it means to be Japanese. Nevertheless, such approaches to the Japanese myths are only one way for Japanese authors and creatives to engage with these stories. In just as many instances, popular culture adapts the larger corpus of Japanese mythology, including the narratives compiled in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, without actively putting the text itself on a pedestal.²¹ The contrast between these two different perspectives on Japanese imperial mythology as well as possible overlaps between these categories are fascinating topics for future research. In this context, Takeda Tsuneyasu's *Gendaigo Kojiki*, in combination with his

²¹ Many works of Japanese popular culture could be named here, and their approach to myth often differs greatly. For instance, details from the larger corpus of Japanese myths are incorporated into works like *Fairy Tail* (Mashima, 2006–2017), *Naruto* (Kishimoto, 1999–2014), and *One Piece* (Oda, since 1997) without acknowledging their origin. Other examples, such as the videogames *Ōkami* 大神 (Capcom, 2006/2018) and *Tensui no Sakuna-hime* 天穂のサクナヒメ (Edelweiss, 2020) adapt episodes from the mythical corpus as main plot points of their story. A thorough discussion of the multifaceted approaches to myth in Japanese popular media is the topic of my dissertation project tentatively titled “Retelling Myth: On the Communication and Transformation of Japanese Mythology in Contemporary Popular Media.”

various other publications, can serve as a prime example for the sacralization of the *Kojiki* from a conservative point of view.

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The Return from the Land of the Dead Considering the Nuclear Disaster of Fukushima

Jun'ichi ISOMAE

The disaster in northeast Japan cost the lives of approximately 18,000 people. The explosion at Fukushima Nuclear Plant No. 1 led to a massive influx of refugees, with over 30,000 individuals still displaced (limited to outside Fukushima prefecture). Because of the catastrophe, they have lost their families and home, and their suffering has not ended until this day. It is of vital importance to give a voice to those affected by the disaster, and how to do so remains an ongoing challenge. On the basis of ghost stories and myths, this chapter will deal with questions of loss and grief, and the ever-present tension between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Introduction

Making its appearance in a myriad of stories, the theme of the return from the land of the dead has captivated the living across different places and periods. It is the dominant theme of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, as well as of Izanagi's and Izanami's tale in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). Not only is it present in the realm of myth but it also prominently features in ghost stories such as the tragic romance of *Botan dōrō* 牡丹燈籠, told in varying forms since the Edo period, and in contemporary media like the German movie *Grüße aus Fukushima* (*Greetings from Fukushima*, 2016). The fascination with this theme stems, in part, from the need to establish a boundary between the living and the dead. The living are drawn to the realm of the dead due to their deep emotional connection to their departed loved ones—family members, partners, and close

friends. The central narrative found in such stories concerns the journey of the living to the land of the dead and their attempts to bring back their loved ones, only to ultimately fail as the dead cannot return to the world of the living. Consequently, a tremendously ambivalent emotional state arises between the realms of the living and the dead, encompassing both love and anger.

In the case of Fukushima, its people grapple with the challenge of dealing with the loss of their family members and home. It appears inevitable for them to delineate a boundary between the living and the dead, between their current reality and the home that they cannot reclaim. The main issue lies in how to establish and redefine this boundary, akin to encounters between the living and the dead in ancient mythology and ghost stories. In the following chapter, I will focus on this ambivalent connection between the living and the dead, discussing contemporary music, ghost stories, and myth, and explore the fundamental question of how to deal with catastrophe and loss.¹

Greetings from Fukushima

Around 2020, a flagship station in Tokyo broadcast a news report about the Fukase Coast in the Arahama district in Sendai, which used to be a bustling beach frequented by locals. However, after the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, swimming was prohibited due to the danger of debris that had sunken into the sea. News of the nearby beach being reopened for swimming almost a decade later prompted a TV announcer from the city to come to the area for an interview.

The young interviewer asked, “There are dead people on the bottom of this sea. Isn’t that creepy?” I was watching the news segment at the time and was momentarily taken aback by this thoughtless question. The elderly

¹ The following text is based on the chapters three (“Futaba-gun” 双葉郡) and four (“Iwaki Yumoto” いわき湯本) of my 2024 monograph *Seisha no zawameku sekai de* 生者のざわめく世界で.

interviewee responded calmly, “What’s so creepy about it? My grandchild is down there. What’s creepy about swimming with my grandchild?”

Around six months after the earthquake, rumors began to spread about numerous people in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures seeing ghosts along the coastline. On August 23, 2013, NHK aired a program titled *Naki hito to no “saikai”*: *Hisaichi sandome no natsu ni* 亡き人との“再会”: 被災地三度目の夏に, which featured dramatizations of encounters with those who lost their lives because of the catastrophe. However, around seven to eight years after the disaster, rumors of ghosts became less common. Putting the veracity of this claim aside, it has generally been said that this decline in sightings could be attributed to the fact that more and more people along the Miyagi and Iwate coastlines are recovering from the initial damage caused by the earthquake to some extent and now lead more stable lives.

In Fukushima’s coastal areas, on the other hand, rumors of ghostly sightings were always virtually non-existent. This is understandable, considering that many areas along the Fukushima coast were designated as “difficult-to-return zones” (*kikan konnan chīki* 帰還困難地域), and all of the residents were forced to evacuate. Without listeners, the voices of the dead, stripped of social connections, become not only untranslatable but might as well not exist. Likewise, without people to look at them, ghosts have no one to convince of their existence. The debate over the absence of ghosts in Fukushima is, in fact, not so much a question of the existence of the deceased but rather a narrative of the absence of the living.

For instance, members of the Ōmoto 大本 movement have been conducting rituals to soothe the wandering souls (*chinkon* 鎮魂) in the coastal areas of the disaster-stricken region. Among them, Kusano Kazuya 草野一也, a native of Ōkuma Town in Fukushima Prefecture, has been organizing memorial services (*ireisai* 慰霊祭) in dozens of locations from Miyako in Iwate Prefecture to his hometown of Ōkuma, held every third Sunday of the month. In an interview published in the Ōmoto periodical *Aizen sekai* 愛善世界, Kusano describes such a memorial service as follows:

About thirty minutes before arriving at the site, I have the feeling that something is happening to me. My legs become a bit heavier, and during the ceremony, even my back feels heavy. But as soon as

the ceremony ends, everything returns to normal. Perhaps the spirits (*mitama* 霊) are aware of our arrival. Maybe they think that if they come to the memorial service, they can be saved. (Fujii 81)

According to members of the Ōmoto movement, countless spirits that have lost their human form can be seen crawling (*ugomeku* 蠢く) in the coastal areas of Fukushima Prefecture. If that is the case, the assumption that ghosts do not appear in Fukushima's coastal areas, unlike in the prefectures Iwate and Miyagi, would be incorrect. The fact that there are no people who see ghosts in the disaster-affected areas implies that there are no people to worship the spirits, and further, that there are no people living there at all.

Not only those who suffered tragic and untimely deaths but also those who survived cannot return to their homes. Forced into this awful situation, they have been unable to conduct rituals to mourn the deaths of their loved ones. Because the people are absent, there is a lingering sense of sadness that remains in a stage where it stays shapeless. That is why the spirits were described as crawling, without a clear form. The ritual of soothing the souls gives them a shape. As a result, the survivors feel that these rituals help the grieving spirits to find peace. The following words reflect the genuine feelings of the bereaved families who have had to leave their loved ones' bodies unattended after the disaster:

It's just unbearable to think that they were in the cold water for so many months. Even though we were affected by the disaster, we were still able to live decently. So, I can't help but feel sorry when I think that they were both in the cold sea the whole time. That's why all I can say is sorry, really. Sorry that we couldn't find them. (Higashi nihon daishinsai purojekuto 484–85)

Who exactly created this “world” that is dominated by nuclear power? Sawada Kenji 沢田研二 ponders this question in his song “Hitonigiri hito no tsumi” 一握り人の罪, which was included in his 2014 mini-album *San-nen omoi yo* 三年想いよ.

Long ago, to a small, desolate village by the sea,
 TEPCO came, eager to quickly build a nuclear power plant . . .
 TEPCO believed,
 and those accepting [the power plant] believed as well,
 in the myth of safety without questioning,
 the sins of a handful of people.
 The fishermen, for whom the sea was life, feared its death.
 The village was torn apart,
 the sins of a handful of people. Ah, what cruelty.

“TEPCO really messed up, right? And the politicians, too, what they did to Fukushima is just awful.” Even though he speaks about the sins of a few, I do not think that this is what Sawada means. Instead, I feel like he is asking me, “Who are you to say such a thing?” We talk about “the sins of a handful of people,” but have we not benefited from nuclear energy by receiving electricity and jobs? Have we not affirmed that our lives are enriched by doing so? I think Sawada is implying that we, who try to resolve the matter by claiming that it was only the sins of a few, are all at fault and is thereby problematizing the very foundations we stand on.

In this context, notions like individuality, which were a sort of catchphrase in post-war Japanese society, hold no persuasive power. With a measure of self-awareness, one would realize that the theory of humankind’s inherent goodness, which assumes that humans are saved from such evil, does not hold water either. Instead, there is a pervasive mentality in contemporary Japanese society which Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) coined as the “banality of evil” (*Eichmann*), a mentality that could be described in the following words: “No, I was just following orders. It is the duty of a good subordinate to obey their superior.”

How can we avoid becoming infected with this banality of evil? We have to understand the reality of human inequality as a prerequisite, and as a consequence, it becomes necessary to consider which kind of critical discourse should be applied here. Believing that humans must be equal and that, at the very least, one is making such a world possible on a small scale creates a fantasy and conceals the true nature of reality.

In this regard, coming to the areas affected by the Tōhoku disaster held great importance for me, and I think that feeling indebted toward an

“enigmatic other” (*nazomeita tasha* 謎めいた他社)² and being aware of their presence is an important first step. “Enigmatic others” can be complex entities that control the human unconscious, but they are ultimately just mere puppets in the metaphorical hand of social structures. The problem lies in clarifying how these social structures are affecting all of us. For instance, in the areas impacted by the Tōhoku disaster, many people have encountered death. These experiences took a heavy toll on their mental health but making it through the hardships opened up a perspective that enabled them to see the everyday world around us more critically. An example for this is the story of a woman from Tarō who mentioned that she began to feel a sense of discomfort in her daily life when she thought of her late husband and father. By recalling their moments of death, she has to experience that death herself. In this way, we, the living, are able to gain a transcendental insight that objectifies our world. It thus becomes difficult for us to confine ourselves to the world of the living. We are attacked by the blank spaces in this world, and we constantly hear the echoes of voices who relativize the real world. A home (*ibasho* 居場所) is a place in which such diverse perspectives come together. Complete harmony without blank spaces is unachievable.

I believe that Edward Said’s “criticism” is about feeling such a sense of discomfort towards the place one belongs to, even if, geographically speaking, it may be called one’s home (29). The absence of a critical attitude leads to disastrous consequences, like the contamination caused by the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Let us recall the song “Hitonigiri hito no tsumi” by Sawada Kenji. How long will we continue to be convinced that it is enough to criticize TEPCO and the government? To prevent such tragedies from recurring, it is necessary to not only be angry at TEPCO but also to form intellectual networks capable of discerning ideological deception.

We tend to be preoccupied with our daily lives, but the needs of the people from areas affected by the catastrophe can bring about critical reflection

² This idea is inspired by Jacques Lacan’s (1901–1981) concept of the “big Other” and “little other.” For a further discussion of the enigmatic other, see Isomae, *Kōkyō shūkyōron*.

on our own circumstances. In present-day Fukushima, regional efforts are directed towards this purpose, for example at the Dengonkan 伝言館 in Naraha, the Futaba Information Center (Futaba info ふたばいんふお) and the Historical Archive Museum in Tomioka (Tomioka ākaibu myūjiamu とみおかアーカイブ・ミュージアム), as well as the nuclear disaster museum in Iwaki Yumoto (Genshiryoku saigai kōshōkan furusato 原子力災害考証館 furusato).

However, it must be acknowledged that mistakes were made in the past, at the very least regarding nuclear disasters. Dependence on the nuclear power industry has resulted in fatal damage, but because of the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework (*Fukushima inobēshon kōsuto kōsō* 福島イノベーション・コースト構想), the region again has to rely on a project that is funded by the national treasury for the support of small businesses. How will the people of Fukushima be able to break this cycle?

In many areas affected by the disaster, “home” has been depicted as a place of nostalgia to which one should return. However, we must not forget that it has also been a space where anti-TEPCO views have been suppressed. Home, for the people of Fukushima, is a place in which they, the refugees, have been criticized for throwing away this exact home. Further, the people at the places they evacuated to rejected the refugees because they thought that radioactive contamination was contagious, and they too were trying to protect their home. Home is thus an ambivalent place in which one accepts the people that adapt to it and tries to drive out those who are different.

Regarding the concept of home, we therefore have to take a step back from the physical place, and progress from thinking about the way we are in our home to the way our home looks in our minds and thus try to internalize the idea of home. Such an internalization that will engender the aforementioned sense of discomfort should be fostered in the minds of the Fukushima residents, who were forced to move their home to another place, and also in the hearts of those who returned but found their home to be completely altered, now a temporary storage place for radioactive waste.

Okonogi Keigo 小此木啓吾 (1930–2003) redefines sorrow as “reviving the connection to a lost object in the mind and continuing the inner connection with that object” (223). However, he also points out that there are

individuals for whom engaging in such acts of mourning is difficult. They are engulfed by their feelings towards the dead, the objects of their sorrow, and cannot endure the pain of parting from them. It is as if their own souls are taken to the afterlife with their loved ones.

A story that portrays this exact situation is the famous ghost story *Botan dōrō*. The story goes as follows: One day, a beautiful girl named O-Tsuyu and a rōnin named Shinzaburō meet in the mansion of a high-ranking samurai in Edo. The two fall deeply in love, but eventually, they have to part ways. O-Tsuyu, eagerly awaiting a visit from Shinzaburō, ends up falling ill and eventually passes away. Shortly thereafter, the ghost of O-Tsuyu begins to visit Shinzaburō's home. Completely spell-bound, Shinzaburō meets her in secret, night after night. However, it turns out that O-Tsuyu planned to kill Shinzaburō and take him to the afterlife. The question that we have to ask is whether love with beings from another world inevitably leads to lives lost, even if the lovers' feelings are sincere.

To save Shinzaburō, who has finally come back to his senses, his neighbors put up talismans (*ofuda* お札) from a temple in the vicinity of his room. That evening, O-Tsuyu comes to visit Shinzaburō again, carrying her peony lantern, but the *ofuda* make it impossible for her to come inside. She realizes that Shinzaburō has abandoned her and cries out in frustration: "You'll pay for this!"

On the last day of the purification (*kessai* 潔斎) period, Shinzaburō falls for a ruse by O-Tsuyu and mistakenly thinks that he hears the crow of a rooster signaling the dawn of a new day. He opens the sliding doors, and to his horror, it turns out that the night is not over. There is a horrible scream. Panicked, Shinzaburō's neighbors rush to the scene and find blood splattered all over the walls of the room. In this story, O-Tsuyu embodies the grudge of the abandoned, while Shinzaburō represents the guilt of the one who abandoned his partner. These two emotions—the remorse of betrayal and the resentment of being betrayed—can exist in the same person in a rather ambiguous manner.

Here, we can observe psychological mechanisms comparable to experiences of intrusive thoughts by children who have suffered abuse from their parents. Accusations like "You're guilty" or "You're a nuisance" enter the subconscious, leading to an obsessive form of self-denial expressed by

thoughts such as “I am a sinful person, so others . . . punish me” (Hasegawa 132–35). Consequently, instead of directing their aggression at their parents or society who are the root of the intrusive thoughts, individuals become obsessed with condemning themselves. They also have the tendency to attack those who care about them, and who they in fact care about themselves, in order to make sure that they are trustworthy.

The story of O-Tsuyu and Shinzaburō, then, is a tragedy that depicts such a lack of trust and moments of self-harm. In the subconscious, the distrust and self-harm get repeated time and again, which leads to a mental state known as dissociative identity disorder in psychoanalysis. A person who is supposed to have one personality ends up being split into several personalities through severe trauma, for which O-Tsuyu and Shinzaburō could be seen as symbols.

From this perspective, O-Tsuyu would be the personified manifestation of aggression that has dissociated from the self, and Shinzaburō would be the self, burdened with guilt. In that sense, O-Tsuyu is the messenger (*shi-sha* 使者) or dead person (*shisha* 死者) who makes her otherworldly voice heard from the subconscious. Shinzaburō’s home can be understood as a secret, small chamber where the self resides. O-Tsuyu, who was excluded from the chamber, repeatedly knocks on its door. A solution to the conflict would have been to mourn the aggressive personality, O-Tsuyu, that had separated from the self, Shinzaburō, and to find a suitable space for her. Would that be Shinzaburō’s home, O-Tsuyu’s grave, or perhaps the darkness that she wanders in?

A person splits into O-Tsuyu and Shinzaburō, in other words, the person loses their wholeness. For such a dissociation to occur, the person has to have made experiences that lead to feelings of helplessness and guilt; they must have suffered abuse in their personal history such as neglect by their parents. In these cases, what is “heimlich,” one’s house or home, turns into something “unheimlich,” a thing that torments children.³ On a societal level, this describes peoples’ loss of their home due to the radioactive contamination caused by the government and TEPCO. Paradoxically, the one

³ For a discussion of the concepts of “heimlich” and “unheimlich,” see Freud’s 1919 essay “Das Unheimliche.”

thing that supported their home, to which they wanted to return but could not, was without a doubt the nuclear power policy developed by the government and TEPCO. Because of these measures, the desolate village, from which the residents had to leave to seek work elsewhere, became a flourishing town where families could live once more. While wanting to resent TEPCO and the government, it is therefore difficult to do so. The home that people are now unable to return to was built by funds from TEPCO and the government which is a reality that is hard to accept.

Let us return to the example introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the case of the Arahama Coast in Sendai. If those who swim through the sea where their loved ones lie make it back to the coast, they succeed in bringing the voiceless pleas of the dead to the world of the living, through their empathy for the dead. However, if they themselves end up sinking to the bottom of the sea, overwhelmed by the sorrow of losing their loved ones, they become engulfed by a sense of transference⁴ towards the dead. When the pleading voices of the dead resonate with the guilt of the living, the living become unable to swim back to the coast. The feeling of guilt towards the dead is like an irresistible, dark force. However, rashly trying to get rid of this darkness is pointless. Because it is impossible to do so, we must distance ourselves ahead of time to not get caught by the darkness. The reason for this is that we were raised in darkness, and like the “banality of evil,” it clings to all humankind.

In that case, the issue becomes how we can confront such dark feelings while maintaining our distance from them. First and foremost, the people of this region, whose voices have become completely hoarse (*kasureta koe* かすれた声; Hasegawa), need trustworthy listeners. There needs to be someone at their side who tells them, “I understand. You (your unconscious mind) must have been in so much pain. I won’t forget.” The psychologist Hasegawa Hirokazu 長谷川博一 comments in this regard:

⁴ The term “transference” stems from the field of psychoanalysis and was coined by Freud, among others. See, for example, Freud’s 1912 essay “Zur Dynamik der Übertragung.”

Can you become aware of your inner child? It might only appear as a frightened, small child. In most cases, the child does not show its true face. It might be turned away from you, crouching down, shoulders trembling, and crying. (160)

The whispers of the disaster victims cannot be heard, and they do not form words. We are painfully aware of the powerlessness of our own words which do not reach them. Above all, we are the ones who have neglected our inner child, striving to become adults yet unable to do so.

We must speak about the trauma borne by individuals and societies affected by disaster. About Ōkawa Elementary School, where most students and teachers lost their lives because of the Great East Japan Earthquake, where the clock froze at 3:37 pm. The march of time is relentless and there is a duality of time, a life in the present and a life in the past. We must also remember the Great Hanshin Earthquake, and the statue called Marina, that is standing in the East Park of Sannomiya district in Kobe. It was rebuilt after the earthquake and holds a clock that has stopped at 5:46 am.

It is important to show care for individuals or communities carrying such trauma. Striving for understanding is also crucial. However, caution is needed to figure out how to give shape to the silence of those affected by trauma because what they experienced is hard to accept for the victims, and therefore they themselves reject awareness of these experiences. Connected to this, they often suffer from traumatic flashbacks. A woman who has experienced serious trauma describes her symptoms as follows:

For me, the experience of sexual violence takes the shape of a donut with a hole in the middle. The hollow center represents the unspeakable past, surrounded by the many past moments that I can put into words. The more I try to talk about what I went through, the more the “unspeakable past” stands out, hollow like the hole in the middle of a donut. I can’t take my mind off this hole. I’m plagued by obsessive thoughts, thinking that “I haven’t really told the truth” or “I lost grasp of what should have been said.” (Komatsubara 27)

We are indeed looking at what Talal Asad refers to as the “untranslatable world” in his *Secular Translations*, or, as discussed by Gayatri Spivak, at

a “subaltern” whose voice has been lost (Asad 57; Spivak 252). “Subaltern” originally referred to socially marginalized people in southern Italy, but here, it is used in a broader sense to refer to people who cannot determine their own position in the world, based on the discourse in the field of post-colonial studies.

Because the victims’ self-respect, the feeling that they are ordinary humans, was taken away from them, their minds and bodies have split apart, and they are left in a predicament where they are unable to manage their daily lives. Therefore, it is crucial to listen carefully to what they have to say. We have to decipher the underlying meanings of their words and translate them appropriately. Of course, this must be done without being engulfed by the strong emotions caused by transference and countertransference (Lacan). If one is swept away by these feelings, neither the speaker nor the listener will be able to return to the real world.

Let us now discuss the intriguing German movie about the Great East Japan Earthquake *Greetings from Fukushima*, that was already mentioned in the introduction. Set in the difficult-to-return zone along the Fukushima coastline, the movie tells a ghost story. It can be assumed that this story was inspired by the tragedy which happened in the Ukedo district of Namie Town, Fukushima, caused by the nuclear disaster and the tsunami. An elderly woman called Satomi illegally occupies an area within the uninhabitable difficult-to-return zone and builds a makeshift hut from scattered debris. She begins to share the space with a woman from Germany, Marie, who has come to the disaster area as a volunteer and carries many emotional scars. This marks the start of the story.

The two of them start repairing the makeshift hut. Walls are attached, and sliding doors and a front door are installed—all made with materials salvaged from houses destroyed or partially damaged by the disaster. From the houses of the dead, a home for the living is built. Satomi and Marie create their own secret, small room, and every night, they hold hands as they sleep. They are trying to build an environment in which they no longer have to fear the darkness in their hearts. Around them is the beach where many lost their lives to the tsunami, the beach that was abandoned because of the nuclear disaster. The makeshift hut stands in the middle of this desolation, far too vulnerable to last.

Then, the two women hear a mysterious song. When they open the sliding doors, they see the ghosts of those who died in the tsunami surrounding the house. The ghosts are singing while trying to look inside the house. Right in front of them, there is the ghost of a young woman. Suddenly, Satomi falls to her knees, apologizing profusely. From there, she begins her tale of confession, reminiscent of *Botan dōrō*, the story of Shinzaburō and O-Tsuyu.

It turns out that Satomi was training the young girl, Yuki, as a Geisha. When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck the beach, they escaped the tsunami by climbing up a large tree that still stands beside the house. However, when the water reached their feet, Satomi unintentionally kicked Yuki and was thus the only one surviving atop the tree. Yuki was swallowed by the black sea. Every night, she stands next to that tree and sings a song she learned from Satomi. Satomi collapses in tears while Yuki's ghost watches her.

On the next day, Marie notices that Satomi is trying to hang herself from a branch of the tree where the accident happened. Driven by guilt over pushing her student off the tree, she had come back to her former home, intending to end her own life. Marie desperately clings to Satomi's legs and manages to pull her down from the tree just in time. With resentment in her voice, Satomi asks, "Why didn't you let me die?" Before one knows, anger turns into sorrow and both women are crying. Satomi is no longer alone because Marie has chosen to stay by her side.

As Marie did not experience the disaster herself, she cannot fully understand Satomi's pain, but she still made the decision to stand by her side. Thanks to Marie, Satomi is saved from being carried away by negative emotions. In this moment, trust is built, in stark contrast to Shinzaburō's story in the Rakugo play *Kaidan botan dōrō* 怪談牡丹灯籠—here, Shinzaburō is betrayed by his neighbors who secretly remove the talismans that had protected him from O-Tsuyu and thus cause his death. Marie and Satomi let down their guard and open up to each other. However, speaking about emotional scars means exposing one's vulnerabilities, so they do not look at each other directly while listening to each other's stories, in order to not hurt each other.

From there, the tone of the story changes. The two of them start *living* together—with a new tomorrow in mind and not death. They sweep the floors, mop the hallways. Satomi, a former Geisha, teaches Marie about Japanese culture, and they drink tea together. In time, Satomi's life that was shaped by guilt after the earthquake is put back on track through routine and manual tasks.

Marie and Satomi live a life in which they exist because of each other, in their secret house surrounded by ghosts in the difficult-to-return zone. Theirs is a hidden world, unknown to anyone else. It is powered by the imagination that leads you away from official living spaces such as the temporary housing built by the local government to the other side of the barricades, the secret room.

At the end, Marie becomes a messenger, delivering a doll to Yuki, Satomi's former student. This doll of a groom is the counterpart to the dolls of brides which bereaved families dedicated to the Yasukuni Shrine for their sons who had died in the war. Satomi had sewed the doll with her own hands so that Yuki would not be lonely in the afterlife. Yuki lovingly cradles the doll and disappears into the darkness.

After this moment, Yuki does not appear again, which shows that she and Satomi were able to reconcile. By accepting Satomi's feelings of remorse, the ghost of the young woman was finally able to find peace. The ghost represents Satomi's guilt that had dissociated from her, and because of the mediation by Marie, an outsider, Satomi was able to come to terms with her feelings.

In the final scene of the movie, the story that began with Satomi confessing her guilt to Marie evolves into a relationship of transference and countertransference, in which Marie confesses her guilt as well. It is at this moment that a crucial scene, perhaps the climax of the film, takes place. One of them recounts her past where she left her former student to die. The other speaks about shouldering the responsibility for breaking off her engagement in Germany, about the wounds her actions inflicted. As they admit to these things, they are looking at the Fukushima ocean and never directly face each other. They share their stories without meeting each other's eyes while looking out at the same sea—at the bottom of which lie the bodies swallowed by the tsunami, during the earthquake.

If they faced each other directly, they would feel ashamed of and burdened by their respective pasts. The darkness of their pasts might evoke anger and lead to destruction, or they might cry while embracing each other. If their emotions ended up running too high, the two would be completely overwhelmed and their bond would break. This connects to the myth of Medusa, whose gaze turns those who directly meet her eyes into stone. One should not directly confess the darkness of one's heart captured by this gaze. Those who hear such a confession might become afflicted with the same trauma, becoming unable to move. Medusa subjugates the other to her will. The one who pleases her is left with only three choices: to submit to her, to flee, or to fight.

Confessions of guilt are not meant to be listened to in direct confrontation. To keep the other person from turning into Medusa, it is important to take such confessions in from a different perspective. This can be compared to the relationship between a patient and a psychoanalyst in a psychoanalytic setting. An example of a work embodying this relationship between analyst and patient is the movie *Konya, romansu no gekijō de* 今夜、ロマンス劇場で (2018), starring the actress Ayase Haruka 綾瀬はるか.

In the movie, a young man falls so deeply in love with a fictional female character that she materializes in the real world. Because she does not really exist, there is a rule that if he touches her, she disappears from this world. Because of this rule, the lovers spend their time together only talking and touching with glass between them, careful to avoid direct touch.

Facing the other person directly and not getting tangled up with their emotions, with the darkness of their heart—his is the taboo that Freud establishes in the relationship between patient and psychoanalyst in psychoanalysis. Culture means turning the desire of the animalistic, natural world into such a taboo, and establishing rules through this process. This taboo keeps the psychoanalyst as well as the patient from getting overwhelmed by emotions and prevents one from becoming emotionally dependent on the other. Under the gaze of Medusa, they are able to form a self that can show initiative—in our terms, it becomes possible for them to build their own secret, small room. This process brings the emotions between the two to the surface in a visible form. Sharing and analyzing these emotions is what psychoanalysis is about. Through this process, the secret, small room

is separated from the illusionary world that the enigmatic other created, and this separation connects to the formation of a transference that gives to the enigmatic other, to a subject that is dependent on another, an active form of subjectivity. This “return” (*toraekaeshi* 捉え返し) is the complete opposite of dependence.⁵ To alleviate the burden of secrets that two people shoulder, it is necessary to relate those secrets to someone. It should not be someone similar to the individual in question. Rather, it needs to be a being not of this world, like someone who has already passed, or even a divine entity from Shinto or Buddhism. This is the “enigmatic other,” a presence that signifies a “you” that is not here, nor in fact anywhere at all.

Coming back to the story of Satomi and Marie, we can say that the two of them experience what Sakai Naoki 酒井直樹 calls *taishō ni utareru* 対象に撃たれる. Even if they are in the same room, the fact that they share their feelings with each other does not signify a form of sympathy where everything is in agreement but rather stands for an empathy that presupposes the secrets of their respective rooms. Their confessions concern the wounds of their past, and as such, they are different from each other. It is here that the desire arises to compel the other to submit to one's own wounds, without giving them a choice.

Because of a sense of empathy that is based on the existence of their respective rooms, the two can be together in one room. However, if they tried to seal off their individual rooms, what they have confessed would become unbearable, and the relationship of transference and countertransference would deteriorate into a negative, binding force, in other words, into violence, just like in the case of O-Tsuyu and Shinzaburō.

This takes me to another important point: behind the secret room(s) of Satomi and Marie, of O-Tsuyu and Shinzaburō, there is, in fact, another room. It is a chamber that is not easily accessible to the self. It can be likened to an altar room in which kami and Buddhas are worshipped, or to a crypt that no one knows the contents of. In the truest sense of the phrase, it is a room that cannot be opened (*akazu no ma* 開かざる間). No one beside oneself can enter this primordial space.

⁵ My concept of *toraekaeshi* refers to the ability of a person to face their desires and thus change the outcome of things. For more on *toraekaeshi*, see Isomae, *Kōkyō shūkyōron*.

The secret room, that we established before, belongs to no one but ourselves, and in it, we can spend time that is meant just for ourselves. It is not a space of isolation (*koritsu* 孤立). Isolation signifies an escape from oneself, an escape from being alone. Ultimately, it is a loneliness that is utterly discomforting. So, when others intrude, they trample over the heart without sensitivity, because the owner of the room had already turned dislike and violence towards themselves. On the other hand, solitude (*kodoku* 孤独) allows us to learn to relax with just ourselves for company. There, boredom and loneliness become not signs of misery but rather tools for relaxation. In this way, Marie and Satomi can speak without facing each other, looking in the same direction while holding onto their secrets and respecting each other. About having and confessing secrets, Okonogi writes the following:

In other words, we are speaking about “intimacy” (*shinmitsusa* 親密さ) which differs from “fusion” (*yūgō* 融合). It is an intimacy that is shared while maintaining a sense of separation and distance as independent individuals. . . . At this stage . . . disclosing secrets does not lead to the loss of self, nor does it result in a fusion with the other person. Instead, even if the other person does not confess all their secrets . . . , the intimacy and fundamental trust towards them are not damaged. (118)

When one cannot bear the solitude of being alone with one’s thoughts, one descends into a state of isolation. At that moment, the gaze of Medusa can make the isolated individual submit to her will. This is where the hidden space behind the hidden space, that we briefly touched upon above, comes into play. It manifests as a realm to which no one belongs. It is a space that even leads us to abandon a feeling of sameness towards our own selves. Speaking in religious terms, it is close to the kami and Buddha that are enshrined on a Buddhist or Shinto altar. It is a space in which one connects to beings that are not of this world, the divine or the dead, and to an infinity that has lost any sense of finiteness. However, it is not a convenient but ultimately useless deity to whom humans simply make a wish. It is a deity

that heightens desire, a deity of hunger and pleasure. I previously referred to it as the “enigmatic other,” or as the “you” that is nowhere to be found.

Here lies the true meaning of solitude, as described by Hannah Arendt (*Origins* 476 et seq.). It pierces the subject, right down to its core. It is incommensurable and destructive. Because of this, the subject cannot keep up their connection to others, let alone to themselves. However, it is precisely this untranslatable hidden space behind the hidden space that allows you and I, within our secret chambers, to avoid assimilating to each other in an excessive manner, and to maintain the distance that we need for companionship. In that moment, the conceit that we are an ordinary person's idea of “decent” which has turned us into something monstrous and our desire to be nothing but victims is called in to question under the watchful gaze of the enigmatic other(s).

In this context, it appears that our ability to truly sense the pain in the hearts of those affected by disasters is being questioned. When society lacks that capability, crucial memories end up forgotten, like the devastation of entire villages and the complete destruction of important facilities. We are asked for a stance which shows that apologies alone do not suffice, as is the case with the forgotten memories of Japanese colonial rule.

Here, it has to be noted that there is nothing more senseless than asking, “Why are the Koreans still preoccupied with the past?” Instead, we should ask ourselves, “How many atrocities have we committed to make them hold onto the past like this?” In this way, it will become clear whether Japan's post-war democracy was truly a space open to everyone or if its equality was merely deemed as such by us, a group of people who share the same circumstances.

If we assume that liberal democracy is a system that unconsciously affirms the individual's desires, and that the idea that overall peace comes to be naturally through competitive acts of desire is a deceptive notion, then the democracy of the future begins with a reexamination of this desire. The “doctrine of the salvation of the wicked” (*akunin shōkisetsumo* 悪人正機説) advocated by Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263) is especially notable in this regard. By objectively considering our own wickedness, meaning our desire, which is a social phenomenon that lacks

innocence, we can start thinking about social organization with the basis that we are wicked.

In the end, humans all end up being harmed or cause harm themselves. We inflict wounds or suffer them in many different forms—here, Emmanuel Levinas's concept of "vulnerability" comes to mind (75–81). While this concept is often assumed to mean that we are always vulnerable, it should also be understood to signify that humans are capable of causing harm. This provides an opportunity to reevaluate the notion of the "banality of evil" and gives rise not to a plurality based on complete sameness but rather to an atmosphere of incommensurability where we complement each other based on our differing perspectives. Thus, a space is created in which we, a multitude of subjects who cannot be measured by the same standards, are able to co-exist without one-sided assimilation.

Ultimately, thinking about Fukushima means reconsidering what democracy is. In the post-war period, the importance of democracy was emphasized consistently, and the statement that it is important to equally listen to the voices of the oppressed was repeated often. However, I would argue that the word "fairness" is more meaningful than the term "equality." Equality signifies that one's own rights are respected, not those of the other party. It does not describe a social system such as that of a socialist state where everyone is given the same rights regardless of success or failure. Rather, democracy built on fairness can only be realized through a stance that Said calls "critical" thinking. This stance means striving to be fair regardless of one's own personal interests, which brings us to the idea of the public sphere, proposed by Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, among others.⁶ Currently, the public sphere is often perceived as a space where social rights are recognized. However, Yun Hae-dong and Giorgio Agamben point out that the establishment of these rights is inevitably accompanied by exclusion; they are like two sides of the same coin (Yun 193).

This is linked to the imagination of a space called "white land" (*shiroi tochi* 白い土地), that is, in essence, an eternal difficult-to-return zone.⁷ The

⁶ See, for example, Chapter 2 of Arendt's *The Human Condition* and Part I and II of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* by Habermas.

⁷ *Shiroi tochi* is a term used within the nuclear power industry as well as by the

dark place to which O-Tsuyu meant to take Shinzaburō is exactly such a white land. It is a world where ordinary people can no longer live, inhabited only by ghosts. We have to properly grasp the fact that this merciless world of otherworldly beings, who were forgotten and left behind, exists at the edge of our world.

O-Tsuyu herself is the personification of resentment, caused by Shinzaburō's insincerity. She is also a victim, hurt by the selfishness that ails human society and forcibly removed from this world. Shinzaburō should have embraced O-Tsuyu who sought to take him into the world of darkness. He should have properly apologized. The insincerity that we can observe here is his own, but it is also the insincerity of the world at large. And in a way, it is connected to the shameful selfishness of Satomi, who lets her student be swallowed up by the tsunami so that she can survive.

The question is if there is a way out of this insincerity and selfishness. Should Shinzaburō have stayed with O-Tsuyu and offered to start a new life together in this world? Could O-Tsuyu even return from the underworld to live as a human being? In ancient times, this phenomenon was called *yomigaeri* 黄泉がえり ("return from the land of the dead"). However, as can be seen in the stories of Izanagi and his wife Izanami, and Orpheus and his wife Eurydice, bringing back the dead to this world must ultimately fail. Instead, should O-Tsuyu not have returned to the world beyond (*anoyo* あの世)? There, she could have found peace, just like Yuki in *Greetings from Fukushima*. Indeed, it is important that those we have lost return to the world of the dead, and that they receive proper remembrance and worship. We need to draw a line between the two worlds, to say our final good-byes to our loved ones so that we can keep them in our hearts.

In the *Kojiki*, when Izanagi flees from Yomi no kuni pursued by Izanami, he barricades the entrance to the underworld with a heavy rock, thus clearly separating the world of the dead from the world of the living. On the other side of this rock, he speaks words of parting to Izanagi, and leaves her in the underworld. One of the important narrative functions of myth is to

government. These are regions in which radioactivity is still strong, and that people cannot return to. Because of this, maps of these places are not marked with black dots that usually symbolize the population of an area. They remain completely white.

explain origins—in this context the origin of the separation of life and death. Through the separation of the two, order has been brought to the world of the living, but the former state of togetherness can never be achieved again. It is exactly this irretrievability that is central for this myth's narration of origins. It is not a story about returning to a sense of completeness, but rather a tale about how what was once whole split apart. Disaster causes such a rupture in people's life, and giving shape to this kind of loss remains a daunting challenge.

Conclusion

How, then, do we face this challenge? As discussed in this chapter, it is important to accept the existence of blank spaces in our world. A line must be drawn between the here and now and the afterlife, but what has been lost should not be forgotten. Remembering the terrible, the unimaginable is pivotal because it helps us keep up a critical attitude towards ourselves and towards the past. The voices of those affected by traumatic events—and this includes not only disaster but also, as touched upon previously, experiences of colonialism—need to be heeded.

Mythical and ghostly tales like those of Izanami and Izanagi, Shinzaburō and O-Tsuyu, and Satomi and Yuki are different expressions of trauma and loss and might point towards a tentative framework of dealing with these difficult issues. Even if a return from the land of the dead is ultimately impossible, these stories show the importance of providing a proper space for mourning and of letting go while still remembering the past. As such, the fragile connection between the living and the dead must not be completely severed. At present, society is often assumed to be a place where humans interact as living beings, but a perspective based on an actor-network in which the living and the dead, humans and animals, as well as humans and society at large interact, will likely become vital in the future.⁸

⁸ The actor-network-theory was coined by the French sociologist Bruno Latour (1947–2022), among others. For an introduction to the theory, see Latour's *Reassembling the Social*, published in 2005.

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A Concealed Nature in Miki Kiyoshi's and Maruyama Masao's Theories on Myth

Daniel F. SCHLEY

Miki Kiyoshi and Maruyama Masao addressed the issue of myth in different ways. Miki analyzed myths as products of the "power of imagination" that connects individuals to their society through rational as well as sensual elements. He acknowledged them as a socially relevant form of symbolic knowledge that continues to be active in the present and appears in times of accelerated change and social tensions. While Miki discussed myth as a concept in general terms, Maruyama dealt with Japanese myths in particular. In the cosmogony of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki, he found the paradigmatic pattern of historical consciousness in Japan. Namely, he identified the three basic categories of becoming (nari), succession (tsugi tsugi) and energy (ikioi).

Miki and Maruyama both had a background in Marxist theories and appreciated myth as an important element for analyzing social and cultural phenomena. They differ in their approach and conception but nevertheless share some important points. Among them is a subtly hidden and hitherto less considered concept of nature which is in fact a central component in their theories on myth. Miki explored the effect of nature more explicitly through the concept of pathos and its relation to logos. For him, myth is one of the different historical forms in which logos and pathos come to a specific dialectical unity. In contrast, Maruyama unconsciously carried a certain understanding of nature into his interpretation of Japanese myths. He did so especially when he characterized the historical consciousness in Japan as an optimism of the absolute present in which the past and the future are continuously realigned and relativized for an open-ended succession of singular nows. Both, however, paid no attention to the in fact

complex layering of pre-modern meanings from different cultural backgrounds in the modern concept of nature.

In this chapter, I explore this obscured nature in Miki's and Maruyama's approaches to myth and examine the tensions that result from their neglect respectively. I examine how their rational analyses in a sense resacralized nature "through the backdoor."

Introduction

Miki Kiyoshi 三木清 (1897–1945) and Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914–1996) are two well-known representatives of the liberal left and Marxist intellectual tradition in Japan. Both of them struggled with the problem of achieving a genuine modernity in Japan and both understood myths less as a danger than as an opportunity to achieve this goal. They noticeably diverged in their conceptions and premises concerning myth, history, and modernity. This chapter will shed some light on the similarities and differences between their approaches in regard to the relationship of their theories to nature.

To begin with an introductory note on Miki, he developed his line of thought in the vicinity of the Kyoto School of Philosophy (*Kyōto gakuha* 京都学派) that formed around his teacher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945). He passionately participated in the Marxist debates during the late 1920s and early 1930s but soon turned his attention to other current philosophical topics and theories. Miki's position is somewhat difficult to assess because he joined Konoe Fumimaro's 近衛文麿 (1891–1945) brain trust *Shōwa kenkyūkai* 昭和研究会 in 1938 for a time and contributed to it with two pamphlets in which he seemingly supported an ultranationalistic agenda. His legacy therefore remains difficult to evaluate.¹

¹ It seems that his participation in the *Shōwa kenkyūkai* was partly motivated by his endeavor to positively influence the political elite. However, he underestimated the strength of the militaristic and imperialistic agenda at that time. On this problem, see, among others, Tsuda 281.

Maruyama was among the leading academics in the field of political science and intellectual history and established his fame as a proponent of the post-war democracy. Miki and Maruyama had many things in common, including their belief that myths still belong to the present. They saw them as a primitive but nevertheless effective cultural technique to master nature for the construction of societies and worldviews. In this regard, myths did not lose the importance they have had in ancient times or in “primitive” societies. One good example for this conviction can be seen in the following quote by Maruyama:

Myths exist in many primitive cultures because they play a major role in the formation of human symbols. I do not believe that there is a gap between the mythical worldviews and those of contemporary people that we modern people can be proud of. But there is a gap between the time when mythical world views were formed and the time before that. Myths are not simply a whim of the imagination or a product of thought. They are the primitive project of constructing a symbolic world that is separate from natural existence. Myths are formed when people try to control the oppressive nature that surrounds them, that is, when people create culture. Art, science, and myth are on the same line. Myths in particular are the first conscious attempt in human cultural history to give the boundaries a context of meaning. In this we can recognize an original framework for concepts. (*Nihon seiji shisōshi* 51–52)

More well-known than these passing remarks during his annual lecture about early modern Japanese political intellectual history at the University of Tokyo is Maruyama’s analysis of Japan’s cosmogenic myths to deduce from them the cultural basis of historical consciousness. More frequently, however, he drew on other types of texts and historical eras to develop his themes of democracy, liberty, and modernity together with his critique of Japanese ultranationalism.²

² There is a wealth of research literature on this subject in Japanese, English, and German. Wolfgang Seifert, for instance, translated many important texts from Maruyama into German.

Miki, on the other hand, is not so much famous for writing extensively on myth but on history and human existence. Yet he, too, began to deal with myths in the wake of his first major monograph on historical thinking published 1932 as *Rekishi tetsugaku* 歴史哲学 (*Philosophy of History*). In a series of smaller essays and journal articles on literature, epistemology, and aesthetics, he treated myth as a special form of knowledge, being inspired, among others, by Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) and the second volume of his *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* from 1925. More than a particular condition of knowledge, Miki saw in myth a practical attitude that connects to his basic concepts of *logos* and *pathos*. Some years later, he drew on several philosophical, sociological, and anthropological theories of myth for the first chapter of his *Kōsōryoku no ronri* 構想力の論理 (*Logic of Imagination*). Only the first three chapters were published during Miki's lifetime, but they are sufficient to acknowledge a maturity of his historical philosophy. To understand Miki's ideas on myth thus means to first consider his concept of history and the historicity of human existence.

The dangerous aspects of myths that dominated public debates and perceptions during the years of ultranationalist extremism should not be forgotten. Miki and Maruyama were well aware of the pitfalls of myth. Shortly after the complete surrender of Japan, Miki's life ended tragically in prison. He had been under observation by the special police and subjected to censorship for some time, but it was his commitment to his Marxist friends which was the final cause for his imprisonment. Due to his untimely death, he was unable to experience the post-war democracy and to react philosophically to the changed social conditions. One can only imagine what influence he may have had on the intellectuals of those years or the Marxist debates on subjectivity (*shutaisei* 主体性). Maruyama, on the other hand, only began to fully develop his intellectual potential in these years.

Maruyama and Miki argued differently in regard to myth in general and Japanese myths in particular. They are, however, similar in that they place myth in the context of their conceptions of subjective creativity and society. As will become clear by way of their arguments, both rely on a peculiar idea of practice and nature for their approach to myth. The two thinkers

touched on many similar points, and it is fascinating to imagine how a discussion between them might have gone.

In this chapter, I will approach their theories on myth as a kind of preparatory step for further comparison. Following a brief overview of Maruyama's treatment of myth, I will more extensively turn to Miki's theories on myth and history, as they are presumably less well known. I analyze their arguments in regard to a less considered concept of nature which is in fact an important component in their understanding of modernity, history, and the systematic place of myth therein.

Maruyama on the Japanese Origin Myths

As mentioned above, Maruyama is famous for his post-war criticism of Japanese society and political culture as well as his studies on the intellectual history of early modern Japan. He was deeply concerned with the difficulties Japan faced in becoming a truly modern and democratic society. This is an important point in his well-known study *Nihon no shisō* 日本の思想 (*Japanese Thought*) from 1961. He begins his essay of the same title by pointing out the lack "of an intellectual tradition that serves as a nucleus or coordinate axis in Japan" (Maruyama, *Nihon no shisō* 5; mentioned also in Liederbach 35, 39; Karube 153; Stevens 32). Foreign concepts and thoughts are absorbed without any real confrontation, which led to a mutually unconnected simultaneity of intellectual imports from India, China, Korea, and Europe throughout Japanese history.

Maruyama thus specifically characterizes Japanese intellectual history as discontinuous. New elements are absorbed and assimilated but hardly related to each other. It seems that he gained inspiration for this assumption much earlier during the war through a comment of the German Philosopher Karl Löwith, who addressed the conspicuous disconnectedness between imported foreign cultural elements and one's own cultural traditions (Karube 86; Löwith "Nihilism in Europe"). Further influence can be traced back to Miki's *Philosophy of History*. Maruyama read this difficult study during his university days and was much impressed by Miki's thought (Imai, *Miki Kiyoshi* 166–67; Karube 154).

In *Nihon no shisō*, Maruyama only describes the basic structure of thought in Japan, but he could not yet identify its origins. This leads him to the negative conclusion of a general insufficiency in regard to intercultural transformations. As Hans Peter Liederbach notes in his study on Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960), Maruyama was criticized for his idealization of the European intellectual tradition and his mainly negative definition of Japan's cultural characteristics that he gleaned by using European concepts like individuality and autonomy (39).³ It is true that Maruyama borrowed much from European and especially German philosophers and sociologists like Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, and even the problematical Carl Schmitt (Schamoni and Seifert 8–11; Kersten 51–52, 59, 81–88).⁴ Later, during his annual lectures on premodern political thought at the University of Tokyo, he was still preoccupied with the question of the underlying structure of Japan's cultural development. His main interest was to identify the conditions that had so far prevented the formation of a coherent intellectual tradition similar to what he assumed to be representative for Europe.

In his search for an explanation, he turned towards the cosmogonic myths of the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). Therein he believed to have found the paradigmatic pattern of historical consciousness in Japan and the basic structure of thinking in Japan from ancient times to the present. He identified a specific historical logic that determines Japan's independent culture and modernity. According to Maruyama, three basic categories are important: “becoming” (*nari*), “succession” (*tsugitsugi*) and “energy” (*ikioi*). They represent the “archetypes” (*genkei*) or “ancient strata” (*kosō*) of the intellectual development in every age since ancient times. Combined, these elements result in an optimism regarding the present, in which the past is selectively rearranged and the future envisioned as a linear sequence ad infinitum. History becomes a continuous

³ In this study, Liederbach approaches Watsuji in the context of “Japanese thought” and questions this concept, among other things, by a short digression on Maruyama. One can further add that the formation of the philosophical-historical tradition in Europe is itself the construct of competing intellectual schools.

⁴ Imai Hiromichi 今井弘道 places Maruyama somewhere between Kantianism and Hegelianism (*Miki Kiyoshi* 51–52).

and non-teleological, unlimited flow of vital energy (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku*, 327, 343–44, 350).

With these conclusions Maruyama distanced himself from the earlier criticism against his previous analysis of thought in Japan, namely that he had used Europe as a normative standard. Published in 1972, his later essay “Chūsei to hangyaku” 忠誠と反逆 attracted much attention as well as new criticism. Among the latter, especially his approach to Japanese mythology coupled with his seemingly essentialist position caused serious doubts.⁵ Some critics accused him of having moved away from his earlier social-historical method in favor of culturalist stereotypes.

Elsewhere, Maruyama explains that he had in fact been working for some time on his concept of basic cultural patterns or archetypes, as he called them in reference to Carl Gustav Jung’s term for the collective unconscious. He had experimented with these concepts during his university lectures and further developed his ideas during a lecture series in the United States (Maruyama, “Genkei” 129). A closer look at the text will uncover a thematical continuity with his wartime writings on Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1705). It will furthermore reveal conceptual and theoretical similarities with Miki’s philosophy of history and myth.

Maruyama begins his essay “Chūsei to hangyaku” with a quote from Motoori Norinaga’s 本居宣長 (1730–1801) commentary on the *Kojiki*, in which the early modern nativist scholar states that “the logic of history (*rekishi no kotowari*) including the future is condensed in the Age of the Gods” (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 295). With this hint towards the continuous importance of the origin myths for the understanding of history, Maruyama moves on to position his own approach against the existing research on the Age of the Gods. His goal is not to carve out the possible historical facts in the mythological narrative through a historical-critical source analysis or to interpret the myth as a reflection of historical rituals and politics. He aims instead for the mythical substance of these texts “because the myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are, in their own way, neither

⁵ Maruyama distanced himself from interpretations that he identified with the “Nipponists” (*nihon shugisha* 日本主義者) in his conversation with Katō Shūichi 加藤周一 (1919–2008) (*Maruyama Masao zadan*, 244).

pure myths nor representations of history, but something that lies ‘strangely’ in between” (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 297).⁶

This textual quality enables him to draw conclusions about the creative capacity of the imagination from the modes of expression. In three larger sections, each dedicated to one of the above-mentioned key concepts and accompanied by numerous examples, Maruyama slowly builds up his main statement.⁷ The first historical category he turns his attention to is becoming, *naru* or *nariyuki*. The preference for processes of biological recovery in the stories of the gods gives Maruyama reason to emphasize this first peculiar aspect of Japanese cosmology.⁸

In the seemingly superfluous and inelegant repetition of the word “next” (*tsugi*) in the account on the genesis of the gods and the creation of the Japanese archipelago, he notices an important clue on the historical consciousness. Several generations are coming to existence one after the other in an uninterrupted linear process that further continues in the offspring of Amaterasu’s Heavenly Grandchild, that is the lineage of Japanese emperors. He interprets the expression *tsugi* not only as a spatial expansion but also as a temporal unfolding (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 312–13). The former is characteristic of Chinese mythology and its linguistic conditions, while the latter is a modification made in the adaption process to the Japanese language and the political ideology of *bansei ikkei* 万世一系, meaning one “unbroken imperial line” (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 314–15).⁹ Maruyama then proceeds to state that

⁶ In this passage, the Japanese term *shinwa* 神話 is rendered with the reading *myutosu* ミュトス (“myth”).

⁷ Among others, he draws on the *Manyōshū* 万葉集, the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, the *Ōkagami* 大鏡, and *Mizukagami* 水鏡 as well as the *Gukanshō* 愚管抄. Among the Confucian scholars of the early modern period, he mentions for example Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680–1747), Iida Tadahiko 飯田忠彦 (1799–1861), Ogyū Sorai, Rai Sanyō 賴山陽 (1780–1832), Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685), and Yamagata Taika 山県太華 (1781–1866).

⁸ It should be noted that cultural-anthropological research on myths and religious studies already worked on intercultural references in Japanese myths at the time. See, for example, Naumann 91–92, 113.

⁹ Maruyama anachronistically uses the modern expression to define the political-theological thought of ancient and medieval Japan.

the ‘next’ (*tsugi*) and the ‘on and on’ (*tsugitsugi*) essentially refers to the idea of the continuity and its uninterrupted [succession] of kinship or houses. But even if one looks at imperial decrees in the *Man'yōshū* as a concrete example, [the expression] is not limited to lineages of kinship and houses but is also used to describe the continuous occurrence of achievements and actions. (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 318)

The first two categories of becoming and succession are thus basically representative for the unbroken succession of the imperial house into the indefinite future and the myth of the ruling tennō as a direct descendant from the imperial ancestor deity Amaterasu. The third and last category *ikioi*, energy, appears in many different ideas and images, including the regular cycle of the four seasons, for which there are equivalents in Chinese sources. For Japan, however, the focus is especially on the notions of an unlimited progress and of a charismatic or sacral power (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 326).¹⁰ It is thus in combination with *ikioi* that the connection of *tsugitsugi ni nariyuku ikioi* takes on a particularly historical significance as a kind of additive-linear structural principle (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 309, 334; see also Kracht 226; Liederbach 44).

This finally results in a fundamental optimism towards the present, in which the primordial beginning manifests itself. The present consists of singular “now-moments,” that are each structurally similar to the mythical beginning of history. This characteristic also prevents the formation of a coherent chain of “nows” with a beginning and an end as well as a circular structure (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 310, 327). As a consequence, every single event contains the potential within itself to represent a radical new beginning which is at the same time paradoxically a repetition of the past. This contradictory, non-teleological structure of historical consciousness is the reason why no guiding principle was ever influential enough to create a continuity of thought and to avoid a careless eclecticism. History and the present of the everyday receive not only a mythical quality but also

¹⁰ The latter is written with the Chinese character for virtue, *toku* 徳, but is not used in the regular normative and ethical sense (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 321–22).

an existential significance, in which the present is a repetition or rather a “retrieval” (*Wiederholung*) of the past (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 343).¹¹

Both of these points are very similar to Miki’s arguments in his *Philosophy of History*, which will be the topic of the second half of this chapter. Miki himself stressed the historical potential of the everyday and argued for a non-teleological understanding of historical time. Events are related to each other in a continuous discontinuity in which every moment bears the possibility of a radical break and a new beginning, not unlike Maruyama’s interpretation.¹² In this regard, both of them understood myth as something relevant for the present, albeit with different intentions. Before taking a closer look at Miki’s ideas, a discussion of Maruyama’s war-time articles on Ogyū Sorai will prepare the ground for a concluding comparison between these two eminent Japanese intellectuals.

Maruyama on Nature

In his 1972 article, Maruyama proposed an argument for understanding the disconnected stratification or layering of ideas and conceptions in Japan’s intellectual history. Significantly, he found the key to the paradigmatic pattern of historical consciousness and the primeval modes of thought in the ancient origin myths. With his first category, Maruyama highlighted the term becoming/*naru*, which he thought to have been more important in Japanese intellectual history than similar concepts like “giving birth,” *umu*, and “making” or “producing,” *tsukuru*. The former appears in the Chinese cosmogenesis, while the latter is representative for the biblical “creation out of nothing,” which has been decisive for the formation of European historical consciousness from the medieval period onwards. In contrast to the Japanese version of a spontaneous, natural generation process that arises from within, expressed with becoming/*naru*, “making” presupposes

¹¹ For this specific existentialist interpretation that goes back to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, see Kashima 211.

¹² For Miki’s concept of history, see especially MKZ 6: 18, 22–23, 178, 184.

an active subject.¹³ Together with the third aspect of life energy, *ikioi*, Maruyama assessed Japan's historical and political thought from a vitalist point of view.

As mentioned in the introduction, Maruyama did not raise a new topic with his analysis of Japanese myths to uncover the peculiarities of Japanese self-understanding. Many have addressed this issue earlier with varying degrees of success and others will surely continue to do so in the future. Maruyama himself received substantial impetus and inspiration for his analysis from prewar and wartime interpretations of Japanese culture and history, among others by Watsuji Tetsurō and Miki.¹⁴ While Watsuji's concept has to be omitted at this point, Maruyama and Miki both regarded the modern conceptions of history and nature in Japan to be inadequate to fully realize modernity. They both turned to myth for analyzing social and cultural phenomena and confronted a particular notion of nature, therefore addressing similar problems. However, they applied different analytical frameworks. For my analysis, I will limit myself to the vitalism and presentism stressed in their analyses. Beginning with Maruyama, one can see this notion in the predominance of nature (*shizen*) over human invention (*sakui*) and creative subjectivity (*shutaisei*) as the decisive mode for thinking in Japan. The origins of his interpretation lead us back to his earlier study on Ogyū Sorai.¹⁵ This move backwards enables us to uncover some of the subtle references to Miki and the Kyoto School.

Maruyama's main thesis in the two essays on Sorai's political philosophy, written in 1940, are about the development of a modern consciousness in Japan.¹⁶ The juxtaposition of his key terms *shizen* and *sakui* already reveals his attitude or rather bias towards nature repeated in his later writing on myth. In Maruyama's view, true modernity provides individuals with

¹³ On this point see also the comments of Katō Shūichi in Maruyama, *Maruyama Masao zadan* 245–46.

¹⁴ Due to the large number of studies on Watsuji's philosophy, I will limit myself to a discussion of Miki's ideas.

¹⁵ Furthermore, they connect to his early papers on democracy and liberty (Iguchi 114–16, 120, 125–26).

¹⁶ His decision to focus on Sorai's writing was likely a reaction to the nationalistic and militaristic climate of the time. For more details, see Karube 74–78.

autonomy by liberating them from nature. One important prerequisite for modernity is to recognize artificial inventions and creative subjectivity as primary political values against naturalistic conceptions of society. Confucian ideologies as envisioned by Chu Hsi's 朱子 (1130–1200) philosophy and implemented in Japan by Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657) and other early-modern scholars represented an idealized continuum between the realms of politics and morality, or the “public” and the “private.” As Maruyama interpreted the dominant Neo-Confucian intellectual tradition in 1940, the main principles of the natural world and human affairs were interchangeably structured according to the same logic called the “Way” (*michi* 道) (*Studies* 95–99). For any progress towards a modern state, this strong connection had to be severed (Maruyama, *Studies* 102).¹⁷

In Ogyū Sorai's writing, Maruyama detected an intellectual turning point towards the possibility of an early beginning of modernity. Sorai argued that the Way of mankind was not a given cosmological principle but “nothing more than institutions of governance created by the Early Kings of Chinese antiquity,” the so called “sages” or *seijin/shengren* 聖人. The Way for human beings is therefore different to the laws governing the natural world (Maruyama, *Studies* 106–7). But Sorai's approach failed against the prevailing dominance of orthodox Confucians, which is why, according to Maruyama, nature still dominates over individual autonomy and freedom even after the Meiji modernization. Indirectly but in a recognizable manner, he criticized his political present and the totalitarian power of the state as being based on the continued presence of a premodern and Confucianist type of nature. Even in his later writings on “Japanese thought” or the “ancient strata” of the historical consciousness, he continued this thread and lamented the lack of a complete liberation from “nature” as one reason for Japan's weak post-war democracy (see, for example, Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 346–47, 350–51).

¹⁷ This criticism was also directed against his own society during and after the war (Stevens 21–22). Rikki Kersten interprets Maruyama's studies in early-modern intellectual history in the context of his negative assessment of Japanese postwar democracy (53–56).

Maruyama's theses have much potential, but there are also problematic points in his ideas, predominantly his binary opposition of modernity and nature. Nature is identified with premodern societies and oppression; these are, from his point of view, representative for Asian cultures. Japan in particular has not sufficiently modernized and has dissociated itself from its Asian political environment. Written during the war, and repeated after the war under different circumstances, this was a barely concealed criticism against his society and political system. It is precisely here where the above-mentioned criticism against his European bias comes into play. During this time, Maruyama was committed to a specifically European, and in particular Hegelian, conception of modernity as the universal historical arc of a development from nature to individual freedom, from feudalism to democracy, and, in a culturalist sense, as a movement from East to West.¹⁸

Another problem is his reductive expression of "nature" with the term *shizen* despite the variety of early modern expressions. *Shizen* did not become the standard term in Japanese until the 1890s. Maruyama's interpretation of the sources is not only lacking in philological accuracy but also misses the conceptional diversity of the relationship between nature and culture in the work of scholars like Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703–1762).¹⁹ In this regard, the linguist Yanabu Akira 柳父章 (1928–2018) has also raised an important objection to Maruyama's thesis. According to Yanabu, Maruyama based his argument on a uniform concept of nature and consequently does not take the differences in the meaning of nature in premodern Japanese sources and modern European texts into account (162). In short, Maruyama simply presupposes a modern understanding of nature and culture, whose lack he then claims to prove in the sources. Such a juxtaposition, however, cannot be found directly in the Confucian texts, which is why his discussion of Sorai and others misses interpretations and worldviews specific to their time. It is worth noting that Maruyama differentiates the premodern Chinese and Japanese meanings of *shizen/zirán*

¹⁸ On this problem, see especially Thomas 27–28, 30–31, 35. For Japanese critics of Maruyama's Eurocentric perspective, see also Schamoni and Seifert 8. In later essays, Maruyama questioned the East-West dichotomy (Kersten 117–22).

¹⁹ For Shōeki's exceptional concept of nature/*shizen* and social utopia, see Watanabe 205–08.

from the modern understanding in his later essay on the ancient strata of historical consciousness. He emphasizes the aspect of *shizen* as *onozukara*, meaning “spontaneous” or “by itself” (Maruyama, *Chūsei to hangyaku* 338).

In recent years, the intellectual historian Julia Thomas put forth a more accommodating interpretation of Maruyama’s ideas. She understands Maruyama’s one-sided preference for *shizen* as a veiled critique of the nationalistic propaganda during the war. The discourse on the Japanese spirit and the “national polity” (*kokutai* 国体) was at its peak during the celebration of the 2,600th anniversary of the legendary first Emperor Jinmu’s 神武天皇 founding of the nation in November 1940. “Nature” itself became a myth during these times. The notorious treaty *Kokutai no hongī* 国体の本義 (1937) is one of many possible examples for this notion. As Thomas explains in detail with reference to Maruyama, one chapter explicates the national character by referring to Japan’s extraordinarily beautiful nature and the deep connection between the Japanese people and the nature that surrounds them (22). This rather accommodating interpretation should not obscure the fact that Maruyama read his early modern sources from a very modern perspective.

Another factor that had influence on Maruyama’s criticism was the philosophy of the Kyoto School and among them in particular the writings of Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962) and Miki.²⁰ As will become clear in the following, Miki approached myth and history from a similar perspective that places “practice” (*seisaku* 制作) and “action” (*kōi* 行為), or “invention” (*sakui* 作為) in Maruyama’s terms, at the center.

Miki on Myth in his Earlier Writings

Similar to Maruyama, for Miki myths belong not only to past ages and cultures but to the order of the present. They are not the historical past and not a preliminary stage of rational knowledge and science. This is how he

²⁰ However, all three thinkers differed in their conceptualization of practice. For more details on Tanabe, see Imai, *Miki Kiyoshi* 164, 167–68.

explained myth as a kind of historical form in 1937, while referring explicitly to Ernst Cassirer's theory of "symbolic forms" (MKZ 8: 34). By approaching myth from the standpoint of present societies, he was in accord with other European scholars of myth such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) or Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939). Miki had been working on myth for some time now and included his ideas in a collection of essays about the power of imagination. He collectively published his essays as the first part of the *Logic of Imagination* in 1939. He wanted to establish "a logic differing from that of reason," a philosophy that is not simply a "logic of knowledge" but rather a "logic of praxis" (MKZ 8: 15). Among other things, he consequently states that the "logic of imagination is the logic of forms" (MKZ 8: 227). In Miki's view, myths are an exemplary case to recognize this specific capacity of the imagination, and they are consequently explored in the first chapter.

One of the many problems left unfinished with the *Philosophy of History* was to find a convincing solution for the Cartesian dualism between history and nature or spirit against nature in Hegelian terms.²¹ In the Japan of Miki's time, this dualism appeared as a subtle conflict between the internal, cultural world of the self with the external, empirical world of the social and natural environment.²² Miki finally settled on the imagination as the decisive human faculty to produce a dialectical unity between these two contending entities; this was his solution for the modern dualisms and contradictions. To explain his own intellectual development, Miki tells the reader in the introduction of the *Logic of Imagination*, written in July 1939, that it was a lifelong concern for him to theoretically grasp the pre-conscious and non-rational components of human existence and to balance them with the usually emphasized intellectual elements:

What continuously occupied my mind after the publication of my previous book, the *Philosophy of History*, was the problem of how the objective and the subjective, the rational and the irrational, and

²¹ A solution for these dualisms was a major topic in Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (1911), which initially inspired Miki to study philosophy in Kyoto.

²² For further information on the political construction of the "interior," see especially Isomae 297–300, 310–13.

the intellectual and the emotional could be united. At that time, I formulated this problem as a question of the unification of *logos* and *pathos*, analyzing each and every aspect of history as elements in terms of *logos* and *pathos*, and articulating their dialectical unification. (MKZ 8: 4)²³

Miki developed his philosophy from the interplay of rationality and passion, through his concepts of *logos* and *pathos*. *Logos*, on the one hand, delineates the realm of the intellect, rationality and knowledge but also of norms and values. *Pathos* is, broadly speaking, a physical state of mind and inner human nature that has an important influence on decisions and actions.

Miki explains why *pathos* is so important for understanding history by way of the creative act of producing a work of art. It is based on “creativity” and therefore different from mechanical production. Creation is inconceivable without considering emotions and an inner impulse (MKZ 19: 581).²⁴

A tendency towards irrationalism cannot be denied in *pathos* and must therefore be limited by scientific rationality. *Pathos* needs *logos*, just as *logos* would be one-dimensional without *pathos*. They form a dialectical relationship which is part of the ontological structure of human historicity (MKZ 19: 588). The synthesis of the two was intended to contain the dangerous irrationality and transform the positive sensuality into stable cultural forms. He argues, in other words, against the tendency to favor mind over body or spirit over nature.

A further remark concerns the intended scope and meaning of the Japanese expression *kōsōryoku*. The term is borrowed from Immanuel Kant and his *Critique of Judgement* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*) wherein the “Einbildungskraft” (imagination) is not opposed to but a part of perception. Kant used the faculty of imagination to connect sensibility and understanding. Miki moves beyond the mere epistemological scope in Kant and proposes a practical, structuring imagination for merging the emotional and the

²³ Translation altered from Fujita, *Philosophy* 57–58. Quoted also in Fujita “*Logos and Pathos*,” 306.

²⁴ Mentioned in the short essay “On pathos” (“Patosu ni tsuite” パトスについて), published in January 1933 and now included in the collected Works, see MKZ 19: 580–584.

intellectual towards a dialectical unity. Unlike in Kant's case, the faculty of imagination becomes productive with Miki in another sense. It lies at the center of creativity for producing reality through images or "forms" (*katachi* 形). With this move he shifted his attention from the earlier Marxist inspired dialectical materialism during the time of his *Philosophy of History* to the building process of forms. In this context, forms are a general term for the manifold historical, social or natural manifestations of the dialectical *logos* and *pathos* unity. One of them is myth.

Through myths Miki draws another connection to *pathos* in historical terms. Myths are essentially fictions, but they are also a fundamental part of everyday life. Without myths, no society could be built because they help to ensure that artificially produced conventions and customs are approved. Myths create a sense of togetherness that reinforces the validity of the social order (MKZ 10: 322). Miki wrote about these dimensions of myth in a short paper titled *Historical Consciousness and Myth Consciousness* (*Rekishishi ishiki to shinwa ishiki* 歴史意識と神話的意識) in February 1934. At that time, he was searching for a better definition of the historical subject than what he had conceptualized in his *Philosophy of History*. With the topic of myth, he addressed the dangers of a superficial understanding of historical creativity. A one-sided view would easily lead one to disregard the historical subjectivity and to forget that traditions are social inventions and belong to the dynamic realm of historical change. Disregarding their temporality would mean understanding myth as something natural and forgetting that it is originally something invented. This was one of many warnings he issued against the irrational tendencies and political extremism of his society.

In his own terminology, a consciousness for myth corresponds to an awareness of *pathos* that manifests itself outwardly in conventions. As such, myth-consciousness is an "important element" of historical consciousness (MKZ 10: 325). Myth and history are structurally similar, but with different tendencies in regard to the existing social conditions. Historical consciousness deals differently with conventions and traditions because it knows about their artificial origins. It recognizes them in the process of their development and sees through the mechanisms of their representations as something naturally given and not artificially produced.

This is why historical consciousness creates myths on the one hand but also destroys them through its essential critical attitude on the other. Such criticism stems from *logos* which opposes and limits the influence of *pathos*. A common feature of history and myth is what Miki will later address as the capacity of form-construction through the logic of imagination.²⁵

Yet the seed for social criticism and the possibility of change is already included in myths. Through the study of myths, one can access the historical character of seemingly given social conditions because every myth about the creation of the world creates itself a world as a representation.²⁶ History also shares an awareness of the present (*genzai no ishiki* 現在の意識) with myth, which is important for Miki's concept of creative praxis (MKZ 6: 18, 22–24, 33–34). Myths are thus not just producing variations from what is already existing but truly create something new. Seen in this way, myths have a revolutionary potential for change.

To further understand this rather bold claim, it is important to pay attention to how Miki explains the conditions for creation and differentiates them from the Marxist concept of production. Before moving on to his theory of praxis and nature, a possible objection has to be addressed first. One might reject his positive assessment of myth by pointing to the many negative aspects concerning myths and their ideological use which were well known to Miki. Considering his involvement in Konoe Fumimaro's ultra nationalistic think tank *Shōwa kenkyūkai* 昭和研究会 between 1938 and 1940, he seems to have reached an at least ambiguous position. However, during the former half of the 1930s he still criticized the political and social developments in Germany and Japan and fiercely rejected fascism. He also in fact differentiates between two kinds of myths; one affirms the status quo while the other one fosters a consciousness of crises and the need to change the present.

Miki drew up this differentiation in his *Shakaigaku gairon* 社会科学概論 (*Introduction to Social Science*) published in 1932, the same year as the

²⁵ This close reference to material objects is, incidentally, one reason for the somewhat unusual choice of *kōsōryoku* instead of the more appropriate term *sōzōryoku* 想像力 as a translation for the German “Einbildungskraft” or the English “imagination.”

²⁶ On this point, see also Curley 2019, 453.

Philosophy of History. He had begun to work on a theory on myth which owes much to the controversial French social thinker Georges Sorel (1847–1922) and his *Réflexions sur la violence* from 1908. Following Sorel, Miki differentiates two basic forms of social knowledge: *doxa* and *mythos*. Neither of them is inferior; they are just two different kinds of knowledge appropriate for different social conditions. *Doxa* includes the notion of common sense and social norms during times of social stability. It stands for an harmonical enlargement of knowledge, while myth emerges during intervals of social tensions and supports revolutionary development. In contrast to *doxa*, *mythos* articulates a temporal consciousness of discontinuity and asserts the freedom to act within the present toward the future. Myths are therefore truly historical in the context of Miki's philosophy of history (MKZ 6: 289–99, 302).²⁷

In terms of Miki's own philosophical terminology, the difference between *doxa* and myth lies in their diverging alignment with *logos* and *pathos*. While *doxa* is discursive and thus closer to *logos*, mythical consciousness is intuitive and less related to ideas than to emotions, that is the realm of *pathos*. Myth addresses the emotions of society and offers intuitive “storytelling” as an interpretation of the changing reality. Yet the primacy of emotions over reason seems to invite the danger of twisting the positive historical creativity into oppressive ideologies.

Miki acknowledges the fact that myths are not immune to being turned into something negative. He calls the counterparts of *doxa* and *mythos* *dogma* and *utopia*. Utopias are basically unhistorical and offer no solution to improve the present. Myths, on the contrary, belong to the order of the everyday that negotiates reality. They challenge the limits of the common-sense notion of society during periods of political dislocation by proposing new images. The “everyday” (*nichijōsei* 日常性) is one of Miki's new concepts for deepening the philosophical dimensions of history.²⁸ It is sufficient to note at this point that Miki sees the possibilities for overcoming

²⁷ For a comprehensive overview of Miki's position, see Wirtz 90–91.

²⁸ Miki develops his argument on the relationship between the everyday and the historical in the second chapter of his unpublished *Tetsugakuteki ningengaku* 哲学の人間学 (*Philosophical Anthropology*), see especially MKZ 18, 191–94.

traditions and the given historical circumstances in the context of the ordinary, everyday life. Myth is one of his conceptual tools to foster a consciousness for the dynamics of history. This kind of historical action, which Maruyama called invention, was meant to connect with, but not to oppose, nature.

This becomes visible in his *Logic of Imagination*, wherein he returns to Sorel's differentiation six years later. In these times, Japan was already waging war with China abroad and oppressed political and intellectual freedom at home. Nationalistic myths like "nature" in the *Kokutai no hongi* are, from Miki's perspective, utopias and not myths. To be truly creative and not only productive like *doxa*, myth must be connected to a specific concept of nature (MKZ 8: 74):

The conceptual power is connected with a certain nature, a nature in the subjective sense that is *pathos*. The question must be what this nature is and how this *pathos* relates to *logos*. This nature is preliminary not merely our body but also our social body. The connection between the social body and the power of imagination is particularly obvious in myth. (MKZ 8: 95)

It becomes obvious that myth was one part of Miki's lifelong philosophical agenda to bridge the external and the internal realms, for which he reached a provisional solution in the *Logic of Imagination*. To understand the kind of nature he had in mind it is necessary to look at his concept of creative historical praxis.

Logos in Pathos

The philosophical problem Miki addressed after the publication of his *Introduction to Social Science* was how subjective sentiments and opinions can be turned into objective validity. In his own terms: how can *logos* and *pathos* achieve a combination that would move beyond their usual opposition? He approached this problem by thinking from the perspective of acting bodies and bodily action, including individual bodies and collective

bodies. His definition of praxis is an important component for understanding his concept of myth and the limits of his criticism.

For Miki, praxis consists of a voluntary, subjective and an involuntary, non-subjective aspect. The former is connected to individual freedom and autonomy, while the latter can be described as an impulse of being urged to praxis by “something.” Miki calls this something *pathos*. However, *pathos* is not merely a passive state of being moved by emotions and passions (MKZ 19: 582). Miki discerns two aspects of *pathos*, one implying a passive state of a disposition in which one is affected by the outside world. The other one has an “impulsive” character, and a “fundamental activity” that urges to action through bodies. *Pathos* manifests a power of self-expression which is directed outwards. Humans are in this sense expressive beings (MKZ 18: 167–69).

The manner in which Miki explains the interrelation of inner bodily *pathos* with its outer environment, nature and society, is especially noteworthy. To express itself, *pathos* needs concrete forms, and forms are controlled by the intellectual capacities Miki summarizes under *logos*. Forms are connected to ideas and to images. Action is “poietic” in that it is directed towards the outer world for producing. In this way, Miki moves his concept of praxis closer to the ancient Greek concept of *poiesis* in his writings during the 1930s, especially in his unpublished *Philosophical Anthropology* (*Tetsugakuteki ningengaku* 哲学の人間学). Poetical action, however, is not just the production of goods in the sense of the Marxist theories that Miki had been concerned with since his *Philosophy of History*. He aimed at an artistic and aesthetic understanding of originality and the creation of something new. For becoming poietic in this sense, production or active praxis needs both aspects of *pathos*. Without *pathos*, there would be no creativity and no historical development. It is through *pathos* that poietic praxis—or invention in Maruyama’s terms—is deeply connected to nature, but the nature Miki is talking about is not the same nature as in Maruyama’s perspective or the materialistic Marxist version. Miki’s nature is mainly the inner human nature or a second cultural nature to be differentiated from the first natural nature.²⁹

²⁹ On the concept of first and second nature in European intellectual history and

The further premises and implications of Miki's perspective would need much more scrutiny, but it is sufficient to note that he understands human praxis as an activity of constructing images or forms out of emotions. Myths are an exemplary case of such creative forms. The question then is, how to control the dangerous notions in myth, when reason alone is problematic as well because it can turn myth into ideologies and utopias. When Miki discusses poietic action through the importance of *pathos*, he has to be careful to give the rational part of *logos* enough power to defend individuality and autonomy. *Logos* remains essential because without *logos*, *pathos* could not express itself in objective forms. There would be no true creativity for bringing forth something new and consequently no real historical development. But so far, the process of *pathos* taking form though *logos* remains unchanneled in his rather formalistic scheme. Within the power of imagination, he thought to have finally found the stabilizing faculty to turn private subjective emotions into something objective and public, and with it the possibility to rethink the opposition of sensuality and rationality—or nature and spirit—from a common ground.

Before he settled this pressing question with the *Logic of Imagination*, he gave his whole concept a further twist towards the problematic. In his essays that propagate a new modern humanism and the related program of the *Philosophical Anthropology*, Miki had already reconceptualized *pathos* by relating it to “nothingness.” *Pathos* as nothingness is the foundation of all praxis which is poietic expressive activity. “All creation has the meaning of ‘creation from nothingness,’” as he writes in the *Philosophical Anthropology*, “and creation from nothingness is always determined by *pathos*” (MKZ 18: 340). Nothingness becomes a further factor for action that exceeds the subjective and the objective aspects of praxis.³⁰

With his definition of *pathos* through nothingness Miki in fact inserts a quite demanding notion of nature into his philosophy of praxis and myth. A correct understanding of Miki's definition of poietic action through

especially in German idealism, see Rath 27, 105–20.

³⁰ The reasons for Miki's reconceptualization of *pathos* with nothingness are not clear. Fujita Masakatsu 藤田正勝 considers Helmut Plessner's (1892–1985) anthropology to be a substantial influence (“*Logos and Pathos*” 313).

nature and nothingness is, in my opinion, the key for assessing the dangers as well as the possibilities implicated in his theory on myth.

Autopoietic Nature

In an article about the *Rebirth of Humans and the Challenge of Culture* (*Ningen saisei to bunka no kadai* 人間再生と文化の課題) in 1935, Miki reflects on nature as the basis for culture and history:

Just as the word nature is originally connected with life, things emerge from nature and human beings also emerge from nature. But this nature from which human beings are born must be a historical nature. What the philosophers call “*natura naturans*” must be thought of as a historical nature. (MKZ 13: 199)³¹

Historical nature is further identified with society in his *Philosophical Anthropology*:

Society is not only something cultural. Rather, society must have the meaning of a “birth-giving nature”—since ancient times, *natura naturata* has been separated from *natura naturans*. When culture confronts us, society wraps us up from the inside. (MKZ 18: 170–71)

This is felt as *pathos*. Through its equation with nothingness and furthermore with society, the possibilities of *logos* to counter *pathos* are decisively limited, even though the nothingness Miki had in mind is supposed to be a state that surpasses the opposition of *logos* and *pathos*. In its connection to society, the need for *pathos* to channel itself through forms can easily degenerate into an oppressive force of social constraint or turn myths into utopias and political ideologies.

The reason for this emerges out of his equation of society with a “birth-giving nature” that structures the inner human nature as *pathos*. In this way,

³¹ Miki went therefore in the opposite direction from Maruyama. See also Tsuda 12.

human beings are based on *pathos* which is prior to *logos*. As mentioned above, the power of imagination precedes reason as well. Genuine myth is supposed to be creative and revolutionary in contrast to utopia and ideology. Myths are furthermore deeply connected to history for Miki, as it is the same logic that built both of their inner structures. Yet they are all based on creative imagination as the channeling capacity (MKZ 8: 50, 58).

However, a serious problem arises out of this relation: if the creative imagination as faculty belongs to the inner human nature, and if the inner nature is basically a second, cultural nature produced by the society as a collective body, how can the imagination balance individual freedom and social constraints? As the mediating instance between emotions and reason, *pathos* and *logos*, the imagination has to stand apart from all dualisms. Yet how neutral can the power of imagination be, if society gains the upper hand on *logos* through *pathos*?

Further complications arise from the genuine nothingness Miki describes as a self-creating activity. It is possible then to understand this genuine nothingness as another kind of nature which could be expressed in Japanese with the same characters as “nature” 自然 (*shizen*) but is instead read as *onozukara*, meaning spontaneity and something like a momentum out of itself.³² Miki does not explicitly talk about this veiled type of nature. He hints unintentionally at something primordial, possibly a nature equipped with its own historical agency. His reasoning at this point seems to imply a transcendent meta subject or an autopoietic process that reveals itself in history. Previously in his *Philosophy of History*, he had vehemently argued against teleological concepts of history and the idea of an historical absolute. Now, however, his argument seems to suggest a third nature in addition to the first and second natures discussed so far, but *Logic of Imagination* remains silent on this matter.

More insight can be gained from the article “The Reason of History” (“*Rekishī no risei*” 歴史の理性), which Miki wrote in the early summer of 1939. Only several weeks later he summarized his new ideas in the introduction to the *Logic of Imagination*. This time gap of up to two years to

³² In modern Japanese, *onozukara* is written with the first Chinese character as 自ずから. For the semantical shift, see Yanabu 74–75, 82.

the first chapter on myth helps to explain some of the subtle differences and conceptual ambiguities in the three published chapters and it furthermore elucidates a conspicuous change in the overall composition.³³ To just briefly mention some of the important points concerning history in the essay, Miki rejects two extreme variants of an objective understanding of history. Firstly, he opposes Hegel's rationalizing interpretation of historical events which recognizes the "cunning of reason" in every event, no matter how senseless it may seem (MKZ 14: 250, 253). Secondly, he criticizes historical positivism because it is based on a one-sided scientific model that takes the laws of nature as measure for historical objectivity. In his view, it is more important to achieve a balance between these two extremes (MKZ 14: 255).

Miki challenges a too narrowly defined objectivism with his standpoint of practical action and its modification towards technology, which he was occupied with while writing about the imagination. He wants to characterize the historical reason in question as a technical one (MKZ 14: 257). He further concludes that "the reason of history is not decided by laws, but by forms" that unite the subjective and the objective. As we have seen so far, it is the faculty of the imagination and not reason that creates this subjective-objective unity through forms. As a result, he can consequently state, that the "[structuring] power of the imagination (*kōsōryoku*) is the reason of history" (MKZ 14: 160). If one considers this modified type of historical reason only in terms of its formal structure, then it should be balanced through its self-referential dialectical process of channeling *logos* and *pathos* into ever-changing forms like myth. But the aforementioned problem of an imbalance towards *pathos* secretly returns, because the creative power for historical development flows from the genuine nothingness and its connection to society.

Even though in the *Logic of Imagination*, Miki suggests a "creative society" (*sōzōteki shakai* 創造の社會) as the "true transcendent subject" that is to be discerned from the concrete historical living conditions called the

³³ This inherent time difference of the *Logic of Imagination* is often overlooked; see, for example, the otherwise insightful explanations by Melissa Anne-Marie Curley (449–50, 460–61).

“institutional society” (*seidōteki shakai* 制度の社會), it remains unclear how the *logos* aspect in all the different historical forms can assert itself against the dominance of *pathos* (MKZ 8: 184). With his redesigned *pathos*, a hidden, metaphysical kind of nature lurks in the background as the true historical subject. Notwithstanding his criticism, he seems to have replaced Hegel’s absolute spirit with a no less compromising concept of nature.³⁴ If one bears in mind Miki’s objections to Hegel’s infamous “cunning of reason,” this is but one of many inconsistencies in the *Logic of Imagination* and it indicates its unfinished state as a collection of several essays written over a longer period of time.

Miki’s metaphysical nature as the true historical subject becomes quite an intriguing problem when one considers his intellectual support for war-time propaganda. Yet despite the obvious abuse of myths for nationalistic and militaristic purposes in his own country, he seems to have been convinced that a critical consciousness would naturally emerge from within society to continuously reinstate the power of imagination in its creative potential. The truly creative faculty of imagination would consequently strive to balance the many social, political and cultural antagonisms, especially the demands of individual autonomy or history, with society or nature. He believed, so it seems, in the self-creating activity of history and society as yet another kind of self-organizing process or nature. Accordingly, he states in the *Logic of Imagination* that human beings are “created from society but at the same time create society as an independent being” (MKZ 8: 184). They cannot be separated but have to form a “discontinuous” (*hirenzokuteki* 非連続的) relationship. Otherwise, no genuine creativity and no real historical development is possible.

However, following his intellectual involvement in Konoe’s political agenda, Miki came to move towards a continuous relationship between creating and being created that does not allow any true ruptures. In this regard, his logic of imagination and with it his concept of myth are seriously threatened from the inside. A structural imbalance becomes visible, which only the faculty of imagination itself has the potential to correct. In

³⁴ For a more detailed argument on the connection between Hegel and Miki’s transhistorical metasubject, see Curley 459. Curley refers to Iwasaki Minoru’s criticism of Miki.

the passages on myth two years earlier, Miki had emphasized the critical side of historical consciousness, which ultimately asserts itself against myths in their degenerated form, that is utopias and ideologies. The critical impetus to the revolutionary potential inherent in myth is not really lost in the later chapters of the *Logic of Imagination* but partially pushed into the background.

Preliminary Results: Concealed Nature

Far from disappearing in modern societies, myths remain a vital social element due to their dual function of building identities and fostering critical awareness. Maruyama and Miki proposed two different theories on myth that share many similarities in regard to the understanding of history and modernity. Among the many points that became discernible in the above analyses, I will mention only two as a concluding remark for this chapter. The first one is about their understanding of historical action, the second one deals with some ambiguities in their theories.

First, Miki and Maruyama differ decisively in the way they reframe the relationship between nature and history and thus the potential of the Japanese society to become modern. Maruyama separates nature from history, whereas Miki connects them. For both, myth is an exemplary case to demonstrate this structure. Maruyama dealt with Japan's cosmogonic myths to understand the cultural peculiarities of the development of modern subjectivity in his own culture. According to his political theory, an autonomous individual is the product of a dialectical relationship with its social and political environment. The dignity of the individual as a self-conscious subject precedes any governmental system while it remains at the same time paradoxically related to the state.³⁵ One of the prerequisites lies in human historicity and historical acting. Maruyama turning to the Japanese myths to decode historical consciousness in his later essay on the ancient layers might look like a simplistic, essentialist argument at first

³⁵ Here, Imai sees evidence that Maruyama was not arguing for a Kantian individualism (*Miki Kiyoshi* 57–58).

glance, but one can also read it as part of his broader approach to the individual self, the state and the possibility of democracy in his country.

Compared to Maruyama's idea of modernization which he had borrowed from a European intellectual background and applied to the Japanese context with almost no further adjustments, Miki proposed a different type of modernity that moves beyond the dualistic oppositions and essentialist extremes of his time. At the basis of Miki's concept of myth lies the transformative power of the imagination which closes the gap between history and nature. The imagination thus opens up the possibility for a third kind of modernity that integrates European science, technology and rational inquiry with Japanese, or more broadly speaking, East Asian traditions.³⁶

One reason for this divergence can be found in Maruyama's and Miki's different understanding of historical action or invention which forms the core of their theories about myth and history. For Miki, on the one hand, poetical praxis is a creative process, qualitatively different to the teleological structure of the Marxist modes of production. Maruyama, on the other hand, adheres to a dichotomous opposition of making and becoming, history and nature, that has to favor the former for achieving modernity. A closer look at the Japanese original helps to elucidate the difference. While Miki uses expressions like *kōi* for acting or praxis and more specifically *seisaku* for poetical praxis, Maruyama referred to *sakui* for invention or making.³⁷ Further investigations will help to clarify the semantical gap between these two approaches to modernity via history and myth.

³⁶ Namely, an emphasis on praxis, spiritual experience, and a unity of subject and object, culture and nature. In this regard, Miki resembles his teacher Nishida (Feenberg 172–74).

³⁷ The difficulties in translating the Japanese terms with the peculiar meaning that Miki gives them are, for instance, palpable in the translation of the introduction of the *Logic of Imagination* by Robert Chapeskie. He renders *seisaku* with “production” and equals *tsukuru* 作る to “creating.” In this context, Miki gives action (*kōi*) the meaning of “making” (*tsukuru*) in the sense of creation or poetical praxis that emerges from the dialectical dynamics of history and nature. This difference is blurred, for example, in regard to Maruyama's understanding of action (*kōi*) as invention (*sakui*) in opposition to nature when *seisaku* is translated as “production.” Chapeskie seems to be aware of these notions, emphasizing the creational aspect in making/production (Fujita, *Philosophy* 59; cf. MKZ 8: 7).

Secondly, among the notable ambivalences between the two, Miki strengthened the importance of *pathos* throughout many of his texts with some problematic consequences. To have pointed out the limits of human self-knowledge by highlighting *pathos* against *logos* is certainly an important point, but he offers no other positive criteria for *logos* to counter the influence of *pathos*. This makes it difficult to find reliable criteria for evaluating the products of the imagination, such as myth. The possibilities of *logos* for critical reflections on traditions and customs that would point out their historical and not naturally given character are severely limited, and with them the possibilities to unveil ideological and essentialist constructions of history or myth. A collective identity creeps, so to speak, into his conception as a transcendental subject and limits individuality, rationality and freedom. From Miki's point of view, the negative effect of social customs and manners endanger the creative power of the imagination because they oppress the consciousness of a society or a nation that they are, in fact, an imagined community. Sooner or later, he believed, a balance between *logos* and *pathos* and therefore myth and history, with their progressive, revolutionary potential, would be restored through the self-generative energy of the power of imagination.

A similar ambivalence towards a hidden nature became visible in Maruyama's approach to history and modernity. He applied not only a biased one-sided opposition between nature and history for his analysis of the ancient cosmogenic myths. To uncover the formative basis of historical consciousness and development in Japan, he also included a strong vitalist premise that further strengthened the dualistic bias of nature against history.

These are just some of the aspects that arise from a comparison between Miki and Maruyama, and further points remain to be investigated in the future. At the very least, it is safe to say that both provide us with plenty of insights and impulses for thinking about our own concepts of history, society and myth.

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MYTH AND NATIONALISM IN
MODERN JAPAN

Kojiki and the Sacralization of Political Power in Japan The Case of the *Kokutai no hongî*

Marcin LISIECKI

The following chapter focuses on the monumental process of sacralization that Japanese politics underwent in the twentieth century. Central political myths such as the divine origin of political power and, related to this, the strong position of the emperor and the goals of his actions were connected to the idea of kokutai (“national essence,” “national polity,” or “national character”). This idea played a significant role in legitimizing political power and consolidating national identity. It was officially incorporated into Japanese politics by issuing a Japanese government document in 1937 titled Kokutai no hongî.

Introduction

Research on the content of the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and its meaning in Japanese culture has been conducted for a long time and has resulted in a wide array of comments, analyses, and translations.¹ The purpose of this chapter

¹ The focus of this chapter will be on the *Kojiki*, with the second important work of Japanese mythology, the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), only being considered in special cases. For research on the *Kojiki*, see, for example, Keene; Kotański, “Imiona bogów w *Kojiki*”; Kotański, *Dziedzictwo japońskich bogów*; Kotański, “Intonacja jako narzędzie”; Kotański, “The Belief in Kotodama”; Kotański, “‘*Kojiki*’ no genbun o kenkyū”; Kotański, “Watashi no ‘*Kojiki*’ kenkyū”; Lisiecki, “*Kojiki* and Gesta principum Polonorum”; Lisiecki, “Myth and mythologization”; Lisiecki, “The Politics and the Mythology.” The text of the *Kojiki* has been translated thirty-one times, of which eight translations appeared in the years 2005–2014 (Hirafuji 342–44).

is to contribute to these discussions by investigating the formation and reproduction of political myths in the political discourse of the early Shōwa period (1926–1989). The chapter will focus on the idea of *kokutai* which is one of the foundations of Japanese nationalism. It will discuss how the contents of *Kojiki* were included in the official position of the Japanese government expressed in the document *Kokutai no hongī* 国体の本義.² More precisely, the goal of the chapter is to demonstrate in which manner the process of the sacralization of selected narratives from the *Kojiki* was carried out—a process that aimed at the legitimization of extreme right-wing political ideas and the consolidation of national identity.

To this day, there is a dearth of research on the idea of *kokutai* and the *Kokutai no hongī* in Japanese studies as well as the political sciences. Therefore, it is worth pointing out a pioneering work devoted to this issue, Klaus Antoni's *Shintō und die Konzeption des Japanischen Nationalwesens, Kokutai* (1998), which discusses the history of the *kokutai* and its cultural and political significance in Japan.³ The following discussion can be treated as a continuation of Antoni's research on the idea of *kokutai*, extended by the analysis of the *Kokutai no hongī* itself with a focus on how its content sacralized selected themes from the *Kojiki*.⁴

This chapter is divided into two parts; in the first section, I will define the type of sacralization presented by the *Kojiki* and consider the significance that this text had for the *kokutai* idea. In the second part, I will analyze the *Kokutai no hongī* to show how this text was sacralized.

² The title could be translated as “basic principles of the *kokutai*.” I chose the Japanese term *kokutai* because its many different meanings are difficult to express in English. Common translations of the term are “national polity,” “national essence,” “national character,” and “national body.”

³ The work was translated into English in 2016 (Antoni, *Kokutai*).

⁴ For a discussion of the sacralization of the *Kojiki*, see also Antoni et al.

Kojiki and Sacralization

The concept of “holiness,” coined by Rudolf Otto in his seminal work *Das Heilige* (1917), has held much sway in religious studies and the philosophy of religion. For a long time, it was a defining factor for discussions on and the understanding of what constitutes religion. Without going into detail regarding the contemporary discourse on Otto’s work, it is worth considering the importance of the category of holiness for politics, and especially for the legitimization of political power. In addition to its connection to religion itself, holiness has clear links to morality and law, as well as to the ways in which political elites are perceived (Otto 7; cf. Machoń 83–84). Therefore, it is of relevance for gaining insight into the formation of political ideas and actions. It is notable, however, that in politics it is the process of sacralization (or sanctification) that turns out to be more discernible and significant, and not the holiness itself. This is elucidated by the fact that in contemporary processes of legitimizing power, one can often find references to selected narratives related to the sacred, which politicians and ideologists want to connect—often based on associations—with their own ideas and actions (Mosca 70–71; Lisiecki, “Myth” 141).

A few remarks should be made here regarding the importance of sacralization for politics. The main point on which most political activities focus is the legitimization of the power of those who rule a country or aspire to rule. Depending on the political regime, an important role in this process is played by the ability to convince voters, citizens, or subjects to recognize politicians, political parties, or the government as legitimate and as representatives of their interests and worldviews. To achieve this goal, references to the doctrines and symbols of the religion(s) dominant in the respective countries have continued to be effective from ancient times until this day.⁵ These references largely serve the function of granting the status of sanctity to political elites—mainly rulers, leaders, and party leaders. Places and (or) things related to power are also sacralized to facilitate identification with the political system, the state, or the nation itself. Sometimes

⁵ This process is less complicated in countries where one of the religions has the status of state religion.

such processes aim to establish politics, i.e., party or government policies, as part of religious worship, which is intended to further cement the “alliance of the throne with the altar,” metaphorically speaking.

In continuation of these preliminary findings, the following question needs to be asked: What type of text are we dealing with in the case of the *Kojiki*? Among researchers, we can find the stance that apart from the fact that it is the oldest Japanese literary work, it is also a sacred Shinto text (Keene 99; Kotański, 6; Melanowicz 89). However, when analyzing the content of this text and comparing it with other similar works, it becomes clear that the *Kojiki* is nothing more than a dynastic chronicle and that although it contains references to what may be perceived as “sacred,” for instance cosmogonic myths, it was written for political reasons (Lisiecki, “Kojiki” 268–69; Lisiecki, “The Politics” 30). It is worth recalling that the *Kojiki* began to receive widespread attention with the research of Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) at the end of the eighteenth century, and that this research is the basis for many interpretations of the *Kojiki*’s content (Antoni et al. 37–38). However, the *Kojiki* only gained the unique status of a religious text rather than an imperial chronicle in the second half of the nineteenth century, when it became a source of legitimization for the political power of the emperors, shaping Japanese national identity and knowledge about Japan’s past. All of this was incorporated into the political myth represented by the idea of the *kokutai* (Antoni, *Kokutai* 200–17, 257–60; Lisiecki, *Kokutai* 22–52; Lisiecki, “‘Kokutai’” 167).

The *Kojiki* is fundamentally valuable for understanding political and identity-forming processes in Japan because of the many clues it provides about the relationship between religion and politics. With reference to the Swedish historian Geo Widengren (1907–1996), who conducted research on the philosophy of religion, one can point to similarities in religious texts regarding the legitimization of the power of monarchs. In his monograph *Religionsphänomenologie* (1969), Widengren compares Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cultures, among others, and notes that they contain similar patterns of relations between deities and royal power and thus similar patterns of sacralization (546–65). A special focus here is the ruler’s confirmation of his own connection to holiness. The ruler, using sacred

symbolism or references to the sacred sphere, tries to convince his subjects that his power is granted by a divine being. This is an important step in the process of legitimizing power as well as actions taken by the monarch.⁶

When undertaking an analysis of the *Kojiki*'s text and, above all, when looking into the context of references to its content, two points should be taken into account. Firstly, unlike the examples mentioned by Widengren and despite common associations, the *Kojiki* did not function as a revealed book, as is the case with the Bible, the Torah, and the Qur'an (Widengren 557). The sacralization of this text, albeit on a political level, only began in the fourteenth century with the *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (1339) by Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房 (1293–1354). In this work, explicit references to the *Kojiki* are used to justify Emperor Go-Murakami's 後村上天皇 (r. 1339–1368) succession to the throne, pointing to the divine origin of Japan and the imperial dynasty. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Kojiki* was first recognized as a sacred text and used to sacralize political power at the pan-Japanese level, along with large-scale propaganda activities. It is worth to emphasize this, because for the process of sacralization to be effective, as Antonio Gramsci points out, ideas invoked by the ruler must be accepted and shared by the majority of society as absolute (162–63). This holds true especially regarding the legitimization of the power of the political elite as well as the ideas propagated and the actions undertaken by this elite. If Gramsci's assertion was untrue, most texts could be considered sacred, meaning, for instance, that the opinion of a small group of readers would be sufficient to grant sacred status to a collection of poetry such as Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1867).

Secondly, the content of the *Kojiki* itself already includes the political sacralization of imperial power, demonstrating the divine origin of this power and portraying Japan itself as created by the gods. According to the

⁶ In the context of the connection between rulers and the sacred sphere, it is worth considering John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), in which Locke comments in detail on the relationship between British kings and the Christian God. Another interesting case of such a relationship is pointed out by Boris A. Uspenskij and Viktor M. Živov in their monograph *Tsar' i Bog: Semioticheskiye aspekty sakralizatsii monarkhii v Rossii* (1987), where they discuss the sacralization of the monarch in Russia.

Kojiki, the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami sent her grandson Ninigi no mikoto to earth in order to rule. The passage goes as follows:

Then Ama-terasu-opo-mi-kamī and Taka-kī-nō-kamī commandend the heir apparent Masa-katu-a-katu-kati-paya-pi-Amē-nō-osi-po-mimi-nō-kimötō, saying: ‘Now it is reported that the pacification of the Central Land of the Reed Plains has been finished. Therefore, descend and rule it, as you have been entrusted with it.’

...

‘As I was preparing to descend, a child was born; his name is Amē-nigishi-kuni-nigishi-Ama-tu-piko-Piko-po-nō-mikötō. This child should descend.’ (Philippi 137)

The objects that sacralize the origin of Ninigi and the power of later emperors are said to be three regalia: the jewel (*yasakani no magatama* 八咫瓊勾玉), the bronze-mirror (*yata no kagami* 八咫鏡), and the sword (*kusanagi no tsurugi* 草薙劍) (Philippi 139). Another passage from the *Kojiki*, which describes the transfer of these regalia, also represents the sacralization of power. Here, the words of Amaterasu herself are important: “This mirror – have [it with you] as my spirit, and worship it just as you would in my very presence” (Philippi 140).

Ninigi’s grandson eventually appoints the first emperor, Jinmu, from whom the subsequent Japanese emperors are supposed to be descended (Aston 110).⁷ Imperial power is thus sacralized by connecting the emperors to the gods, going all the way back to the cosmogonic myth about the creation of the Japanese islands by the progenitors of later deities, Izanagi no mikoto and Izanami no mikoto (Philippi 49). In order to better understand the sacralization of power in Japan, it is worth considering the *Jinnō shōtōki* and its connection to the *Kojiki*. In this work, Kitabatake states the following: “Great Japan is the divine land. The heavenly progenitor founded it, and the sun goddess bequeathed it to her descendants to rule eternally” (Varley 49; Kitabatake 1). Kitabatake deliberately uses this narrative about the divine origin of the emperors and the islands of the

⁷ Notably, this scene is not included in the *Kojiki*.

Japanese archipelago because he aims to show Japan's uniqueness, which will endure if the country is ruled by a descendant of Amaterasu. For instance, he writes, "Only in our country is this true; there are no similar examples in other countries. This is why our country is called the divine land" (Varley 49; Kitabatake 1). Here, we can already observe a sacralization of the *Kojiki*'s narrative of divine origins, a process that was repeated and intensified later in the twentieth century, especially in the case of the *Kokutai no hongi*.

Let us now return to Widengren's research on sacred texts and apply his findings to an analysis of the *Kojiki*. Comparing different cultures, Widengren concludes that there are two types of sacralization: "inspired" or "revealed" and "inherited" (557). While in Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultures, we find the "revealed" type, as these cultures are based on texts considered sacred by their own religious communities, the *Kojiki* belongs to the "inherited" type. This is because the *Kojiki* was only considered sacred long after its compilation, and, above all, contains no references to revelation. The two passages below demonstrate why sacralization in the *Kojiki* can be understood as "inherited," i.e., as based on the continuation of a message.

Whereupon, the Emperor said:

'I hear that the *Teiki* and *Honji* handed down by the various houses have come to differ from the truth and that many falsehoods have been added to them.

'If these errors are not remedied at this time, their meaning will be lost before many years have passed.

'This is the framework of the state, the great foundation of the imperial influence.

'Therefore, recording the *Teiki* and examining the *Kuji*, discarding the mistaken and establishing the true, I desire to hand them on to later generations. (Philippi 41)

And:

Reverently, in accordance with the imperial will, I chose and took them up in great detail.

However, during the Times of antiquity, both words and meanings were unsophisticated, and it was difficult to reduce the sentences and phrases to writing. (Philippi 42)

Note that the “inherited” message must be preserved in an appropriate form, supervised by a chronicler appointed by the ruler or his assistants. In this context, the influence of the Confucian concept of the “rectification of names” (*zhèngmíng* 正名) on Japanese reflections on power is significant. According to the teaching of Confucius, this concept signifies a clear definition of the proper social and political order, which includes a proper understanding of names as well as their correct use (Yu-lan 57; Liu 51). Without going into detailed considerations about the meaning of this concept and the influence of Confucianism on the *Kojiki*, I want to note that the *Kojiki* touches on the issue of power and the relationship between ruler and subjects. Examples include later parts of the text, where there are occasional mentions of the obligation to submit to the will of the founders of the dynasty, i.e., the goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. Such mentions can be found in the following passage:

‘I dreamt that the two deities Ama-terasu-opo-mi-kamī and Taka-kī-nō-kamī summoned and commanded Take-mika-duti-nō-kamī, saying:

‘The Central Land of the Reed Plains is in an uproar. Our offspring seem to be in difficulties. Since this Central Land of the Reed Plains is the land which you alone subdued, you, Take-mika-duti-nō-kamī, ought to descend. . . . (Philippi 168)

Similarly, the *Kojiki* also states, “This is the will of Ama-terasu-opo-mi-kamī. . . .” (Philippi 260). These quotes contain clear patterns of sacralization, such as a vertical perception of the power-subject relationship and a reference to the subordination of will to a higher authority (e.g., divine or monarchical), according to the Confucian model. It is also important to note that in the *Kojiki*, the scheme of sacralization is not of the top-down but rather of the bottom-up type, which again marks the *Kojiki* out as an

unrevealed text. In other words, in the *Kojiki*, it is not the deity that determines man's duties but man himself who determines their scope and validity. A person appointed by the emperor and distinguished by special features, for example loyalty and memory, can authoritatively determine the history and structure of the dynasty of rulers. Two prime examples for this are Ō no Yasumaro 太安万侶, the compiler who wrote down the *Kojiki*'s message, and the courtier Hieda no Are 稗田阿礼 who memorized the oral version of the message. In the preface to the *Kojiki*, the three passages below show the importance of Ō no Yasumaro's position:

I, Yasumarō, do say. . . (Philippi 37)

And:

Hereupon, appalled at the mistakes in the *Kuji*, she [Empress Gemmei] determined to correct the corruptions in the *Senki*. . . . [A]n imperial command was given to me, Yasumarō, to record and present the *Kuji*. . . . (Philippi 43)

As well as:

These three volumes are recorded together and are reverently presented.

Thus do I, Yasumarō, full of awe, full of fear, reverently bow my head again and again.

The twenty-eighth day of the first month of the fifth year of Wadō. The Asōmi opo nō Yasumarō, upper fifth rank and fifth order of merit. (Philippi 44)

Hieda no Are's crucial function is expressed as follows:

At that time there was a court attendant whose surname was Piyeda and his given name Are. . . . He possessed such great native intelligence that he could repeat orally whatever met his eye, and whatever struck his ears was indelibly impressed in his heart.

Then an imperial command was given to Are to learn the Sumera-mikötō pi-tugi and the Saki-nō-yō nō puru-götō. (Philippi 41–42)

The above passages show that Ō no Yasumaro is tasked with writing down the content of cosmogonic myths as well as with determining the origin and establishing the coherence of the dynasty of emperors, which we can consider as confirmation of the previously mentioned idea that the *Kojiki* is not a “revealed” but an “inherited” text.

The Sacralization of the *Kokutai no hongī*

Having considered the process of sacralization within the *Kojiki*, the next focus will lie on the analysis of the *Kokutai no hongī*. This analysis will be conducted on two levels: one external, the other internal. I opted for this division because the sacralization of the *Kokutai no hongī* was not a uniform process, rather, it concerned several separate but interconnected areas. The external level concerns the place of the text’s publication, its authors, circulation, and the purpose of its dissemination.⁸ To put it briefly, I am interested in all areas that do not relate to the content of the text, i.e., the internal level. Adding the external division to the analysis of the *Kokutai no hongī* not only aids in showing what role it played in the sacralization of political power and how the text itself was sacralized but also serves to fill a gap in research on far-right ideology in Japan in the first half of the twentieth century.

The *Kokutai no hongī* was issued in March 1937 by the Ministry of Education. Apart from the fact that it presented the official position of the Japanese government, it also functioned as a textbook on the history of Japan (Antoni, *Shintō* 266). The author of the original draft was Hisamatsu Senichi 久松潜一 (1894–1976), and Itō Enkichi 伊東延吉 (1891–1944) was responsible for the compliance of its content with official Japanese

⁸ The external and internal levels largely correspond to external criticism and source criticism, which are applied in the historical sciences (Maternicki 163–64).

ideology; he ended up making many redactions to the original text (Hall 4–5; Lisiecki, *Kokutai* 71; cf. Schmid 163; Haring 298).⁹ In addition to Itō, an important figure in the Ministry of Education, and Hisamatsu, a professor of Japanese literature at the Tokyo Imperial University, many well-known researchers of Japanese literature, religions, especially Shinto, and philosophy were involved in the compilation of the *Kokutai no hongī*.¹⁰ The text was presented to the public as an official document of the highest importance, intended for distribution in schools, mainly among students of primary, secondary, and technical schools. Teachers were also included in this process; they were to play an important role in popularizing the *Kokutai no hongī* and in reproducing the sacralization of its content. In this context, it has to be noted that the process of including identity-forming activities in educational programs had already begun in the Meiji period (1868–1912). The political foundation for this period was provided by the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (*Dai nippon teikoku kenpō* 大日本帝国憲法), promulgated on February 11, 1889, and the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo* 教育ニ関スル勅語), signed by Emperor Meiji on October 30, 1890. It should be emphasized that these two documents became the official basis for the sacralization of the narrative about imperial power and the divine origin of Japan that originated from the *Kojiki* and was later included in the *Kokutai no hongī*. In the *Dai nippon teikoku kenpō*, the following is stated:

Having, by virtue of the glories of Our Ancestors, ascended the throne of a lineal succession unbroken for ages eternal . . . We hereby promulgate . . . a fundamental law of the State. . . .

⁹ Itō was responsible for approximately 60,000 arrests for “incorrect thinking” in Japan (Haring 298).

¹⁰ Among them were Yoshida Kumaji 吉田熊次 (1874–1964), Kihira Tadayoshi 紀平正美 (1874–1949), Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄 (1875–1958), Kōno Seizō 河野省三 (1882–1963), Kuroita Katsumi 黒板勝美 (1874–1946), Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 (1882–1963), Miyaji Naokazu 宮地直一 (1886–1949), and Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960). A list of people who worked on the text can be found in the introduction to the English translation of the *Kokutai no hongī* (Hall 5–6; cf. Lisiecki, *Kokutai* 73–77).

Article 1. The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal.

Article 2. The Imperial Throne shall be succeeded to by Imperial male descendants, according to the provisions of the Imperial House Law.

Article 3. The Emperor is sacred and inviolable. (*The Constitution of the Empire of Japan; Dai nippon teikoku kenpō*)

Similarly, the *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo* asserts:

Our Imperial Ancestors (*waga kōso kōsō*) founded our empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty (*chū*) and filial piety (*kō*), have, from generation to generation, illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Nation (*kokutai no seika*). . . . (“The Imperial Rescript on Education” 780; *Kyōiku chokugo*)

This narrative was increasingly sacralized at the beginning of the twentieth century when views about the divine connotations of Japan and its rulers became officially accepted as historical knowledge (Holtom 224–67). However, it was only in the *Kokutai no hongi* that the process culminated in the sacralization of the political myths found in the *Kojiki*. Related to this was the sacralization of the *kokutai* that granted sacral status to the *Kokutai no hongi*, alongside other objects of political and religious worship such as the flag of Japan, the national anthem, the portrait of the emperor, and the *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*. The number of editions proves the importance of this text and its success as propaganda with the intention to disseminate political myths about the divine origin of the Japanese imperial power and Japan itself. In 1937, around 300,000 copies were printed and distributed in schools and universities, and until 1943, about 1,900,000 additional copies were sold by the Cabinet Printing Bureau (Hall 10).

On an internal level, the process of sacralization was aimed at disseminating and reproducing the main political myths that were connected to the *Kojiki*. These myths provided the building blocks for the *kokutai*, i.e., the divine origin of power in Japan, the divine origin of the Japanese archipelago, the unique status of the subjects, and—this was an addition in the *Kokutai no hongî*—Japan's mission in the world. The document itself consists of two chapters divided into individual subchapters, in which the basis for and the uniqueness of the *kokutai* are explained. Book one, titled "The National Entity [*kokutai*] of Japan," features the four subchapters "The Founding of the Nation," "The Sacred Virtues," "The Way of the Subjects," and "Harmony and Truth." The second book with the title "The Manifestation of Our National Entity [*kokutai*] in History" is divided into the sections "The Spirit That Runs Through History," "The Homeland and the Life of the People," "The Inherent Character of the People," "Ceremonial Rites and Morality," "National Culture," and "Political, Economic and Military Affairs" (Gauntlett and Hall vii–viii; *Kokutai no hongî* 1–2).

The document ends with a conclusion which includes the above-mentioned point about the Japanese mission (Gauntlett and Hall 183; *Kokutai no hongî* 155). A cursory review of the *Kokutai no hongî*'s table of contents shows that the aforementioned myths are pivotal for the document. In terms of sacralization, the first book with its allusions to the *Kojiki* is the most important. The second book then serves to perpetuate these myths. Here, it has to be noted that the sacralization of political measures requires not only actions that initiate the process but also actions that stabilize it and thus determine the success of the measures' establishment among the citizens of a given country. The *Kokutai no hongî* held such a stabilizing function: through sacralization, it was supposed to strengthen an ideological message that had already been conceptualized previously.

In the case of the *Kokutai no hongî*, language played an important role in the process of sacralization, both as a method of recording and as a rhetorical practice.¹¹ In this regard, Hall explains that "[t]he almost sacred

¹¹ Rhetorical practices include not only the use of appropriate arguments and techniques of persuasion but also the use of style where the imitation of religion, e.g., prayers, rituals, or magical phrases, plays an important role.

status of any official writing about *kokutai* . . . has resulted in a level of politeness, formality of style, and extreme use of honorifics which removes the language from the normal contact of most Japanese” (15). Without delving too deeply into the style of the text, I want to focus on the extensive vocabulary used to describe the main ideas that make up the *kokutai*. The authors of the document use several dozen terms and euphemisms from Japanese literature and specifically the *Kojiki* which refer to the emperor, Japan, and its subjects, the aim of which was to show Japan’s uniqueness. These terms played an important role for the identification with a Japanese identity and, above all, in the process of sacralization (Gauntlett and Hall 188–89). Related to the issue of language is the way that the *Kokutai no hongī* refers to its main source of references, the *Kojiki*. The document contains many other references to and quotations of literary, philosophical, and legal texts. As a side note, I want to mention the following examples: the *Nihon shoki*, *Man’yōshū* 万葉集, *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集, *Nijūichidai shū* 二十一代集, *Jinnō shōtōki*, *Taiheiki* 太平記, *Dai nihon shi* 大日本史, Yamaga Sokō’s 山鹿素行 (1622–1685) *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事實, *Daimon zakki* 待問雜記 by Tachibana Moribe 橘守部 (1781–1849), and lastly, the *Dai nippon teikoku kenpō* and *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*. In the present chapter, the above-mentioned references cannot be discussed further, with a few exceptions. Rather, I now want to focus on the *Kojiki*.

First, I will consider the sources for quotations from the *Kojiki*, which were intended to justify and sacralize the idea of *kokutai*. The authors of the *Kokutai no hongī* did not quote the original *Kojiki* text.¹² Instead, a brief preface to the document makes it clear that they relied on Motoori Norinaga’s 本居宣長 (1730–1801) *Teisei kokun Kojiki* 訂正古訓古事記 while in the case of the *Nihon shoki*, they used Iida Takesato’s 飯田武郷 (1828–1900) *Nihon shoki tsūshaku* 日本書紀通釈 as a source. It can be assumed that there were several reasons for adopting this solution, one of them being that the original text is unclear in many places and therefore requires additional interpretation and translation, especially for younger readers. Presumably,

¹² The original text of the *Kojiki* is, in essence, a *kanbun* text. Its textual style is also known as *hentai kanbun* 変体漢文 (Antoni, *Kojiki* 393).

the fact that Motoori Norinaga's (re-) construction and explanation of the *Kojiki* were considered as exemplary for understanding the text also contributed to this decision (Antoni, *Kojiki* 429–31).¹³ This confirms the assumption that the text of the *Kokutai no hongî* was part of the secondary phase of the *Kojiki*'s sacralization, meaning that it buttressed content from the *Kojiki* that was already considered sacred.

To better understand the sacralization of the *Kokutai no hongî* and the political myths it contains, it is worth paying attention to the discourse on "sacred" words called *kotodama* 言霊 ("word soul"). *Kotodama* are supposed to reflect the essence of the meaning contained in them and to guarantee effectiveness in ritual and magical practices. In the *Kojiki*, *kotodama* are not explicitly mentioned, but there are traces of the magical power of language in the text (Antoni, *Kojiki* 384–88). The *Kokutai no hongî*, then, directly highlights the power of language. It stresses the connection between honest words and honest actions and specifies that words filled with utter sincerity are, in fact, *kotodama* (61–62; Hall 101).

While the *Kokutai no hongî* is not a religious or ritual text but a state document and a quasi-textbook on Japanese history, a comparison with religious texts such as the Torah, the Bible, or the Qu'ran still elucidates an important point. In these religious texts, the original language was to guarantee both the sacredness of the texts and their effectiveness in prayer and ritual. The *Kojiki*, too, indirectly touches on the subject of the power of words, and the *Kokutai no hongî* directly discusses the idea. Therefore, it is legitimate to claim that the *Kokutai no hongî* continued the "inherited" sacralization of the *Kojiki*, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

When considering the role that the *Kokutai no hongî* played in the secondary phase of the *Kojiki*'s sacralization, one also needs to pay attention to the fact that the quoted fragments from the *Kojiki* are extremely selective and largely limited to the first chapter. It is also important that in later chapters, there are stylized references, but with no indication as to the source of the citation, for example:

¹³ In this regard, it has to be noted that the *Kokutai no hongî* explicitly highlights the importance of Norinaga's work on the *Kojiki* (78).

The great august Will of the Emperor in the administration of the nation is constantly clearly reflected in our history. This Land was made and consolidated by Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto in compliance with the divers orders given by the heavenly deities. And Ninigi no Mikoto, receiving the Oracle of Amaterasu Ohmikami and descending to earth at the head of many deities, set the eternally unchangeable foundation of our nation. (Gauntlett and Hall 73; *Kokutai no hongî* 26–27)

Notably, the authors quote the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* with similar frequency, albeit with a subtle distinction. The *Kojiki* is treated as the starting point and the *Nihon shoki* as a supplement and confirmation of the truthfulness of the political myths described in the *Kokutai no hongî*. The first chapter has a rather clear narrative structure: it is a description of the rise of Japan and its political power, justified by references to the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. For example, at the beginning of the chapter, it is stated that

[t]he unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our eternal and immutable national entity. . . . This national entity is the eternal and unchanging basis of our nation and shines resplendent throughout our history. . . . Our nation was founded when its Founder, Amaterasu Ohmikami (Heavenly-Shining-Great-August-Deity), handed the Oracle to her Imperial Grandson Ninigi no Mikoto and descendend to Mizuho no Kuni (Land of Fresh Rice-ears) at Toyoashihara (Rich Reed-plain).¹⁴ And in relating the facts of the founding of our Land by the Founder of our Empire, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon-shoki* tell first of all of the beginning of heaven and earth. . . . (Gauntlett and Hall 59; *Kokutai no hongî* 9–10)

This passage is followed by selected quotations from the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (cf. Philippi 47; Aston 2–3). When the goddess Amaterasu

¹⁴ John Owen Gauntlett opted for a translation of the names of deities and places. Jan Willms, who translated the *Kokutai no hongî* into German, did not include these additions in his translation.

Ōmikami is depicted as the progenitor of the imperial dynasty, this pattern is repeated:

Thus, Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto gave birth first to Oh-yashima (Great-Eight-Islands) then gave birth to mountains and rivers, herbs and trees, and to deities, and furthermore gave birth to Amaterasu Ohmikami (Heavenly-Shining-Great-August-Deity), who is the supreme deity who ruleth them. . . . (Gauntlett and Hall 61; *Kokutai no hongī* 11–12)

As is the case above, these statements are buttressed by quotations from the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (cf. Philippi 71; Aston 18).

Here, I want to emphasize again that in the rest of the *Kokutai no hongī*, quotations from the *Kojiki* appear as loose references. Notably, the *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo* and the *Dai nippon teikoku kenpō* are quoted much more frequently and accurately. Klaus Luhmer comments in this regard that the *Kokutai no hongī* is an ultra-nationalistic commentary on the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (177).

Conclusion

One of the foundational concepts of the research project “Sacred Narrative – The Political Dimension of Japanese Mythology” is to understand sacredness not in the sense of a predefined quality but as something that should be described in the context of cultural practices (Antoni et al. 32). With this chapter, I hope to have contributed to this research by supplementing it with the dimension of policymaking. In accordance with this goal, the focus was placed on the idea of *kokutai* and its sacralization, which was intended to strengthen the right-wing ideology of the Japanese government in the early Shōwa period. The *Kokutai no hongī* was used to carry out this undertaking; apart from displaying the official stance of the Japanese government at the time, it has become clear that it also contains many instances of sacralization.

As a conclusion to this chapter and as an avenue for further research, I want to draw attention to one more issue related to the question of what role the *Kojiki* plays in the *Kokutai no hongi*. This question results primarily from the observation that in the *Kokutai no hongi*, citations of and references to the *Kojiki* are not numerous and are surpassed by references to other documents important at the time, mainly the *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*. The answer seems simple because the historical circumstances of the *Kokutai no hongi* indicate that the document instrumentalized the political myths of the *Kojiki* for ideological purposes. This is visible both in the selection of quotations and in the rather loose interpretation of their content to justify the *kokutai*. Such a process is nothing particularly new in the realm of politics and propaganda and has been discussed quite thoroughly (Żyromski 91–92). It also bears similarities to the theory of contemporary rhetoric, which analyzes ways of using persuasive techniques to strengthen political messages (Perelman 47–48). In the case of the *Kokutai no hongi*, it can be assumed that the authors were only interested in preserving the “spirit” of the *Kojiki* in a propaganda sense. In this way, they could more easily justify their actions and sacralize the political myths that constitute the *kokutai*. It also has to be noted that the immediate readers of the *Kokutai no hongi* were already functioning, to use Antonio Gramsci’s (162–63) terminology, in the hegemonic system of the official ideology centered around Shinto and the emperor. While they did not necessarily have a thorough knowledge of the *Kojiki*’s content, connections between the *kokutai* and the *Kojiki* were therefore still recognizable to them.

When discussing the question of the relationship between the *Kojiki* and the *Kokutai no hongi*, I stated that the answer seems simple, but this only appears to be the case on a surface level because the answer does not take the complex presence of the *Kojiki* in Japanese culture into account (Antoni, *Kojiki* 324–411). For this reason, it is worth distinguishing the *Kojiki* as a cultural text from the political and ideological understanding of this work at the beginning of the twentieth century. It can be assumed that the actions of right-wing politicians and ideologists cemented the *Kojiki*’s importance for official matters, which resulted in an identification of formerly cultural content with politics and ideology.

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Propagating Japan's Spiritual Culture Editorial Compilation and Exegetical Dissemination of Shinto's "Sacred Scriptures"

Michael WACHUTKA

In a 1929 interview, the industrialist and educator Ōkura Kunihiro drew a bleak picture of Japan's contemporary society, seeing it in a state of confusion of ideas where "devotional life that was the foundation of the national life since the establishment of the nation" has eroded. In his eyes, the spiritual and religious realms control the root of thoughts, yet their present conditions were defective, and the people needed to be "spiritually awakened." He thus founded the Ōkura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture (Ōkura seishinbunka kenkyūjo), which, according to his opening speech in 1932, should "explore the essential values of spiritual culture and establish a truly faith-based attitude towards the state." The Institute's first endeavor was the compilation and editing of several ancient texts into a novel work titled Shinten (1936), Shinto's "Sacred Scriptures." With its deliberate appearance in leather binding, lightweight paper, and gilt edging, Shinten was conceived as a "Bible for Japan" equivalent to sacralized canonical writings of other religious traditions. Accompanied by explanatory lecture series and exegetical commentary works, it was disseminated as a reference to timeless cultural memory and a source of national polity (kokutai) for the whole population from the beginning.

By spotlighting Shinten's editorial history, this chapter will trace the relatively small circle of protagonists and the complex ideological background leading to its genesis. Elucidating exegetical elaborations of the contained texts and the concept of shinten itself furthermore epitomizes how the mythico-religious narrative found in these "sacred scriptures" has been used to support and legitimize contemporary political agenda throughout Japan's modernization process and beyond.

Introduction

Normative texts have always been considered one of the main tools of handing down religious and cultural orthodoxy. Canonized as classical dogmatic scriptures, they form the basis of a certain group's religious-ethical discourse. In accordance with their central function of defining and transmitting a certain identity or auto-stereotype, canons are objectifications of shared culture and values. In other words, they are conversions of concepts or abstractions into physical objects and thus are of central importance for the shaping and sustenance of "cultural memory." The concept of cultural memory as developed by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1938–2024) "comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity" (Assmann, "Collective Memory" 132). In various works expounding his theories on cultural memory, Assmann furthermore describes religion as the peak of cultural self-reflection. He sees the core function of religion in storing and reproducing collective memories that are essential for the identity of a given cultural group. Moreover, the concept of cultural memory has been devised for a context that "vertically anchors" mankind in the depths of time and hence for a similar framework to that of myth (Assmann, *Religion* 169).

Allan Menzies (1845–1916)—who in 1897 was one of the first to attempt a prolegomenon to the history of the canon of scripture—proclaimed the following important assumption:

[T]here are two essential conditions of the formation of a canon. The first is the existence of books which the nation is prepared to recognize as the norm of its religion. The second is the existence of a religious authority of sufficient power to prescribe to the nation what books it shall receive as that norm. . . . And it takes no great insight to recognize that these two conditions are intimately connected with each other. Where no religious doctrine is attained

which dominates the mind of the nation as a whole and prompts the writing of works embodying the essence of the national beliefs and aspirations, there the priesthood have no central standard around which they may feel themselves one body . . . and cannot possibly present for national acceptance any religious law or sacred canon. (90)

In a historical perspective, every canon is an offer to deal with one's own socio-cultural history, an offer that qualifies or even totally negates other perceptions to the advantage of a currently relevant targeted identity. It is always simultaneously a canon of education and of values. The thereby mediated knowledge is the necessary and mandatory basis of any kind of discourse on one's own cultural identity. The German sociologist of religion Alois Hahn thus emphasizes the vital fact that "according to the central function of canonization to set explicit symbolic boundaries by way of a binding self-perception, . . . it has to be assumed that the need for canonization and the need for determination of identity are highly correlative" (33). Therefore, a canon of normative texts with the explicit intention to be a dogmatic collection of "sacred scriptures" is not simply an effigy of an actual cultural development but instead comprises such works that support the then politically accepted auto-stereotypes.

Such purposeful intention of identity formation and assurance can also be ascribed to the work *Shinten* 神典—or Shinto's "Sacred Scriptures"—of 1936, the focus of this chapter.

Transmission and Canonization of Shinto's Sacred Scriptures in Japan

One peculiarity of Shinto frequently alluded to—outside as well as inside of Japan and often with reference to the Bible—is its apparent lack of sacred scriptures, on which grounds it was at times even denied the status of "religion." Nevertheless, several classical texts are seen as normative and

sacred by many Shinto adherents.¹ Moreover, the Nippon Decimal Classification system maintained by the Japan Library Association includes the category *shinten* among its detailed divisions as no. 173, thus indicating that there must indeed be works that can be officially shelved among a group of other “Shintô sacred classics” as their own formal translation of that term states.²

Various attempts at authoritative compilations of dogmatic Shinto manuscripts used to convey identity-generating “ancient truths” go back at least to medieval times. Examples that come to mind are the Kamakura-period (1185–1333) “Pentateuch” *Shintô gobusho* 神道五部書. Although each of these five fundamental texts of Ise-Shinto have colophons proclaiming that they originate before the ancient Nara period (710–794), in reality they were all created around the late thirteenth century to passionately appeal to the independent nature of Shinto during a time when its deities were mostly understood as actually being manifestations of Buddhas in local disguise (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹).

Wider importance as a collective was first attached to such works by early modern scholars, many being prominent representatives of the then emerging intellectual movement of “national learning” (Kokugaku) in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Besides in-depth philological studies of several ancient texts in an attempt to define the “Shinto Classics” (*shintô koten* 神道古典), these scholars also endeavored to create a unified mythological narrative consisting of parts of various ancient sources. Most important to this end were the mythological accounts on the Age of the Gods included in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (*Record of Ancient Matters*, 712) and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記 (*Chronicles of Japan*, 720). Regarding the politico-religious purpose that both books were compiled for in the early eighth century, it may be said, put simply, that the *Kojiki* was aimed primarily at the

¹ Besides the texts contained in the work *Shinten* as referenced below, the *Sendai kuji hongî* 先代旧事本紀—allegedly compiled by Shôtoku Taishi 聖德太子 (574–622) in 620 but nowadays seen as a later forgery—is often also counted among Shinto’s “sacred” scriptures (Miyachi and Saeki 785; KDGBK 560–61).

² See also http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~ax2s-kmtn/ref/ndc/e_ndc1.html#ndc17, accessed 19 March 2025.

religious function of sanctifying the authority of the imperial family and lineage, whereas the *Nihon shoki* was aimed more at the political goal of increasing the power of imperial control over land and subjects. Together they were thus underscoring an old and overriding policy that was articulated in more recent times as the “unity of ritual and politics” (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致) because in antiquity, both “religious matters” and “matters of the state”—jointly conducted by the emperor—were expressed by the same term *matsurigoto*.

The preface to the *Kojiki* itself clearly indicates that its compilation was a form of canonization. The proclaimed act of subjecting fluid oral narratives to a fixed form in writing was an attempt on the part of Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇 (r. 673–686) to exercise complete control over pre-existing myths and genealogies. Tenmu’s explicitly proclaimed goal was to “correct errors” that had crept into the authentic narrative of the land—and had generated “variants” as a result. We must recognize this move as part of his larger attempt to legitimate his rule, while delegitimizing the claims of others.³ The very act of labeling a deviant description as a variant of the correct main narrative, as it is often done within the *Nihon shoki* account of the Age of the Gods, is an important attempt to exercise power by controlling and evaluating the telling of such stories.⁴ However, with the decline of imperial power by the end of the Heian period (794–1185), the ancient court texts were no longer required in order to determine the social status of court officials. The political authority of divine regal power associated with a literal belief in the textual descriptions of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as historical events diminished in the transition to the ensuing medieval times of turbulent warfare and feudal rule.

³ The underlying canonization process occasionally even involved violent elements of repression, as witnessed by the massacre of members of the Soga family in 645 and the burning of their alternative accounts, e.g., the *Sumera mikoto no fumi* 天皇記 (*History of the Heavenly Sovereigns*; also known as *Tennōki*) and the *Kunitsu fumi* 國記 (*History of the Country*; also known as *Kokki*) (OSBK, *Shinten* 686; Aston 2: 193).

⁴ Similar things can be said about the distinction of formally acknowledged “religious” belief and practice from so-called “heresy” or—later in modern Japan even enforced by the state—from “superstition” and “madness.”

From the eighteenth century on, these ancient court texts were once again brought out of oblivion due to the enormous philological efforts of nativist Kokugaku scholars. Instead of solely focusing on imperial legitimacy, however, texts such as the *Kojiki* were then more broadly identified as containing the “true memory” of the ethnic nation as a whole—a view that continued to be canonized in state-sponsored textbooks after the Meiji Restoration of direct imperial rule in 1868. After the Tokugawa shogunate was defeated, from the beginning the new government desired to anchor Japan in ancient history and emphasized new forms of education to promote national unity. In the very first year, an Institute for Imperial Studies (*Kōgaku jo* 皇学所) was created in Kyoto that quite significantly categorized the texts to be used for its curriculum besides “History Books” (*rekishi sho* 歴史書) under the heading “Sacred Scriptures” (*shinten*).⁵ Thus, in the context of the emerging modern nation-state, several ancient works and their mythical narratives achieved canonical status as a sacred repository of shared national-cultural memory.

The Ōkura Institute for the Study of Japan’s Spiritual Culture and its Work *Shinten*

Likewise, the 1936 canon of more than a dozen ancient texts compiled by the Ōkura Institute for the Study of [Japan’s] Spiritual Culture (*Ōkura seishinbunka kenkyūjo* 大倉精神文化研究所) that originated with considerable socio-cultural connotation at the height of national hubris was explicitly titled *Shinten* or “Sacred Scriptures [of Shinto].”

Notwithstanding Allan Menzies’ assumed second condition for canon formation, the Institute was not a religious authority *per se* and its founder

⁵ All texts included in the later work *Shinten* can already be found among this curriculum’s list of “Sacred Scriptures.” For an in-depth history of the Institute for Imperial Studies and “national learning” in Meiji-period Japan in general, see Wachutka, *Kokugaku*.

Ōkura Kunihiro 大倉邦彦 (1882–1971) not a priest. Nevertheless, both had a zealous politico-religious mission.

Ōkura Kunihiro's Personal Background

Kunihiro was born in Saga prefecture on the island of Kyushu as the second son of the lower rank family Ehara 江原, who had formerly been samurai. After graduating from the local middle school in 1902, he continued his education in Shanghai at the *Tōa dōbun shoin* 東亜同文書院,⁶ the academy of the Pan-Asianist “East Asia Common Culture Society” (*Tōa dōbunkai* 東亜同文会) that had been formed in 1898 under the leadership of Prince Konoe Atsumaro 近衛篤磨 (1863–1904), the chairman of the House of Peers. Immediately after graduation in 1906, Kunihiro was employed at the Tianjin 天津 branch office of the Ōkura Paper Company. Due to his business skills, he was adopted into the Ōkura family as son-in-law and successor in 1912 and eventually took over the entire company in 1921.⁷

Shortly thereafter, Ōkura Kunihiro began his educational and spiritual activities. The devastating earthquake in Tokyo in September 1923 that destroyed large parts of the city and killed more than 100,000 people had doubtlessly been a decisive turning point. In 1924, he first founded a kindergarten in Naka Meguro and at the same time conceived the idea of

⁶ Established as an institute for higher education for Japanese expatriates in Shanghai on May 26, 1901, the Academy became one of the special schools abroad designated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1921 and a full-fledged university in 1939. After closing down in 1945, its books were transferred to Japan and, together with many former staff and students, integrated into the newly founded Aichi University in 1947.

⁷ The Ōkura dynasty was originally founded by Ōkura Magobei 大倉孫兵衛 (1843–1921). Besides the Ōkura paper manufactory he also managed the publishing house Ōkura Shoten, which was highly successful in the prewar years and sold, among others, the first books by Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916). Magobei later left the corporate succession to his adopted son Ōkura Bunji 大倉文二 (?–1918) who had no heir of his own and adopted Kunihiro to succeed in the third generation. When Bunji died, Kunihiro at first only acted as general manager, since Magobei was still alive at that time, but after the founder's death in 1921, Kunihiro took over the whole corporation as the new head of the Ōkura family.

building a library to support teachers in the field of education on spiritual culture. To collect relevant books and conduct investigative preparatory work, Ōkura traveled throughout Europe, mainly Germany and England, for nearly a year in 1926–27. After his return to Japan, construction began in 1928 with slight changes to the initial plan. Now, the project's core was no longer the library itself but an institute dedicated to the study of Japan's spiritual culture that included an affiliated research library.

The Research Institute's Syncretistic and Religious-Metaphysical Architecture

The Institute was founded on February 11, 1929. Known as *kigensetsu* 紀元節 or “Empire Day,” the anniversary of the legendary Emperor Jinmu's 神武天皇 alleged establishing of the nation and accession to the throne in 660 BCE, February 11 is a date of extreme cultural-historical and ideological significance in modern Japan and was purposefully selected for the Institute's inauguration—it is still a national holiday today.

The Ōkura Institute's building is based on the pre-Hellenistic architectural style of the cultures of Crete and Mycenae. Until the sensational archaeological discoveries by Heinrich Schliemann in the late 1870s and 80s, the pre-Hellenistic world of Troy, Crete, and Mycenae was largely associated with the realm of myth and literature and rarely considered by serious research. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did this ancient world once again fully become part of historical reality. Schliemann published his excavation reports as books, which Ōkura bought during his stay in Europe and on which he based the architecture of his Institute.⁸

⁸ The elaborate building was entirely privately funded by Ōkura who invested about 700,000 yen, which corresponds to several billion yen today. Based on his plans, it was realized by the famous architect Nagano Uheiji 長野宇平治 (1867–1937), a professor at Waseda University and the first president of the Japanese Association of Architects, *Nihon kenchikushi kai* 日本建築士会.

In his speech at the opening ceremony of the completed building in 1932, Ōkura stated his vision that: “Form is the embodiment of belief” (*keishiki wa shinen no gushō de aru* 形式は信念の具象である; OSBK, Ōkura Kunihiko den 109). Moreover, a leaflet called *Shonai shirube* 所内しるべ, which was published in 1935 as a guide to introduce the Institute, describes that not only the building itself but also its surroundings and the entire Ōkura-hill⁹ were conceived and created as a whole spiritual world:

The garden constitutes a map of Japan and also East Asia (*tōyō* 東洋). The [whole mountain's] area of altogether 9,000 tsubo [c. 29,752 m²] symbolizes the world, and the building represents the individual human being. This expresses that Japan, the individual human being, and the world are a Trinity (*sanmi ittai* 三位一体). (OSBK, *Shonai shirube* 16)

Within this metaphorically depicted holy trinity, the Institute's building represents the human body. Hence, as described in the leaflet, the central entrance hall symbolizes the human heart and is thus also called *kokoro no ma* 心の間 (“space of the heart/mind”). The golden light that shines down from the ceiling through stained glass windows signifies the “clear and true heart” (*makoto no kokoro* 誠の心) cleansed of all worldly thoughts. Eagles and lions—the rulers of land and sky—of different shapes and alignment are looking down from the walls and no matter your location in the entrance hall, at least one of them looks straight at you. Thus, as the leaflet states, one's heart is constantly observed and although other people might be deceived, it is impossible to escape the scrutiny of the divine (OSBK, *Shonai shirube* 1–2). In other words, only after returning to a true heart and mind by passing through this hall, the visitor is then ready to enter the innermost hall, located at the center of the building's metaphorical heart where faith is cultivated and which was originally referred to as “temple” or “sanctuary” (*dendō* 殿堂). The columns and ceiling therein made of unvarnished wood were again intended to mirror the style of Mycenaean architecture.

⁹ In 1928, Ōkura had bought the grounds from Gotō Keita 五島慶太 (1882–1959), the founder of the Tōkyū railway company.

The Institute's archive still contains numerous construction sketches, which show some alterations. Although never realized, it was originally planned to install an organ just above the rear entrance. It was obviously intended to make this innermost area resemble a European church. Furthermore, not least due to the triangular and trapezoidal windows, this hall also alludes to then popular Masonic Temples.¹⁰ Surrounding it on the outside was a corridor with elevated straw mats along the wall to practice Buddhist seated meditation (*zazen*). After the building's completion, however, this temple hall was slightly remodeled in 1936 due to the more and more nationalistic *zeitgeist* during the war era. It was re-interpreted as resembling ancient Japanese Shinto sanctuaries and henceforth accordingly referred to as "shrine" (*shinden* 神殿).

In 1929, Ōkura still indicated the following as the original intention of the Institute's innermost "temple" in his *Watashi no shimei jigyo* 私の使命事業 ("My Lifework [Mission]"): "Without inquiring about [organized] religion (*shūkyō* 宗教) or denomination (*shūha* 宗派), the aim are specific aspects of [religious] belief (*shinkō* 信仰), namely the profession of faith (*shinkō kokuhaku* 信仰告白), sermons (*sekkyō* 説教), and so on" (OSBK, *Ōkura Kunihiro to seishinbunka kenkyūjo* 170).

Depending on the occasion, he wrote, this hall was to be used for any kind of ceremonial occasions throughout life (*kankon sōsai* 冠婚葬祭), such as coming-of-age, marriage, burial, and ancestral worship (OSBK, *Ōkura Kunihiro to seishinbunka kenkyūjo* 170). The Institute's syncretistic architecture symbolizes the underlying importance of having a religious conviction, yet without being partial towards a specific persuasion, because for Ōkura all religions—be it Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity or Islam—are similar in nature at their core.

Corresponding to the heart as central organ of the human body and the heart's innermost as seat of religious faith, the Institute's central part was

¹⁰ The cornerstone of Japan's first Masonic Hall in Yokohama was already laid in 1869. After its destruction in the 1923 earthquake, a new Temple was dedicated on 12 February 1927 (Chakmakjian 162). The Detroit Masonic Temple, the largest of its kind in the world, was completed in 1926.

elaborately designed. Yet both wings—more modestly built and housing the researchers' offices and the library respectively—have their own symbolism, too: For a well-rounded human being, the heart and faith need to be flanked in support by intellect and education. Overall, according to an essay on its establishment, the Institute was intended “to explore in detail the essential values of spiritual culture, which should deeply guide our country, and [thus] establish a true faith-based attitude towards the state” (Ōkura, *Setsuritsu* 6).

Many conservatives during the 1920s saw the country and especially its youth lacking such spiritual-cultural guidance. In 1919 and 1920, students, university professors, and journalists, bolstered by labor unions and inspired by a variety of democratic, socialist, communist, anarchist, and other Western schools of thought, mounted large public demonstrations in favor of universal male suffrage without the old minimum tax qualifications for voters. In 1921, amidst a growing national debt, Prime Minister Hara Takashi 原敬 (1856–1921) was assassinated by a disenchanted railroad worker. In 1922, the Japan Communist Party was founded and in 1923, it announced its goals as ending feudalism, abolition of the monarchy, recognition of the Soviet Union, and withdrawal of Japanese troops from Siberia, Sakhalin, China, Korea, and Taiwan. The ensuing brutal suppression of the party was responded to by radicals with an assassination attempt on Prince Regent Hirohito 裕仁 (1901–1989). The 1925 passage of the Peace Preservation Law (*Chian ijihō* 治安維持法) was a direct response to such “dangerous thoughts” as perpetrated by communist and other alleged subversive elements. By using the vague but highly charged term *kokutai* 国体 therein—subjecting anyone to imprisonment who intended to alter Japan's “national polity”—the law attempted to blend politics with ethics and gave carte blanche to accuse and outlaw any form of dissent.¹¹

In 1929, Ōkura explained the reason for inaugurating his Institute in an interview for a long newspaper article about his various endeavors:

¹¹ On the development of the key concept of *kokutai* in the Japanese idea of the state during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Wachutka, “Der *kokutai*-Diskurs” as well as Antoni, *Kokutai* for a broader historical background of this pivotal notion; see also the chapter by Marcin Lisiecki in this volume: “*Kojiki* and the Sacralization of Political Power in Japan.”

When we survey the present condition of the country, we see that the whole nation is in a state of turmoil and confusion of various principles and thoughts. Some are blinded by one phase of equality, unable to realize differences caused by natural developments, while others are demanding mistaken liberty, forgetting the necessity of control and colligation. And then, some are falling victims to mistaken conception that material life controls spiritual life. Devotional life that was the foundation of the national life since the establishment of the nation has absolutely disappeared. The noble and beautiful characteristics of our national life are facing destruction and disappearance. Whatever revisions and changes of existing systems and forms might be advocated, it will be difficult to remove such causes of ruin, unless the people are spiritually awakened and their mistaken ideas rectified. . . .

The present condition of our spiritual and religious realms which control the root of our thoughts are equally defective. . . . Because they lack firm foundations for their beliefs, . . . it is of urgent importance that this situation should be improved . . . so that the people of our nation will be able to realize their fundamental mission. (Joya 3)¹²

Hence, to provide the Japanese people with the necessary foundation for belief and spiritual guidance for a faith-based attitude towards the state, the Institute's first major task was the editing and compilation of the book *Shinten*, which after more than three years of editorial work was published in 1936, deliberately on February 11. Beginning with the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, these "Sacred Scriptures" of Shinto contain about a dozen ancient texts on more than 2,500 pages, either in their entirety or as extensive excerpts of all passages relating to the deities of Heaven and Earth or the imperial lineage.¹³ The rationale behind their selection was an ascribed

¹² This article furthermore reports that the Institute intends "to encourage the racial development of the Japanese people" and will become a center "to which all nations will look for guidance in studying and appreciating the spiritual culture of Japan" (Joya 3).

¹³ Texts included in their entirety are: *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, *Kogoshūi* 古語拾遺, *Senmyō* 宣命, *Nakatomi no yogoto* 中臣寿詞, *Shinsen shōjiroku* 新撰姓氏錄, and the various *Fudoki*

special significance as the original sacred traditions of antiquity and their enormous importance for the understanding of the history of medieval and early modern Shinto.¹⁴

The Concept and Notion behind *Shinten*

The book's compilation originated in the "Special Course on Shinto" (*Rinji shintō kōshūkai* 臨時神道講習会) organized by Ōkura's institute and initiated in November 1932. Renamed into "Course on the Japanese Spirit" (*Nihon seishin kōshūkai* 日本精神講習会), it was held until 1936. Archived documents show that the commissioned lecturers of this Shinto Course were the subject's leading specialists at the time. Among them were the philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856–1944), the historian Kuroita Katsumi 黒板勝美 (1874–1946), the head of the Ise Shrine Offering Association (*Jingū hōsaikai* 神宮奉斎会) Imaizumi Sadasuke 今泉定助 (1863–1944), Miyachi Naokazu 宮地直一 (1886–1949), head of the Department of Historical Investigation (*Kōshōka* 考証課) at the Ministry of Home Affairs' Bureau of Shrines (*Jinja kyoku* 神社局) and later co-editor of a comprehensive Shinto dictionary, as well as Ueki Naoichirō 植木直一郎 (1878–1959)

風土記. Texts included in extensive excerpts are: *Ritsu* 律, *Ryō no gige* 令義解, *Engishiki* 延喜式, and *Man'yōshū* 万葉集.

- ¹⁴ *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* together with *Kogoshūi* give comprehensive information about the deities as well as events, acts, and rituals associated with them, which belong to the essence of Shinto. The parts of the ancient Japanese legislative and regulatory texts *Ritsu*, *Ryō no gige*, and *Engishiki* dealing with the deities provide basic information about ancient rituals and the former Office of Divine Affairs. The ritual prayers *Norito* 祝詞, also contained in the *Engishiki*, as well as the imperial edicts *Senmyō* that are found in the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 are basic liturgical texts for recitation during rites addressed to the deities. Based on their genealogical ancestor, the family register *Shinsen shōjiroku* divides more than one thousand families from the capital and the interior provinces into the three categories of imperial descent, divine origin, and foreign origin. It contains particular traditions of various families that cannot be found in other records and provides important information regarding the relationship of some families with the deities of Heaven and Earth. The local topographies *Fudoki* contain significant regional myths and legends, while many of the *Man'yōshū* poems give expression to the consciousness and the feelings of the people of antiquity towards the deities.

and Kōno Seizō 河野省三 (1882–1963), both esteemed professors at Kōkugakuin University. Later in 1937, Kōno was also responsible for Shinto matters as an editor of the infamous government treatise *Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義 (*Cardinal Principles of the National Entity*).

At the first meeting of the course lecturers on December 20, 1932, they already decided upon the work's title, the classical texts to be included, and appointed the respective person in charge. Thus, the general framework was determined, but what was the underlying objective of this compilation? According to Ōkura's afterword in *Shinten*'s first edition, the editorial work began with the intention that the texts to be contained "are the venerable and timeless classical works that show the origin of this divine country" (Ōkura, "Shinten kankō no shushi") and should therefore find a wide distribution. However, it is also obvious by merely looking at the book's deliberate outward appearance that *Shinten* clearly emulated the Christian Bible.¹⁵ Its leather binding, lightweight paper, gilt edging, and ribbon bookmark visually emphasize the intention to function as a "Shinto Bible." Thus, the external appearance already indicates a catalyzing perception of canonical sacred writings of other religious traditions for the formation of a distinct, unique collection of sacred scriptures, perceived as the epitome of the eternal and immutable indigenous cultural tradition.

Three days after *Shinten*'s initial publication, the well-known journalist and intellectual Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (1863–1957) wrote a short front-page review for the newspaper *Ōsaka Mainichi shinbun*. The enthusiastic

¹⁵ Komori Yoshikazu 小森嘉一 (1907–?)—who graduated in Japanese history from Kōkugakuin University in 1931, was involved in *Shinten*'s compilation as assistant during his postgraduate studies, and was later fully employed at the Ōkura Research Institute—reminisced in a 1998 interview: "I think, concerning the *Shinten*, Ōkura-sensei had the Bible in Europe in mind. Once I even directly heard him say so. It was only a short time, but while in Europe, he lodged in a private house that belonged to a devout Christian family, and each day, without fail, there had to be some dedicated time to study the Bible. Probably due to this experience, the idea occurred to him: one *Shinten* for each [Japanese] family. . . . When staying in a hotel in Europe, isn't there a Bible in each room? At a short spare moment, the guest quickly picks it up and reads it. Nothing like that exists in Japan. I think due to this experience abroad Ōkura formed a resolve to compile the *Shinten*" (Uchikoshi 227–28).

description suggests that not only should each family own a copy, but it should also be made available at hotels, *ryokan*, club houses, train stations, and any place where people meet and spend time so that it gets widely disseminated. Interestingly, the very first paragraph already mentions *Shinten*'s relation to canonical scriptures of other religions:

Be it the Confucian Four Books, be it the Christian Old and New Testament, or be it all the Sutra of Buddhism, each are available in handy editions. Only our national classics were hard to come by, even as individual books, not to mention the impossibility that anyone could possess them as a comprehensive collection. Since long we have regretted the fact . . . [but] this [*Shinten*] now indeed is a work that meets all our desires. (Tokutomi 1)

A similar comparative perception of other canonical scriptures was presented in Ōkura's following versified observation, published in February 1936 in the journal *Kyūkō* 躬行:

The Europeans and Americans have the Bible / The Jews have the Old Testament or the Jewish Holy Scriptures / The followers of Islam have the Koran / The Chinese have the Four Books and Five Classics [of Confucianism] / The Indians have the Upanishads / The followers of Buddha have the Tripitaka / And / The Japanese, together with the *kokutai* that is eternal as Heaven and Earth, have these sacred scriptures (*shinten*). (Ōkura, "Shinten no koto" 29)

The brief essay that precedes these verses also clearly shows Ōkura's underlying attitude towards the compilation; a mindset that mirrors a common *zeitgeist* in the early Shōwa period where the mythical narrative contained in Japan's sacred scriptures formed the basis of a nationalist political ideology. His essay praises Japan's particular spirit and national entity (*kokutai*), quoting in the very first sentence the eminent opening line of the fourteenth century *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (*Chronicle of the Divine*

Sovereign's Direct Line [of Reign]) that “great Japan is a divine country”¹⁶—a phrase that, incidentally, is cited a year later in 1937 with the same intentions and in equally prominent position in the Ministry of Education’s infamous work *Kokutai no hongi*. According to Ōkura, the texts compiled in the *Shinten* bespeak the spiritual essence (*seishin* 精神) of Japan, which exists since the beginning of the world and is bequeathed in the eternal heavenly-sun-succession of the emperors since the state’s foundation by the deities. Thus, he states, they are not simply records of a distant past but are firmly rooted in the contemporary life and faith of the people; they truly are alive and are the basis of all future state development and cultural creation. Hence, he writes, the Institute’s goal is to spread them among the “people of the divine country” in an easily understandable and readable form (Ōkura, “Shinten no koto” 28–29).

The extent to which Ōkura supported these ideas is also reflected in many of his more than 1,380 aphorisms, which appeared on a regular basis in various journals between July 1925 and February 1937. In 1935 for instance, again on February 11, he wrote under the heading *Kannagara no kokutai* 神ながらの国体 regarding the “Divine Origin of the Japanese National Entity” that

[u]niversal law is reflected in the specific. The national entity of our imperial realm is a particularity of the universal law. Because in other countries the concept of the divine realm being universal law is entirely different from [the concept of] the human world, these empires were created by human planning. The divine spirit (*kannagara no seishin* 神ながらの精神) shows its distinctiveness in the indivisible unity of deities and man (*shinjin ichinyo* 神人一如) and forms our Empire. We therefore speak of a unique national entity (*kokutai*). (OSBK, *Ōkura Kunihiko no Kansō* 172)

¹⁶ *Jinnō shōtōki*’s famous opening passage reads *Ōyamato wa kami no kuni nari* 大日本者神國也. For an analysis of its concept of Shinto and the text’s general significance within the nationalism of modern Japan, see Wachutka, “A Living Past.”

Due to limitations of space, a deeper exploration of Ōkura's thought and philosophy is not possible. But against this spiritual backdrop and his other various endeavors,¹⁷ it is hardly surprising that he was arrested after the war by the Allied Powers. From December 11, 1945, he was detained at Sugamo prison, together with Tōjō Hideki 東条英機 (1884–1948), Kishi Nobusuke 岸信介 (1896–1987), and others, on the suspicion of being a category A war criminal. However, because ultimately no actual war crimes of that highest level were proved against Ōkura, he was released after two years in prison on August 30, 1947 (Nemoto 146). From 1952 onwards, until his death in 1971, he again worked as director of the Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture.

Editorial Work on *Shinten*'s Manuscript

Given all these spiritual foundations and institutional preconditions, what about the actual process of compiling these “Sacred Scriptures” of Shinto that had been conceived as a “Bible” for the Japanese people, inhabitants of a divine country?

Editorial work on *Shinten* was started in January 1933. Although various studies and modern reprints of some individual texts did exist at the time, the *Shinten* was the first attempt in the long Japanese history of philological work to unite all its texts in a single volume and to widely diffuse them among the population in a portable and easily accessible format. The initial major task was to completely rewrite the original texts' mostly *kanbun*-style Classical Chinese written language into Japanese word order and to furthermore provide all characters with *furigana* phonetic reading aids so that non-trained laypersons could easily familiarize themselves with these fundamental “sacred” texts.

¹⁷ Ōkura, for instance, also was president of Tōyō University from July 1937 to June 1943 and held important posts in many organizations such as the Association for the Support of Imperial Rule (*Taisei yokusankai* 大政翼賛会) or the Patriotic Industrialists Association of Great Japan (*Dai nippon sangyō hōkokukai* 大日本産業報国会).

Those in charge were all the previously mentioned instructors at the Institute's Shinto training-course (OSBK, "Shōwa nana nen"; OSBK "Shinten hensan") with the exception of Inoue Tetsujirō and Kuroita Katsumi who were not involved with this additional editorial task. Among all these illustrious people, it was the historian Ueki Naoichirō who especially stood out. Originally only responsible for the *Ryō no gige* text and, in collaboration with Kōno Seizō, for that of *Nihon shoki*, Ueki finished his manuscripts way ahead of time and consequently also took over the tasks of those editors who fell behind schedule. In the end, Ueki became *Shinten*'s most prolific editor and additionally handled the manuscripts of *Ritsu*, *Shinsen shōjiroku* and the various *Fudoki*. By the end of 1933, most individual manuscripts were completed, and Ueki took upon himself the task of revising and consolidating all the texts—he thus effectively shouldered the whole editorial duty.¹⁸ Assisted by Oka Yasuo 岡泰雄 (1871–1941), former high priest at Kashima jingū and author of several Shinto works, the manuscript's consolidation rapidly continued throughout 1934. The following year, beginning with the *Kojiki*, the various manuscripts successively went to press, and Ueki's focus now shifted to the strenuous task of proofreading, for which four or five rounds per manuscript seemed not uncommon. Last corrections were made at the end of 1935 and in early 1936 the "Sacred Scriptures" finally began to be printed. However, even after the first edition was issued, Ueki's involvement continued. Prior to *Shinten*'s initial publication, Ōkura had already fathomed a possible collaboration in producing a comprehensive name and subject index, and in August 1937 this complementary work titled *Shinten sakuin* 神典索引 was published under Ueki's editorial supervision.

Moreover, according to Ueki's recollections, at the time of approaching *Shinten*'s publication, Ōkura decided to have it exegetically read in public lectures in order to cultivate and strengthen national faith (*kokuminteki*

¹⁸ In a 1942 article, Ueki describes, "Director Ōkura entrusted me with the consolidation and unification as well as the revision of the manuscripts. It meant a heavy burden of responsibility, but to advance this work and to bring it to a successful conclusion was dear to my heart and came in handy" (701).

shinnen 国民の信念). These public readings were meant to complement the work's objective of familiarizing ordinary people with the scriptures. Ueki was entrusted with the lectureship, and he suggested holding these regular meetings successively each Sunday midmorning akin to Sunday School, for which he received Ōkura's full support (Ueki 704). The serial "Course on the Sacred Scriptures" (*Shinten kōza* 神典講座) started in the end of January 1936 with the *Kojiki* and continued for more than seven years until the last reading of the *Man'yōshū* in July 1943. None of the Sunday reading sessions during this period were ever canceled and in a total of 311 meetings all these ancient classics were thoroughly read, expounded, and made accessible to a wide audience. Several corresponding lectures on the *Shinten* were additionally held in Kyoto and Osaka.

In October 1936, the Ōkura Institute also published *Shinten josetsu* 神典序説, a general "Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures" with in-depth explanatory essays on the individual classical texts by leading Shinto scholars—partially written by those already involved in *Shinten*'s compilation and partially specially commissioned. In his short preface, Ōkura remarks on the publication, using several highly important and at the time ubiquitous keywords; thus, he clearly reveals the prevailing socio-political circumstances that both favored and demanded a work like *Shinten* and the various forms of its exegetical dissemination:

The Japanese spirit's clarion call, given rise by that Manchurian Incident, already saturates the whole country and a variety of movements are now under way. In other words, we are finally realizing anew the true nature of our country and finding in it the guiding principle for national life. The momentum of historical necessity has already solidified, the times have changed, and what is now most strongly demanded is a profound content-related substantiation of the Japanese spirit. However, this issue is too feeble when addressed by subjective arbitrariness, namely, by a fictitious argument born of a single person's thought; or likewise, those who merely study the classics in an evidentiary manner without touching on the spirit of their contents cannot avoid the blame of narrow-mindedness. None of these will meet the demands of the new era. The tide of the times has come, then, where we ought to stand on exact reliable sources

that narrate the true meaning of the national entity (*kokutai no hongi*) and the true nature of the Japanese spirit (*nihon seishin no honshitsu* 日本精神の本質), look back into history, moreover even absorb modern culture, and create and develop the content of a Japanese spirit for the new era.

In light of this, first of all the Institute published the sacred scriptures as a fundamental requisite for the clarification of national polity (*kokutai meichō* 國體明徴) and the rousing of the Japanese spirit (*nihon seishin sakkō* 日本精神作興) on the auspicious occasion of this year's Empire Day and sent them out to the general public. At the same time, we held the fourth Course on the Japanese Spirit (*Nihon seishin kōshūkai* 日本精神講習會) and commissioned those in charge of *Shinten*'s content, authorities in this field, and asked them to give lectures on each of the contained works.

Fortunately, the authorities in this field shared their profound and vast knowledge with enthusiasm, and I believe that together with the distinguished audience we were able to achieve the desired goal.

The transcripts of these extremely significant lectures have been proofread by the lecturers and in response to the widespread request are made available here as Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures, volume three in the series of Collected Treatises on the Japanese Spirit. I greatly hope that this book will become widespread among the general public as explanatory notes (*kaidai*) on the sacred scriptures, which are the original texts for the study of the Japanese spirit. (Ōkura, "Kanko no ji")

Furthermore, from 1938 to 1939, a comprehensive "Commentary on the Sacred Scriptures" (*Shinten kaisetsu* 神典解説) was published in two volumes, under the editorial supervision of Imaizumi Sadasuke and Miyaji Naokazu, intended as a textbook for detailed elucidation of *Shinten*'s content. In the preface to volume 1, Ōkura explains:

The spirit upon which our nation is founded originates in the ancient times of the gods, is inherent in the development of our national history, and is its driving force. The classics of our country, therefore, transmit the origins of this Japanese spirit and are of great

importance as the original texts for the clarification of the national polity's true meaning. To disseminate them widely among the nation's people and to strengthen their awareness and belief in being a people of a divine country is a fundamental requisite for clarification of the national polity and boosting of the Japanese spirit (*kokutai meichō, nihon seishin kōyō* 國體明徴・日本精神昂揚).

In view of the purpose of its recent establishment, the Research Institute has first of all written down [in Japanese word order] the most fundamental and important classics, thoroughly applied Japanese readings, made them accessible and familiar even for the non-specialist general public, compiled them in a single volume, and sent them to the world under the title *Shinten*. Next, we started to compile its index and a commentary, the former of which was completed in August of last year. In the meantime, the Institute has received requests for a commentary from all sides. These requests narrate that the Sacred Scriptures are spreading widely among the nation's people, which is truly a delight.

This book was written by this Research Institute under the editorial supervision of Imaizumi Sadasuke, President of the Association for the Dedication to the [Ise] Grand Shrine, and Dr. phil. Miyaji Naokazu, was entitled Commentary on the Sacred Scriptures, and sent out to the general public as Volume One consisting of explanations of *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Kogoshūi*, which are included in *Shinten*.

At this critical juncture, with calls for a general mobilization of the national spirit (*kokumin seishin sōdōin* 國民精神總動員), I sincerely hope that the publication of this book will be of help in deeply devoting ourselves to the true meaning of the national entity (*kokutai no hongi*). (Ōkura, "Jo," *Shinten kaisetsu: jōkan*)

In the preface to volume 2, Ōkura furthermore states:

It was on the auspicious occasion of Emperor's Day in 1936 that this Institute compiled the *Shinten* as a fundamental necessity for clarification of the national polity and boosting of the Japanese spirit (*kokutai meichō, nihon seishin kōyō*). Since then, it has been a great pleasure to see the *Shinten* spread widely among the people. In order to contribute to the perusal of these Sacred Scriptures, we completed an Index for it in August 1937, followed by the publication of

Volume One of the commentary in April 1938, which contains explanations of the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Kogoshūi*.

In this book, we have continued to compile the explanations of *Senmyō* (including the *Nakatomi no yogoto*), *Ryō no gige*, *Ritsu*, *Engishiki*, *Shinsen shōjiroku*, *Fudoki*, and *Man'yōshū* contained in the *Shinten* as Volume Two and sent them out into the world.

The “*Shinten*,” “Index,” and “Commentary,” if consulted together as a trilogy of national polity clarification (*kokutai meichō*), will greatly contribute, I believe, to the understanding of the original texts.

This book by the way, as with Volume One, was written at this office under the editorial supervision of Dr. phil. Miyaji Naokazu. (Ōkura, “Jo,” *Shinten kaisetsu: gekan*)

Moreover, from 1936 until the end of the war, Ōkura additionally held at least twenty-nine radio addresses and 169 lectures all over the country. Their contents often naturally turned to the sacred scriptures of Shinto, the Japanese spirit and the special political system revealed therein, and the resulting ethical and moral values and duties of the people. Hence, it is not surprising that the *Shinten* indeed found a ready market and got a relatively wide distribution. By the end of 1943, *Shinten* already reached four editions of which at least 22,360 copies were sold.

Afterwards, the book was temporarily out of print for about twenty years but was reissued in its fifth edition in 1962.¹⁹ Starting with the sixth edition of 1967, the index of subjects and names, published separately since 1937, has been integrated and from then on, new print runs continuously followed the other. On *Shinten*'s seventieth anniversary in 2006, the twentieth edition was issued, and the twenty-first edition appeared in September

¹⁹ In the promotional pamphlet for this reissue, Kōno Seizō, who was in charge of the *Man'yōshū* when the first edition was published, as well as Sasaki Yukitada 佐佐木行忠 (1893–1975; president and chairman of the board at Kokugakuin University, who also presided over the *Jinja honchō*), Senge Takanobu 千家尊宣, and Hirata Kan'ichi 平田貫一 (1883–1971; president of Kōgakkan University) all wrote words of congratulation and endorsement.

2009²⁰—henceforth published and distributed by the Association of Shinto Shrines, *Jinja honchō*.

Conclusion

Currently, editions of classic texts which are completely rewritten in Japanese word order and provided with *furigana* indicating pronunciation are not unusual anymore. In the early years after the Second World War, various publishers already began to edit comprehensive multi-volume compilations of classical texts, such as *Nihon koten zensho* 日本古典全書 (“Complete Collection of the Japanese Classics,” 1946–1967) and *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系 (“Anthology of Classical Japanese Literature,” 1957–1967). Thus, despite being reissued after the war in 1962, *Shinten* never reached its earlier popularity and wide distribution. Nevertheless, not least due to its compact size and scope of content, it is currently still used as an indispensable *vade mecum* in the educational training of priests at both Shinto universities Kokugakuin and Kōgakkan and in the daily work of priests at their shrines. This is not surprising, as the Association of Shinto Shrines’ basic charter (*Jinja honchō kenshō* 神社本庁憲章,

²⁰ The 1st edition from February 11, 1936, 2nd edition from April 29, 1936, and 3rd edition from September 20, 1936 altogether saw 19,098 copies in that initial year. The year-end sales figures according to the Institute’s annual report were: 1938 = 13,511; 1939 = 15,288; 1940 = 16,257; 1941 = 18,931. The 4th edition of 3,500 copies was printed on July 20, 1942. The total circulation by the end of that year was 20,382 copies and by the end of 1943 it reached 22,360. Later sales figures are unfortunately not available, but subsequent print runs were: 5th ed. February 11, 1962; 6th ed. February 11, 1967; 7th ed. July 30, 1971; 8th ed. August 1, 1981; 9th ed. February 11, 1982; 10th ed. September 20, 1982; 11th ed. February 11, 1985; 12th ed. January 31, 1987; 13th ed. November 15, 1989; 14th ed. July 20, 1992; 15th ed. April 20, 1994; 16th ed. December 6, 1996; 17th ed. March 1999; 18th ed. August 2001; 19th ed. July 2003; 20th ed. May 23, 2006; and 21st ed. September 2009. Besides normal copies some deluxe impressions also have been printed (6th, 7th, and 14th eds.). Except for the 5th and 7th edition with 2,000 copies each and the 14th edition with 1,300 copies, each post-war print run has been 1,000 copies. Assuming that a previous run was almost sold out before a new edition was printed, almost 42,000 copies of *Shinten* were sold until today. On these numbers, see also Uchikoshi 74–76.

issued in 1980) in its Article 11 Section 2 explicitly states that “Shinto priests must have studied and mastered the ancient classics (*koten* 古典).” Furthermore, Section 3 of that same Article states that “Shinto priests in their professional conduct may not act arbitrary and at their own discretion, but in accordance with traditional belief and the sacred scriptures (*shinten*).” Hence, at least in Shinto circles the *Shinten* remains very present as a set of normative texts in the sense of an authoritative “Bible of Shinto.” Yet, even among such a specialized group, matters concerning the actual history, circumstances, and protagonists involved in canonizing the Sacred Scriptures of Shinto can be assumed to be largely unknown.

This case study of the genesis of the work *Shinten*, published by the Ōkura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture in 1936, therefore intended to lift the veil of anonymity and shed some light on an intriguing example of the usually diffuse and largely anonymous process of sacralization and canon formation of sacred scriptures.

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Myth and Historiography Jingū kōgō in Meiji Period Print Media

Sarah Rebecca SCHMID

According to the imperial chronicles Kojiki and Nihon shoki, Jingū kōgō was the first woman in the Japanese imperial line to assume the rule over the Yamato polity following the untimely death of her husband, Chūai Tennō. However, her status, both in the imperial line and as a historical figure, has long been debated. While the Kojiki included her reign in that of her husband, the Nihon shoki devoted a separate section to her reign, essentially treating her as a sovereign ruler. Even in the nineteenth century, she was often referred to as Jingū Tennō or as the fifteenth ruler in the imperial line. However, the Dai nihon shi, compiled by the Mito school from the early seventeenth century onwards, strongly argued against her inclusion in the imperial line of succession. This argument eventually bore fruit; she was officially removed from the imperial line in the Taishō period.

Despite her later removal from the imperial line, Jingū kōgō is easily one of the most mentioned and depicted Japanese rulers in the Meiji period and is often the first ruler after Jinmu Tennō (and Yamato Takeru, who never ruled, but was an heir to the throne) to receive greater attention. Her portrait was used by the government to adorn bank notes, government bonds, and postage stamps. Jingū kōgō was also an important cultural and religious figure, appearing frequently in books, prints, gunka (war songs), as well as many other areas of culture. This chapter aims to show how Jingū kōgō was represented in different types of media during the Meiji period and what function her figure had in society and culture. It also seeks to discuss factors that may have contributed to her success as a culturally dominant figure.

Introduction

When Japan formally annexed Korea in August 1910, the event was widely reported in print media, especially in newspapers. Many articles not only gave account of the annexation but sought to justify it with the theory that the Japanese and Korean people shared a common ancestor (*Nissen dōsoron* 日鮮同祖論), with some articles even describing the annexation as a “restoration” (*fukkō* 復興) (Oguma 84). The notion that the Korean and Japanese people shared a common ancestor had been part of intellectual discourse long before 1910 but experienced unprecedented coverage in the media around the time of the annexation (Weiss 159), as if in an attempt to convince every last one of their readers. Indeed, not everyone in Japan agreed that the Japanese and Korean people shared an ancestor, and some, like the essayist and translator Kimura Takatarō 木村鷹太郎 (1870–1931), outright disputed it. Best known for his translations of Lord Byron’s work into Japanese as well as the publication of the (nationalist) magazine *Nihon shugi* 日本主義 together with Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856–1944) and others, he was also an adherent of a theory about the origin of the Japanese people that directly contradicted the *Nissen dōsoron*.¹ In a commentary in the newspaper *Yomiuri Shinbun* 読売新聞 from August 29, 1910, Kimura criticized proponents of the common ancestor-theory, writing:

Independent historians do not need to curry favor with politicians and [are at liberty to state] that there are large doubts [about the theory] that the Japanese and Koreans belong to the same race. The so-called Western Expedition of Jingū kōgō, well-known from Japanese history, was not a conquest of Korea, but a conquest of Italy, which is clearly stated in the *Nihon shoki*. Ame no hiboko is the astronomer Hipparchus, born in Bithynia in Asia Minor. (Kimura, “Jingū”)

¹ His arguments can be found in some of his “history” books, such as *Sekaiteki kenkyū ni motozureru nihon taikoshi* 世界的研究に基づける日本太古史 (1912).

According to Kimura, the events described in the imperial chronicle *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720) had not taken place in East Asia at all, but rather in the ancient Mediterranean region. However, while this critique was accepted for print in the *Yomiuri shinbun*, his theories must be regarded as fringe; the *Nissen dōsoron*, on the other hand, was mainstream. Indeed, if Kimura were alive today, it is within the realm of possibility that he would be peddling historical conspiracy theories on *YouTube* or *TikTok*—the reasoning behind his theory of origin is anything but scientific. Kimura did not entirely operate out of the framework of modern Japanese historiography. Like the proponents of *Nissen dōsoron*, he used Jingū kōgō 神功皇后 (trad. 169?–269)² and her “Western Expedition” as proof that his theory was correct, and the common ancestor theory was wrong, mainly by replacing Korean toponyms with a Mediterranean equivalent.

Jingū kōgō, the legendary empress whose deeds were described in the eighth century imperial chronicles *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki*, was frequently cited as proof for a link between the Korean and Japanese people long before the annexation of Korea. As one of the most prominent women from Japanese antiquity, occasionally even identified with Himiko 卑弥呼, the ruler of Wa 倭 mentioned in the *Records of Wei* 魏書 (Jap. *Gisho*, third century CE), she was an ideal candidate for such an argument. Her successful subjugation of the three Korean kingdoms Silla 新羅, Baekje 百濟 and Goguryeo 高句麗 in the third century CE made her the perfect historical precedent to argue that the Korean peninsula rightfully belonged to Japan. In addition to this conquest, her ancestry was also traced back to the legendary Korean prince Ame no hiboko 天日槍 as early as the *Kojiki*. This prince reportedly came from the Kingdom of Silla and settled in present-day Hyōgo prefecture in the first century BCE. Accordingly, Jingū kōgō not only laid claim to the Korean peninsula through military conquest, but she also had a claim to Korea through (noble) blood and so provided proof

² Also known as Okinaga tarashi-hime 氣長足姫, her “real” name. Like all other early emperors up to Jitō tennō 持統天皇 (645–703), she only received the posthumous name (shigō 諡号) by which she is commonly known today in the eighth century, when these names first came into use.

for the theory that the Korean and Japanese people shared a common ancestry.

Kimura did not agree with this, but he followed the example of the *Nissen dōsoron* argument by creating a tie between Japan and ancient Greece, turning Jingū kōgō's ancestor into the eminent Greek astronomer Hipparchus (ca. 190–120 BCE). However, Kimura's use of Jingū kōgō cannot be attributed singularly to the fact that the proponents of the common ancestor theory used her in their argumentation. Rather, Jingū kōgō needs to be understood as a fundamental building block of Japanese historiography during the Meiji period (1868–1912). It is well-known that Jingū kōgō was used by the Japanese government as national representation on banknotes, government bonds, postal stamps, and more (Trede, "Banknote Design"). However, Jingū kōgō was an eminently important figure for Japanese society as a whole; the narrative of Korean subjugation did not only build on a millennium of history but was also deeply embedded in all aspects of society. She was used in different ways in Meiji period historiography, and this manifests in print media, from official accounts in history textbooks to women's magazines and woodblock prints. Some aspects of how this figure was used in Meiji period historiography will be discussed on the following pages.

Problems of Historiography: Jingū kōgō's Status over the Centuries

It should be stated at the outset that the conceptualization of Jingū kōgō was never singular. Even the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* accounts of her reign differ from each other and contain variants that resist fusion into one overarching narrative.³ Accordingly, no "standard" version of the narrative exists, although the *Nihon shoki* version was commonly given preference over the *Kojiki* version, even in the modern period. Part of the reason for

³ Some of the variants are mentioned in Steineck 108.

this preference may be that the *Nihon shoki* not only contains more detail but also has a somewhat more logical narrative structure.⁴

Modern scholarship has long debated which parts (if any) of her narrative are based on historical fact, but until after the Meiji period, she was generally understood to be a historical figure, and her subjugation of the Korean peninsula was considered historical fact. The historian Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉 (1873–1961) was the first to doubt Jingū kōgō's historicity based on modern methods of scholarship; in works such as the *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no shinkenkyū* 古事記及び日本書紀の新研究 (*New Research on the Kojiki and Nihon shoki*, 1919), he analyzed the *kiki* texts⁵ and came to the conclusion that these works were not historically accurate but must be read as politically motivated historiography (Brownlee 190). In consequence, he cast doubt on the historicity of all rulers before Ōjin Tennō 応神天皇 (trad. 200–310), Jingū kōgō's son. This went against the scholarly consensus of the time and ultimately brought him into conflict with the law in the 1940s. William Farris and others note that there were individuals that debated the degree of dependability of some of the content of the *kiki* texts even before the modern period, but these individuals were usually met with resistance (Farris 60). One notable example is Yamagata Bantō 山片蟠桃 (1748–1821), an Edo period scholar and merchant, who considered texts about events that occurred before the introduction of writing in Japan to be completely unreliable (Mittmann 96–97).

The general acceptance of Jingū kōgō's historical existence did not equate to a clear agreement about her status in history. In the traditional order of succession of the imperial line, she was included as the fifteenth ruler of Japan, in between her husband Chūai Tennō 仲哀天皇 (trad. 149–200, as the fourteenth ruler), and her son Ōjin Tennō (as the sixteenth ruler). While her title in the *kiki* texts is given as *kōgō* 皇后, she was regularly

⁴ One example would be the fishing oracle, i.e. when Jingū kōgō caught a sweetfish (*ayu* 鮎) on the bank of a river. In the *Kojiki*, this episode was inserted after her return from Korea without a clear connection to the overarching narrative. In the *Nihon shoki*, on the other hand, it was embedded in the narrative as a means to literally fish for good fortune for the upcoming military campaign.

⁵ Here used as an abbreviation of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

referred to as Jingū Tennō 神功天皇 in other texts.⁶ This choice of title indicates that at least some intellectuals viewed her as an empress regnant, not a “mere” regent.⁷

The question whether Jingū kōgō had been a regent or a genuine empress regnant became a topic of intense discourse from the Edo period onwards. This was a notable shift from the medieval period, when her role as a deity and the mother of Ōjin Tennō seems to have played the largest part in her reception (Kubota 83). While Ōjin Tennō had become identified with the deity Hachiman as early as the Heian period, the connection between Jingū kōgō and Hachiman was strongly consolidated after the Mongol invasions in 1247 and 1281. The seemingly miraculous salvation from the Mongol threat not once, but twice, was quickly ascribed to the workings of the deity Hachiman (then referred to as Hachiman daibosatsu 八幡大菩薩, the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman), for example in the *Hachiman gudōkun* 八幡愚童訓 (*Teachings on Hachiman for the Ignorant and Children*), likely written by a member of Iwashimizu Hachimangū 石清水八幡宮. In the *kō* 甲 version of the *Hachiman gudōkun*, compiled around 1308–1318, Jingū kōgō was equated with the bodhisattva Seibo daibosatsu 聖母大菩薩 (“Holy Mother Great Bodhisattva”), and revealed to be a manifestation of Amitābha (Jap. Amida nyorai 阿弥陀如来) (Simpson 115–17). In other words, the *Hachiman gudōkun* reinterpreted the subjugation of the Korean peninsula in a medieval, Buddhist context and described the Korean kings as morally deficient and in neglect of Buddhist principles in reaction to Korean participation (however involuntary) in the Mongol invasions.

During the Warring States period (*sengoku jidai* 戦国時代), historical sources indicate that Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598) visited Gokōnomiya jinja 御香宮神社, a shrine in present-day Kyoto dedicated to

⁶ The *Fusō ryakuki* 扶桑略記 (twelfth century) is one of the most prominent examples to do this.

⁷ In current use, the holder of the title *kōgō* is an empress consort, not an empress regnant. In other words, a *kōgō* can only rule as a regent, not in her own right. Female rulers (i.e., empresses regnant) also used the title *tennō* when they were still allowed to ascend to the throne, Jingū kōgō being the notable exception.

Jingū kōgō,⁸ before embarking on his invasions of Korea, since he saw her subjugation of the peninsula as an auspicious precedent (Kuze 14–15). He even had the shrine moved to the northeast of his castle in order to use Jingū kōgō as a protective deity against calamity (*kimon no shugojin* 鬼門の守護神) (Tanigawa 5, 205). The shrine was moved back to its original location by order of Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616) in 1605. Hideyoshi was, however, not the only one to conceptualize the invasion of Korea within the framework of Jingū kōgō's conquest. In a diary entry, even a relatively minor participant in the war such as Tajiri Akitane 田尻鑑種 (dates unknown), a retainer from Chikugo 筑後 province (present-day Fukuoka), likened his experience in battle to Jingū kōgō's conquest and alluded to the divine power that her mission had been imbued with (M. Kitajima 121). Kyushu has historically had a strong association with the worship of Jingū kōgō, so Tajiri's view was probably shared by many with the same background.

Jingū kōgō's role as a deity connected to the conquest of the Korean peninsula continued to be important throughout the Edo period. A number of rites and festivals regularly occurred in various locations, and Hideyoshi's invasion might have even temporally influenced practices at the Gion Festival (*Gion matsuri* 祇園祭) around the turn of the seventeenth century (Tsukamoto 839). The earliest scripts have not survived, but it is known that *kabuki* and *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 plays featuring Jingū kōgō's conquest were performed at least as early as 1695, when a play with the title *Jingū kōgō tsuketari, Sankan taiji* 神功皇后付り、三韓退治 (*Jingū kōgō and the Subjugation of the Three Korean Kingdoms*) was performed; the earliest surviving script is a *jōruri* play called *Jingū kōgō sankan zeme* 神功皇后三韓責 from 1719 (Tsukamoto 844). The narrative was widely disseminated in print media and theater among the common people from the eighteenth century onwards (Lee 42), meaning that overall, it was a fixed part of cultural practice by the early Meiji period.

Intellectual discourse during the Edo period was greatly concerned with the problem of succession. The *Dai nihon shi* 大日本史 must be regarded as

⁸ While many shrines enshrine Jingū kōgō as a secondary deity (for example, Hachiman or Sumiyoshi shrines), she is the main deity enshrined at Gokōnomiya.

the most influential text in this regard, arguing strongly against the inclusion of Jingū kōgō in the line of imperial successors (Yoshii 100–01). The *Dai nihon shi* was a massive historical project that was started by Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628–1701) in 1657, but it would only be finished towards the end of the Meiji period, in 1906.⁹ It is, in essence, a chronology of the imperial line that serves as a “history of Japan.” The compilation of the *Dai nihon shi* was strongly influenced by Neo-Confucian thought and is considered to be one of the foundation stones of both Mitogaku and Kokugaku, which in turn became the driving forces behind the initial push for the Meiji Restoration. Jingū kōgō’s biography does not appear in the main chronology (*honki* 本紀) of the *Dai nihon shi* but in the biography section (*retsuden* 列伝), together with all the other empresses consort. In short, the compilers of the *Dai nihon shi* removed Jingū kōgō from the imperial line of succession. Her subjugation of the Korean peninsula, however, was included in the *honki*, added to the reign of Chūai Tennō.¹⁰ Her actual entry in the *retsuden* is very short; the justification for why she was removed from the imperial line is longer than the entry itself. The *Dai nihon shi* based its justification heavily on the text of the *Nihon shoki*, arguing that Jingū kōgō’s reign was termed a “regency” (*sesshō* 攝政) and the posthumous title awarded to her was *kōgō*, not *tennō*, making her an empress consort (Tokugawa, *Yakubun Dai nihon shi* 477–78). It neglected to elaborate on why a regency would have lasted sixty-nine years, as the *Nihon shoki* likewise stated. However, it also corrected the *Nihon shoki* on the point of Ōjin Tennō’s titles, arguing that he should have already been named emperor (*tenshi* 天子) before his birth,¹¹ and that the *Nihon shoki*’s use of *miko* 皇子 (“imperial prince”) and *kōtaishi* 皇太子 (“imperial crown prince”) was incorrect.

⁹ The bulk of the work was already published in the Edo period, however; this included the parts that concerned Jingū kōgō.

¹⁰ Essentially following the model of the *Kojiki*. The *Nihon shoki* awarded Jingū kōgō’s reign a separate section.

¹¹ The *Dai Nihon shi* also called Ōjin Tennō *taichū no mikado* 胎中之帝, “Emperor in the womb.”

While the Mito school's stance was influential, their opinion was not shared unanimously. Jingū kōgō was frequently referred to as the fifteenth ruler in the imperial line throughout the Meiji period and was included as such in popular histories and chronologies. It took until the appointment of the "Temporary Commission for the Examination of the Historical Facts about the Successive Emperors and Empresses" (*Rinji go rekidai shijitsu kōsa iinkai* 臨時御歴代史実考査委員会) in 1924 to decide over the ultimate fate of Jingū kōgō. The very first issue the commission concerned itself with was the question whether Jingū kōgō should remain included in the imperial line of reigning emperors and empresses or not. A report from March 19, 1825, declares that the commission has concluded that she should not be included (*kōdai ni resseraru beki ni arazu to gitei* 皇代ニ列セラルヘキニ非スト議定) ("Go rekidai shijitsu kōsa iinkai roku"). This decision led to her official removal from the imperial line. The justification for this decision is longer than that of the *Dai nihon shi* but argues in a similar vein, concluding with the verdict that she was indeed a regent for her son and did not rule in her own right. It is perhaps not entirely surprising that this formal demotion came after Jingū kōgō had already fulfilled her function of justifying the annexation of the Korean peninsula.

Jingū kōgō in History Textbooks

Historiography was a major concern of the new Meiji government, but opinions were by no means unified as to *how* the history in question had to be narrated.¹² However, with the introduction of universal education, it became necessary to create textbooks for different subjects, including history, that students and teachers could use in class. Repeated changes in the rules and regulations of the education system necessitated changes in textbooks in order to comply with new requirements, meaning that the Meiji period saw the publication of a large number of history textbooks in quick succession (Baxter 317). These changes involved both the form and content

¹² For a discussion of the various and sundry conflicts about official historiography during the Meiji period, see for example Mehl.

of the textbooks, such as improvements in the difficulty of the text and the narrative structure, and an increase in reverence for the imperial institution (Baxter 332–34).

Table I compares six of the most widely used textbooks published between 1881 and 1900.¹³ An analysis of the sections devoted to Jingū kōgō in these books shows that she is an integral part of history education, though at least some textbooks explicitly exclude her from the imperial line. Still, they all dedicate a separate section to her and her subjugation of the Korean kingdoms. As textbooks published before 1881 tend to be extremely condensed, summarizing individual reigns in a few sentences (Baxter 319–21), their study is not particularly productive; textbooks published after 1881 tend to contain much more information in general, not just on Jingū kōgō.

The comparison shows that there is no unified narrative of Jingū kōgō's subjugation of the Korean peninsula. While most of them agree on the major elements of the narrative, such as the death of Chūai Tennō during the subjugation of the insurgent Kumaso 熊襲, and all elaborate on Jingū kōgō's successful subjugation of the Korean peninsula, none of the narratives are quite the same, including the two texts written by the same author, Yamagata Teizaburō. However, the texts do have some elements in common. All but one book make mention of Jingū kōgō donning male dress during her campaign, while only one textbook brings up that she was tasked to go on her conquest by several deities. In the *kiki* texts, this is a vitally important part of the narrative, but in modern school historiography, this might have been viewed as a potentially problematic element rather than a meaningful justification for the invasion of a foreign country. However, this often leads to the narrative lacking clear justification for the sudden subjugation of Korea, when the emperor and empress originally went to Kyushu to subjugate the Kumaso. In the *Nihon shoki*, the deities tell Chūai Tennō that the Kumaso will submit only *after* he has subjugated

¹³ The background of these books' publication and their authors are described by James C. Baxter in "Shaping National Historical Consciousness," so they will be omitted here.

Table I

Comparison of Jōngū kōgō's Subjugation of the Korean Peninsula in Different Meiji-Period Textbooks

Title	<i>Shinpen nihon ryakushi</i> 新編日本略史	<i>Kōsei nihon shōshi</i> 校正日本小史	<i>Kōō shōgaku rekishi</i> 高等小学歴史	<i>Teikoku shōshi kōgō</i> 帝国小史甲号	<i>Teikoku shōshi otsugō</i> 帝国小史乙号	<i>Santei teikoku shōshi</i> 冊訂帝国小史
English Title	Brief History of Japan, new edition	Short History of Japan, revised edition	History for Higher Level Primary School	Short History of the Empire 1	Short History of the Empire 2	Short History of the Empire, abbreviated and revised
Date	1881	1885	1891	1892	1893	1900
Author	Kasama Masuzō 笠間益三 (1844–1897)	Ōtsuki Fumihiko 大槻文彦 (1847–1928)	Kamiya Yoshimichi 神谷由道 (dates unknown)	Yamagata Teizaburō 山県梯三郎 (1859–1940)	Yamagata Teizaburō	Okabe Sei'ichi 岡部精一 (1868–1920)
Divine task	×	○	×	×	×	×
Male dress	○	○	×	○	○	○
Tribute (general)	○	○	○	○	○	○
80 ships of tribute	×	×	○	×	○	*
Ōjin Tennō's birth	○	○	×	×	○	○
69 years of reign	○	○	×	×	○	○

*The *Santei Teikoku shōshi* mentions ships, but not the number of ships.

Silla, providing incentive to embark on the conquest of the peninsula.¹⁴ As it stands, not even the *Kōsei nihon shōshi* saw it necessary to accurately recount this episode: in the *Shōshi* version, Jingū kōgō subjugated the Kumaso before embarking on the conquest of Silla, and the reason for this second conquest was simply given as “following the instructions of the deities” (*kami no oshihe ni shitagahi* 神ノ誨ニ從ヒ).

Though all texts mention some form of tribute—in fact, tribute seems to be one of the most important aspects of the narrative, aside from the submission of the Korean kings—the description of the tribute varies. Some mention tribute without specification (*chōkō* 朝貢), while the *Kōtō shōgaku rekishi* and *Teikoku shōshi otsugō* go into the most detail and mention everything from hostages to gold, silver, and silk, delivered in eighty ships. This is clearly a reference to the submission of the king of Silla described in the *Nihon shoki*, where the eighty ships of tribute were first mentioned (*Nihon shoki* 431). Two texts, the *Kōtō shōgaku rekishi* and the *Teikoku shōshi kōgō*, neglect to mention Ōjin Tennō’s birth after the triumphal return to Kyushu in favor of discussing other topics.¹⁵ The same texts also do not discuss Jingū kōgō’s reported sixty-nine years of reign, for the same reason. The grand picture of the narrative is the same in all stories, emphasizing both the submission of the Korean kings, the tribute that Japan received, and depicting Jingū kōgō as a powerful military leader, usually in male guise. The texts also commonly mention Takenouchi no Sukune 武内宿禰 as her loyal advisor and supporter, though the way his role is described varies. The remaining elements constitute a smorgasbord of options that can but do not have to be included. Still, the function of the overarching narrative is clear: justification not only for Japanese rule over Korea but also the identification of Korea as a source of “tribute.”

¹⁴ The *Kojiki* lacks this clear incentive, but the deities still command to subjugate Silla rather than fight against the Kumaso.

¹⁵ *Teikoku shōshi kōgō* discusses the transmission of *kanji* to Japan, while the *Kōtō shōgaku rekishi* departs on a lengthy discussion of the Korean kingdoms and their relationship with Japan.

A Role Model for Women and Children

History textbooks were intended to educate children within the classroom, but education also continued outside of the classroom. While educational material geared towards (young) women and children were not new, the Meiji period added to the media already on offer with magazines that were published in (ir)regular intervals.¹⁶ Media aimed at women and children also showed an interest in Jingū kōgō and used her as a role model for their audience. A comparison between eight magazine articles and book chapters published between 1885 and 1899, summarized in Table II, shows which elements of her narrative were commonly used.

Considering that history textbooks were more strictly regulated than other types of print media, it follows that the narratives in magazines, children's books, etc. are less uniform. The two elements that appear in all texts are, again, the subjugation of the Korean kingdoms and the payment of tribute. Other than that, the texts prioritize different aspects of the narrative. The article in *Shōkokumin* (1890), for example, does not mention Takenouchi no Sukune, Ōjin Tennō, or the Kumaso, but focuses entirely on the details of the subjugation of the Korean peninsula. At the end of the article, the anonymous author addresses the readership directly, writing:

Since ancient times, our country has never been shamed by foreign countries. Jingū kōgō's [subjugation of the] three Korean [kingdoms], Tokimune's Mongol [invasion], Hideyoshi's Korean [invasion], they have shed brilliant luster on history for a long time. Today's citizens must protect the meritorious service of their predecessors and exalt it more and more ("Jingū kōgō," *Shōkokumin* 19).

The citizens in question are, of course, the *shōkokumin*—the small citizens reading this article. The author chose to list the three (questionably) successful military actions against Korea, notably including the Mongol invasion, but omitted the time when Japan suffered a painful loss in Korea,

¹⁶ Many early magazines changed the intervals at which they were published more than once.

Table II (a)

Comparison of Jingū kōgō's Subjugation of the Korean Peninsula in Different Meiji-Period Journals and Popular History Books

Title	<i>Jogaku shinshi</i> 女学新誌	<i>Jogaku zasshi</i> 女学雑誌	<i>Shōkokumin</i> 少国民	<i>Jokan</i> 女鑑
English Title	New Magazine for Women's Learning	Magazine for Women's Learning	Small Citizens	Women's Mirror
Article/ chapter	<i>Jingū kōgō go ryakuden</i> 神功皇后御略傳	<i>Jingū kōgō</i> 神功皇后	Jingū kōgō 神功皇后	<i>Jingū kōgō no o-den</i> 神功皇后の御傳
English Translation	Short biography of Jingū kōgō			Biography of Jingū kōgō
Date	1885	1885	1890	1892
Issue	25	1	16	30
Author	unknown	unknown	unknown	Miki Ioe 三木五百枝 (1869–1916)
Artist		Ogata Gekkō 尾形月耕(1859–1920)	unknown	
Divine task	○	×	×	○
Male dress	○	×	×	○
Spear in front of gate	×	×	○	○
80 ships of tribute	×	×	×	○
Ōjin Tennō's birth	*	×	×	○
69 years of reign	×	×	×	○

* The *Jogaku shinshi* names Jingū kōgō as the mother of Ōjin but does not mention the circumstances of his birth.

Table II (b)

Comparison of Jingū kōgō's Subjugation of the Korean Peninsula in Different Meiji-Period Journals and Popular History Books

Title	<i>Wakan fujo kikan</i> 和漢婦女龜鑑	<i>Jogaku zasshi</i>	<i>Shōnen nihonshi</i> 少年日本史	<i>Yōnen hisudoku shūshin</i> <i>kunwa</i> 幼年必読修身訓話
English Title	Mirror of Japanese and Chinese Women	Magazine for Women's Learning	Japanese History for Children	Ethics Discourse: Necessary Reading for Children
Article/ chapter	<i>Jingū kōgō</i> 神功皇后	<i>Jingū kōgō no seikan</i> 神功皇后の征韓	<i>Jingū kōgō no sankan sei-</i> <i>batsu</i> 神功皇后の三韓征伐	<i>Jingū kōgō</i> 神功皇后
English Translation		Jingū kōgō's Subjugation of Korea	Jingū kōgō's Sub-jugation of the Three Korean Kingdoms	
Date	1893	1894	1894	1899
Issue		384		
Author	Kishigami Misao 岸上操	Inoue Jirō 井上次郎	unknown	Tekken Gakujin 鉄研学人
Artist	(1860–1907)	(dates unknown)		(dates unknown)
Divine task	○	×	×	×
Male dress	○	×	○	○
Spear in front of gate	○	○	×	×
80 ships of tribute	○	○	○	×
Ōjin Tennō's birth	○	○	○	×
69 years of reign	○	○	○	×

namely the Battle of Baekgang (Jap. *Hakusuki no e no tataikai* 白村江の戦い) in 663. As Jingū kōgō's subjugation is considered to be the "reverse model" and mythological justification of Baekgang by some (Steineck 200), the author omitted not only a historical event that might be directly tied to the creation of the Jingū kōgō narrative but also one that put the Japanese court in high alert and led to extensive fortifications of "endangered" areas in fear of an invasion (Batten 26–31).

The *Shōkokumin* was not the only magazine to elucidate (singularly) on the military prowess of Japan. While the general narrative in issue 384 of *Jogaku zasshi* (1894) is primarily based on the *Nihon shoki*, the narration is interspersed with comparisons between Jingū kōgō's successful subjugation of the Korean kingdoms and the military failures of the Sui 隋 (581–618) and Tang 唐 (618–907, with interregnum) dynasties as they fought against one or more Korean kingdom(s), emphasizing Japan's greater military might. Author Inoue Jirō ended the article with the following evaluation:

In the history of great Japan, there are outstanding exploits such as this. And in this case, they were achieved with ease by the hands of women. Apart from the Empress, another woman must be counted among these women. One of the younger sisters of the Empress, called Soratsu-hime no mikoto, helped the Empress, accompanied her to Korea, and together they accomplished extraordinary feats. After her return to Japan, she governed present-day Buzen and Bungo, and held Korea subjugated. (8–9)

The mention of Soratsu-hime no mikoto 虚津姫命/虚空津比売命 is unusual. She is a minor figure only mentioned by name in the *Kojiki* and revered as a deity in a small number of shrines such as Hachiman kohyō jinja 八幡古表神社 (in former Buzen province). Soratsu-hime's inclusion did serve a purpose, however. The article was published just around the start of the First Sino-Japanese War, and so the simultaneous denigration of Chinese military power combined with the lauding of female achievements was intended to encourage female readers to render support to Japanese military

efforts. Not by encouraging women to join the army, of course—Soratsu-hime's support of Jingū kōgō, rather than Jingū kōgō's military campaign, was supposed to serve as a model for the readers of the article.

Not all articles or chapters were quite so blunt when it came to drawing historical parallels. Both the 1892 article in *Jokan* and the 1893 chapter in *Wakan fujo kikan* are essentially rewritten versions of the *Nihon shoki* account, which is why they are also the only texts to include *all* the common elements of the narrative.¹⁷ In addition, it seems like the *Wakan fujo kikan* liberally borrowed from the *Jokan* article. Though not identical, they have enough similarities (e.g., the same sentence structure with slightly different vocabulary and grammar) to suggest copying. Miki Ioe, author of the *Jokan* article, used a quote from the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 at the end of his article: “[It] looks like [the empress Jingū] laid these mysterious stones,¹⁸ giving a command: ‘Pass the word as long as Heaven and Earth [exist]!’” (Vovin 54) (Jap. *Ametsuchi no tomo ni hisashiku iitsuge to, kono kushi mitama shikashikerashimo* 天地の共に久しく言継げと、この奇しみたま敷かしけらしも, Miki 22; cf. *Man'yōshū* 39).¹⁹ He used this quote to then proclaim that the “mysterious deeds” (*kusushiki mi isao* 奇しき御功蹟) of Jingū kōgō should be admired forever. The *Wakan fujo kikan* copied this sentiment, though without quoting the *Man'yōshū*. It also framed Jingū kōgō's deeds in the terminology of *aikoku chūkun* 愛国忠君,²⁰ and so indirectly asked young women to aspire to the virtues of patriotism and loyalty with Jingū kōgō as their model.

¹⁷ Not much is known about the author of the *Jokan* article, Miki Ioe, but he was involved in the publication of classical literature, the *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記, and the work of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843), indicating that he was very familiar with the *Nihon shoki*.

¹⁸ The stones mentioned here are the stones that Jingū kōgō inserted into her loins to prevent the birth of her son while on military expedition in Korea. They were left in Kyushu after the birth and, according to this poem, are still there.

¹⁹ Vovin translates the *kushi mitama* solely as “mysterious stones,” but the translation of this phrase as *fukashigi na seirei* 不可思議な精霊, i.e., “mysterious spirit,” is also possible; this double meaning makes more sense in the context of the *Jokan*.

²⁰ The *yoji jukugo* 四字熟語 *chūkun aikoku* 忠君愛国 is more commonly used as a term; why it is reversed here is not entirely clear. See “*Chūkun aikoku*” for further details about its usage.

The *Yōnen hitsudoku shūshin kunwa* (1899) is also enlightening in terms of how Jingū kōgō was conceptualized as a role model.²¹ The book presents a number of individuals that represent different virtues—filial piety, propriety, loyalty, etc. Jingū kōgō is included in the section for “intelligence” (*chinō* 知能); a virtue both women and men need in their respective (gendered) areas of activity, according to the book. Jingū kōgō’s inclusion in this section mainly seems to be owed to two factors: her accurate assessment of the Kumaso-Silla situation and her decision to subjugate Silla first, as well as her subsequent import of Chinese civilization (*bunmei* 文明) from the continent. This was quite possibly intended as a parallel to the contemporaneous situation, only that the civilization imported this time was not that of China.

Overall, it is quite clear that the aim of these articles was not to critically engage with history but to disseminate the narrative that Korea had been subservient to Japan since distant antiquity, and that Japan had a claim to Korea, although the common ancestor theory does not seem to play a role in any of these narratives. The only text that comes remotely close to critical engagement is the *Shōnen nihonshi* (1894), which mentioned that Korea was a tributary of Japan for only around two-hundred years, and thus limited Japan’s claim to an extent. Still, Jingū kōgō is lauded as a model of virtue throughout all texts, but the virtues exemplified are imperialist in nature. Interestingly, the texts in popular media are often more overtly so than the texts found in the history textbooks.

The Submission of the Three Korean Kingdoms

Historical textbooks tended to favor maps of Korea over illustrations of Jingū kōgō.²² Magazines and other print media, on the other hand, were

²¹ This is a school textbook, but it is included here since it does not fit with the history textbooks.

²² Out of the examples above, three include maps, one (*Teikoku shōshi*) an illustration of Jingū kōgō that belongs to the submission scenes discussed here, and two have no pictures or illustrations at all.

frequently accompanied by images of Jingū kōgō. In cases like woodblock prints, the importance of the image clearly outweighed that of the text. Most existing images of Jingū kōgō are formulaic, however, and they are generally based on a small number of pivotal scenes. A particularly popular choice is the submission of the Korean kings in front of Jingū kōgō.

The most well-known illustration of this type is doubtlessly the illustration by Ogata Gekkō 尾形月耕 (1859–1920) in the first issue of *Jogaku zasshi*, showing two Koreans bowing to Jingū kōgō and presenting tribute to her (fig. 1). However, this illustration is also the most unusual version of the submission of the Korean kings. The presence of Ōjin Tennō in the arms of Takenouchi no Sukune contradicts all known variants of the narrative, as Ōjin Tennō was not born on Korean soil.

Other illustrations of this scene do not feature Ōjin Tennō. A history textbook called *Shinsen nihon rekishi* 新撰日本歴史 (“New Selection of Japanese History,” 1913) features an illustration that is quite similar to the *Jogaku zasshi* version, though with less detail (fig. 2). As before, Jingū kōgō is seated under a pine tree, receiving tribute from a Korean king or emissary. Takenouchi no Sukune, who was on Jingū kōgō’s right before, is now seated to her left, without Ōjin Tennō in his arms. Issue sixteen of *Shōkokumin* also features the same scene as a frontispiece (*kuchi-e* 口絵, fig. 3). In this version, Jingū kōgō is standing inside of what seems to be a building, possibly carpeted with fur. Takenouchi no Sukune is seated next to her. A large table with an elaborate pattern is standing directly in front of the entrance, filled with tribute. A Korean king is standing in front of the table, bowing to Jingū kōgō; two attendants are kneeling behind him.

The *Jogaku zasshi* illustration belongs to this group of images, but it is the only one in which Ōjin Tennō appears. Jinnai Eri 陣内恵梨 has explained this as an attempt to “revolve” Jingū kōgō’s image to fit into a “wife and mother” framework (36–37), but this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. First, the text that accompanies the image does not mention Ōjin Tennō and focuses more on Jingū kōgō’s relationship with her advisor Takenouchi no Sukune; as such, the presence of Ōjin Tennō might not be related so much to Jingū kōgō than to Takenouchi no Sukune. Second, the image does not try to revert to a *past* framework but rather makes use of a framework that is part of contemporary practice: *ema* 絵馬 (votive tablets).



Fig. 1. Ogata Gekkō 尾形月耕, biography of Jingū kōgō, *Jogaku zasshi* 女学雑誌 vol. 1, 1885.

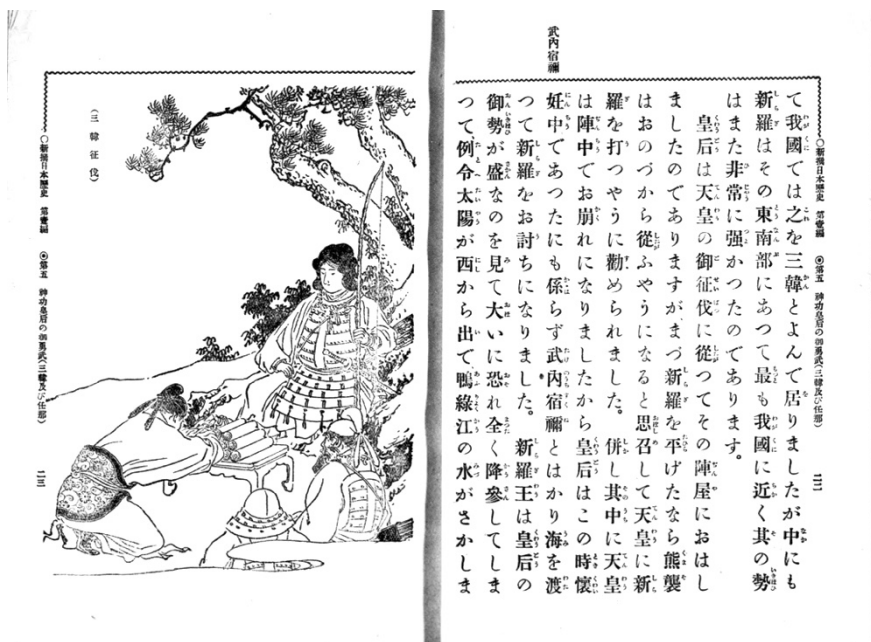


Fig. 2. Illustration of the submission of a Korean king in front of Jingū kōgō, *Shinsen nihon rekishi* 新撰日本歴史, 1913, NDL Digital Collections, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/910241/1/21>.

Richard Anderson has analyzed Jingū kōgō *ema* from Fukuoka and Yamaguchi prefectures in the late Edo and early Meiji periods, and one of the two motives that were depicted on these *ema* most frequently was the so-called *Jingū kōgō to Takenouchi* (“Jingū kōgō and Takenouchi”) motif (258). This motif shows Jingū kōgō standing under a pine tree, while Takenouchi no Sukune is seated at her side, holding Ōjin Tennō. These *ema* were donated by worshippers as an offering after consulting with a shrine for good fortune, such as bountiful harvests or protection from harm. Although the *ema* were ritual objects donated to shrines, the iconography that they made use of found its way into print publications. The Edo period publication *Sankan taiji zue* 三韓退治図会 (“Collection of Pictures from the Conquest of the Three Korean Kingdoms,” 1841), written by Segawa Tsunenari 瀬川恒成 (dates unknown) and illustrated by Katsushika Taito 葛飾戴斗 (dates unknown), uses the *Jingū kōgō to Takenouchi* motif as a *kuchi-*

e for the first volume.²³ So does issue 139 of the *Jogaku zasshi*. It is likely that Ogata combined two existing iconographies—the submission scene and the *Jingū kōgō to Takenouchi* motif—into one image.

However, there is also a third reason why a one-dimensional reduction of Jingū kōgō to a representation of the “Good Wife, Wise Mother” (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母) paradigm would not have been an appropriate fit, and that was Jingū kōgō’s class. This is illustrated by the fact that Jingū kōgō, as a rule, does not hold her own child in any type of pictorial representation. In *ema* iconography and in print illustrations, it is without exception Takenouchi who holds the child. In terms of representation, Jingū kōgō is closer to depictions of Teimei kōgō (貞明皇后, 1884–1951) in newspaper photography (Miller)²⁴ rather than famous mothers from history, such as Tokiwa gozen 常盤御前, whose iconography notably includes carrying a baby through a snowstorm. While Jingū kōgō was revered as Seibo dai-bosatsu during the medieval period, iconography similar to that of a Koyasu Kannon 子安観音 (“Safe Childbirth Kannon”), gently cradling a newborn, never seems to have been part of her iconography. Reducing her image purely to the domestic concerns of a wife and mother was not a suitable representation for Jingū kōgō, since her role as an empress also included her duty as a representative of the imperial institution. In the submission scene, she represents the imperial institution. Texts that describe the submission of the Korean kings corroborate that; it is quite clear that Jingū kōgō functions as a representative for the Japanese empire, rather than as an individual; she conquered Korea for the greater good of *Japan*, not her personal gain.

²³ All volumes of the *Sankan taiji zue* are available online in the Japanese and Chinese Classics Database of Waseda University, see Works Cited.

²⁴ According to Trede, Jingū kōgō was probably used as a substitute for Emperor Meiji 明治天皇 (1852–1912) and his wife Shōken 昭憲 (1849–1914), who could not be depicted on paper money etc. (104). As such, she had a similar function as Teimei—acting as a representative of the imperial institution.



Fig. 3. Frontispiece illustrating the submission of a Korean king in front of Jingū kōgō, *Shōkokumin* 小国民 vol. 16, 1890.

Carving a Message into Stone

Another iconography that appears frequently is the “Stone Carving” scene. The most well-known example is a triptych by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–1892), titled *Dai nihon shi ryakuzu-e: Dai jūgo dai Jingū kōgō* 大日本史略図絵: 第十五代神功皇后 (“Illustrated Abbreviated History of Japan: Fifteenth Ruler Jingū Kōgō,” 1879, fig. 4). The print shows Jingū kōgō standing on a rocky beach. She is accompanied by Takenouchi no Sukune, seated to the left, a female attendant holding a polearm weapon, and several soldiers. Jingū kōgō is dressed in a mixture of Japanese armor and a bustle dress, which would have been in high fashion around the time that this print was made. She also carries a sword and a quiver of arrows, and in her right hand, she holds a bow, raising it just so that the tip of the bow seems to be touching the flat surface of the rock in front of her.

This scene does not appear in the *kiki* texts but is part of the medieval Buddhist reinterpretation of the narrative found in the *Hachiman gudōkun*. The *Gudōkun* altered existing scenes and added new ones. Jingū kōgō carving a message into stone is one of them:

Thereupon, the subjects and king of the foreign country submitted and were made to take an oath, which read: “We will become the dogs of the Land of the Rising Sun and protect [the Land] of the Rising Sun. We shall provide eighty ships of tribute every year. All this shall not be neglected. Should we harbor hostile intentions, we shall suffer the punishment of Heaven.”

At this time, the empress wrote with the point of her bow on a large rock, “The great king of the land of Silla is the dog of the Land of the Rising Sun.” She stuck her spear upright before the gate of the royal palace and returned home. (Hanawa, *Gunsho ruijū* 395)

While the spear is also described as a symbolic object of subjugation in the *kiki* texts, and an oath of submission is likewise made, the *Gudōkun* added



Fig. 4. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年, *Dai nihon shi ryakuzu-e: Dai jūgo dai Jingū kōgō* 大日本史略図会: 第十五代神功皇后, 1879, British Museum, 1990, 1012, 0.1.

a specific phrase to this process of submission: “The great king of the land of Silla is the dog of the Land of the Rising Sun” (*Shinrakoku no taiō wa nihonkoku no inu nari* 新羅国ノ大王ハ日本国ノ犬也). This phrase was carved into a large rock with the tip of Jingū kōgō’s bow, presumably in a location close to the king’s palace, where it was said to remain to this day.

This is the scene that appears in Yoshitoshi’s print, though the Korean king himself is not present. While the image does not show the stone inscription, the text in the upper right corner of the print states that the words *Shinra no ō wa nihon no inu nari* 新羅王日本之犬也 (“The king of Silla is the dog of [the Land of] the Rising Sun”) were carved into the rock by Jingū kōgō.

It may not be possible to reconstruct the exact reason for the inclusion of this additional humiliation of the Korean kings in the *Hachiman gudōkun*. Some of it, however, can be inferred. The first motivation that guided the authors was doubtlessly the desire to leave a tangible symbol of conquest in Korea. A similar mechanism already appears in the earlier versions. The *Nihon shoki* relates that “[t]he spear on which the Empress leant was planted at the gate of the King of Silla as a memorial to after ages. Therefore, that spear even now remains planted at the King of Silla’s gate”

(Aston 1: 231). That spear was not only mentioned in the *Gudōkun* but is also shown in Yoshitoshi's print, held by Jingū's female attendant. Both the *Nihon shoki* and the *Gudōkun* make use of the idea of an irremovable proof of subjugation, but they do it in different ways. The reason why the *Gudōkun* makes use of writing while the *Nihon shoki* does not is that *Gudōkun* is a medieval and not an ancient tale, and as such was not inhibited by the fact that writing was only introduced to the Japanese archipelago after Jingū kōgō's rule.²⁵

The second reason for the addition was the temporal closeness between the compilation of the *Gudōkun* and the Mongol invasions. The *Gudōkun* very deliberately painted the Koreans as morally deficient and even sub-human as a reaction to a perceived threat from the Korean peninsula. Seeing that the stone-carved phrase added in the *Gudōkun* survived well into the Meiji period with barely any alteration, it is equally clear that the sentiment behind the phrase survived the intermediate centuries.

The iconography of the scene was established early on, as evidenced by the Hachiman Digital Handscrolls project of Heidelberg University ("Light Table Empress Jingū"). The project collected seven different illustrated handscrolls (*emaki* 絵巻) narrating the origin of Hachiman. The oldest digitized scroll, the *Hachiman daibosatsu go engi* 八幡大菩薩御縁起 ("The Karmic Origins of the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman"), is dated to 1389. The scroll shows Jingū kōgō in full armor after her arrival on Korean soil. Her army and her ships are to her right, and the Silla palace gate is just visible to her left. A spear has already been placed in front of the gate. The king of Silla has seated himself on the ground next to a large boulder. Jingū kōgō is shown raising her bow in order to inscribe her message on the boulder. The scene is remarkably similar in all digitized scrolls, making it clear that at least some of the scrolls were either copies or used the same reference. Comparing these *emaki* with Yoshitoshi's triptych shows that

²⁵ Stones were also an important element both in the *kiki* texts (see the mention of the birth stones in the *Jokan*) and the *Gudōkun*. This discussion will be omitted here, however.

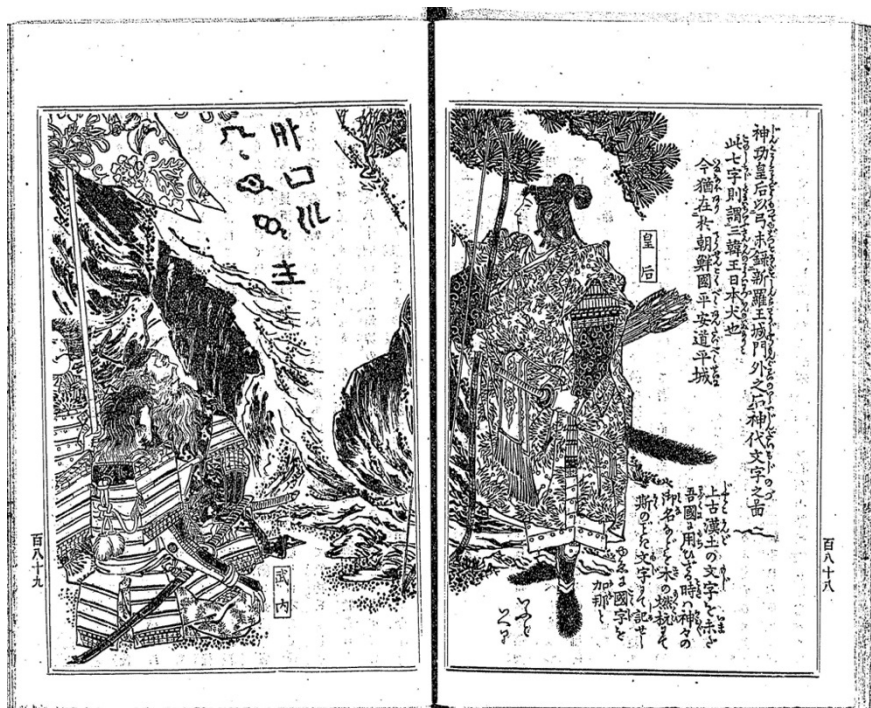


Fig. 5. Stone Carving scene, *Jingū kōgō sankan taiji zue* 神功皇后三韓退治図会, 1886.

while Yoshitoshi's style is that of a Meiji period artist, the iconography itself does not differ much from that in the *emaki*, rendering the scene and its message easily recognizable even after five hundred years.

The transmission of this scene until the modern period was at least partially facilitated by stage plays (Trede 72). The *Jingū kōgō sankan taiji zue* 神功皇后三韓退治図会 (*Collection of Pictures from the Subjugation of the Three Kan by Jingū kōgō*, 1886), published by Kyōryūsha 共隆社, is an example of a text that is based on a play, and is a reprint of an Edo period work (fig. 5).²⁶ The Stone Carving scene is not only found in the text but is also illustrated. In this version, Jingū kōgō has finished carving her message into stone, and she stands beside the rock with her bow lowered,

²⁶ Namely the *Sankan taiji zue* mentioned in the previous section.

Takenouchi no Sukune once again seated to the left. However, the stone inscription cannot be read. The text accompanying the illustration helpfully transcribes the writing on the wall as “The three Korean kings are the dogs of [the Land of] the Rising Sun” (*Sankan no ō wa nihon no inu nari* 三韓王日本犬也) and informs the reader that the characters seen in the image are *jindai moji* 神代文字, a supposedly purely Japanese script that existed before the introduction of Chinese characters.²⁷ *Jindai moji* are a hoax, but they fitted the needs of the narrative; unlike the medieval narrators, the (early) modern narrators understood Jingū kōgō’s subjugation as an ancient narrative and therefore could not use Chinese characters ahistorically. To circumvent the problem, they opted either not to write the inscription at all (which follows the example of the *emaki*) or added *jindai moji*. This had the additional advantage of uncoupling Japanese writing from Chinese script, elevating indigenous cultural achievements. The script here vaguely resembles the Korean script but has no similarity with any well-known *jindai moji*. In addition, it seems to function just like *kanbun* 漢文 (“Chinese writing”), since it contains only seven characters, just as the phrase in the Japanese text does (三韓王日本犬也). It omits particles and verb conjugations necessary to the Japanese language, which would make no sense if the *jindai moji* truly were an indigenous script. Considering that the same script also appears in earlier illustrations of the scene, it is possible that this script was originally used in a play.

While the scene was first introduced in a Buddhist context, it seems to have lost this association over time. Not only was it used in fictional tales and plays but an *ema* with this design can also still be found at Gokōnomiya, dedicated to the shrine in 1882; apparently, it was considered appropriate for use in a Shintō shrine (fig. 6). The most notable part about the Stone Carving scene is, however, that not a single textbook or magazine mentioned in the previous sections includes this scene in its narrative. With the general turn to the *Nihon shoki* as the most important source for the

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of *jindai moji*, see Louise Neubronner’s chapter in this volume, “On the Fringes of Imperial Mythology.”



Fig. 6. Ema at Gokōnomiya shrine, photographed by the author.

subjugation narrative, modern historiographies seem to have shied away from including medieval additions to the narrative. Still, the image of Jingū kōgō inscribing a message of conquest into stone can be found in different contexts throughout the Meiji period, although in a function completely divorced from modern historiography.

Conclusion

Like Kimura Takatarō, French writer, poet, and translator Judith Gautier (1845–1917) might be an unexpected figure to provide further insight into Jingū kōgō during the Meiji period. She never visited Asia herself but was a prolific writer on “Oriental” culture. It is unclear who or what her source

of inspiration was,²⁸ but in 1912, she published a collection of short stories titled *Le paravent de soie et d'or*. This collection included “L’impératrice Zin-Gou,” a dramatic account of Jingū kōgō’s subjugation of the Korean peninsula. Towards the end of the story, Jingū kōgō arrives at the palace of the Korean king, and takes the offensive:

The first to attack, [Jingū kōgō] went across the moat and struck the royal gate, exclaiming loudly: “The King of Korea is the dog of Japan!”

The panels of the gate shattered and collapsed, and the conqueror stepped over the rubble.

She hung up her pike of ivory and gold above the entrance, where it remained for centuries. (Gautier 245)

The *Nihon shoki* recounted that the king of Silla surrendered without resistance or bloodshed—a sign of Jingū kōgō’s divinely protected mission. The story that Gautier became acquainted with was that of a martial empress, turned into a fearless warrior in her imagination. The call of “*The King of Korea is the dog of Japan!*” must have reverberated with her, but the Jingū kōgō that she encountered was not the same that appeared in the history textbooks read by Japanese school children, or the one that the *Yōnen hitsudoku shūshin kunwa* lauded for her intelligence. They all show, however, why Jingū kōgō, who had been eyed critically by intellectuals for centuries at this point, still managed to defend her position as one of the central figures of Meiji period historiography. As a mythological narrative, it is almost impossible to reduce Jingū kōgō’s subjugation of the Korean peninsula to one dominant version; each variant carries meaning that gives life to the ongoing transmission of the narrative.

²⁸ Gautier did have Japanese connections: among them were Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望 (1849–1940), a major Japanese statesman who had studied in France, Kōmyōji Saburō 光妙寺三郎 (1847–1893), who had studied Law at Paris University and was a friend of Saionji, Motono Ichirō 本野一郎 (1862–1918), a Japanese minister in France before he became the Japanese ambassador to Russia in 1906, and Motono’s wife Hisako 久子 (1868–1947) (Richardson 154, 238).

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MYTH IN EARLY MODERN JAPAN

The Power of Language Edo Period Poetic Discourse on the Spoken and the Written Word

Judit ÁROKAY

The study of poetry plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of ancient languages, providing a unique lens through which to understand the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual elements of past societies. In the context of Japanese poetics, the thirty-one syllable waka form is of great importance, often associated with sacred traditions dating back to mythological times. Eighteenth-century scholars of National Learning (Kokugaku), notably Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga, emphasized the importance of poetry in reconstructing the original Japanese language, which they believed had been corrupted by Chinese influence. For these scholars, poetry, with its inherent rhythm and prosody, preserved the pure essence of the ancient language and served as a tool for accessing the unadulterated Japanese spirit (yamato gokoro). Despite the challenges of reconstructing a language from its poetic forms, these scholars argued that poetry preserved the phonetic and emotional nuances of the original language and offered insights into a time before the introduction of Chinese characters and concepts. This quest for linguistic purity was not merely academic but deeply intertwined with a cultural and nationalist agenda to restore the perceived primordial harmony between language, man, and the universe. The discourse on ancient poetry in the late Edo period, however, was diverse and provides a window into the multifaceted spiritual and intellectual life of the time. This analysis focuses on two important issues in the debates: the possibility of reconstructing ancient poetry through writing, and the nature of rhythm as a main feature of oral poetry.

The Importance of Poetry for the Reconstruction of Ancient Language

In the history of Japanese poetics, various arguments have been put forward to connect poetry, first and foremost the thirty-one syllable *waka*, with the realm of the sacred. The first instances of Japanese poetry, it is argued in the prefaces to the *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集, written at the beginning of the tenth century, are to be found in mythical times. It supposedly originated with the first words uttered by Izanami and Izanagi as they set out to create Japan, or with Susanoo, the son of Izanagi and Izanami, who, according to the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712), composed the first thirty-one syllable poem when he descended to Izumo (*Kokin wakashū* 93–94, 334).¹ In these prefaces, *waka* is described as having the power to move Heavenly and Earthly Deities and to make even the invisible fierce gods show emotion (*Kokin wakashū* 93–94, 334).

The concept of *kotodama* 言霊 (“word soul”) can be traced back to ancient Japan and expresses the idea that language, especially songs and poems, could directly influence the world of objects, that pronouncing the word in a ritual context made it possible to control the object. It already appears in the poems of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, which testify to the existence of this magical thinking that saw a direct connection between words (*koto* 言) and things (*koto* 事).² We can also find this way of thinking in the form of “raising up words” (*kotoage* 言挙) in the *Kojiki*,³ and it remained influential until the Edo period, when it was first treated theoretically in the context of National Learning (Kokugaku).

In the same vein of mythical thinking, there are legends of poets who can invoke rain as if in prayer. This ability was attributed to the monk

¹ The *Kokinshū* preface mentions these origins of *waka* poetry, Susanoo's being the first poem in the regular thirty-one syllable form: *yakumo tatsu / Izumo yaegaki / tsumagomi ni / yaegaki tsukuru / sono yaegaki o*.

² Plutschow gives an introduction to the magical forms of Japanese poetry from early to medieval times in the context of ritual (10–12, 75–87).

³ For a discussion of this concept, see Antoni 387.

Kūkai 空海 (774–835), the founder of the Shingon 真言 school in the early ninth century, but also to the poetess Ono no Komachi 小野小町 (ninth century), who is reported to have evoked rain by writing and ritually offering a *waka* poem, an episode that was widely known throughout the centuries and inspired, for example, the Nō play *Amagoi Komachi* 雨乞い小町 and several *ukiyo-e* prints of the Edo period.⁴

In the Heian period, the custom of worshipping ancient poets as sages or deities developed, Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂 (alt. 柿本人麿, around 660–710) being the most important among them.⁵ Poetry meetings were organized around the theme of worshipping Hitomaro (*Hitomaro eigū* 人麿影供). In addition, from the Heian period onward, poems and anthologies of poems were used as votive offerings to temples and shrines, a custom that originated in China with the Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (722–846), with anthologies of poems serving the purpose of donations, much like sutras. In addition, there is the Buddhist concept of *kyōgen kigo* 狂言綺語 (wild words and fancy language), used in the context of poetics as an apologetic for creating fictional worlds, either in stories or poems. In this context, the words of a poem are like *dharani*, incantations, recitations of Buddhist mantra, which generate merit for the poets. This argument became popular among leading poets in Japan in the twelfth century and is associated with the names of Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原俊成 (1114–1204), Jien 慈円 (1155–1225), and Saigyō 西行 (1118–1190), and it became a frequently cited topos in the Middle Ages.

Thus, as we move into the eighteenth century, when the discourse on the functions of Japanese poetry gained momentum, the stage had already been set in various ways to ascribe transcendental powers to poetry, but here we are confronted with new perspectives. The main motivation of the scholars

⁴ The famous poet Nōin 能因 (988–c.1051) from the Heian period is cited in this context by Plutschow in his chapter “Aspects of Magic in Japanese Poetry” (129–130).

⁵ Kakinomoto no Hitomaro was perhaps the most important poet of the *Man'yōshū*. He was already revered as a kind of deity of poetry (*uta no hijiri* 歌の聖, *uta no kami* 歌の神) in the late Heian period. From the twelfth century onwards, institutionalized Hitomaro worship (*Hitomaro eigū*) developed, which gave rise to numerous poetry meetings and poetry competitions.

of National Learning was to reconstruct the original Japanese language of the myths contained in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). Some of its prominent representatives believed that in ancient Japan there was a unity of language and action as well as language and customs, which was destroyed by the influx of Chinese texts and the use of Chinese characters, vocabulary, and concepts that did not correspond to the attitudes of the ancient Japanese people. While the original Japanese spirit (*yamato gokoro* 大和心) was characterized by straight-forwardness (*makoto* 真, *magokoro* 真心), Chinese thinking was crooked. This eighteenth-century intellectual movement was decidedly sinophobic, seeing Japanese words and original Japanese values as superimposed and distorted by Chinese and especially Confucian influence. Historical changes in language were seen as decay. Representatives of this group, such as Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769) and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1740–1801), idealized the spoken language and wanted to return to the state presumed to have existed before it was recorded. The pure Japanese spirit was supposed to be rooted in the Age of the Gods. To reconstruct the original language of the myths, poetry was the ideal starting point, with its prosody and melody that seemed to preserve the language in its original form.⁶ However, the attempt to reconstruct the Japanese language before its first recording encountered difficulties that could not be solved by philological means, and ideological tones began to dominate the discussion.

⁶ It was Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人 who shaped the discussion of the phonocentric turn in Japanese cultural history, which he linked to the discovery of interiority and located in the early modern period around 1900. He interprets the efforts during the Edo period to reconstruct the original language that existed before the Chinese script as the first attempts to subordinate the figurative meanings of *kanji*, which are always diverse in the Japanese language, to phonetic representation and thus to a single, clear meaning. According to the Kokugaku school of thought, in order to access reality, the meaning of the figurative signs (*kanji*) that precede the things they represent must be suppressed, and instead, a transparent language must be reconstructed. Karatani refers to this as an aspect of the discovery of interiority, along with other stylistic developments in literature and theater (59–60). In this sense, Naoki Sakai also speaks of a phonocentric turn in his book *Voices of the Past* (111).

Criticism of Chinese Writing and the Superiority of the Japanese Language

In the *Kokka hachiron* 国歌八論 written 1742, Kada no Arimaro 荷田在満 (1706–1751) explained the importance of *waka* for the recovery of the ancient language as follows:

Japan is the country of our imperial family, which has reigned for a myriad of generations, but because literature blossomed late [in relation to China], our ancestors had to rely upon Chinese script; they employed Chinese etiquette, laws, codes, dress for court officials, and tools; everything has been based upon Chinese models. Only Japanese poetry was based on the natural sounds of our language, and there are no Chinese usages included in the least. Concerning epithets and plays on words in Japanese poetry, they are superior to the Chinese usages, and we can feel proud because they are genuinely Japanese. (Bentley 52; Kada 49)⁷

Arimaro set the tone for the criticism of Chinese models, Chinese writing and the worship of Japanese poetry. The linguistic turn, however, goes back to Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701), who had pointed out that the phonetic use of characters in the *Kojiki* and the *Man'yōshū* deviated from the writing conventions of his time, but apparently also from the so-called Teika syllabary system (*Teika kanazukai* 定家仮名遣い), which had been formulated in the thirteenth century and was still in use. He identified the differences between the “pristine, original” state of the Japanese language of antiquity and that of his own time as decline and loss (Burns 49–50). This linguistic insight laid the groundwork for a culture-theoretical interpretation that became particularly important in Kokugaku. In his interpretation of the peculiarities of the ancient Japanese language, Mabuchi adopted Keichū's explanation of the phonetic system, interpreting the differences from the contemporary language not simply as historical decline but as the result of

⁷ See Nosco for a detailed presentation of this debate that began 1742 and continued with interruptions into the 1770s.

the intrusion of foreign sounds from Chinese. According to Mabuchi, this cultural contact led to the loss of the original direct connection between man and the universe, and man and language. Previous interpreters had relied too much on Chinese characters, Mabuchi wrote in *Goikō* 語意考 (1768), and the original words had been forgotten, so people tried to derive the meaning of texts from the characters (Kamo, *Goikō* 124–25).

Mabuchi launched an attack on the Chinese writing system in general. In his essay *Kokuikō* 国意考 (1765), he presented ancient Japan as the ideal society governed in accordance with nature until the intrusion of Chinese knowledge.⁸ He writes:

China is a troublesome and poorly governed country. To give a specific example, there are the characters in the form of pictures. When we look at the characters that someone has put forth as just the ones necessary for ordinary use, they amount to some 38,000. . . . In India, though, using fifty characters, they have written and passed down over five thousand volumes of Buddhist texts. Just knowing fifty characters, it is possible to know and transmit a limitless number of words from both past and present. Moreover, it is not only the characters; the fifty sounds are the voice of Heaven and Earth (*ametsuchi no koe* 天地の声) so what they contain within them is natural (*onozukara*). In the same way, there seem to have been some kind of characters in our Imperial Land as well,⁹ but after the introduction of Chinese characters, this original writing sunk wrongly into obscurity, and now only the ancient words remain. . . . In Holland they have twenty-five characters, in this country there are fifty, and, in general, characters are like this in all countries. Only China concocted a cumbersome system, so things are disorderly there and everything is troublesome. (Flueckiger, “Reflections” 247–48; Kamo, *Kokuikō* 12–13)

⁸ For a detailed analysis, see Flueckiger, “Reflections on the Meaning of Our Country.”

⁹ This is an allusion to *jindai moji* 神代文字, writing from the Age of the Gods, that some representatives of Kokugaku had posited. For details, see the chapter by Louise Neubronner in this volume, “On the Fringes of Imperial Mythology.”

It is interesting to note that the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet or the twenty-five letters of the Dutch alphabet, as mentioned by Mabuchi, are considered superior to the Chinese script not only because of their effectiveness in reproducing speech, but also because they are closer to the “voices,” i.e., natural sounds, and therefore more authentic. We will return to this argument later.

Although Chinese characters came to be used in our country, in ancient times they only borrowed the characters’ sounds (*on* 音) and used these to represent the words of our own country. After a while they also mixed in the meanings (*kokoro* 心) of the characters, but they still used only the Japanese readings (*kun* 訓) and were not overly concerned with the Chinese meanings. [*Here, a Man’yōshū example follows*] In this way, the words were the masters, and the characters were the servants, so people used characters as they saw fit. Later, though, it was as if the words, which had been the masters, lost their position and were replaced by the characters that had been the servants. Such a development shows the influence of the wicked Chinese custom of lowly people becoming the ruler, so it is unspeakably foolish not to recognize how despicable this development was and to think only that Chinese characters are something splendid. (Flueckiger, “Reflections” 248–49; Kamo, *Kokuikō* 13)

However, the historical distance from antiquity could only be overcome by reconstructing the phonetic script that Mabuchi and his most famous disciple, Motoori Norinaga, considered to be the only authentic one. The representatives of the School of National Learning were convinced that the original harmony that existed among people, between people and deities, and between people and nature was directly expressed in the poetry of antiquity, and that therefore, the poetry that had come down to us was the only authentic expression.

In ancient times, people’s hearts were direct and straightforward. Because their hearts were direct, their actions were few, and because there were few things, the words they spoke were also few. When

feelings arose in their hearts they would put them into words and sing, and they called this “poetry” (*uta*). When they sang they did so directly and with a single heart. (Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony* 161; Kamo, *Kaikō* 40)

Mabuchi urged the poets of his time to follow the example of the ancients: to read ancient texts and poems and write and compose in the same way (Kamo, *Kaikō* 44).

While the study of the script used in the historical sources of the eighth century, especially the *Kojiki*, and its phonetic values led to important discoveries in language history and phonology, National Learning was generally backward-looking in its poetics, as it aimed to apply the linguistic and poetic conventions of the eighth century to the eighteenth century. In this way, Mabuchi and his followers believed that they could not only recognize the “old words” through ancient poetry, but also that by simply repeating this language, it would be possible to express oneself authentically, untouched by later developments. Thus, in the eighteenth century, the problem of reconstructing the language of antiquity was complex, because the original phonetic forms could not be deduced from Chinese-language texts. It therefore seemed that only poetry, because of its mode of recording, syllable count, and rhythm, could provide insight into the language of antiquity. However, the writing conventions had to be elucidated in order to access the Old Japanese used in the poems.

Norinaga devoted himself to this task by writing the *Kojikiden* 古事記伝 (44 volumes, completed in 1798). The *Kojiki* is written in a mixed style: the preface in pure *kanbun* 漢文, which follows Chinese grammar, and the main text in the so-called *kirokutai* 記録体, which attempts to capture a Japanese text and thus deviates from Chinese writing conventions. By reconstructing an original reading, Norinaga effectively steps back in time to the language he believes existed before the text was written, attempting to bridge the gap between the lost past and the corrupted present. Norinaga was convinced that the language of each era had its own characteristics,

corresponding to the actions and inner dispositions of its people.¹⁰ This unity existed in ancient times until it was disrupted by the use of *kanbun* 漢文 and Chinese characters, vocabulary, and concepts that did not correspond to the mindset of the ancient Japanese people. The meaning of Chinese characters had overshadowed Japanese words, the conventional style (*bunshō* 文章) of historical records had obscured historical reality, and the way of interpreting the world according to Confucianism had superimposed original values.¹¹ He makes this point by contrasting the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. While the former strives not to destroy or abandon the language of antiquity, the latter uses a Sino-Japanese language that disregards this unity (Takenishi 52).

For Norinaga, the ideal of direct expression is closely tied to the primacy of the voice, a stance he articulates most clearly in his studies of the *Kojiki*. He argues that the *Kojiki* preserves a more original language than the *Nihon shoki*:

The *Kojiki* employs a language that is unembellished (*moji no aya wo mo kazarazu* 字の文をかざらず), relies exclusively on the old language (*furukoto* 古言), and strives not to lose sight of the true events of antiquity (*inishie no makoto no arisama* 古の實のありさま), as stated in its introduction. . . . The reason why the *Kojiki* is to be valued more highly than the *Nihon shoki* is, first, because in ancient times there were no written texts (*fumi* 書籍), and what the people wanted to transmit orally cannot possibly correspond to the text of the *Nihon shoki*, but must correspond to the language recorded in the *Kojiki*. (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 3–4, 6)

By studying the *Kojiki*, Norinaga was able to decipher much of the use of the script. He was able to assign sounds to the characters used in the *Kojiki*, and from their systematic arrangement he realized that in ancient times there were distinctions made with Chinese characters (*man'yōgana* 万葉が

¹⁰ See, for example, the chapter “Yomizama no koto” 訓法の事 (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 31–49).

¹¹ See, for example, the introduction to *Kojikiden* (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 4–5).

な) in the transcription of Japanese sounds, distinctions that were later abandoned in the *hiragana/katakana* script. He proceeded systematically, reconstructing a fifty-sound table and assuming that all other sounds in Japanese were added later due to foreign influence, such as voiced consonants (*dakuon* 濁音), sound assimilation (*onbin* 音便, *renjō* 連声), palatalization, and the word-final nasal. Since Norinaga was convinced that Japan was superior to all countries and cultures, including its language and script, he believed that anything the Japanese language did not have could only be false and corrupt. The perfect state of language was represented by the language of antiquity because it was free from Chinese influence. He assumed that the script used in the *Kojiki* had accurately represented all the syllables of Old Japanese, and he firmly believed that the *kana* characters could represent all the sounds worth representing. In *Kanji san'on kō* 漢字三音考(1785), Norinaga devoted several chapters to a comparison of Japanese and Chinese and concluded that only the fifty sounds of Japanese were correct (*tadashiki* 正しき), and that all the others were incorrect (*tadashikarazu* 不正) not far removed from the cries of birds or beasts and the noises emitted by inanimate objects (Motoori, *Kanji san'on kō* 383–84).¹² In reconstructing the “original” meanings of words, Norinaga did not aim at abstract concepts. Instead, he tried to understand how words were used in the past. Their meanings should not be reconstructed abstractly or on the basis of commentaries, but rather in the specific contexts in which they were used in antiquity. He sought to overcome the distance imposed by writing through reconstructing an original linguistic situation. In this context, he emphasized that the meaning of the characters is irrelevant because they are borrowed. Norinaga dismissed the study of characters to uncover their original meaning, as they were later introduced as substitutes and therefore unworthy of consideration (Motoori, *Isonokami no sasamegoto*

¹² Two chapters of *Kanji san'on kō* are conspicuous in this respect: “Totsukuni no ne no tadashikarazu koto” 外国の音正しからざる事 (“About the Incorrectness of Foreign Sounds”) and “Chōjū banbutsu no koe” 鳥獸萬物の聲 (“The Voices of Birds and Beasts and Objects”). For an English language introduction to the topic, see McEwan.

113–14).¹³ Instead, he focused his efforts on developing an authoritative Japanese pronunciation of the text in order to reconstruct a unified meaning. For this reason, the ambiguity arising from different readings of a character had to be suppressed, and the vocal rendition had to be unambiguous, for only then could the text be captured as the lost voice. The *Kojikiden* can thus be understood as a project to transfer the text from the realm of the visual (written) to the realm of speech and hearing. While the visual always involves a distance, this project also aims to eliminate that distance. Attention moves from content to form, from the signified to the signifier. Implicitly, the previous state of unity between signifier and signified is sought, since the original unity of expression is lost at the moment of written fixation.

Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734–1809) held a contrary view on the question of writing and the sound it conceals. He rejected both the idea of the historical decline of the language and the idea that the influence of the Chinese had been pernicious. The basis of his differences with Norinaga lay in their divergent views on the historical placement of myths about the Divine Age and the phonetics of ancient Japanese. In their dispute, later recorded by Norinaga under the title *Kagaika* 呵刈葭 (1787–1790), their different views on the relationship between writing and language became apparent. Akinari proved to be a follower of Tayasu Munetake 田安宗武 (1716–1771)¹⁴ on the question of the spoken and the written word. Munetake, a student of Mabuchi, believed that writing should follow pronunciation: if pronunciation changed, the writing should be adapted. Akinari followed Munetake and emphasized that writing was conventional, not a natural law; therefore, there was no need to adhere to a traditional system, although a system was necessary. More than one character for the same sound was pedantic and would only confuse, as he convincingly demonstrated with examples from the *kana* usage of his time, where the writing

¹³ Here demonstrated with the example of the word *uta* and its conventional representation by 歌.

¹⁴ Tayasu Munetake, son of the eighth Shōgun Tokugawa Yoshimune 徳川吉宗 (1684–1751), was the initiator of and an active participant in the above mentioned *Kokka ha-chiron* debate.

of “o,” “ho,” and “wo” or “e” and “we” was used at will by most writers. In antiquity, people wrote as they spoke, so the same should be done in the present.¹⁵ Historical writing conventions that no longer corresponded to contemporary pronunciation should be abandoned. Akinari thus proved to be the forerunner of a phonetic writing system that would become popular in the Meiji era.

Writing, Akinari argued, has always had an ambivalent relationship to speaking. He found Norinaga’s idea too simplistic. The relationship was more complex, as writing could never exactly (immediately and without deviation) represent spoken language. There were certain rules of writing but taking them too literally would obscure the subtleties of speech. Akinari speculated that certain sounds, such as the syllable-final nasal or certain muted sounds, which had no representation in the *man’yōgana* system, were not perceived as distinct, clearly different sounds, but emerged in spoken language through blending and progressive assimilation (*renjō*) (Ueda, *Kagaika* 194).¹⁶ Phonetic distinctions arose only after the introduction of writing; it was only through writing that people became aware of certain distinctions. Thus, writing produced differences that preceded language. At a time when writing did not have the importance it would later have because speech was paramount, uniform spelling was less important. In other words, the introduction of writing led to standardization: it had changed the language it was supposed to merely record. This argument implies that the reconstruction of the so-called *yamato kotoba* 大和言葉, the

¹⁵ “For *wa* the syllable sign *ha* was used, for *i* *hi*, for *we* *he*, for *wo* *ho*. The reason being that in antiquity 粟 (millet) was pronounced *aha*, 言 (to say) as *ihi*, 令言 (Say! Tell!) *ihe*, 塩 (salt) as *shiho* and the writing followed the pronunciation. Only later did *ha* change to *wa*, they pronounced *wa* but in writing they kept *ha*” (Ueda, *Reigotsū* 71).

¹⁶ As an example, Akinari mentions that Norinaga insists that the character sequence 加牟加是 was read *ka-mu-ka-ze*, while he himself assumes that it was pronounced *ka-n-ka-ze* (i.e., a slurred form of *kamikaze*). Norinaga considers spellings such as *-ten* 点, *-ken* 兼, *-nan* 南 in *Man’yōshū* to be the notation of the auxiliary verbs *-temu*, *-kemu*, *-namu* and believes that they were pronounced in the latter form. Akinari, however, takes this as clear evidence for the existence of the syllable-final nasal (Ueda, *Kagaika* 192–95).

language of antiquity prior to Chinese influence, would be forever impossible.

In *Nubatama no maki* ぬば玉の巻 (1781), his treatise on the *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, Akinari combined his reflections on writing with a historical classification of lyric poetry and narrative: poetry corresponded to antiquity because people then had the ability to react immediately and without reflection to their environment and express it in words.¹⁷ This was no different in ancient China. Poetic expression was natural because it came from the speaker's heart and could not be labeled as true or false—the primary concern of Confucian interpreters. While Norinaga condemned the introduction of writing as the intrusion of foreign methods of organizing experience into Japanese culture, Akinari saw it in the context of a broader cultural shift: writing created the possibility of social memory by pushing direct experience into the background. This formed the basis for historical consciousness, the ability to remember the past and reflect on the present. In this new historical situation of writing as an established cultural practice, Akinari argued, the first narratives (*monogatari* 物語) emerged (Ueda, *Nubatama no maki* 67).

Kagawa Kageki 香川景樹 (1768–1843), a leading *jige* 地下 poet who had many followers during his lifetime and remained important into the Meiji period as the founder of the Keien-ha 桂園派 poetic school, approaches the question of appropriate writing from the perspective of language change, as outlined in the poetic treatise *Kagaku teiyō* 歌学提要, recorded by his student Uchiyama Mayumi 内山真弓 in 1813 (published in 1847). For him, the main question is how spoken language is reflected in writing and how linguistic change can be traced in the face of a rigid orthography that increasingly diverges from pronunciation. In the section “Kana” (仮字), he states:

¹⁷ *Nubatama no maki* embeds the *Genji* interpretation in a fictional story and addresses the question of the fictional nature of stories and their role in society. Akinari criticized the Confucian view that fiction is only permissible if it serves moral purposes. Fiction had the function of entertaining. Untrue stories also conveyed social and historical truths that the author had identified.

Why have there always been rules for *kana* (仮字)? Because language has rules. Expressing one's feelings is the way of poetry. Although character usage was absolutely correct in ancient times, deviations appeared in the classical era, leading to the emergence of the apocryphal script known as *Teika-kyō kanazukai*, indicating that the rule was lost. From the present into the future, character usage reflects the past and present state of language. Should we follow this entirely incorrect writing simply to conform to common practice? Writing and language are like death and life. To give an example, language is like thunder and wind, while writing is like frost and snow. Wind and thunder are audible but leave no trace; frost and snow are silent but leave traces. Therefore, language is ever-changing and unbounded, while writing does not change. It is pointless to try to change it. Hence, only writing preserves memories of the past. The language of antiquity has transformed into the language of the Nara court, and the language of Nara has transformed into the current capital's language. As it changed slightly from day to day, month to month, it underwent a significant transformation. The language of antiquity has changed but still it shares commonalities with the current capital's language. Language will continue to change, returning to its origins or moving forward. In this eternal change, there can be no end. If one becomes proficient in the character usage of old, this helps interpret the language. If present records were no different from those from a thousand years ago or those to be written in a thousand years, this would enable us to explore the distant Divine Age after several thousand years. Now, about the fifty syllables I have written elsewhere. (Kagawa, *Kagaku teiyō* 158–59)

Visually, poems are on paper, but only intonation and voice can move the recipient. Kageki does not seem to be expressing a critique of writing itself, but rather of orthographic reforms that deprive the reader of the ability to understand earlier poems in their original pronunciation. This ability is essential for reviving a poem and capturing its rhythm in later times. The primary view is that writing is a tool for capturing spoken language. Kageki did not address whether the borrowed Chinese script was appropriate or not, nor did he delve into the philological details of ancient script. He

attributed the spelling problems that hindered phonetic understanding of earlier texts not to language decay, but to the deterioration of spelling. The language had changed, and the rules that must have originally existed to capture pronunciation had been lost. Interventions in spelling, such as the *Teika-kanazukai* attributed to Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241) but actually dating from the late thirteenth century, had a pernicious influence. Kageki envisioned, perhaps naively, a spelling that reflected pronunciation and did not rely on conventions or rules yet remained understandable to the community.

In the section “Strength and Weakness” (“Kyōjaku” 強弱) of *Kagaku teiyō*, he explains the opposition of vocal recitation and writing:

Poets in this world transcribe the poems they first intoned into characters. When rendered in writing, they become visible to the eyes. When viewed with the eyes, one shifts to the meaning (*giri* 義理). Shifting to the meaning, one moves away from the rhythm of vocal expression (*koe no shirabe* 声の調). Moving away from this rhythm, the pathos (*kan'ai* 感哀) vanishes, and the unique essence of the poem is lost. But this happens because [the poets] have not sufficiently strived for rhythm (*shirabe*). Moreover, not knowing the distinction between strong and weak lines (*ku* 句), they replace or omit lines haphazardly, like wearing an old cotton undershirt under grand festival clothes or a worn-out sash over a splendid hakama. Is this not disheartening? (Kagawa, *Kagaku teiyō* 150)

Writing imposes itself on verbal expression, but its use is inevitable. Writing is a secondary tool, but when used correctly, it preserves the essence of individual poems over centuries. Poets must come to terms with the fact that poetry is not a purely oral activity but must be transmitted in writing.

In his poetics, Kageki radically opposed the poetics of Mabuchi and his followers, who advocated a poetic language based on *Man'yōshū* diction. Kageki emphasized the importance of the direct expression of emotions in spoken language—in fact, he meant the spoken language that was accessible to every member of the linguistic community, without recourse to ancient models of expression. Kageki's idealization of oral poetry does not

imply a reverence for antiquity. He adopted the concept of rhythm (*shirabe*) as his central ideal to explain the emotional unity between the poet, emotion, linguistic expression, and the recipient.¹⁸

Rhythm and Melody as Central Features of Language

In the search for both the original Japanese language and the authentic expression of emotions, the questions arose as to how to understand the rhythm of poetic language, whether it was a musical feature, and whether this rhythm could be conveyed in writing. Similar to other cultures, the idea emerged in Japan that poetry could be traced back to song. In the eighteenth century, when poems were apparently no longer recited with melody, Kada no Arimaro wrote in *Kokka hachiron*:

In order to compose poetry, the words must be lengthened. Therefore, poems (*uta*) were sung both in our country as well as in China. Since they were meant to be sung, their words must have been quite different from everyday speech. (48)

Originally, poetry was preserved in the early poems of the *Man'yōshū*, in the *Kojiki*, and in the *Nihon shoki*, but later the poetic language changed, losing its musicality and focusing on rhetorical expression, metaphors, and linguistic embellishment. By the time of the first imperial *waka* anthology in about 900, poetry was no longer sung except for the songs of the Imperial Office of Poetry (*ō-utadokoro* 大歌所) and the vernacular poems of the eastern provinces, according to Arimaro (51–52).

Since Arimaro, the loss of the musical character of Japanese poetry has been noted, with the original emphasis having been on oral performance and singing. With the spread of writing, musicality was gradually lost. Verbal expression became more important than the musical, attention shifted

¹⁸ I have elaborated in detail on this question in Árokay, *Die Erneuerung der poetischen Sprache*.

from auditory to visual perception, and from a spontaneous, improvised activity to a specialized skill requiring reflection. Later adherents of National Learning, such as Mabuchi or Norinaga, understood this as a moment of loss, attributed to the intrusion of writing from China. Norinaga's work is permeated by the idealization of orality, the belief that the oral would immediately and directly reveal the reality of the ancient world, since the adoption of Chinese writing had overlaid the Japanese language both externally and internally.

In this sense, Mabuchi took up the term *shirabe* (調 / しらべ), which has a rather wide range of meanings and can be translated, depending on the context, as “rhythm,” “tune,” and “melody,” but also as “literariness.”¹⁹ He was convinced that poetry was originally sung: “In the songs of ancient times, rhythm (*shirabe*) is the most important thing, as they were sung” (Mabuchi, *Niimanabi* 218). This concept became a key term of poetics in the following decades and was interpreted in different ways. For Mabuchi, *shirabe* was “rhythm,” “tone,” “melody,” something that changes as language changes. This was crucial for understanding the poetic language of antiquity, but also for the poetic practice of his time. Appropriating the language of the *Man'yōshū* was necessary to achieve an original, pure, direct, unadulterated expression of emotion. However, it is not clear how this is to be described musically. Judging from the opening sentence of *Niimanabi* 新学 quoted above, rhythm seems to indicate a musical melody, but at least from the reactions of his contemporaries, we can conclude that it was interpreted in this way around 1800. Mabuchi's imitation of the *Man'yō* rhythm, however, consists of taking up Old Japanese vocabulary and combining it more or less according to the syntactic conventions of *Man'yō* poetry. This is probably less a matter of musical effect than of diction, achieved through archaic vocabulary and a series of rhetorical devices such as *utamakura* 歌枕 (poetic places) and *makurakotoba* 枕詞 or *jokotoba* 序詞 (epitheta ornantia).

¹⁹ Nakamura Yukihiro 中村幸彦 suggests that the term could mean literariness (*bungakusei* 文学性 / *geijutsusei* 芸術性) in certain cases (Nakamura, “Kageki to Shiki” 323).

In his early poetic treatise *Ashiwake obune* 排蘆小船 (1756), Norinaga quotes the preface of the *Shijing* 詩經 commentary *Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳 by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), which also locates the origin of poetry in sighs and laments (4). What distinguishes poetry from ordinary language or lament and sigh is form:

However, if we speak without fixing the number of syllable characters, as we please, it is not a poem. It is ordinary language (*gengo* 言語). We speak of a poem when it has a certain meter (*hyōshi* 拍子). On the other hand, even if one does not exclude ordinary words and does not care about prohibitions, as long as it has a tune (*kyokusetsu* 曲節), it is a poem. One cannot claim that the croaking of the frog living in the water that also has a melody and meter (*fushi hyōshi* 節拍子), is not a song. Every living being has the disposition (*kokoro* 心) to create its own songs. Birds and beasts also have emotions, and if their cries are well shaped, it is a song. How much more so, then, are the words (*koto no ha* 言の葉) of man, if they have melody and meter, all songs. (Motoori, *Ashiwake obune* 4–5)

This is the minimal definition of song or poetry, but in fact, for Norinaga, linguistic embellishment becomes an important feature of poems. His well-known admiration for the style of the *Shinkokin wakashū* 新古今和歌集 is based on his claim that only elaborate language is capable of expressing feelings in an authentic way. In his oeuvre, the gap between his philological exploration of ancient language and his poetic practice is particularly striking: his appreciation of the *Shinkokin wakashū* can indeed be placed in a concrete line of tradition since the Middle Ages,²⁰ but it can hardly be reconciled with Mabuchi's appreciation of a primitive, direct, and non-artificial expression. While Norinaga idealizes the orality of antiquity and describes the beginnings of poetry as musical, he has another ideal for the

²⁰ Emi Foulk Bushelle has argued in her article “The Poetics of Nativism” that, contrary to the common view, Norinaga was heavily influenced by Buddhist concepts and his theory of *mono no aware* was indebted to Fujiwara no Shunzei's Buddhist interpretation of the functions of *waka*.

poetic language of his time: to become one with the ancients (*kojin ni narikiru* 古人になりきる), that is, to transform oneself into a representative of an earlier epoch to the point of indistinguishability, or in other words, “to dye one’s heart in the old style” (*kokoro wo kofū ni somu* 心を古風に染む).

For Kageki, one might assume that the emphasis on rhythm (*shirabe*), which is commonly considered a quality of spoken language, i.e. singing or poetry recitation, would have far-reaching consequences for the primarily written poetic practice of his school. However, there is no indication that he saw a return to oral poetry as the solution, or that he sought a poetic practice that emphasized orality. Therefore, I assume that these terms do not refer concretely to musical quality or accompaniment but rather express a linguistic conception in which rhythm appears as a characteristic of language. Kageki’s criticism of the idea that poems were sung in ancient times and that musical rhythm was crucial is primarily directed at Mabuchi. Kageki wrote a rebuttal to Mabuchi’s *Niimanabi* entitled *Niimanabi iken* 新学異見 (1811) in which he criticized the interpretation of *shirabe* as musical melody:

Also, the word *utau* (うたふ, to sing) in ancient times obviously referred to lengthening the voice, and it seems to have had not only the meaning it has today of “singing with melody” (*fushi shite utau* 節してうたふ). The origin is nothing other than a deep and long sigh (*usobuki nageku* うそぶき長息). Therefore, the term was also used for official songs that conveyed longing content (*uttae* 訴へ), referring to the meaning of lamenting with a long sigh (*nageki* 長歎). The singing of birds is also called *utau* because they lengthen their voices. And the annoying talk of some incident is generally referred to as *yo ni utawaru* 世にうたはる,²¹ which retains the old meaning. So, it is clear that all this is called *utau* because the emotional expression is revealed in a long sigh. The fact that later generations used this word only in this one sense [of singing] and thought that poetry only meant reciting aloud to a melody is a confusion of origin

²¹ Passive form of the verb *utau* meaning “to be talked about.”

and a later development. It can hardly be the origin of the word *utau* if it is a feature that was added later to an existing poem (*uta* 歌).
(216–17)

Musicality is rejected here both diachronically, as the historical origin of poetry, and synchronically, as the feature that would first create a poetic quality. Instead, it takes up another aspect that has appeared frequently in Japanese poetics since the preface to the *Kokinshū*: the origin of poetic expression as a kind of lament, in its most reduced version, as a sigh. Here we arrive at a minimal definition of poetry that was often discussed around 1800 and even during the transition to modernity. A surge of emotion, expressed in a sigh or a groan, in an ah or oh, is already equated with poetic expression. Kageki gives the following definition:

The heart of the common person inevitably makes a sound (*koe* 声) when it is touched by something. . . . In the end, it is a sigh (*nageki* 嗟嘆), which is so designated. In short, an Ah! or Oh! is nothing other than a poem. Even if it lacks rhetoric (*aya* 文義) up to that point, what the listener feels is embedded in the rhythm (*shirabe*) of this sound (*sei*). What I call *shirabe* here is not what is commonly understood as *shirabe* (rhythm). For the moment, I would like to define *shirabe* as when a spontaneously produced sound, even if it is only an Ah or Oh, communicates itself to the other person as joy if it was a sound of joy and as sorrow if it was a sound of sorrow.
(*Kagaku teiyō* 139)

Basically, this means that any vocal expression that comes from an authentic impulse, even if it is pre-linguistic, can be understood as poetry. It is inarticulate, rhetorically completely unrefined, but rhythmically structured, as Kageki says. An extreme consequence of this is to postulate the inarticulate scream as the most authentic form of linguistic practice because the scream has no representative function. Out of context, the scream signifies nothing, but it is filled with *significance*. In this context, the considerations in the prefaces to the *Kokinshū* about whether the sounds of all living beings (*iki to shi ikeru mono* いきとしいけるもの) can actually be considered

poetry become understandable: “When one hears the bush warbler singing among the flowers or the croaking of frogs living in the water, it becomes clear: what living creature could exist without singing its song” (*Kokin wakashū* 93). Modifying this passage and following the above considerations, Kageki writes:

When you understand this, you should think that the sounds of bush warblers and frogs are also poems. But if someone goes on to say, derived from the bush warbler and the frog, that the sounds of the wind or water are also poems, he is drawing a false analogy and forgetting that this statement is limited to everything that lives. Poetry only expresses the emotions of living beings (*seijō* 性情). So, if someone wanted to call those sounds that do not come from emotion poems (*hijō no koe* 非情のこゑ), what sound (*hibiki* ひびき) would then not belong to poetry? (*Kagaku teiyō* 139)

This defines the minimum requirements for poetry: living beings must give vocal expression to their inner impulses. However, Kageki also emphasizes “rhythm,” the only characteristic that guarantees authenticity: if it is absent, one cannot speak of a poem. He does not attempt to explore the historical origins but limits himself to a general definition of poetry. Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga, on the other hand, as we have seen, deal with the emergence of poetry not on the synchronic but on the diachronic level.

Conclusion

Ancient poetry was relevant to the study of the Japanese myths that emerged in the Edo period because it was seen as the only authentic and direct expression of emotions. And indeed, as Mark Teeuwen has put it, the short list of Kokugaku topics starts with Japanese poetry, and most of the *kokugakusha* began their studies with the primary goal of mastering *waka* (58). Poetry as a subject of study and as a practice thus went hand in

hand. Poetic theory of the time, in turn, was primarily concerned with the question of how to free oneself from the constraints of the centuries-old classical tradition and how to find authentic expression in poetry once again.

The concepts that developed in this context were based on the immediacy of poetic expression—Mabuchi's and Norinaga's *makoto*, or Kageki's *shirabe*. They clearly differ on which historical period's language comes closest to their ideals, and on the question of which one should be adopted in the late eighteenth century. Mabuchi's reverence for the language of antiquity bears the hallmarks of a belief in the magical power of language. Norinaga propagates a poetic language that is elaborate and thus most expressive. Kageki's concept is embedded in demands that seem extremely "modern." Instead of returning to earlier forms of language, he propagates the use of contemporary language, the participation of everyone in *waka* poetry regardless of social status, and the reliance on one's subjective feelings and abilities to express oneself linguistically.

The relationship between the written and the spoken word was crucial to both poetic praxis and the study of the language of the myths. The study of this relationship led to important philological and linguistic insights, some of which are still valid today, and certainly contributed to the development of an indigenous Japanese linguistics. However, many of the ideological implications also proved to be enduring, giving rise to nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century.

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On the Fringes of Imperial Mythology Peter Kempermann and the Divine Script

Louise NEUBRONNER

Arguments for the existence of jindai moji (“Age of the Gods script”) emerged in the Japanese discourse during the medieval period and have supporters to this day. During the nineteenth century, Western intellectuals joined the discussion, among them the German diplomat and interpreter Peter Kempermann. In his work, Kempermann endorsed the existence of a writing system in Japan prior to the introduction of kanji and was not deterred by the absence of such a script from the Kojiki and Nihon shoki. This chapter will focus on Kempermann’s affirmation of the religious and mythical nature of jindai moji. A central point will be his open support of Hirata Atsutane’s scholarship on the divine characters and, connected to this, his idealization of ancient Japan that links him to prominent Koku-gaku figures. Additionally, the chapter will delve deeper into the entanglement between jindai moji and the myths of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki, exploring the idea that the assumed veracity of jindai moji documents ultimately affirms the authority of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki.

Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, the history of the Japanese people was on many minds. The relaxation of travel bans in the course of the Meiji Restoration led to an influx of visitors from Europe and America, and connected to this, a rise in publications on Japan. Western authors wondered who the Japanese people were and what their life might have looked like in antiquity. A fundamental issue that often came up during these inquiries

was the origin of the Japanese language. The *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon shoki* (720) give no indication that there was writing in Japan before the introduction of Chinese characters, and many prominent Western scholars, such as James Curtis Hepburn (1815–1911) and Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), echoed this sentiment (Hepburn ix–x; Chamberlain, “On Two Questions”). However, the late nineteenth century also saw support for the idea of *jindai moji* 神代文字, or *kamiyo no moji*, a variety of scripts that supposedly date back to the Age of the Gods. The idea that Japan had its own unique system of writing during the ancient period held a tremendous appeal ever since it was first propagated in the medieval period. Popularized by Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) in his *Kanna hifumiden* 神字日文伝 (1819), it was picked up by his disciples and ultimately by a small but dedicated number of European writers. Among them was Peter Kempermann (1845–1900), a German interpreter and diplomat, who was convinced that Hirata Atsutane’s *jindai moji* were authentic and could provide reasonable answers to the pressing question about the origin of the Japanese people. This chapter analyzes Kempermann’s 1877 article “Die Kamiyo no modji oder Götterschrift” (“The Kamiyo no modji or Script of the Gods”) while also considering his other publications on Japan.

Kempermann was born in Krefeld in 1845 and received a stellar education. After graduating the Gymnasium in Münster, he studied Philosophy, Law and Political Science in Berlin. Supported by the diplomat Max von Brandt (1835–1920), Kempermann came to Japan as an interpreter for the Prussian consulate in 1867 and stayed until 1879, with one brief intermission during which he resided in Germany. He was already entrusted with diplomatic responsibilities in Japan, and after 1879, he would go on to hold the post of consul in Asia and Australia (Kumazawa 57–58). While in Japan, he was mostly stationed in the greater Tokyo area but also took the opportunity to travel to other parts of the country. The observations he made during his travels and most of his other works on Japan were published by the German East Asiatic Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für

Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, OAG).¹ Kempermann was a founding member of the OAG in 1873 (Weegmann 11–12) and stayed active in the society in later years, holding the post of president between 1878 and 1879 (Kumazawa 64–65).

During his time at the society, he met the British diplomat and japanologist Ernest Mason Satow (1843–1929), who penned a groundbreaking study on Kokugaku and Shinto titled “The Revival of Pure Shintô” (originally published as “The Revival of Pure Shiñ-tau,” 1875). After a talk by Brandt on the origin of the Japanese people, Satow and Kempermann are said to have engaged in a discussion to which Satow no doubt contributed his expert knowledge on ancient texts and history (“Sitzung in Yedo” 2). Notably, Kempermann was also in contact with William George Aston (1841–1911), a diplomat and japanologist from Britain who published a monumental translation of the *Nihon shoki* at the turn of the century (*Nihongi*, 1896). Aston supplied him with important Japanese material for his research (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 91). Not only was Kempermann acquainted with two of the most prominent nineteenth-century scholars on Japan, but his research was also met with international acclaim. His 1874 article on Shinto, “Mittheilungen ueber die Kamilehre” and the report on his journey through central Japan in 1877, “Reise durch die Central-Provinzen Japans,” were translated into English (Kempermann, “Shintôism”; Kempermann “A Journey”). The former article was well-received by several prominent writers of the time such as William Elliot Griffis (1843–1928), Isabella Lucy Bird (later Bishop, 1831–1904) and Chamberlain (Griffis, *The Mikado’s Empire* 96; Bird 363; Chamberlain, *The Kojiki*

¹ The periodical of the OAG published two pieces on Ieyasu by Kempermann in 1873, as well as his articles “Mittheilungen ueber die Kamilehre” (“Transactions on the Teachings of the Kami”) (1874), “Die Kamiyo no modji oder Götterschrift” (1877), and “Reise durch die Central-Provinzen Japans” (“Journey Through the Central Provinces of Japan”) (1877). Further, a talk by Kempermann on Japan and Korea was printed in the periodical of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory in 1876, and the *Japan-Bibliographie* attributes articles under the pseudonym Asiaticus to him (“Corea”; Hadamitzky and Rudat-Kocks 81). Heinrich Menkhaus, however, notes that the true identity of Asiaticus remains unclear (38).

iii). Chamberlain, for example, praised Kempermann's analysis of the *Kojiki*, specifically his ideas about the origins of the Japanese people.

This fascination with the history of ancient Japan comes up frequently in Kempermann's work and is coupled with a deep interest in Atsutane's Kokugaku. In his 1877 article on *jindai moji*, Kempermann provides a detailed discussion of the history of writing according to the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* yet ultimately recognizes Atsutane's research as the highest authority on the Japanese script. While Chamberlain would later emphasize the patriotic nature of Atsutane's *jindai moji* ideas in his critical piece "On Two Questions of Japanese Archæology" (1883), Kempermann does not discuss this aspect of Atsutane's writing. Ultimately, the present chapter seeks to shed light on Kempermann's largely uncritical support of Atsutane's argument for the existence of *jindai moji* and what such a support means for the position of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. To dive deeper into Kempermann's concept of *jindai moji*, the chapter will begin by discussing the history of discourse on the existence of a divine Japanese script.

Forged Sacrality: A Brief History of the Discourse on *jindai moji*

The *Kokugoshi jiten* 国語史辞典 (1979) defines *jindai moji* as writing that was supposedly used in Japan before the introduction of *kanji* and notes that theories on the existence of such writing have been solidly disproven (Yamazaki 204). Recent academic publications treat the various systems of *jindai moji* as inauthentic with labels such as *gishi* 偽史 ("forged history"; Ozawa) and *giji* 疑字 ("dubious characters"; Yoshida, "Jindai moji no jikūkan" 99).² The dispute surrounding the authenticity of *jindai moji* was settled in the academic world through Yamada Yoshio's 山田孝雄 (1873–1958) essay "Iwayuru jindai moji no ron" 所謂神代文字の論 (1953) (Mitsumatsu 69). In this essay, the philologist Yamada shows himself concerned that to his day, documents written in *jindai moji* are valued higher

² An overview of the many systems of *jindai moji* is given in Harada Minoru's non-academic publication *Zusetsu jindai moji nyūmon* 図説神代文字入門 (2008).

by some than the truly authentic *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* and are said to shed light on a golden Japanese past (“Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)” 2).³ As will become clear, this is exactly what Kempermann believed *jindai moji* to be capable of. To gain an understanding for his deep fascination for the divine script, in the following, a brief overview of the history of *jindai moji* and their entanglement with religion and myth will be given.

In the early fourteenth century, the *Shaku nihongi* 釈日本紀, a commentary on the *Nihon shoki* compiled by Urabe Kanekata 卜部兼方 (dates unknown),⁴ established the idea that the origin for the Japanese *kana* was to be found not in *kanji* but in written characters from the Age of the Gods. Very significantly, the work posits that Izanami and Izanagi used these characters for divination when Hiruko was born (*Shaku nihongi* 5; Yamada, “Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)” 3–4; Hirafuji, “Kijin” 308–9). Subsequently, the two *Nihon shoki* commentaries *Nihon shoki jindai no maki shō* 日本書紀神代卷抄 by Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼俱 (1435–1511), also known as Urabe Kanetomo 卜部兼俱, and *Jindai no maki kuketsu* 神代卷口訣 reinforced the idea of a divine script (Yamada, “Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)” 5–6).⁵

While the idea of *jindai moji* thus originated before the Edo period, the beginnings of a more wide-spread discourse lie in early modern Japan (Shimizu 47). In this discourse, the connection between *jindai moji* and the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* was further cemented with the idea of a system of forty-seven characters starting with the syllables *hifumi*, that

³ Yamada contributed to the compilation of the nationalist tract *Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義 (1937), and thus his remarks on the *Kojiki* have to be read through a critical lens. While he is a problematic figure, it has to be noted that his contribution to the discourse on *jindai moji* was monumental and laid the foundations for modern research on the topic.

⁴ Matthieu Felt dates the *Shaku nihongi* to the early fourteenth century and provides a close reading of syncretistic thought in the work in his 2023 volume *Meanings of Antiquity* (159–66).

⁵ The preface of the *Jindai no maki kuketsu* attributes the text to Inbe no Masamichi 忌部正通 (dates unknown) and dates it to 1367, but Felt suggests that it should be dated to the sixteenth century based on a lack of references to the work before the seventeenth century (186). Kanetomo’s *Nihon shoki jindai no maki shō* is dated to after 1502 (Felt 179). The titles and readings of both works follow Felt (131, 179).

was said to go back to the deities Amaterasu, Ōnamuchi (Ōkuninushi) and Ame no Yagokoro (Omoikane) (Yamada, “Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)” 18). Whereas Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) did not echo this sentiment, referring to *jindai moji* as forgeries in his *Kojikiden* 古事記伝 (completed in 1798) (17), Hirata Atsutane’s *Koshichō* 古史徴, written 1811–1819 and published 1818–1819, and his *Kanna hifumiden* 神字日文傳 from 1819 further emphasize the link between *jindai moji*, the myths, and divination. In the earlier *Koshichō*, Atsutane does not provide any specific characters, but in the *Kanna hifumiden*, he presents a large collection of scripts out of which he only deems the *hifumi* true and authentic. These characters supposedly arose from divination and were handed down by the Abiru 阿比留 clan whom Atsutane describes as “Urabe from Tsushima” (*tsushima no kuni no urabe* 対馬國卜部; Hirata 195). The creator deity of the *hifumi* is Ame no Koyane or Omoikane; according to Atsutane, they are one and the same (Hirata 194–95). On the *hifumi*, Mitsumatsu Makoto 三ツ松誠 notes that they are essentially Hangul (*onmon* 諺文) (71). However, Atsutane simply claims that Japan’s divine script existed first and was then brought to Korea and turned into the *onmon* script (Hirata 183). Thus, he essentially states that the Korean script is based on a Japanese writing system and clearly assumes a significance for *jindai moji* that goes beyond Japan.

Atsutane’s ideas on *jindai moji* were carried into the Meiji period by his supporters, serving to emphasize the superiority of an imperial Japan vis-à-vis the world (Mitsumatsu 73). More and more *jindai moji* texts appeared which led to new tensions between the divine script(s) and the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. The year 1872 saw the publication of the *Shinji Kojiki* 神字古事記, compiled by Fujiwara Masaoki 藤原政興 (dates unknown) who possibly belonged to Atsutane’s school of thought (Mitsumatsu 76). In this new version of the *Kojiki*, the text was transcribed into *hifumi* and their readings were given in *katakana*, with no *kanji* to be found in the text (Hirafuji, “Kijin” 312). According to Mitsumatsu, a *jindai moji* version of the *Nihon shoki* titled *Shinji jindai kan* 神字神代卷 is also rumored to exist, likely dating back to the Meiji period (76). Evidently, the fact that the Age of the Gods was written down in *kanji* in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* when divine

characters were supposed to have existed during their time of writing was intolerable to certain *jindai moji* supporters (Mitsumatsu 76).

While Kempermann does not mention these texts in his publications, he owned a 1891 edition of the *Shinji Kojiki* (*Jahrbuch* 334) and was thus at the very least interested in the idea of the *Kojiki* being originally written in *jindai moji*. Direct influence of the text can be found in the work of another Atsutane enthusiast—the French scholar Léon de Rosny (1837–1914). While never traveling to Japan himself, Rosny was deeply invested in the study of the Japanese language and culture. He worked closely with the *Shinji Kojiki* (Hirafuji, “Kijin” 312), and Atsutane’s *jindai moji* make numerous appearances in his texts *Questions d’archéologie japonaise* (1882), *Koziki: Mémorial de l’antiquité japonaise* (1883) and *Kami yo-no maki: Histoire des dynasties divines* (1884).⁶ On Rosny, Hirafuji Kikuko 平藤喜久子 notes a peculiarity which goes back to his study of Japanese mythology (“Kijin” 307–8). This peculiarity also applies to another Western supporter of the *jindai moji* idea, the Scotsman Norman (Nicholas) McLeod (dates unknown). In his volume *Epitome of the Ancient History of Japan*, first published in 1875, McLeod claims that the Japanese people are descended from a part of the ten lost tribes of Israel.⁷ He argues that *jindai moji* are sacred characters brought to Japan by the people of Israel and that ancient documents such as the “Annals of Japan,” presumably referring to the *Nihon shoki*, must have been written in these characters. Equipped with various sets of *jindai moji*, most likely copies of the ones given in Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden*, McLeod looked for traces of them while traveling through the country (*Epitome* 146–48)⁸—during the same time period,

⁶ For biographical information on Rosny and an analysis of his texts about *jindai moji*, see Hirafuji, “Shoki japanorojiso” and “Kijin.”

⁷ The idea of a common ancestry of the Japanese and Jewish people, commonly known as *Nichiyū dōsorōn* 日ユ同祖論, gained traction in the twentieth century. It was, for instance, propagated by the nationalist author Sakai Katsutoki 酒井勝軍 (1874–1940) who also argued for the existence of *jindai moji* (Yoshida “Hirata” 314–15). The discourse on *nichiyū dōsorōn* continues until this day.

⁸ For the specific *jindai moji* in McLeod’s possession, see McLeod, *Illustrations* 23; the corresponding characters in Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden* can be found in Hirata 199–202, 246, 248, and 260.

Kempermann went on a very similar journey to the central provinces of Japan.

Peter Kempermann and the Search for the Origins of Japan

In the autumn of 1877, Kempermann traveled through Harima (Hyōgo), Mimasaka (Okayama), Hōki (Tottori), Izumo (Shimane), Tajima (Hyōgo) and the Kamigata region (Kansai). In his travel report “Reise durch die Central-Provinzen Japans,” he gives detailed descriptions of the places he visits, especially for Izumo. With awe, Kempermann describes his first view of the “the blue mountains of the mythical land of Izumo” (“Reise” 126). This description foreshadows Lafcadio Hearn’s (1850–1904) *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), in which Hearn would later enthuse about the “divine magic in the very atmosphere” (174) of picturesque Izumo, cradle of the gods (172). Like Hearn, Kempermann sees the importance of Izumo in the fact that it is the stage for many of the Japanese myths. He calls the region the center of Shinto and claims a closeness of the people of Izumo to the ancient Japanese (Kempermann, “Reise” 132), another stark similarity to Hearn who describes Izumo as “the place of the childhood” of the Japanese people (172). Kempermann notes that the earliest migrants to Japan presumably settled in Izumo and Iwami, and did not have contact with the “ugly” Ainu or other immigrants, which is how they remained “pure.”⁹ Their language, too, is remarkable for the purity of its sounds, and it still uses many expressions from ancient Japanese that one cannot find in the language of Edo (Kempermann, “Reise” 132).

Eight days Kempermann stayed in Matsue, visiting the Izumo Grand shrine and Sada shrine from there. While his fascination for Shinto and its history is apparent in his travel report, it has to be noted that many of his stances on Japan are typical for Western, Christian visitors of the time. He does not perceive Shinto as a true religion because of its supposedly simple

⁹ Kempermann’s condescending description of the Ainu is similar to other nineteenth-century European and American literature about Japan. Compare, for example, Bird depicting the Ainu as “stupid, gentle, good-natured, and submissive” (9).

nature and clearly understands civilization as a European achievement (Kempermann “Reise” 134, 136; see also Dolkovski and Neubronner, forthcoming). In his article on Shinto, Kempermann positively notes that Shinto has no idols which acts as proof for its “depth of feeling and its honorable stance towards the nature of the deity” (“Mittheilungen” 32). While he later relativizes this statement, his aversion towards the worship of idols, an element understood to be essential for Catholicism, might speak for a Protestant viewpoint.¹⁰ However, negative comments on the syncretistic form of Shinto prevalent in the Japan of his time abound, and it becomes clear that he idealizes his own construct of an ancient, uniquely Japanese Shinto (Kempermann, “Mittheilungen” 30, 36).

In Izumo, Kempermann tried to breathe as much of the air of ancient Japan as possible. When he had to leave Matsue, he expressed his regret at not being able to visit the Oki islands to look for the ancient hieroglyph-like inscriptions, i.e. *jindai moji*, that were rumored to have been found in caves in the region (Kempermann “Reise” 135). His quest for echoes of ancient Japan had thus led him to *jindai moji*, and he was so fascinated with them that he wanted to seek out the divine characters himself, just like his contemporary McLeod. In Kempermann’s case, this fascination was closely linked to his passion for the study of Kokugaku. Kumazawa Eriko 熊澤恵理子 documents that as early as 1869, Kempermann tried to join Atsutane’s Kokugaku school Ibukinoya 気吹舎, albeit without success, and had already read Atsutane’s *Kodō taii* 古道大意 (completed 1811, published 1824) at this point (55–56). While he considered works by German scholars such as Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866) and Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1873–1835) for his research (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 86, 88–89), his publications on Japan focus on Japanese scholarship. They speak of a fervor for Kokugaku texts, for instance when Kempermann claims that to understand true Shinto, one would have to study the

¹⁰ For a discussion of Protestant anti-Catholicism, see Farrelley. About Kempermann’s religious stance during his time in Japan, little can be said with certainty. According to Kumazawa Eriko’s 熊澤恵理子 fieldwork, he was listed as an Evangelical Catholic (*fukuin katorikku ha* 福音カトリック派) in the 1864–1865 yearbook of his school, the Gymnasium Paulinum in Münster (63–64).

works of scholars such as Norinaga and Atsutane (“Reise” 132). His large collection of Japanese works, among them Atsutane’s *Koshi seibun* 古史成文 (completed 1811) and Norinaga’s *Kojikiden*, also speaks to this fact (*Jahrbuch* 334). Sources of Kempermann’s time attribute a high proficiency in Japanese to him, making it plausible that he not only collected but in fact read these texts (Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin 475; Hübner 237). His article on *jindai moji* likewise suggests a solid grasp of the Japanese language and a fascination for Kokugaku texts, especially Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden*.

In “Die Kamiyo no modji oder Götterschrift,” Kempermann openly acknowledges the similarity between *jindai moji* and the Korean *onmun* but still clearly advocates for their authenticity (86). He provides different hypotheses regarding the genesis of such a script but notes that they are of Japanese origin according to the most common theory (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 86). While Kempermann is tentative regarding a Japanese origin of *jindai moji*, he still assumes that there was a script in circulation in ancient Japan that was distinct from *kanji*. This ancient script was, however, lost due to wars and the negative influence of Buddhism. The Japanese people forgot about their own splendid past and language which was only brought back because of the work of scholars such as Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769), Norinaga and Atsutane. Mabuchi first purged the Japanese language of foreign influences, and Norinaga and Atsutane later picked up his work (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 86).

Kempermann’s language bears stark similarities to the rhetoric of the Kokugaku scholars themselves; one needs only to think of Norinaga’s lament that the ancient way has been forgotten due to outside influences in *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (1771) or his idealization of the Japanese language in *Kanji san’on kō* 漢字三音考 (1785) (Motoori, *Naobi no mitama* 53; Motoori, *Kanji san’on kō* 381–82). Kempermann has a deep respect for Mabuchi’s and Norinaga’s research, which makes it baffling to him that neither of them investigated *jindai moji* in detail. While he assumes that they must have found traces of a native Japanese script in their research, they chose not to endorse such a theory, with Norinaga even outright arguing

against it in the *Kojikiden*. Kempermann can only explain Norinaga's oversight with the fact that he must not have known about the great number of *jindai moji* documents or only had access to inauthentic material. To keep them safe from fire and because of their sacred nature, many documents written in the divine script had to be kept in secrecy, which would explain Norinaga's lack of knowledge (Kempermann, "Die Kamiyo no modji" 86). This passage shows that Kempermann was very concerned with the question of authenticity and at the same time elucidates a lack of understanding that the very same point led Norinaga to dismiss *jindai moji* in one single sentence. Norinaga's work focused on the *Kojiki* as a source with unquestionable authenticity and authority, and studying dubious sources that went far beyond the contents of the *Kojiki* was unthinkable to him. According to Norinaga, all communication in the ancient period was spoken, with written texts only coming to Japan from abroad at a later time. Naturally, he bases this statement on the *Kojiki* (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 17), which mentions that the first written texts came to Japan from the Kingdom of Paekche during the reign of Emperor Ōjin (*Kojiki* 248–49; Antoni, *Kojiki* 182).¹¹

Kempermann is aware of this, noting that neither the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, nor the *Shoku nihongi* 続日本紀 (797) refer to the introduction of a script to Japan from a foreign country. These works minutely list different arts, institutions and wares that came to Japan from neighboring countries and therefore, it would be unlikely that the introduction of a new system of writing would remain unmentioned. An old custom being forgotten, however, might not be referred to in historical accounts (Kempermann "Die Kamiyo no modji" 89). Thus, it becomes clear that Kempermann did not disregard the *Kojiki*. In fact, he directly acknowledges that it is the oldest surviving work of history and goes into much detail regarding the history of writing according to the *Kojiki*, its usage of Chinese characters, and, in connection to this, Ō no Yasumarō's preface. The absence of *jindai moji* from the preface is notable to Kempermann but does not deter him from

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of Norinaga's idealization of the spoken Japanese language and his work on the *Kojiki*, see Judit Árokay's chapter in this volume, "The Power of Language."

arguing for the existence of such a script (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 89–90). To bolster his argument, he gives a minute overview of sources that speak for the possibility of an ancient Japanese writing system. Among these works, he highlights the *Shaku nihongi* as the most important one (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 90). Already, it becomes apparent how closely he worked with Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden*, as the text also repeatedly discusses the *Shaku nihongi* (see, for example, Hirata 183, 203–4). Like Atsutane, Kempermann notes that the *Nihon shoki* mentions old characters that were changed frequently, correctly giving volume nineteen and a specific page number for this statement (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 90; Hirata 191; *Nihon shoki* 69). This suggests that while he used the *Kanna hifumiden* as a basis, he went back to some of the original works to corroborate Atsutane’s claims. Kempermann then provides more sources mentioned in Atsutane’s text as evidence according to which *kanji* were added to the ancient characters or replaced them completely on the grounds of governmental orders (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 91; Hirata 191).¹²

Even Inbe no Hironari’s (dates unknown) 斎部広成 *Kogo shūi* 古語拾遺 (807) that makes the absence of writing in ancient Japan very clear does not deter him, just like it did not dissuade Atsutane (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 91; Hirata 181). It simply leads Kempermann to assume that the divine characters were not in use anymore when the *Kogo shūi* was written. The reason for this disappearance might lie in their religious nature—this is where Kempermann fully shows his indebtedness to prior Japanese *jindai moji* discourse. As has been shown, this discourse strongly linked the divine script to the deities of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as well as to the practice of divination, chiefly within the house of the Urabe. Based on this discourse, Kempermann came to understand *jindai moji* as a religious script. He elucidates that Buddhists regarded *jindai moji* with contempt, and after they won their fight against the proponents of Shinto during the sixth century, they did everything to eradicate any trace of the

¹² The idea that *jindai moji* were replaced by *kanji* due to governmental interference already came up in the *Jindai no maki kuketsu* and makes an appearance in several other texts that advocate for the authenticity of a divine script (Yamada, “Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)” 5).

old teachings and script. According to Kempermann, the religious nature of *jindai moji* is also corroborated by their connection to divination with the shoulder bones of deer (scapulimancy or *futomani* 太占) (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 91). In *Kanna hifumiden*, Atsutane describes this form of divination as the origin for the *hifumi* (Hirata 195). As previously noted, he understood the deity Ame no Koyane (Omoikane) as the creator deity of the *hifumi*. Atsutane explains that this deity, who is the ancestor of the Urabe, started the practice of *futomani* (Hirata 195).

This practice indeed features in an episode of the Age of the Gods section of the *Kojiki*, as Kempermann correctly points out (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 91). When Amaterasu is hiding in the Heavenly Rock Cave, the deities devise strategies to lure her out. They call upon Ame no Koyane and Futotama no mikoto to conduct divination with the shoulder bones of a deer and heavenly wood, both from the mountain Ame no kaguyama (*Kojiki* 80–81; Antoni, *Kojiki* 38–39). Out of the ritual of divination, that is therefore closely tied to the *Kojiki*, the *hifumi* came into being—as reported by Atsutane, the deer bones were subjected to fire, which caused cracks in the bones, and these cracks are the origin of the divine script (Hirata 198). Kempermann follows this interpretation and gives additional proof for the connection between *jindai moji* and divination: ancient texts in the possession of the Urabe, which understand their ancestral deity Omoikane as the creator of *jindai moji*, the *Shaku nihongi*, and *Jindai no maki kuketsu* (“Die Kamiyo no modji” 91).¹³ The religious significance of *jindai moji* seems to be unquestionable, with the characters having been found at religious places and even still being in use from time to time (Kempermann “Die Kamiyo no modji” 92). Kempermann details one such finding himself, describing the discovery of a stone on which a song from the gods was engraved in *jindai moji*. According to Kempermann, this stone was found in the province of Shimousa (Chiba, Ibaraki) in 1865 in the vicinity of an Inari shrine. Yoshida Yui’s 吉田唯 research shows that this most likely refers to the Handa Inari shrine in Kanamachi, Tokyo, and that Kempermann

¹³ As mentioned before, the *Shaku nihongi* is discussed repeatedly in Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden*, and the *Jindai no maki kuketsu* is brought up as well (Hirata 235).

himself has been credited with the discovery (“Jindai moji no jikūkan” 103–04), even though he merely provides a copy of the characters (Kempermann, “Tafel IV”).

Thus, the historicity and religious significance of *jindai moji* are certain to Kempermann. Based on Atsutane’s *Kanna hifumiden*, he gives a sympathetic sketch of scholarship that supports the existence of the divine script and emphasizes that the scholar who must be credited with most of the work regarding the collection and explanation of the characters is Atsutane (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 87; Hirata 186–193). According to Kempermann, two of Atsutane’s works must be mentioned in the context of *jindai moji*, the “*Shindji hifumi den*” (*Kanna hifumiden*) and “*Kodjisho*” (*Koshichō*). Quite correctly, he notes that Atsutane already formulated the idea that there was a script in ancient Japan in *Koshichō* and then provided specific characters in *Kanna hifumiden*—Kempermann attaches a copy of Atsutane’s *hifumi* in the appendix to the second volume of the *MOAG* (“Tafel I,” for the original, see Hirata 193–94). Generally, Kempermann agrees with Atsutane that the *hifumi* existed in Japan before *kanji* were introduced. One of the few points in which he does not follow Atsutane’s ideas, however, is their specific place of origin. Atsutane, on the one hand, is clear that the *hifumi* are a uniquely Japanese script and were introduced to Korea via Japan. He could not acknowledge that Japan was reliant on China and Korea for its system of writing and thus resorted to his own imagination for an alternative version of events (Seeley 4). Kempermann, on the other hand, is more tentative. He admits that the religious significance of *jindai moji* speaks for them being uniquely Japanese, as true Shinto is opposed to all things foreign. Again, his language is steeped in Kokugaku undertones. However, the similarity between *jindai moji* and the Korean script does not prove that Korea was influenced by Japan, it simply shows that the Korean and Japanese people have the same origin (Kempermann, “Die Kamiyo no modji” 92).

As previously mentioned, the search for the origins of the Japanese people was an issue that preoccupied Kempermann for a long time. In his 1874 article on Shinto, he already considers the creation of Japan and its early history according to the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* while showing a clear

propensity for the *Kojiki* (Kempermann, “Mittheilungen” 30). After he re-tells the Age of the Gods episodes around Izanagi and Izanami, Amaterasu, Ōkuninushi, and Ninigi, he focuses on the eastward expedition undertaken by the mythological Emperor Jinmu 神武天皇 (*jinmu tōsei* 神武東征). In his view, two waves of immigration from the continent to Japan occurred in ancient times. While the people who arrived during the first wave built their seat of power in Izumo, those of the second wave initially settled in Hyūga. Led by Jinmu, these later immigrants set out to conquer the islands and eventually, Jinmu’s descendants succeeded and the two groups of former immigrants united (Kempermann, “Mittheilungen” 31).

Whereas Kempermann does not connect these immigrants to Korea specifically and only indirectly touches upon *jindai moji* (“Mittheilungen” 36), he finds clearer words in his talk “Corea und dessen Einfluss auf die Bevölkerung Japans” (“Korea and its influence on the population of Japan”), held at a meeting of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory in 1876. Based on the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, Kempermann emphasizes that ancient Japan and Korea had a tight knit relationship (“Corea” 78–80), and then notes that two distinct peoples inhabited ancient Japan: the conquerors from the southern parts of mainland Japan and Kyushu, and the subjugated people, the Ainu, who lived in northern Japan and parts of the central region of the mainland.¹⁴ The conquerors have their roots in the two waves of immigration that he had already described in his article on Shinto, and here, he adds that they must have come from Korea in ancient times (Kempermann, “Corea” 80–81). One major piece of evidence for this theory is the existence of the same writing system in Korea and Japan in the form of the Korean script and *jindai moji*. According to Kempermann, this shared script must go back to the ancient period, a time in which there was either a close connection between Japan and Korea, or no distinction between them at all (“Corea” 82). *Jindai moji* thus function as a vital element of Kempermann’s theory of the Japanese and Korean

¹⁴ Similar in tone to his 1877 travel report, Kempermann notes that the Japanese people with Korean descent are superior to the descendants of the Ainu (“Corea” 83). His theory of common descent is thus connected to overt racism against the Ainu.

people's common descent, bearing stark similarities to the ideas of McLeod, who used the divine script to bolster his claim that the Japanese people were descended from the ten lost tribes.¹⁵

As noted in the previous section of this chapter, Kempermann's 1877 travel report also touches on questions surrounding the origin of the Japanese people in the passages on Izumo, and his article about *jindai moji* from the same year ends on a similar note. Kempermann explains that according to one legend, Ōnamuchi was the inventor of the ancient script ("Die Kamiyo no modji" 93), which is likely based on Atsutane's discussion of the late-seventeenth century work *Sendai kuji hongi taiseikyō* 先代旧事本紀大成経 (Hirata 198–99). The *Taiseikyō* claims that Amaterasu created the *hifumi*, and Ōnamuchi, together with Ame no Yagokoro, turned them into *jindai moji* (Yamada, "Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (jō)" 18; Mitsumatsu 69). In this context, Kempermann describes Ōnamuchi as the king who ruled in what is now known as Izumo, with the caveat that this holds true if there is a historical core to the myths. Ōnamuchi's territory was linked to Korea, with the islands of Tsushima, Oki, and Iki functioning as a religious center between Izumo and Korea. Evidence for this is the large number of Japanese diviners who lived in the region and the findings of many *jindai moji* and other mysterious characters with a religious meaning on the islands ("Die Kamiyo no modji" 93). Again, Kempermann references the *Kanna hifumiden*, more specifically the second part of the text titled *gijihen* 疑字篇 ("Die Kamiyo no modji" 93n4). The *jindai moji* listed in the *gijihen* are characters that Atsutane himself deems dubious, but among them are indeed various scripts said to have been uncovered in the Izumo region (Hirata 245–62).

According to Kempermann, the above evidence, combined with the close connection between ancient Japan and Korea described in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, settles the dispute on the origin of *jindai moji*. They must have been the religious script of an ancient people resident in the west of Japan and the south of Korea; the Japanese as well as some of the Koreans

¹⁵ This notion of a common descent of the Japanese and Korean people bears similarities to later theories on a shared ancestry between them known as *Nissen dōsorōn* 日鮮同祖論 that played a large role in Japanese colonialism (Weiss 34–46).

of Kempermann's time would be the descendants of this people (Kempermann, "Die Kamiyo no modji" 93). These statements elucidate that Kempermann's argument for *jindai moji* stands and falls on the history of Japan and Korea as described in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and, even more importantly, on their mythology and its connection to divination. It therefore becomes clear that the two works have a pivotal function for his support of the divine script. While Kempermann heavily relies on Atsutane's scholarship and affirms the authenticity of documents that stray far from the contents of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, he never questions the value of the two works as sources on ancient Japan.

The Divine Characters After Kempermann

Kempermann's theory on the common descent of the Japanese and Korean people shows that he did not support Atsutane's notion of a divine script with an exclusively Japanese origin, but he still generally affirmed the *hifumi* as authentic. The idea of a native Japanese script was warmly received by several German scholars, such as the philologist and sinologist Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893). In the article "China und Japan" (1879), Gabelentz calls Kempermann's "Die Kamiyo no modji oder Götterschrift" an instructive piece on the ancient divine script of the Japanese, all the while emphasizing that this script is identical to Hangul (58). Further, he notes that the text as well as Kempermann's 1876 talk are valuable sources for the history of ancient Japanese culture, specifically the way it was linked to China and Korea (Gabelentz 61). A more direct affirmation of Kempermann's concept of *jindai moji* can be found in Fernando George Mueller-Beeck's (1854–1928) "Unsere wissenschaftliche Kenntniss von Korea" ("Our scientific knowledge of Korea," 1883). Mueller-Beeck, a diplomat who was active in Japan, describes Kempermann as a remarkable expert on Japanese history. According to him, Kempermann's 1877 article on *jindai moji* shows that the divine characters are an ancient, religious script used by a people who resided in the south of Korea and the west of Japan (Müller-Beeck 43). Two decades later, the painter and sinologist

Anna Bernhardi (1868–1944) used the very same article as a source in her essay “Frühgeschichtliche Orakelknochen aus China” (“Early historic Oracle Bones from China,” 1914). When commenting on the use of animal bones for divination in Japan, she retells the *Kojiki* episode surrounding Ame no Koyane and Futotama’s divination in front of the Heavenly Rock Cave. Bernhardi further notes that Ame no Koyane is the ancestor of the Japanese diviners and the creator of the script of the gods, the “Kami yo no Modji,” which arose from divination with the shoulder bones of a deer (18). Kempermann is clearly quoted as an authority on *jindai moji* here. The tone is affirmative, and there is no indication that *jindai moji* are inauthentic material.

German sources thus approved of Kempermann’s research on *jindai moji*, and as previously discussed, his European contemporaries McLeod and Rosny similarly attested to the historicity of an ancient Japanese script. However, the critical side counted a far greater number of prominent scholars who made a strong case against *jindai moji*, with two of them specifically touching on Kempermann’s research. In 1882, Griffis discusses the issue in the appendix to his *Corea*, noting that adherents to Shinto believe in so-called “*Shinji*, ‘godletters,’ or *Shin-dai-ji*, ‘letters of the age of the gods’” (450). The characters are thought to be of great antiquity and are identical or close to the Korean script. Griffis briefly touches on Kempermann’s idea of *jindai moji* as the common script of the Japanese and Korean people, with the premise that there is no proof for the antiquity of the divine characters. The 1872 *jindai moji* version of the *Kojiki*, the *Shinji Kojiki*, is mentioned but not considered serious evidence. Rather, Griffis highlights the value of Chamberlain’s and Satow’s research on the *Kojiki* and other Japanese sources and what it tells readers about Japan and Korea (*Corea* 450).

Griffis further names several foreign critics of *jindai moji*: Hepburn, Aston, and Satow (450). In their various publications, these three scholars deny the existence of *jindai moji*, their stance varying from tentative in the case of Hepburn to an outright disavowal of the idea by Aston and Satow (Hepburn ix–x; Satow 77–78; Aston, *Grammar* 1; Aston, “Önmun” 1; Aston “Writing” 508). The most in-depth critique of the divine characters was,

however, presented by Chamberlain a year after the publication of Griffis's *Corea*. Chamberlain's article "On Two Questions of Japanese Archæology" was a reaction to controversial opinions on *jindai moji* expressed in European publications, especially by Rosny (315). While Kempermann's acceptance of *jindai moji* as genuine is only mentioned in a footnote, Chamberlain's article provides a stark contrast to his ideas ("On Two Questions" 329n1).

In a manner very different from Kempermann, Chamberlain makes clear that there is a limited number of literary sources for the history of ancient Japan that are of doubtless authenticity: the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, the *Man'yōshū*, and the *Norito*. However, none of these sources include evidence for the existence of a native Japanese script (Chamberlain "On Two Questions" 317, 327). In Chamberlain's case, the absence of *jindai moji* from authentic sources on Japanese antiquity serves as irrefutable evidence against them. He gives a concise overview of the history of discourse on the subject, from the *Shaku nihongi* to Atsutane's *Kanna hifumiden* ("On Two Questions" 323–28) but leaves no doubt that the divine characters supported by "the enthusiastic patriot and religious partizan" Atsutane are inauthentic (Chamberlain, "On Two Questions" 327). They are in fact identical to and most probably based on the Korean *onmon* ("On Two Questions" 327–28). For Chamberlain, it is obvious that the religious significance of *jindai moji*, which Kempermann reports on in an almost reverent manner, is a modern invention, and that the movement in support of the characters is propelled by an almost fanatic patriotism ("On Two Questions" 328, 330). The central question posed by supporters is whether Japan, the land of the gods, could truly not have possessed the art of writing while the barbaric Chinese and Europeans did ("On Two Questions" 330)—this would, of course, have to be answered in the negative.

The above passage points towards a stark difference between Kempermann's and Chamberlain's ideas on *jindai moji*. Chamberlain, on the one hand, is motivated by academic interest and focuses on the dimension of patriotism as embodied by Atsutane and scholars after him. The position of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* is central to him, which is exemplified by his list of authentic sources on Japanese antiquity. Kempermann's scholarly

interest, on the other hand, is tied to his fascination for ancient Japan. As his report on Izumo shows, he idealized the ancient period, and therefore might have felt a kinship to scholars like Atsutane. While Kempermann confirms the authenticity of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, he is willing to place utter trust in Atsutane's scholarship to support his theory of a common descent of the Japanese and Korean people. His exclusive interest in the religious dimension of *jindai moji* was connected to this theory, and throughout his publications, Kempermann makes no mention of the problematic side of Atsutane's ideas.

Historically, Chamberlain's critical evaluation of the patriotic dimension to Atsutane's work on *jindai moji* would be proven right. Atsutane's assertion of an importance of *jindai moji* that went beyond Japan was echoed by later texts on the divine script. In his *Kaei santei jindai moji kō* 嘉永刪定神代文字考 (1848), Tsurumine Shigenobu 鶴峰戊申 (1788–1859), for instance, claimed that the *anaichi* 天名地鎮, which Atsutane originally included in his list of dubious characters, are the origin of every system of writing in the world (Yamada, "Iwayuru jindai moji no ron (chū)" 96–97). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Karl Florenz accurately remarked that those who still supported the idea of a native Japanese script were motivated by patriotism rather than academic interest (2), and in an escalation of the discourse, Japanese nationalists of the Shōwa period (1926–1989) used *jindai moji* to argue that Japan was the most superior country in the world (Yoshida, "Jindai moji no jikūkan" 102; Yoshida, "Hirata" 315–17). Sources of the time present Kempermann as a supporter and discoverer of *jindai moji*, his name being listed as the only foreigner among scholars such as Atsutane and Shigenobu (Yoshida "Jindai moji no jikūkan" 103–4). The connection between *jindai moji* and fanaticism is clearly pointed out by Yoshida who describes them as forgeries that were made up by nationalists wanting to believe in a uniquely Japanese script ("Jindai moji no jikūkan" 104). While Kempermann's argument for *jindai moji* did not aim towards emphasizing this specific point, the element of belief coupled with a serious consideration of inauthentic sources is central to his text on *jindai moji*, and succinctly explains the lack of resonance his theories had in the works of scholars like Chamberlain and Griffis.

Conclusion

Kempermann's "Die Kamiyo no modji oder Götterschrift" stands out for his in-depth analysis of Japanese sources, especially in the realm of Kokugaku, but it has become clear that his fascination with these texts went beyond scholarly interest. Whereas Chamberlain directly criticized the ideas of Atsutane and his followers as overly patriotic, Kempermann used the *Kanna hifumiden* as a trustworthy repository for knowledge on *jindai moji*: their link to the myths and specific connection to divination, the history of the discourse around them, and, maybe most vitally, their authenticity. His publications exude a yearning for antiquity—in Aston's words, "those vague prehistoric times of Japan called the 'Age of the Gods'" ("Writing" 508). This longing for golden days long bygone can be found in many Kokugaku texts, most prominently in Norinaga's and Atsutane's work. Although their stances towards *jindai moji* and textual work in general could scarcely be more different, the two are united in their idealization of the past.

Kempermann and Rosny, and maybe even partly McLeod, follow in these footsteps in their search for the true history of ancient Japan. Hirafuji succinctly points out that Rosny seems almost like a scholar of Kokugaku himself: he appears to live in an early modern rather than a modern world and constructs his own version of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* ("Shoki japanorojisuto" 349). She also notes that Rosny's work on the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* with his affirmative usage of *jindai moji*, among other things, presents a stark contrast to the scholarship by, for instance, Aston and Florenz. However, it is also part and parcel of the way the first japanologists looked at Japan (Hirafuji, "Shoki japanorojisuto" 359). The very same can be said for Kempermann. His inquiries into the history of Japan and Korea led him to support the existence of an ancient religious script that was in use in both countries and, to him, affirmed the common descent of the two peoples. Kempermann's ideas differ widely from the common academic stance, but they give an insight into the relationship between *jindai moji* and the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. The religious significance of *jindai moji* is irrevocably tied to the myths, especially as told in the *Kojiki*, which

makes the following hypothesis possible: even if their supporters claim a greater antiquity for them than for the two sources of mythology, the divine characters end up affirming the status of both texts. Hence, *jindai moji* do not desacralize the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, i.e., revoke their authority. Rather, they end up bolstering the elevated position of the original texts, thus sacralizing them unintentionally.¹⁶ This tension between *jindai moji* and the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* continues into the present, with a lively discourse on the subject across various media. The characters from the Age of the Gods are, for instance, supposed to possess a divine power and be able to heal sicknesses (Maruyama 9). One encounters them at bookstores and at shrines, at times with and at others without a connection to nationalist sentiments, but always in close proximity to the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

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¹⁶ In his 1883 article, Chamberlain compares the position of a modern *jindai moji* document, the *Uetsu fumi* 上記, to the *Book of Mormon*. The *Book of Mormon* is only one example of many texts that the Bible has inspired and that expand on the Biblical narrative (Maffly-Kipp). The *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* have similarly inspired numerous *jindai moji* documents, their contents often a variation of the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (see, for example, Yoshida, *Jindai moji no shisō* 52, 59).

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Rethinking Motoori Norinaga and *Nihon shoki*

Matthieu FELT

One oft-repeated refrain of scholarship on early modern Kokugaku is that Kokugaku gave special status to ancient texts presumed to be written in vernacular Japanese, notably Kojiki and Man'yōshū, at the expense of texts presumed to be in literary Sinitic, such as Nihon shoki. Kojiki and Man'yōshū also happen to be the focal points of research by several of the most notable Kokugaku scholars of early modern Japan, including Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga. I argue that Kokugaku in the eighteenth century was hardly limited to works purportedly written in the Japanese vernacular, and moreover, that Norinaga had a more complex relationship with Nihon shoki than contemporary assessments of Kokugaku permit. A close reading of Norinaga's commentary on Kojiki, the Kojikiden, reveals that claims that Norinaga favored Kojiki and rejected Nihon shoki due to the purported Sinitic nature of the latter text are overly reductive. A thorough reading of Kojikiden and a more nuanced grasp of Norinaga's semiotic theory reveal that Norinaga was in fact a close and avid reader of Nihon shoki, that this text was indispensable to his exegetical work on Kojiki, and that his critique of the so-called Chinese mind (kara-gokoro) was directed at an acquired interpretive framework and ontological orientation associated with the Suika tradition of Shinto. Accurately assessing Norinaga's evaluation of Nihon shoki is critical for both understanding the true nature of early modern Kokugaku and for properly historicizing the Meiji-period canonization of both Kojiki and Norinaga.

Introduction

Well-informed work on Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) and his commentary *Kojikiden* 古事記伝 (completed in 1798) has amply demonstrated that Norinaga used *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720) to write his commentary on *Kojiki* 古事記 (712). Susan Burns, using textual exegesis and careful historicization, noted while explicating the opening section of *Kojikiden* that Norinaga used the *Nihon shoki* to interpret the *Kojiki* such that the “reality of the ancient period was not found in the language of the *Kojiki* itself, but rather was constituted by the production of a new inter-textual space” (81–82). That is to say, Norinaga used the vernacular readings and meanings from the *Nihon shoki* reading tradition to derive the vernacular readings attached to the characters written in *Kojiki*. Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 has made a similar argument using inductive logic, observing that Norinaga struggled to explain episodes in which *Kojiki* has no corresponding *Nihon shoki* narrative upon which he could rely for interpretation. For example, the Ōnamuji episodes only appear in *Kojiki*, and Norinaga fails to explain some of the finer details.¹ Kōnoshi infers that if *Nihon shoki* had a corresponding version of these events that Norinaga could reference, then the exegesis would not end so indeterminately (195). Finally, using a positivistic approach, Mizuno Yūji 水野雄司 counted Norinaga’s references to *Nihon shoki* in volume 3 of *Kojikiden*, finding a total of 105. Mizuno argues that eighty-four percent of those references are critical in nature. Assuming this volume of *Kojikiden* to be representative for the whole, Mizuno concludes that Norinaga heavily relied on *Nihon shoki* to understand *Kojiki* (156).

¹ Kōnoshi specifically discusses the episode in which Ōnamuji’s siblings lay a trap for him by felling a tree and splitting it. They kill him with the tree, but the exact mechanism of the lethal device is unclear. The instrument they use is first described as a kind of arrow (*himeya* 菟矢). However, upon its removal, it is described as a different type of arrow (*himeya* 永目矢). Norinaga is unable to decipher the meaning of either arrow and gives up on trying to explain them.

Norinaga's reputation as a *Kojiki* admirer and *Nihon shoki* detractor makes his usage of *Nihon shoki* to read *Kojiki* something of a paradox, not to mention a lacuna in the scholarship. Nishimiya Kazutami 西宮一民 (1924–2007) has noted:

There is no previous research on what Norinaga thought the theme of *Nihon shoki* was. That is not surprising; Norinaga himself criticized *Shoki* for being a work awfully tainted with Chinese meanings, yet he also treated the *Nihon shoki* as if it were a hallowed work, and it was not understood what he thought the true nature of the work *Nihon shoki* was. (17)

“No previous research” is rather an overstatement, although considering the immense amount of scholarship in Japan on *Kojiki*, “understudied” is an apt descriptor. Burns, in line with the grander argument of her treatment of Norinaga, suggests that Norinaga used *Nihon shoki* selectively in order to mark difference, centered on a concept Norinaga deployed called the “Chinese mind.”² Burns also notes that Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 (1916–2008), in his commentary on *Kojiki*, accused Norinaga of selection bias in his treatment of *Nihon shoki*.³ But considering Norinaga's reputation as a careful and detail-oriented scholar, it seems unusual that he would countenance such a glaring inconsistency, regardless of his ideological motives.

The missing piece for resolving the paradoxical relationship that Norinaga had with *Nihon shoki* lies in the system of semiotics he introduces in the preface of *Kojikiden*. In this chapter, I introduce Norinaga's triadic semiotic system, which combined the elements of word, meaning, and matter, and demonstrate that for Norinaga, *Shoki* 書紀, as he called it, was of great

² “The notion of the ‘Chinese mind’ was in fact a device that allowed Norinaga to reject those aspects of the *Nihon shoki* that were at odds with the new understanding of the *Kojiki* that he was trying to create and to incorporate those that would prop it up” (Burns 82).

³ “As Saigō Nobutsuna noted [in *Kojiki chūshaku* vol. 1], in making this pronouncement [about the vernacular readings for the opening passage of *Kojiki*] Norinaga acted selectively, ignoring other passages in the *Nihon shoki* in which the selected reading was employed” (Burns 82).

value because although its words and meanings were distorted in places, the matters they signified were authentic. Then, using an example from *Kojikiden*, I contrast dyadic and triadic semiotic systems, revealing the role and significance Norinaga envisioned for *Shoki*. Finally, in conclusion, I note several larger consequences, both for Norinaga and for Edo-period Kokugaku, prompted by this reconsideration of *Nihon shoki*.

Semiotics

Norinaga's comparison of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* appears in his work in several places, but none more straightforward than in the preface to *Kojikiden*. Note that Norinaga always refers to *Nihon shoki* as “*Shoki*,” arguing that the “*Nihon*” was a later addition:

Meanings, matters, and words have consonance with each other. In the ancient period, meanings, matters, and words were all of the ancient period. In the later period, the meanings, matters, and words were of the later period. In China, the meanings, matters, and words are of China. *Shoki* uses the meanings of the later period to inscribe the matters of the ancient period, and with the words of China, it inscribes the meanings of this imperial country. Therefore, there are many places where they do not match up. In *Kojiki*, not even a bit of artifice is added, and as it is inscribed just as it was transmitted from antiquity, the meanings, matters, and words are congruous with each other, and all constitute the truth of the ancient period. (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 1: 6)

抑意(ココロ)と事と言(コトバ)とは、みな相称(アヒカナ)へる物にして、上(ツ)代は、意も事も言も上代、後(ノ)代は、意も事も言も後代、漢国(カラクニ)は、意も事も言も漢国なるを、書紀は、後代の意をもて、上代の事を記し、漢国の言を以(チ)、皇国(ミクニ)の意を記されたる故に、あひかなはざること多かるを、此記は、いさゝかもさかしらを加(クハ)へずて、古(ヘ)より云(ヒ)伝(ヘ)たるまゝに記されれば、その意も事も言も相称(アヒカナヒ)て、皆上代の真(マコト)なり、...

This passage explains why Norinaga gave priority to *Kojiki* over *Nihon shoki*, as *Kojiki* is identified as having more authenticity or rather, less augmentation. Here, Norinaga also reveals his model of sign interpretation, which has three components: meanings (*kokoro* 意) inscribe matters (*koto* 事) using words (*kotoba* 言). Critically, the relationship signifier (word) and signified (matter) is not dyadic. Rather, it is realized through the mediation of a third feature (meaning). When all three elements are in accord, they result in truth (*makoto* 真). In *Kojiki*, the three are aligned, but in *Nihon shoki*, they are skewed, with the meanings and words not clearly signifying the matters.⁴

Norinaga applies this same triadic semiotic system when describing the writing used in *Nihon shoki* and diagnoses the textual issues in the same manner:

The form of the inscription [of *Shoki*] is meant to emulate Literary Sinitic, and [written] in accordance with this effort, *the meanings and words* have many of its ornaments, even for actual human speech. Many of them differ from the [signified] matters of the ancient period (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 1: 8; emphasis added).

その記されたる体は、もはら漢のに似たらむと、勤められたるまゝに、意も詞も、そなたざまのかぎりのみ多くて、人の言語の実まで、上代のに違へる事なむ多かりける。

Again, the meanings and words of *Nihon shoki* are misaligned with their signified, but Norinaga does not state that these “ornaments” actually changed the “matters” described in the text. In a similar manner, in his 1798 *Jindaiki uzu no yamakage* 神代紀髻華山陰, Norinaga likens the two texts to two portraits. *Kojiki* was meant to capture the true visage of the subject, whereas *Nihon shoki* was done in accordance with the prevailing ideas of style at the time. Hence the latter text had the “face of a Chinese person” (Motoori, *Jindaiki uzu no yamakage* 517–18). However, both portraits are of the same subject, and the hypothetical person is still a Japa-

⁴ This argument is adapted from Felt 271–79.

nese person. The difference is entirely restricted to the domain of artistic style.

If we read Norinaga from the standpoint of a semiotic system that recognizes the two elements of signifier and signified, then we can see the disjunct between the two, and are led to a conclusion that Norinaga's skepticism for *Nihon shoki* was because the words it used were too Chinese. In the words of Susan Burns, Norinaga "argued that the editors of [*Nihon shoki*], in abandoning the ancient language in order to incorporate Chinese words, concepts, and syntax, had disrupted the representational value of the ancient language, so that the 'reality' of the text was not the 'reality' of the ancient period" (72–73). That is to say, Norinaga claimed that the Sinitified language of *Nihon shoki* failed to accurately delineate the object of its signification: the matters of the ancient period. A similar reduction of these three concepts into a dyadic system of "sign" and "meaning" appears in Harootunian, who explains "Motoori's resolution of the disagreement between word, thing, and intent, and the subsequent separation of sign and meaning" (81–83). For both Burns and Harootunian, the triadic semiotic system has been reduced by one concept, with Norinaga's ideas of word and meaning being combined into the single element "sign" in a dyadic semiotic system of "sign" and "meaning."

The signifier-signified treatment of Norinaga makes his frequent usage of *Nihon shoki* paradoxical. What use could Norinaga possibly have for a written account in which the words did not signify the facts? *Nihon shoki* may as well have been written in Ancient Greek. But this binary of signifier and signified is not the system that Norinaga employed. Besides the words of the text (*kotoba*) and the reality of the ancient period (*koto*), there was also the meaning (*kokoro*). Using Chinese words introduces Chinese meanings, and the problem was not that the signifier no longer accurately pointed to the signified but that the meaning introduced additional signifiers to which the sign-vehicle could gesture. For example, if *Nihon shoki* used a Chinese word, say, "yin god" (*inshin* 陰神) to mean Izanami, the matter was still of ancient Japan, but the signifier had a meaning of the Chinese concept of yin, which led to misreading when understood using a Chinese meaning. However, this did not mean that the original matter

could no longer be recognized by the astute reader, who could apply a Japanese meaning resulting in the word signifying the kami Izanami. For Norinaga, reading *Shoki* was an issue of negotiating potential misdirection.

Norinaga's position makes perfect sense when considering the nature of *Nihon shoki* commentary at the time. Scholars associated with the Suika tradition of Shinto, pioneered by Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇斎 (1619–1682), had produced a number of partial and full commentaries on *Nihon shoki*. Tanikawa Kotosuga's 谷川土清 (1709–1776) *Nihon shoki tsūshō* 日本書紀通証 was certainly the most influential of these, and Norinaga was demonstrably in touch with the older Tanikawa.⁵ These Suika commentaries made extensive use of parallels and were heavily inspired by commentaries from the Yoshida tradition of Shinto, itself heavily reliant on Ichijō Kaneyoshi's 一條兼良 (1402–1481) *Nihon shoki sanso* 日本書紀纂疏. The use of parallels drew from an esoteric Buddhist semiotic and epistemological framework in which instances were components and samples of a larger universal whole, and finding parallels between two instances confirmed the existence of the universal.⁶ For a Suika commentator, Izanami being called “yin god” was extremely powerful, because it provided a parallel between *Nihon shoki* and yin-yang cosmology that validated the cosmogonic claims of both Japanese and Chinese works.

Norinaga hated these parallels and completely rejected this mode of exegesis. Writing on Suika, Norinaga exclaimed:

But truly, in Suika, the clouds and fog of Chinese meanings increase all the more. They arise so thickly that it is like being in the dark of night, and the way of the ancients becomes most difficult to see. So conversely, they say to use parallels with Chinese meanings and thus realize outrageous meanings. Not realizing that this, by and large, is an act that ends up darkening the Way is the purest foolishness (Motoori, *Tenso tojō benben* 4).

⁵ On this interaction, see Maeda.

⁶ On this system, see Rambelli.

されどまことには、かの垂加にいたりて、いよ / \ ます / \ 漢意の雲霧、
 ふかく立みちて、闇の夜のごとく、古の道は、見えがたくなりぬるを、か
 へりてかくいへるは、漢意によく合をもて、いみしき事におぼえたるにて、
 そは中々に、道をかきくらすしわざ成ることを、えさとらざるは、いとを
 こ也、...

As stated here, for Norinaga, the issue with mistaken Chinese meanings was not that they made it impossible to identify the actual reality or matters of antiquity. Rather, they crowded out the Way by the sheer frequency and number of meanings that they introduced.

Norinaga's critique of the opening passage of *Nihon shoki* in his *Kojikiden* preface provides an excellent example of how Chinese meanings could be deceiving. Whereas the *Kojiki* narrative starts sometime after Heaven and Earth have already begun, *Nihon shoki* opens with a cosmic void within which the yin elements and yang elements naturally begin to separate. This yin-yang driven narrative continues with the creation of Japan by the yin god (Izanami) and the yang god (Izanagi). Medieval and Suika commentators interpreted this opening passage such that it would accord with both the five-phase cosmology of China and the four-element (*shidai* 四大) Buddhist cosmology of India. In these commentaries, construction of this parallel was also a validation of truth. Conversely, Norinaga explains that the five phases of Chinese theory were different from those of India in order to show that the principles of yin and yang were just a "private explanation" invented by someone in China (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 1: 10). This puts Norinaga on an entirely different epistemological footing from medieval and Suika commentators. Empirically speaking, these cosmological theories all told different, conflicting stories and therefore, to Norinaga, could not all be equally true. And neither Indian nor Chinese theory fit with his understanding of the Japanese ancient period. For example, in Japanese mythology, the sun is a female and the moon a male deity, facts which reversed the basic principles of yin-yang duality. If the ancient Japanese chronicles were in fact passed down verbatim from the Age of the Gods, as Norinaga assumed, and were completely true, then the other theories were simply wrong.

Invoking the triadic model of semiotics clarifies Norinaga's logic in relying so heavily on *Nihon shoki* when writing *Kojikiden* and in his ultimate hope to uncover the true matters of Japanese antiquity through intertextual study. Norinaga believed that the matter of these texts was held in common, that they were telling the same story, and that this congruity held even if the signifiers (words) were changed to Chinese. The problem is that Chinese words could, through Chinese meanings, also signify Chinese matters. Suika commentary was built upon an associative logic that exploited this semantic ambiguity. But to Norinaga, this ambiguity was instead a shaky foundation. In *Kojikiden*, Norinaga set out to identify the true matters of the ancient period, which he believed was recorded in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

Three Crown Princes

An example of how Norinaga regarded *Nihon shoki* and the importance of using his triadic semiotic system for reading *Kojikiden* appears in the records for the legendary Emperor Keikō 景行天皇 (trad. 71–130 BCE). In *Kojiki*, Emperor Keikō is recorded as having eighty children. Twenty-one of these children are recorded as members of the ancient Japanese nobility, and three of them were titled Crown Prince. *Kojiki* gives: “As for these three princes, Wakatarashi-hiko and Yamato Takeru, and also Ioki iri-biko, they bore the title of crown prince” (若帶日子命与倭健命、亦、五百木之入日子命、此三王、負_二太子之名_一; *Kojiki*, SNKBZ 214).

Commentators are divided on how to gloss “crown prince” (*taishi* 太子) as well as what it means in this context.⁷ For the *Shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 (SNKBZ) edition of *Kojiki*, Kōnoshi is

⁷ Compare: 若帶日子命 (ワカタラシヒコノミコト) と倭健命 (ヤマトタケルノミコト) と、亦 (マタ)、五百木之入日子命 (イホキノイリビコノミコト) と、此の三の王 (コノハシラノミコ) は、太子 (オホミコ) の名を負ひき。 (SNKBZ)

若帶日子命ト倭健命与 (ト)、五百木之入日子命亦、此 (コ) ノ三王 (ミハシラ)、太子 (ヒツギノミコ) 之名を負 (オ) ひたまう。 (NST)

若帶日子_の命と倭健_の命、亦五百木之入日子_の命と此の三王は、太子の名を負ひたまいき。 (NKBT)

content to explain the entry as an exception. He notes that “Yamato Takeru” is an exception to the textual style of *Kojiki*, as his primary name from earlier in the genealogical entry is O-usu, but here has been applied anachronistically. Kōnoshi then suggests that “太子” signifies an individual who can legitimately accede to the throne, that it is an exception to have more than one, and that this is perhaps an exception made for Yamato Takeru (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 214–15). The *Nihon shisō taikai* 日本思想体系 (NST) editors’ note that commentators since Norinaga have provided a hypothesis that the title of crown prince was usually limited to one individual, but that since Wakatarashi-hiko and Yamato Takeru are seventh-century creations, perhaps only Ioki iri-hiko was crown prince and the other two names were added later, after both were grafted into the imperial genealogy (*Kojiki*, NST 172, 401). *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 日本古典文学大系 (NKBT) follows Norinaga and claims that in the ancient period, the title of crown prince was not limited to one person (*Kojiki*, NKBT 205). *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 日本古典文学全集 (NKBZ) is perhaps the closest to the mark, noting that all three of the crown princes were connected to the imperial line (*Kojiki*, NKBZ 210). Point being, there is dissension, even in post-war commentaries, about what *Kojiki* means when it refers to each of these figures in reference to the imperial succession and on how to apply vernacular glosses to this sentence.

The waters become muddier when comparing *Kojiki* with *Nihon shoki*, as the latter text also singles out the same three princes but says nothing about crown princes:

The sons and daughters of the emperor [Keikō], from beginning to end, numbered eighty. However, except for Yamato Takeru, Wakatarashi-hiko, and Ioki no iri-biko, the other seventy-odd children were all enfeoffed in the provinces and districts, each of them to their respective land (*Nihon shoki* 2: 64).

夫（ソ）れ天皇（スメラミコト）の男女（ヒコミコヒメミコ）、前後并（アハ）せて八十（ヤソハシラ）の子（ミコ）まします。然（シカ）るに、日本武尊（ヤマトタケルノミコト）と稚足彦天皇（ワカタラシヒコノスメラミコト）と五百城入彦皇子（イホキイリビコノミコ）とを除（ノゾ）きて

の外（ホカ）、七十余（ナナソアマリ）の子は、皆国郡（ナナソアマリ）に封（コトヨ）させて、各（オノオノ）其（ソ）の国に如（ユ）かしむ。故（カレ）、今の時（ヨ）に当りて、諸国（クニグニ）の別（ワケ）と謂（イ）へるは、即（スナハ）ち其の別王（ワケノミコ）の苗裔（ミアナスエ）なり。

Of course, a careful reader of *Nihon shoki* can immediately identify status distinctions between Yamato Takeru, presented as a legitimate ruler, Wakatarashi-hiko, an emperor, and Ioki no iri-biko, an imperial prince. Succession in *Nihon shoki* tends to be predetermined. In the passage here, Wakatarashi-hiko (Seimu Tennō 成務天皇, trad. 84–191) is already titled “emperor,” and Yamato Takeru has the imperial *mikoto* 尊 instead of the royal *mikoto* 命. In the same vein, Yamato Takeru “royally expires” 崩 at death rather than simply “perishing” 薨 like other members of the imperial clan and meritorious vassals. Yamato Takeru does not accede to the throne, but his son Chūai Tennō 仲哀天皇 (trad. 192–200) would succeed Seimu, and the other supernatural events of Yamato Takeru’s narrative attest to his status as a legitimate successor.⁸ This means that the reader knows how the succession will continue even before events transpire and can create a kind of dramatic irony. For example, Emperor Ōjin 応神天皇 (trad. 270–310) appoints one of his sons as crown prince, but because a different son is identified earlier in the text as the future emperor and because that son is marked with the royal *mikoto*, we know that some happenstance awaits the named crown prince who cannot succeed. *Nihon shoki* systematizes the narration of imperial succession by marking legitimate successors to the throne when they are first introduced.

This systematic quality of *Nihon shoki* creates a strong contrast with *Kojiki*, for which the mechanism for succession is not well-defined. In general, *Kojiki* presents the imperial succession as determined by the course of events, and the ultimate successor is revealed as the narrative unfolds.

⁸ Yamato Takeru is one of two exceptions in *Nihon shoki*, along with Princess Itoyo 飯豊皇女; both receive imperial treatment even though they do not formally accede to the throne. Empress Jingū 神功皇后 is a separate exception, as she is assigned the imperial *mikoto* and royally expires, but is formally titled empress dowager, not emperor.

Jinmu's five sons are all given the same title of *mikoto* 命, and it is not clear who the successor will be. Ōjin names one son crown prince, and we do not find out until after Ōjin is dead that the named crown prince will in fact not take the throne. In the example of the three crown princes given above, the rationale is probably that they are all directly connected to the imperial line: Yamato Takeru as the father of Emperor Chūai, Wakatarashi-hiko ruled as Emperor Seimu, and Ioki no iri-biko was the grandfather of Nakatsu-hime 仲姫, Empress of Emperor Ōjin and mother of Emperor Nintoku 仁徳天皇 (trad. 310–399). This is the logic used by the NKBT commentators of *Kojiki*; it also might explain why these three figures have been singled out in the corresponding entry of *Nihon shoki*. But regardless of how we try to make sense of *Kojiki*, there is both a disjunct with *Nihon shoki* and an irregular quality to this entry that will necessitate commentarial intervention.

Norinaga identified this disjunct in his commentary on *Kojiki* and argued that it related to a difference between a Chinese and Japanese model of succession, or rather, to a problem with applying a Chinese meaning to the word “crown prince.” Norinaga wrote:

The three princes bearing the title of crown prince—this was the customary practice in ancient times. In the august reigns of antiquity, the title of crown prince was bestowed upon someone who was especially noble and worthy of reverence among the various princes. This was not necessarily limited to one prince; sometimes there were two or three (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 3: 170).

三王、負太子之名（ヒツギノミコトマヲスミナヲ）とは、是（レ）上代の常（ツネ）なり、抑上ツ御代々々（ミヨミヨ）に、日嗣御子（ヒツギノミコ）と申せるは、皇子（ミコ）たちの中に、取分て尊（タフトミ）崇（アガ）めて、殊なるさまに、定め賜へる物にて、其は必しも、一柱には限らず、或は二柱三柱も、坐（シ）しことなり、...

In a lengthy explanation of this claim, Norinaga briefly referred to other scholarship on the topic by Watarai (Deguchi) Nobuyoshi 度会延佳 (1615–1690) that suggested there was something wrong with *Kojiki*'s mode of

inscription. For Norinaga, however, the problem was not as simple as choosing *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*. Norinaga believed that while *Shoki* recorded the truth of antiquity, the use of Chinese words created semantic ambiguity, and so further consideration was required when *Shoki* and *Kojiki* were not in accord. Norinaga presumed that the limitation of crown prince to one individual was a characteristic of Chinese succession. As he notes earlier, *Shoki* also recorded “later meanings,” and that limitation also applied to the Nara era when *Shoki* was compiled, and a single crown prince was the designated successor. But Norinaga asserted that these contextual features may not necessarily apply in antiquity, and ultimately, he insisted that ancient Japan had a different system of succession than either Nara Japan or China.

Notably, Norinaga’s interpretation has formed the bedrock for interpretations of Yamato Takeru throughout the postwar era. Most important among postwar scholars is Norinaga’s fellow *Kojiki* commentator Saigō Nobutsuna, who essentially agrees with Norinaga’s interpretation, arguing that there were three potential heirs to the throne (3–4). Isomae Jun’ichi 磯前順一, in comparing the Yamato Takeru narratives of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, notes that in *Kojiki*, Yamato Takeru was “no more than one possible successor to the throne,” which creates a source of tension and disturbance with his father the emperor and with the imperial court (363). Conversely, in the *Nihon shoki*, Isomae reads Yamato Takeru as an agent of the imperial court who works harmoniously with his father’s requests. In a similar vein, David Bialock has read the Yamato Takeru accounts in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as competing symbolic narratives, with emphasis on the *Nihon shoki* compilers’ use of a Chinese ideological framework for legitimizing kingship (111–23). Granted, the Yamato Takeru accounts in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are very different, and they are a natural point of contrast to use for understanding the respective texts. The close readings of *Kojiki* performed by Saigō, Isomae, and Bialock illustrate the stakes for grasping Norinaga’s full meaning, as his *Kojikiden* played a formulative role in their treatments.

Norinaga used the example of the three crown princes to broach a larger discussion about the use of Chinese words in *Shoki*, how they related to the ancient matters he asserted were recorded in the text, and how a reader

could identify those matters. He noted several other cases when the purported crown prince does not ultimately succeed, suggesting that this reflects a systemic inconsistency, and also noted the use of “Empress Dowager” for Jingū 神功皇后 (r. 201–269), a title he did not believe existed in ancient Japan. In sum, he wrote:

As such, in the *Shoki*, all sorts of things are in the Chinese style, and being so modelled, as for the matter of naming the imperial crown prince, from the ancient period, everything is just like the Chinese examples, and the prose is thus constructed and recorded, and thereby the true thrust of the past is occluded and like to be invisible. . . . And so in the *Shoki* too, in the places there is not Chinese-style ornamentation, apply your mind and also compare with this record [*Kojiki*], and if you carefully consider the nature of matters, the true state of the ancient period that has been covered up will increasingly be known to you. (Motoori, *Kojikiden* 2: 171)

然るに、書紀は、何事も漢国のふりを、まねばれたるほどに、皇太子を立（テ）賜ふ事なども、上代より、全漢国（モハラカラクニ）の例の如くに、文を造りて、記されたるによりて、古の実（マコト）の趣は、隠れて、見えざるが如し、...されば書紀も、漢めきたる飾のなき處に、心をつけ、又此’記と比べて、事のさまを、よく考へ見れば、隠れたる上代の、実のありかたも、いよよく知る々ことぞかし、...

A binary model for Norinaga’s semiotics would suggest that Norinaga here has suggested two alternative systems, one Chinese and one Japanese, for understanding imperial succession. *Kojiki* preserves the Japanese model, while *Nihon shoki* has switched to a model based on Chinese historiography. At a fundamental level this is correct for the matter of the crown prince, but applying this model then makes the rest of Norinaga’s statement paradoxical, as Norinaga asserts that ancient matters are in fact recorded in *Shoki* and available to the discerning reader. Applying the triadic semiotic model resolves this paradox. Chinese words may be interpreted using Chinese or later meanings that conceal the true sign object, but it is possible to uncover these hidden matters by seeing through the Chinese stylistic interventions. Hence, Norinaga is not suggesting that *Nihon shoki* used a

Chinese system and *Kojiki* used a Japanese one, he is suggesting that *Nihon shoki* changed the way that it discussed imperial succession under the influence of Chinese writings. The difference is not an issue of Japan versus China, but of Japanese narrative style versus Chinese narrative style. This slight difference is important because it means that Norinaga was making factual differences between the two texts into semantic differences. The actual truth of antiquity was preserved in *Nihon shoki* as well. This approach resolves the paradox of why *Nihon shoki* is so critical to Norinaga's work on *Kojiki* and why he made such ample use of the *Nihon shoki* in his commentary.

A natural question that follows Norinaga's discussion here is how the reader can attain the level of discernment required to uncover the ancient matters in *Nihon shoki*, and elsewhere in his writings, Norinaga clarifies that this is a matter of habituation. For readers in Edo Japan, the main issue was consciously identifying Chinese meanings, that is to say, Chinese contextual meanings for Chinese words, rather than applying them without thinking. In his miscellany *Tamakatsuma* 玉勝間 (1794), he defines Chinese meanings and addresses their effect on Edo-period readers:

The term "Chinese meanings" does not only mean having a preference for Chinese affectations or attaching value to that country. Many people in society tend to voice theories about the nature of things in terms of good and bad or right and wrong, and they all tend to follow Chinese writings. This does not only refer to people who read Chinese writings. Even those who have never picked up a single book are the same. It should not be that people who do not read Chinese writings are like this, but for some reason, they take China to be good, and because the custom of learning about it goes back over one thousand years, those meanings have diffused into society and lodged in the depths of people's minds. The common thinking that "I do not hold Chinese meanings, this is not a Chinese meaning, and it is the natural order" is itself a habituation to Chinese meanings that is difficult to discard. People's minds, whether in our esteemed country or foreign ones, are no different from each other. If there is no distinction between good and bad or right and wrong,

thinking that a distinct set of Chinese meanings should not exist is generally how it would seem, but *since thought itself is Chinese meanings*, in any case, these meanings are difficult to eliminate. The fundamental truth is that people's minds are not different regardless of their country of origin. (Motoori, *Tamakatsuma* 48; emphasis added)

漢意（カラゴコロ）とは、漢国のふりを好み、かの国をたふとぶのみをいふにあらず、大かた世の人の、万の事の善悪是非（ヨサアシサ）を論ひ、物の理をさだめいふたぐひ、すべてみな漢籍（カラブミ）の趣なるをいふ也、さるはからぶみをよみたる人のみ、然るにはあらず、書といふ物一つも見たることなき者までも、同じこと也、そもからぶみをよまぬ人は、さる心にはあるまじきわざなれども、何わざも漢国をよしとして、かれをまねぶ世のならひ、千年にもあまりぬれば、おのづからその意世ノ中にゆきわたりて、人の心の底にそみつきて、つねの地となれる故に、我はからごゝろもたらずと思ひ、これはから意にあらず、當然理（シカアルベキコトワリ）也と思ふことも、なほ漢意をはなれがたきならひぞかし、そもそも人の心は、皇国も外つ国も、ことなることなく、善悪是非に二つなければ、別（コト）に漢意といふこと、あるべくもあらずと思ふは、一わたりさることのやうなれど、然思ふもやがてからごゝろなれば、とにかくに此意は、のぞこりがたき物になむ有ける、人の心の、いつれの国もことなることなきは、本のまごゝろこそあれ、...

One reading of this passage envisions a conflict between China and Japan that served to define early modern national identity. Burns, for example, suggests that “Against the ‘Chinese mind’ that was known, [Norinaga] could define what it meant to be Japanese,” and “it was this conception of cultural identity as innate, rather than acquired, that became the foundation of Norinaga’s reading of *Kojiki*” (74). And again, the fundamental logic relies on a binary relationship of signifier and signified. In this configuration, a Chinese meaning can point to a Chinese thing, a Japanese meaning to a Japanese thing, but they cannot be mixed together and still preserve meaning.

If we consider the triadic relationship of elements in Norinaga’s semiotics, then the passage takes on a different meaning. For one, Norinaga is not actually talking about China. As he says himself, there is no value judgment being leveled at China, just as there is none in the earlier citation

identifying the Chinese meanings in *Nihon shoki*. The problem, for Norinaga, is with Chinese meanings made by people who are in Japan; this is not because the meanings are foreign, but because they act as a kind of signification translator. When inserted into the sign process by the use of Chinese words, they erroneously point to additional matters of signification. This critique of potential ambiguous signification is directed at none other than the Suika commentaries and interpretations. The Chinese meanings in *Nihon shoki*—that is, these intermediate, interpretive elements that Norinaga posited to exist between signifier and signified—led readers of ancient Japanese texts to the wrong semiotic matter.

Secondly, this passage also suggests caution when describing Norinaga's understanding of cultural identity (perhaps better referred to as "habitation" [*narai* ならひ]). He clearly states that habituation is not innate but linked to education. This is why Norinaga brings up book learning. People who read Chinese works became acculturated to a Chinese mode of understanding the world; when they processed signs, they did so based on the mindset learned from those books. The problem in Japan, as Norinaga saw it, was that people had been reading Chinese works for so long that the meanings had become an inseparable part of their habituation. But as this was a learned behavior, it could also be unlearned. For Norinaga, this process was a "Way," and its first steps were a reeducation in the Japanese classics.

Conclusion

Reconsidering Norinaga's treatment of *Nihon shoki* opens the door to a reconsideration of Kokugaku itself, the movement with which Norinaga and associated scholars are usually identified. Scholarship on Kokugaku often emphasizes its linguistic elements, especially the centrality of vernacular Japanese. However, we can also posit Kokugaku as a reaction against Suika modes of reading, which nicely dovetails with Norinaga and his perspective on the problems associated with Chinese textual influence.

This opens Kokugaku up to be more inclusive of materials written in Literary Sinitic.

An ideal counterpart to Norinaga and his commentary on *Kojiki* is the Kawamura family: the older brother Hidekai 河村秀穎 (1718–1783), the younger brother Hidene 河村秀根 (1723–1792), and Hidene’s son Masune 河村益根 (1756–1819). Hidene and Masune would ultimately produce the first full non-Suika commentary on *Nihon shoki*, the *Shoki shikkai* or *Shoki shūge* 書紀集解 (1785). They were also quite critical of Suika. In their 1748 *Jingakuben* 神学弁, Hidekai and Hidene wrote:

Regarding the unity of Heaven and Man, this means that Heaven / Earth and mankind are entirely the same. Using “creation” it [the Suika doctrine] refers to humans and things, and using humans and things it explains creation. Is this not the way of the unity of Heaven and Man, it asks? This is absolutely conjecture from the current era, and a forced analogy in imitation of the “Heaven Man one principle” explanation in the Confucianism of the Song. [Then] using the phrase “unity of the imperial way” in the *Kōtoku* volume, it finds the origin of the unity of Heaven and Man. While the characters are the same, the meaning is vastly different, and this is not sufficient for proof. (Kawamura and Kawamura 31–32)

天人唯一といふ事にて天地と人と全く一と云義なり造化を以て人事を示し人事を以て造化を説くものなりこれ天人唯一の道ならずやといへりこれらは一方向近世の臆説にして宋儒の性理の説に天人一理など云に倣ひ附會するものなり孝徳紀に帝道唯一と有る文を以て天人唯一の出所とする輩あれ共文字同しくて義大に異なれり證とするにたらず。

A full explanation of Suika principles is beyond the scope of this chapter, but importantly, the “unity of Heaven and Man” and “creation” were both central concepts in Suika interpretations of the mythical creation story. And their criticism echoes, in less sophisticated terms, the problem of incorrect meanings and words being assigned to matters that was identified by Norinaga: “While the characters are the same, the meaning is vastly different.” Of course, this is a binary sign division, but the central problem

of there being “conjecture” due to multiple possible meanings of a word foreshadows Norinaga’s later formalization of this process using an additional semiotic element.

Reading *Jingakuben* more broadly, it is also clear that Hidekai and Hidene had no predilection about ancient texts needing to be written in the vernacular:

In writings there is past and present and truth and lies; readers should not fail to distinguish these. The most important in this regard are the national histories and the Civil and Penal Codes, and after these it is the old official records produced by major houses. When initiating study, one must be careful not to forget the national histories and house records and not to believe false books and erroneous compilations. . . . There was a time that I was bewitched by oral transmissions, but by thoroughly reviewing the official histories and classic texts, at last I became aware of the wrong things and my doubts were dispelled. (Kawamura and Kawamura 32, 39)

書に古今あり真偽ありよむ人差別なくんは有るべからず其要とする所は國史及び律令格式にしてこれに次のものは古昔の官牒名公百家の記録なり初入の學あしき時は國史家牒をわすれて偽本妄撰の類を信す慎ますんばあるべからず . . . はしめ俗師を信じ彼の傳授口訣に惑ふこと年あり退て正史古典を熟復して漸其非を悟り其疑を解きぬ。

All the texts they refer to—the national histories, the Civil and Penal Codes, and the old official records—are in Literary Sinitic. Moreover, the problem of oral transmissions, which suggests esoteric forms of knowledge creation and transfer, is undoubtedly a critique of the Yoshida and Suika traditions of Shinto. Especially considering that Hidene would go on to write the first non-Suika commentary on *Nihon shoki*, the course correction focused on documentary study is clear. The semiotic dimension is not developed as it is with Norinaga, and the idea that *Nihon shoki* itself was problematic does not emerge. But the general thrust, disappointment with Suika and advocacy of empirical methods, closely resembles Norinaga.

The Kawamuras do not explicitly refer to Kokugaku in these two passages, but their inspiration and the documents they discuss are clearly taken from their teacher, Yoshimi Yukikazu 吉見幸和 (1673–1761). Yukikazu explicitly linked the study of Literary Sinitic material to the Kokugaku movement:

Making clear the facts since the divine age is what should be called *kokugaku*. However, it can also be called the study of the divine. Beginning with the *Nihongi*, thoroughly read the six national histories, the writings of the Civil and Penal Codes and their revisions, and after that the public documents, old records and historical accounts as a foundation, and correct the books. When you find a book that is a fake product of a later age, separate truth from falsehood on your own. Good and bad are not the same, and it is like dividing ice from coal. *Not being deceived by miscellaneous study: this is the cornerstone of kokugaku* (Fujitsuka 488; emphasis added).

神代以来の事実を明らむるは国学といふべし。但神学と云も亦可也。日本紀を始六国史を熟覽し、律令格式の書、其後公文官牒古記実録を土台にして、能々本を正し、扨後世偽作の書を見る時は、自正偽分明にして、薰蕕同じからず。氷炭相分るゝが如し。俗学の為に欺るゝことなかれ。是国学の要たり。

Here, Yukikazu conceives of Kokugaku primarily in terms of distinguishing historical fact from fiction. Fiction arises because writers in later ages created forgeries in order to justify or legitimate miscellaneous study, i.e., ideology and teleology not present in the original text. Put differently, Yukikazu sees the medieval commentarial tradition as the central hurdle for Kokugaku to overcome. And while he is aware that some of the ideological elements are of foreign origin, the various sects of Shinto and forged works that underpin them were homegrown. Perhaps for this reason, Yukikazu does not frame Kokugaku in terms of Japanese vs. Chinese modes of thinking or writing. The “study of a miscellany” (*zatsugaku* 雜學), as Yukikazu censures, implies not only the non-specialist study of a

subject but also the mixing of various subjects or written materials, and almost certainly refers to Suika methods of textual exegesis.

Taken holistically, these examples suggest that both Norinaga and Edo-period Kokugaku have been overdetermined. For Norinaga, while he certainly gave preeminent position to *Kojiki*, he believed that *Shoki* had an important role in understanding ancient matters and in following the way that comprised Edo-period Kokugaku. Moreover, Norinaga's treatment of *Shoki* is not paradoxical, but rather based on a complex semiotic system laid out in the preface of *Kojikiden*. For Edo-period Kokugaku, even Norinaga was not so devoted to vernacular Japanese that he refused to consider Literary Sinitic works like *Shoki*, and this is even more so for other Kokugaku scholars. Academic work on *Nihon shoki*, performed by scholars like the Kawamura family, was a major constellation of Edo-period Kokugaku. The question should be not whether Literary Sinitic materials were part of Edo-period Kokugaku, but when and under what circumstances were they ejected from the Kokugaku corpus and, subsequently, from the sphere of Japanese national literature.

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A Confucian Founding Myth for the Japanese State Wu Taibo as Progenitor of the Imperial Line

David WEISS

The myth of Amaterasu, the sun goddess and progenitress of the imperial family of Japan, played a crucial role in discourses on Japanese national identity in early modern and modern times. This myth emphasizes Japanese uniqueness and centrality by situating the creation of the world in a purely Japanese setting. Less well known is an alternative founding myth that enjoyed popularity among Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars especially in the early seventeenth century: the myth of Wu Taibo, which is the topic of this chapter. In contrast to the Amaterasu myth which asserted the Japanese emperors' heavenly descent, this narrative traced the sovereigns' genealogy back to a Chinese prince. The Japanese scholars who endorsed this myth were less interested in emphasizing Japanese uniqueness than in showing its affiliation to the sphere of Confucian civilization. The theory of the imperial family's Chinese origin provided a historical legitimation for their endeavors to introduce Neo-Confucian teachings to Japan. However, when China was conquered by "northern barbarians" in the mid-seventeenth century, the Wu Taibo myth fell from favor in Japan. As the Sinocentric world order that contrasted civilized China with the allegedly barbarian countries surrounding it was increasingly questioned, Japanese scholars came to prefer a founding myth that was unrelated to China. Employing the concept of cultural memory, this chapter analyses how changes in a group's world view necessitate a rewriting of history.

Introduction: Myth and the State in Japan

Myths play an important role in the construction and maintenance of collective identities.¹ One of their social functions is to “state a precedent which constitutes an ideal” (Malinowski 33). Myth thus “grounds” (Kerényi 16) or justifies the *status quo*—be it a social order, moral norm, or form of government—“mak[ing] the present into something meaningful, divinely inspired, necessary, and unchangeable” (J. Assmann 62). In order to fulfil this function, myths must always be connected to the present. This is achieved by what Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996) has called the “work on myth,” that is, an unending process of adaptations, (re)interpretations, and (re)formulations.²

Historical ruptures and transitional phases pose a special challenge in this process (Hein-Kircher 26). If the *status quo* changes, the myths on which it is grounded have to change as well or they will lose their *raison d'être*. In such a situation, new myths might appear, or the old ones might be modified beyond recognition. The Meiji Restoration of 1868, commonly regarded as the beginning of the modern period in Japan, was such a historical rupture. New thoughts and ideologies streamed into the formerly isolated country, and the political and social order was fundamentally altered, as a group of oligarchs took over the government after overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate that had ruled the archipelago for the preceding two and a half centuries. They legitimated their actions by reinstating the emperor, who under the Tokugawa shoguns had been relegated to a merely ceremonial position, as head of state and supreme ruler. This was the beginning of a modern state ideology centered around the tennō.

New as it was, this ideology (as the name *Meiji Restoration* suggests) was heralded as a return to the allegedly ideal conditions of ancient Japan as described in the myths recorded in the oldest extant Japanese myth-

¹ The research for this chapter was supported by the JSPS KAKENHI research project 18KK0004 “‘National Cultures’ and Religiosity in Modernizing Germany and Japan” (principal investigator: Maeda Ryōzo 前田良三).

² On Blumenberg’s concept of the “work on myth,” see Steineck 28–30 and Bottici; see also the chapter by Steineck in this volume: “Work on Myth in Medieval Japan.”

histories: the *Kojiki* 古事記 (*Record of Ancient Matters*, 712) and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (*Chronicles of Japan*, 720). According to these sources, the imperial family was descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu (and the heavenly deity Takami musuhi) and had ruled Japan without interruption since 660 BCE³ when the first emperor Jinmu 神武天皇 had founded the empire.⁴

Nativist scholars and politicians utilized this foundation myth in order to construct the idea of an immutable Japanese national essence (*kokutai* 国体). Japan, they argued, was a family state in which the emperor occupied the position of a father of the nation while all subjects were regarded as his children. It was Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), the pioneering scholar of the nativist school commonly called National Learning (*Kokugaku*), who in his monumental commentary on the *Kojiki* stressed the emperor's exceptional position as the successor and representative of the sun goddess. His self-declared disciple Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) expanded the imperial family's divinity to the whole of the Japanese people, thus reformulating older ideas of Japan as a land of gods. For him, Japan was superior to other countries. Therefore, it had not only the right but the mission to unite the world under its rule (Antoni, *Kokutai* 132–33, 148–51). This mission was expressed with the slogan *hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇 (“the eight corners of the world under one roof”) which was ascribed to the first emperor Jinmu based on a passage in the *Nihon shoki* (Edwards 290–92).

If one thinks of a founding myth of the Japanese state, the above narrative usually comes to mind. Without a doubt, this narrative played a central role in the construction of a modern national identity in Japan.⁵ It is also true that it was based (though at times somewhat loosely) on the accounts of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. However, this narrative was the result of

³ On the date of 660, which is only mentioned in the *Nihon shoki*, and its conversion into the Gregorian calendar, see Klaus Antoni's chapter in this volume as well as his text “Warum 660 v. Chr.?”

⁴ For English translations, see Philippi (*Kojiki*) and Aston (*Nihon shoki*). See also Antoni's German translation of the *Kojiki* with extensive commentary.

⁵ See, for instance, Chiba; Ruoff 1–105; Saitō, *Yomikaerareta Nihon shoki* 189–253.

a long and dynamic reception history. Before Norinaga and other nativist scholars unearthed the *Kojiki* and made it the centerpiece of their reconstruction of the Age of the Gods in the late eighteenth century, a number of alternate founding myths circulated, each supported by different groups for different political or religious purposes.⁶ The present chapter discusses one of these rivalling founding myths that traced the imperial line to a Chinese rather than to a divine origin: the myth of Wu Taibo 吳泰伯.

The Myth of Wu Taibo and its Reception in Japan

Wu Taibo is mentioned in several ancient Chinese texts⁷ as the uncle of King Wen 文, the founder of the Zhou 周 dynasty (c. 1046 BCE–256 BCE). Although he was the eldest son, he gave up his legitimate rights of succession and fled to the south, when he realized that his father favored his younger brother, who was ready to rebel against the Shang 商 dynasty (c. sixteenth century–c. 1046 BCE), as successor. In the south, he adopted the customs of the southern barbarians, who realized his noble nature and made him their king. Confucius highly praised Taibo's conduct as an exemplar of virtuous action. Several dynastic chronicles dating from the Tang 唐 period (618–907), such as the *Jin shu* 晉書 (648) and the *Liang shu* 梁書 (635), state that the Japanese regarded themselves as descendants of Taibo (Hudson 25–27; Watanabe 279; Nakai 188; Ng, “Wu T'ai-po” 55).

In Japan,⁸ the Zen priest Chūgan Engetsu 中巖円月 (1300–1375) took up this theory of the imperial family's Chinese origin when he wrote a national history sometime between 1340 and 1342. However, when he handed his treatise in to the imperial court, its contents were regarded as

⁶ On the reception history of the myths recorded in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, see Brownlee; Felt; Saitō, *Yomikaerareta nihon shinwa*; Isomae. On myth interpretations by early Kokugaku scholars, including Norinaga, see Burns.

⁷ These texts include the no longer extant *Wei lüe* 魏略 (239–265) quoted in fascicle 30 of the *Wei zhi* 魏志 (third century), the *Wei shu* 魏書 (551–554), and others. See Hudson 25; Kracht 140n151.

⁸ For a detailed description of the myth's reception history in Japan, see Ng, *Imagining China* 45–67; Nakai 187–95.

damaging to the imperial family and thus it was burned (Chisaka 281–82; Kracht 140n151). Therefore, we can infer that the theory was not widely propagated, much less accepted at the time (Ng, “Wu T’ai-po” 56). Engetsu lived during the period of imperial schism (1336–1392). While his treatise was burned by order of the Northern Court (Kracht 140n151), the theory of the imperial line’s connection to Wu Taibo was also criticized by one of the firmest supporters of the Southern Court: Engetsu’s contemporary Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房 (1293–1354). In his *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (*Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, 1339–1343), this prominent courtier and political advisor to the Southern Court quoted a “scripture from another country” that depicted the Japanese as descendants of Wu Taibo, only to reject this view as “completely mistaken.” “Since the Japanese are descendants of the gods of heaven and earth,” he asked, “how could they possibly derive from Wu Taibo, who lived in a later age?” (Iwasa et al. 79–80; cf. Varley 104).

A similar controversy centering on the Wu Taibo myth unfolded in the late eighteenth century between Tō Teikan 藤貞幹 (1732–1797), who is commonly regarded as one of the pioneers of Japanese archaeology, and the nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga. In his treatise *Shōkōhatsu* 衡口発 (*A Bold Statement*, 1781), Teikan argues that a descendant of Wu Taibo had arrived in Japan via the Ryukyu islands and fathered the later emperor Jinmu with a native of the Amami archipelago. In order to harmonize this theory with the chronology of Chinese and Korean historiographies, Teikan dates Jinmu’s founding of the Japanese state to 59 BCE, that is six hundred years later than the *Nihon shoki*’s dating of the event. Moreover, he argues that important aspects of the Japanese language as well as social, political, and religious customs had been introduced from the Asian mainland, mainly from the polities on the Korean peninsula, in antiquity (Tō, cf. Osanai 216–18). This was a frontal attack on the proponents of National Learning, who viewed the very cultural aspects Teikan declared to be foreign borrowings as the unique and immutable essence of Japanese culture predating the allegedly corrupting influence of Chinese culture. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Teikan’s treatise elicited a sharp rejoinder from Norinaga in which the nativist scholar condemned Teikan’s theses as the

words of a madman. In the work titled *Kenkyōjin* 鉗狂人 (*Restrain the Madman*, 1785), Norinaga accuses Teikan of profaning Japan's glorious past and the imperial family (Motoori 273).

Engetsu is a prominent writer of the Literature of the Five Mountains (*gozan bungaku* 五山文学). This term derives from the principal monastic centers of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism in Kyoto and Kamakura. It refers to poetry and prose in Literary Sinitic produced by the monks of these centers during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Pollack 7–18). In his twenties and thirties, Engetsu spent seven years in China to study Zen Buddhism and unsuccessfully attempted to return ten years later. Both his biography and his poems reflect his deep respect and admiration for Chinese culture.⁹ Teikan was born as the son of a Buddhist priest and thus took the tonsure at the age of eleven. However, he grew to hate Buddhism and at the age of eighteen returned to lay life. His critical attitude towards Buddhism clearly distinguishes him from Engetsu, but he shared with the Zen monk an admiration for Confucian learning. During his lifetime, Teikan was regarded as very knowledgeable on ancient history. Unusual for this time, he was not only interested in the chronicles of China, Korea, and Japan, but even more so in material artefacts (Furusō; Sakamoto). Such an interest almost inevitably had to lead to his realization of parallels between Japanese and other Asian artefacts. To sum up, Engetsu and Teikan shared a keen interest in and deep respect for Chinese culture.

Their counterparts, Chikafusa and Norinaga, on the other hand, had a highly chauvinistic view of Japanese history. The former accepted empress Jingū's legendary conquest of the Korean peninsula as a historical fact (Iwasa et al. 77–79), whereas the latter devoted his energies to proving the superiority of ancient Japan's allegedly pure culture over the cold, rationalistic "Chinese spirit" (*karagokoro* 漢意) (Antoni, "Karagokoro" 54–56; Bowring 264–66). At the risk of slight oversimplification, the controversies centering on Wu Taibo in fourteenth- and eighteenth-century Japan can thus be viewed as clashes of Sinophile and nativist views about Japan's history and culture. However, as the next section will show, the picture was

⁹ See Chisaka; Pollack 41, 73, 76, 105–6, 147–48; Ury 41–49.

much more complicated in the seventeenth century, when a number of leading Confucian scholars advocated the theory of the imperial line's descent from Wu Taibo in order to demonstrate Japan's parity with or even superiority to China in following the Confucian Way.¹⁰

Seventeenth Century: Wu Taibo as a Sage Who Brought the Way to Japan

The most prominent supporter of the theory of the imperial family's descent from Wu Taibo is probably Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), one of the pioneers of Neo-Confucian Learning in Japan.¹¹ In his *Jinmu tennō ron* 神武天皇論 (*On Jinmu Tennō*, 1618), the scholar, who was to serve as an advisor or tutor to the first four Tokugawa shoguns, approvingly quotes Engetsu's theory. Razan's treatise is informed by his teacher Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561–1619), who began his career as a Zen monk. Under the influence of *gozan* scholarship, Seika was the first Edo-period scholar to suggest the imperial family's descent from Taibo. While Seika's attempt was purely based on Chinese texts, Razan attempted to harmonize the myth of Wu Taibo and the official myth-history of the *Nihon shoki*. For instance, he argued that the inhabitants of Kyushu had regarded Taibo's descendant who reached Japanese shores as a deity—thus the myth of the heavenly descent of the sun goddess's grandchild as recorded in the Japanese chronicle was born. Like many Confucian scholars Razan regarded the deities who appeared in the *Nihon shoki*'s myths as mere humans (Hayashi 280–81; Ng, “Wu T'ai-po” 56–57).¹² Enthusiastically, he concluded:

the Ji 姬 prince [= Wu Taibo] and his descendants, having already held sway for a hundred generations in succession, will continue their reign for ten thousand generations to come. Is it not glorious? [In China,] the once-powerful Wu 吳 state [eleventh century–473

¹⁰ On this point, see also Nakai.

¹¹ On Razan's discussion of the Wu Taibo theory, see Brownlee 24–28; Felt 203–11.

¹² For a partial translation of Razan's treatise into English, see Tsunoda et al. 358–60.

BCE] may have been overcome by the Yue 越, but their reign in our country is coeval with Heaven and Earth. I am therefore more and more inclined to believe in the sovereign virtue of Taibo. If Engetsu could come back to life, I would like to ask him what he thought of this. (Hayashi 281; cf. Tsunoda et al. 359)¹³

He goes on to provide a Neo-Confucian interpretation of the Three Imperial Regalia, the mirror, the jewel, and the sword. Since he regarded the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild as nothing more than the embroidered account of the arrival of Taibo's descendant in Kyushu, for him the imperial regalia carried by the sun goddess's grandson in the *Nihon shoki*'s account could not be of heavenly origin either. They had been brought from China by Taibo's descendant. However, in Razan's eyes this did not decrease their value:

The Three Regalia are three virtues. The human mind is empty and transparent; it reflects, and it apprehends. This constitutes wisdom (*chi* 智). Is it not truly a mirror? The human mind is round and perfect in its virtue, as stainless as a pearl. This constitutes benevolence (*jin* 仁). It is a jewel, is it not? The human mind is upright and resolute and makes decisions in accordance with its sense of duty. This constitutes courage (*yū* 勇). It is a sword, is it not? The Three Regalia are divine, and the three virtues are those of the human mind, which is the abode of the divine. (Hayashi 281; cf. Tsunoda et al. 359–60)

Thus, Razan, repeating an argument first suggested by his teacher Seika, interprets the three regalia as manifestations of what according to the "Doctrine of the Mean" (*Zhongyong* 中庸) are the cardinal virtues of the sage, namely wisdom, benevolence, and courage (Bowring 66–67; Ng, "Wu T'ai-po" 57–58). However, despite his thinly veiled enthusiasm for Engetsu's theory, Razan was more circumspect than the Zen monk had been. At the end of his treatise, he emphasized that this was nothing more

¹³ The translation follows Tsunoda et al. with slight modifications.

than his personal opinion, which he would never dare to put forward in an official document (Nakai 192–93).

Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山 (1619–1691), another Neo-Confucian scholar and contemporary of Razan, mentions the Wu Taibo theory in his *Miwa monogatari* 三輪物語 (*A Tale of Miwa*), a work written in the form of a conversation between three individuals of differing background. One of the speakers, described as “old man,” argues that the sun goddess mentioned in the Japanese myths was in fact Taibo. Before Taibo’s arrival, the old man claims, the inhabitants of Japan lived in a state of savagery, lacking agriculture and all forms of civilized life. When Taibo arrived from China, he taught the people not only how to plant the five grains, utilize horses and oxen, win iron, produce bows, arrows, and fishing nets, build houses and weave garments, but also schooled them in proper social conduct. Following the three virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and courage (which are symbolized by the imperial regalia), he instructed the people to worship their ancestors, respect their parents, and recognize hierarchical differences of status, thus bringing peace to the land. Due to Taibo’s tutelage, the old man maintains, Japan had achieved a higher level of civilization than any other barbarian people. For this reason, the people started to revere him as a god and called him Amaterasu (Kumazawa 35–38; cf. Bowring 86–87; Nakai 190). For Banzan, the imperial family seems to have become a source of supreme moral authority by upholding and transmitting to later generations the Confucian virtues Taibo had introduced to Japan in antiquity (Bitō 224).¹⁴

¹⁴ A similar phenomenon can be observed in Chosŏn Korea (1392–1897), where Kija 箕子 (Ch. Jizi) was venerated as ancestor of the royal family and culture hero. In early Chinese texts, Kija is described as a relative of the last Shang king, who criticized his monarch’s government. Thus, he was degraded to the status of a slave or imprisoned. When the Zhou overthrew the Shang dynasty, Kija fled to the Korean peninsula, where King Wu 武 (trad. r. 1046–1043 BCE) of Zhou enfeoffed him as king of Chosŏn. From the eleventh century, Kija starts to appear in Korean chronicles, where he is presented as the successor of state founder Tan’gun. The founder of the Chosŏn dynasty declared himself a descendant of Kija and thus chose the name Chosŏn for his court. Similar to Taibo in Japan, Kija allowed Neo-Confucian scholar-bureaucrats in Korea to link their court and culture to China, the center of the Confucian world. Kija was a topic of conversation during the visit of Chosŏn embassies to Tokugawa Japan. It thus seems

Other prominent Neo-Confucian scholars of this time who expressed their support for the theory of the imperial line's descent from Taibo include Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608–1648) and Kinoshita Jun'an 木下順庵 (1621–1698) (Bowring 77–78; Ng, “Wu T'ai-po” 59–60). Why did all these scholars try so hard to trace back Japanese culture and the imperial line to a Chinese origin? In order to answer this question, we have to take the so-called *hua-yi* 華夷 dichotomy into consideration, that is, the Sinocentric ideology of a central civilization surrounded on all sides by barbarians. This ideology became prevalent in Japan in the seventeenth century, when Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) Neo-Confucian teachings started to gain wider acceptance (before that time, Neo-Confucian learning had been largely confined to the Zen monasteries). Subsequently, many scholars in Japan started to measure their own culture according to Confucian standards and endeavored to turn their lords into sage rulers by teaching them to follow Chinese examples as expounded in the Confucian classics.

The Civilized-Barbarian Paradigm

In China, the distinction between barbarians and (Chinese) civilization can be traced to pre-imperial times. Ancient texts clearly depict a sense of superiority that the dwellers of the Central States (*zhongguo* 中国) felt with regard to the “barbarians of the four corners” (*si yi* 四夷). Since Chinese thinkers often referred to their culture as *zhonghua* 中華 (Central Flowering), this paradigm is often described as the *hua-yi* dichotomy. The term *zhongguo* first appeared in oracle bone inscriptions dating from the Shang period. In the earliest texts, the term mainly referred to the territory ruled by the legendary Xia 夏 people and their allies. Even before the unification of the Qin 秦 (221–206 BCE) and Han 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE) dynasties,

possible that the discourses on Taibo in Japan and on Kija in Korea were directly connected and influenced each other. Also similar to Japan, Kija fell from favor in the modern period, when nationalist historians, in their quest to rewrite Korean history along ethnic lines, rediscovered the more purely “Korean” Tan'gun (Jang; Pai 60, 91–92, 112–14, 116–19, 423n13; Schmid 32–34; Shim 271–84).

this concept gradually evolved and, in the Confucian classics, came to comprise three different aspects, namely a geographical, a political, and a cultural aspect. Geographically, the term referred to China and its position at the center of the world, surrounded by peripheral states. Politically, it referred to China as the area under direct imperial jurisdiction. Culturally, *zhongguo* denoted the civilized world. People living outside this sphere were regarded as southern, eastern, western, or northern barbarians (*man* 蛮, *yi* 夷, *zou* 戎, and *di* 狄). The term thus claimed geographical, political, and cultural centrality for China (Huang, "Idea" 408 (1)–05 (4)).

It was the cultural dimension that became more and more emphasized. In early Chinese texts, the barbarian peoples inhabiting the regions bordering on China were described as barely human. Their manner of living was frequently compared to that of beasts. However, as Yuri Pines has demonstrated, being a civilized person in pre-Qin texts did not refer to ethnicity or race but rather to the adherence to the common ritual norms of the Zhou dynasty. In other words, behavioral patterns decided whether or not a person belonged to the Central Civilization (Pines 62). Pines draws attention to an important aspect of the *hua-yi* dichotomy that was to become central in Korean and Japanese discourses in the seventeenth century, namely "the idea of the transformability of savageness into civilized behavior" (74). In other words, barbarians were able "to 'upgrade' their status by emulating the ritually correct behavior of the Chinese" (Pines 74). The theory of the imperial line's descent from Wu Taibo thus allowed Japanese Neo-Confucians to explain how the Confucian Way had reached Japan and transformed it from a barbarian backwater to a Confucian state on a par with China.

The conviction that China represented the civilizational model which other cultures should follow was, however, increasingly questioned from the mid-seventeenth century on, when the Qing, who, according to the traditional Chinese worldview, belonged to the category of northern barbarians, managed to usurp the throne in China. After this political development, scholars emerged in both Japan and Korea who claimed the status of central civilization for their own country. The Confucian standards for measuring culture were by then internalized to such an extent that they were

basically beyond questioning. Japanese and Korean scholars rather challenged the idea that the China of the day could still serve as an exemplar for the fulfilment of these standards.

Japan as Central Civilization

In Japan, this stance can be observed in the work of Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685), who claimed the position of central civilization for his own country. As a proponent of Ancient Learning (*kogaku* 古学), Sokō was highly critical of Neo-Confucian teachings which in his opinion misrepresented the Confucian classics and were not applicable to everyday matters. He argued that the Way of the Sages had been lost in China and that in order to understand the Way one had to read the ancient classics rather than Zhu Xi's commentaries thereof. These radical views led to Sokō's exile from Edo (Tokyo) in 1666 (Leinss 4–5, 8).

During his ten years in exile, Sokō wrote his most famous work, *Chūchō jijitsu* 中朝事実 (*True Facts about the Central Kingdom*). From this time on, he consistently referred to Japan as Central Flowering (*chūka* 中華), Central Realm (*chūgoku* 中国), or Central Court (*chūchō* 中朝) (Earl 38–40). As Huang Chun-chieh has demonstrated, Sokō stripped the term *zhongguo* of its political and geographical association with China by emphasizing the cultural dimension (“Idea” 404 (5)–03 (6); “On the Contextual Turn” 215–16). For him, the decisive criterium for cultural excellence lay in obtaining the Middle Way (*chūdō* 中道) or hitting the Mean. He emphasized that Japan alone was blessed with well-balanced climate, which was neither too hot nor too cold, neither too wet nor too dry and thus brought forth fertile water and soil. From a cultural and political perspective, too, Japan had obtained the Mean, as Sokō was convinced that only Japan fulfilled the three virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and courage. He tried to demonstrate Japan's superiority, according to Confucian standards, through a historical analysis. It was due to the Japanese emperors' benevolence, he argued, that there had never been a dynastic change in Japanese history, whereas Chinese and Korean history was characterized by incessant

internal strife. The establishment and preservation of government and administration as well as the regulation of the lives of the populace, according to Sokō, were proof of the superior wisdom of Japanese rulers. With regard to courage, Sokō emphasized that Japan's martial valor was unequalled since—in contrast to China and Korea—it had never been conquered by another state, and in antiquity had even conquered Korea and turned it into a vassal state. For Sokō, Ming's defeat at the hands of the Qing clearly showed its unworthiness.¹⁵ Like Razan and Banzan, he saw the three cardinal virtues symbolized in the imperial regalia: "The jewel represents the virtue of warm benevolence; the mirror represents supreme wisdom; the sword represents decisive courage. What they symbolize and give form to, is in each case the sincerity and virtue of the heavenly gods" (Yamaga 253; cf. Earl 49).

But in contrast to Razan, Sokō was highly critical of attempts to trace the imperial line to Taibo. He reaffirmed the imperial family's descent from the sun goddess as recorded in the ancient Japanese myth-histories and went as far as to question Taibo's virtue. Had the prince not deserted his home country by fleeing to the south? "How can this be seen as the way of humanity? To not only not understand this but through forced analogies declare one's own country to be that of another is the act of a traitor, a rebellious child" (Yamaga 366; cf. Nakai 192).¹⁶

Some of Sokō's points, especially the emphasis he placed on Japan's uninterrupted imperial lineage and its military prowess, were taken up by proponents of various schools of learning in the latter half of the Tokugawa period, such as National Learning and the Mito school. Arano Yasunori 荒野泰典 described this line of reasoning as a "Japanese-style civilized/barbarian consciousness" (*nihongata kai ishiki* 日本型華夷意識) that stressed military prestige and the presence of the emperor as criteria for Japan's

¹⁵ See Earl 44–51; Uenaka 147–48; Bowring 120; Jansen 79–80; McNally 158; Harootunian 14–16; Toby, *State* 222–26.

¹⁶ Other Confucian scholars, especially adherents to the Neo-Confucian Kimon 崎門 school and Mito 水戸 school, criticized the theory of the imperial family's descent from Taibo but nonetheless showed great admiration for the Chinese sage (Ng, "Wu T'ai-po" 60–61).

cultural superiority (Arano x).¹⁷ In this way, Sokō can be seen as a forerunner of modern tennō ideology.

Concluding Remarks: Wu Taibo in Japan's Cultural Memory

The changing reception of the Wu Taibo myth in Japan can only be understood against the background of an emerging cultural identity. In the early seventeenth century the discourse was dominated by Neo-Confucian scholars who accepted the Sinocentric idea of a central civilization surrounded by barbarian states rather uncritically. It would be an exaggeration to claim that they accepted the status as a marginal barbarian state accorded to Japan in the Chinese world order. They rather tended to argue that Japan was the most advanced non-Chinese state. However, they did not question China's centrality, and they accepted the fact that China was the homeland of the Confucian Way, which had been transmitted to Japan at a later date.

After the Qing takeover, however, scholars like Sokō argued that China could no longer serve as a civilizational model for Japan and that now Japan, as the only remaining custodian of the Confucian way, should properly be called the Central Flowering. While acknowledging the validity of the Confucian classics and their Chinese origin, Sokō depicted China's history as one of decline. For him, the emergence of Neo-Confucian teachings during the Song 宋 period (960–1279) signified that the Chinese no longer understood the ancient classics. Only the ancient China described in these classics, he maintained, could serve as a cultural model. However, like Razan and other early Neo-Confucians, Sokō was convinced that the level of a civilization could only be measured according to Confucian standards.

In a final step, Motoori Norinaga and other scholars of National Learning rejected the validity of the Confucian classics and bemoaned their allegedly corrupting influence on Japan. The model for Japan's future, they argued, could only be found in the ancient Japanese sources. In their view,

¹⁷ On this point, see also Katō 20; Watanabe 284, 288–89.

all Chinese influence on Japanese culture had to be eradicated. While Sokō had only questioned China's aptness as a model for fulfilling the Confucian way, the proponents of National Learning denied the validity of Confucianism as such.

The theory of the Japanese imperial family's descent from Wu Taibo played a critical role in early Neo-Confucians' endeavors to depict Japan as a part of the central civilization represented by China. Sokō, while acknowledging cultural borrowing from China that benefitted Japan, already took a more negative stance toward Chinese civilization. He was especially critical of the many dynastic changes in Chinese history and thus preferred an imperial genealogy that was not connected to China. At this point, the myth of Wu Taibo stopped fulfilling a useful function in the construction of a Japanese cultural identity.

As pointed out at the outset of this chapter, myths achieve a legitimating function by providing a historical precedent for a group's present world view. Thus, Japanese Neo-Confucians in the early seventeenth century attempted to legitimize their Neo-Confucian ideals (which could also be used to bolster Tokugawa claims to rule, not to speak of the Neo-Confucian scholars' own social standing)¹⁸ by "grounding" them on a view of history that connected the Japanese imperial line to the homeland of Confucianism. But as soon as the historical developments in China cast doubts on the validity of those very ideals, the Taibo myth—no longer matching the political realities of the day—lost its legitimizing function as well.

¹⁸ While in China or Korea, studying the Confucian classics and succeeding in the civil service examinations was a prerequisite for achieving prestige, wealth, and political influence, in Tokugawa Japan, Confucian scholars found themselves in a rather different situation. There was no civil service examination and Neo-Confucianism, far from being the ruling ideology, was regarded as nothing more than one form of expert knowledge among others. Beside the shogunate, many feudal lords (*daimyō* 大名) employed Confucian scholars. Although they were respected, in most cases their political influence was limited. Most Confucian scholars were of humble rank (former monks, physicians, or masterless samurai) and were regarded as something akin to artisans rather than members of the ruling elite. Especially in the early Tokugawa period, they were hard-pressed to demonstrate the utility of their learning (Kang 62–63, 65–66, 70–71; Toby, "Sakoku" 51–53).

This process can be framed by using Aleida and Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory. Providing a historical foundation to a group's view of itself and the world, cultural memory "is continually subject to processes of reorganization according to the changes taking place in the frame of reference of each successive present" (J. Assmann 26). According to Aleida Assmann, cultural memory exists in two different modes, functional and storage memory. While the functional memory contains elements that are arranged into a coherent history that allows a group to make sense of its present situation, the storage memory contains an amorphous mass of elements that lack a vital connection to the present, in other words, elements that do not form an integral part of a group's collective identity (A. Assmann 123–28). The distinction of these two modes of memory provides a useful framework for explaining the reception history of the Taibo myth in Japan. When after the demise of the Ming dynasty, China was no longer seen as a civilizational model for Japan, the myth of Wu Taibo—and with it the theory of the imperial line's descent from the Chinese prince—moved from the functional to the storage memory. Today, everyone in Japan knows the name Amaterasu and most people are aware of the imperial family's alleged descent from the sun goddess (whether they believe in its historicity is another question). The name Wu Taibo, on the other hand, is barely known even among specialists on Japanese mythology. It does not have to stay that way, however. If in the future the need should arise to reconceptualize Japanese identity in a way that emphasizes cultural connections to the Asian mainland, the myth of Wu Taibo might again be retrieved from the storage memory and incorporated into a new foundational history of the Japanese state that provides legitimacy for a modified relationship between Japan and its East Asian neighbors.

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MYTH IN PREMODERN JAPAN

Kōki – the “Imperial Calendar” Jinmu Tennō and the Construction of 660 BCE

Klaus ANTONI

When we delve into the study of Japanese pre- and early history, we will soon discover the existence of several distinct and conflicting systems of linear chronology associated with this subject. On the one hand, we encounter the insights provided by the historical sciences, which offer a chronological framework for organizing human settlement on the Japanese islands. This framework is constructed through the examination of archaeological evidence and the analysis of early historical periods.

However, this scientific understanding of early history stands in stark contrast to another system that continues to exert influence in contemporary Japan, albeit in a symbolic and religious sense. This alternative view of history does not rely on archaeological findings or historical artifacts; instead, it draws from written primary sources, namely the Kojiki and Nihon shoki, which present mythical narratives tracing the origins of the world to the establishment of the Japanese state. These narratives place particular emphasis on “Emperor Jinmu,” originally known under the name Kamuyamato Iwarebiko. This mythical perspective on history played a crucial role in establishing the historical legitimacy of the imperial system, especially during the modern era after 1868. According to this conceptualization of history, the mytho-historical starting point is determined by the specific founding year of the Empire that corresponds to 660 BCE in the Western calendar.

The process of selecting, constructing and sacralizing this date carries significant weight within the broader context of the political mythology surrounding “Emperor Jinmu.” Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the origins of this date and examine the underlying reasons for designating it as the exact starting point of the empire’s history. Through a

comparative textual analysis, we will uncover an unexpectedly international dimension associated with this foundational date.

Introduction

The year 660 BCE holds a significant place in the political mythology of contemporary Japan. Regarded as a historical anchor and genesis point, it not only signifies the inception of Japanese statehood but also marks the establishment of a distinctively Japanese calendar, known as the *kōki* 皇紀 or Imperial Calendar. This particular date is intimately intertwined with the mythical and legendary figure of Kamuyamato Iwarebiko, later known as Jinmu Tennō 神武天皇, whose veneration played a pivotal role in shaping modern nationalism, particularly during the late Meiji era and in the 1940s. The central inquiry herein revolves around the origins of the date 660 BCE and the circumstances surrounding its selection, including the individuals involved, their motivations, and the rationale behind choosing this year as the seminal moment of the empire's founding myth. I will demonstrate that the *kōki*, the linear calendar introduced during the Meiji era (1868–1912) with its inception fixed at 660 BCE, can be traced back to calculations made in earlier centuries, notably during the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During these times, this calendar system represented the antithesis of a strictly nationalistic chronology, as it was designed with the intent of synchronizing and harmonizing the temporal calculations of Japan, China, and Europe. This underscores an early form of calendrical syntheses which were obscured with the rise of nation-state ideologies from the Meiji to the early Shōwa period.¹

¹ The present chapter is primarily based on Antoni, “Warum 660 v. Chr.?” I would like to express my gratitude to Sven Osterkamp and Matthieu Felt for additional valuable information.

Antiquity

An enduring enigma within textual scholarship on early Japanese history concerns two distinct annalistic works that bear strikingly similar subject matter and emerged at the imperial court of Heijōkyō in the early eighth century CE, separated by a span of merely eight years. The *Kojiki* 古事記, often translated as *Records of Ancient Matters*,² was formerly offered to Empress Genmei (元明天皇, 660–721) in the spring of 712 by the court official Ō no Yasumaro (太安万侶, d. 723), while the *Chronicles of Japan*, the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀,³ was completed in 720 under the supervision of Prince Toneri 舍人親王 (676–735), son of Tenmu Tennō 天武天皇 (ca. 631–686). Both texts contain the historical knowledge of Japan during their time. Starting at the genesis of the cosmos, their narrative spans both the realms of deities and humanity and tells of the mytho-legendary origins of the state as well as the first legendary rulers of Japan. It concludes in the historical period, close to the time of their composition. The *Kojiki* finishes its narrative arc with the reign of Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (554–628), while the *Nihon shoki* extends the historical account up to the year 697, the eleventh year of Empress Jitō’s 持統天皇 (645–703) reign. However, for the most part these general points are all that the two otherwise distinct works have in common. While the *Kojiki* presents a poetically coherent narrative, the *Nihon shoki* is dedicated to the meticulous portrayal of factual history rather than mythic tales.

It is widely acknowledged that the template for the latter was derived from the official dynastic histories of China which served as the quintessential model for historiography across East Asia, epitomized by the *Shiji* 史記, the magnum opus of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145–90 BC) from the early

² *Kojiki*, NKBT 1; there exists a long history of *Kojiki* translations in Western languages, beginning with Basil Hall Chamberlain’s (1850–1935) still highly valuable work “*Koji-ki*” or “*Records of Ancient Matters*,” published in Yokohama as the 10th supplement to “The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan” in 1882. The present work is based on translations in Antoni, *Kojiki*.

³ *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67/68; for a translation, see among others Aston, *Nihongi*.

Han era.⁴ The early state of Yamato, skillful at asserting its equality with China, as Suiko Tennō's famous letter shows,⁵ adopted the annalistic model established by the *Shiji* to record its own at times meticulously crafted imperial history. In this context, the ability to present an extended, chronologically documented history served a pivotal role in legitimizing the state: according to Confucian precepts, the antiquity of the state determined its prestige and rank. The profound historical depth and purportedly continuous lineage of the Chinese imperial institution, tracing its origins to the earliest epochs of Chinese antiquity, thus served as the benchmark for creating a historically continuous and distinctively Japanese statehood vis-à-vis China. Unlike the comparatively simple *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki* met the requirements of its time for a sophisticated historiographical compendium that also exuded a certain respectability beyond its territorial confines, particularly in diplomatic engagements (Antoni, *Kojiki* 401–02).

The chronology of successive dynasties and their sovereigns throughout history was an important criterion for validating the authenticity of China's dynastic annals. The Chinese record of rulers, always meticulously kept, served as the bedrock for the dynastic legitimacy of the state per se.⁶ Each dynasty compiled a history in which they affirmed their predecessor's claim to rule, which allowed the continuum of rulership to be preserved even amidst repeated dynastic changes. Conversely, in Japan, the construct of an unbroken lineage of dynastic succession based on a fixed genealogy with the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as its foundation has been upheld since its inception.

In this process, chronology assumes a vital role. Here, too, parallels as well as disparities emerge between the two works. One conspicuous

⁴ For detailed information on this, see the entry for Sima Qian 司馬遷 in the digital China dictionary *ChinaKnowledge* by Ulrich Theobald, a sinologist at the University of Tübingen.

⁵ The self-confidence of the Japanese ruling dynasty vis-à-vis China is first evidenced by the salutation in Empress Suiko's letter to the ruler of the Tang in 607, in which the Japanese ruler refers to herself as 'Emperor of the East' and the Chinese ruler as 'Emperor of the West' (*Nihon shoki* 192–93, Suiko 16/19/11; Antoni, *Kojiki* 500).

⁶ See the entry "The Twenty-Five Official Dynastic Histories" (*ershiwushi* 二十五史) in Theobald's *ChinaKnowledge*.

similarity lies in their fundamental structure, in which history unfolds in a seamless progression from cosmogony and theogony. The genesis of the cosmos precedes the succession of divine progenitors, commencing with the primordial deities of antiquity and followed by creator deities such as Izanami, Izanagi, Amaterasu, Tsukiyomi, and Susanoo, along with their progeny. Subsequently, the narrative transitions to deities and cultural heroes, who lay the foundations of the world and the polity, and culminates in the advent of human emperors. In both works, this continuum is evolutionary, devoid of existential ruptures, and imbued with the teleological objective of substantiating the establishment of the human realm and the Japanese state. Here, the narratives of the Age of the Gods epitomize myths in the truest sense of the term. However, the approach differs greatly, as *Nihon shoki* presents a multifaceted, heterogeneous origin story drawing from diverse sources in cultural history that contrast with the linear narrative structure of the *Kojiki*.

Upon the establishment of the human realm, particularly the state and its imperial governance, both sources transition into historiography, albeit with significant disparities in structure and historical detail. Commencing with Kamuyamato Iwarebiko (later known as Jinmu), both sources provide a lineage of emperors.⁷ Notably, both historical narratives conclude with the reigns of female tennō. For *Nihon shoki*, the inauguration of the supposed first tennō, Kamuyamato Iwarebiko, signifies the beginning of the historical period in a predominantly Chinese sense, dedicated to documenting an unbroken dynastic lineage. *Kojiki* likewise adheres to this framework by narrating the historical continuum along a dynastically structured

⁷ The *Nihon shoki* asserts an extraordinarily long time span of more than 1,792,470 years for the Japanese story of creation (*Nihon shoki* 67 188; Aston 1: 110). The commentaries point out that this wide time frame has to be seen as an imitation of corresponding Chinese patterns. The existential rupture between the Age of the Gods and the Age of the Emperors is thus marked by an unbridgeable temporal gap. The *Kojiki*, it should be noted, does not know this concept; here the Age of the Gods passes directly into the Age of the Emperors without an existential or chronological break. This could be another reason for the attractiveness of this narrative for the modern ideology of a direct imperial line of rule.

timeline.⁸ Furthermore, akin to *Nihon shoki*, it gives precise lifespans for most rulers which grow more and more unrealistic with increasing antiquity. For instance, *Nihon shoki* attributes a lifespan of 127 years to Jinmu, and *Kojiki* even assigns him 137 years. Both sources integrate these dates into a coherent calendrical system. However, this marks the extent of the parallels between *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Although *Kojiki* sporadically employs calendrical data concerning individual emperors from the earliest period in its glosses, these instances merely entail the years of death (*hōnen* 崩年) within the framework of the Chinese annual cycle.⁹

In contrast, *Nihon shoki* provides significantly more precise and detailed information. It integrates the lifespans of successive rulers within the framework of an explicitly Chinese calendrical structure, despite Japan's emphasis on its own culturally rich mythical-legendary narrative of origins. This assimilation is evident in *Nihon shoki*'s correlation of Japan's imperial chronology with the Chinese Zodiac system for the counting of years known as the sexagesimal system.

Of particular significance is the manner in which the compilers of *Nihon shoki* not only adopted the general principle of the sexagesimal cycle but also integrated Japan's chronology of rulers, commencing with the first emperor, into China's traditional linear sequence of years. According to *Nihon shoki*, the first year of Iwarebiko's reign starts on the first day of the first month of the year *shinyū* or *kanoto tori* 辛酉 ("metal rooster"), denoting the fifty-eighth year of the cycle per the Chinese calendar (Florenz, *Die historischen Quellen* 223; Aston, *Nihongi* 1: 111; *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 190, lines 2–3). On the first date provided, *Nihon shoki* reports on the start of the imperial "Eastern Expedition" (*Jinmu tōsei* 神武東征), dated winter, tenth month, fifth day of the year *kinoe tora* 甲寅. This corresponds to the cyclical sign "wood tiger" and the fifty-first year of the sixty-year cycle,

⁸ On Kamuyamato Iwarebiko, see *Kojiki* 149–61; Philippi 163–85; Antoni, *Kojiki* 94–105; for the *Nihon shoki* version, see *Nihon shoki* 188–213; Aston 1: 109–32, Florenz, *Historische Quellen* 222–39.

⁹ See, e.g., the gloss on Nintoku Tennō 仁德天皇 (trad. 257–399): "{He died on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the fourth year of the rabbit}" Antoni, *Kojiki* 212, 744; *Kojiki* 282–83.

traditionally equated with the year 667 BC in Western research.¹⁰ There is no mention of an epochal break, a turn of an era, or the beginning of a new cosmic age; rather, the event is seamlessly integrated into the prevailing chronology of the period in which *Nihon shoki* was written. Herein lies the fundamental problem for this discussion: does *Nihon shoki*'s sexagesimal cycle merely represent a system for structuring time, insular and without a given beginning, or is it in fact based on a linear pattern with a defined, vectoral time structure?

Since the late nineteenth century, modern historians have highlighted the fictitious nature of *Nihon shoki*'s chronology, particularly concerning the periods prior to the mid-sixth century. This discourse has engendered a deconstructionist perspective that casts doubt not only on the reigns of the early emperors, notably that of Jinmu, but also on their historical existence. Archaeological research in Japan has substantiated the fictitiousness of the early historical narrative, including the legend of the imperial dynasty's origin. However, this scientific knowledge has yet to displace the fictional reality of Jinmu's founding of the empire in 660 BC (Antoni, *Kojiki* 378–79; Antoni “Der ‘Erste Tennō’”).

While the existence of Jinmu and the early emperors was not questioned, a critical view on the validity of the dates pertaining to the duration of reigns and thus *Nihon shoki*'s chronology has emerged. John S. Brownlee notes that “all scholars until 1945 were forced to work within the established framework of the succession of emperors starting with Emperor Jinmu” (113). Regarding this framework, it was postulated that the chronology had to be adjusted by at least two sixty-year cycles, or 120 years. Based on this premise, the historian Naka Michiyo 那珂通世 (1851–1908) developed a new theory to elucidate the chronology of the early history of imperial Japan. His explanations were based on an approach to interpreting the cycles of *Nihon shoki*, commonly referred to as the *shinyū* (or *shin'i*) theory, which can be traced back to the Heian period work *Kakumei kanmon* 革命勘文 (*Memorandum on the Revolution*) by Miyoshi Kiyoyuki 三善清行 (847–918). This text will be considered in more detail below.

¹⁰ For a table of cycle numbers, see Scheid (ch. “Sechziger Zyklus”).

Middle Ages

Miyoshi Kiyoyuki's Kakumei kanmon

As is well known, the historical narrative of the *Kojiki* did not withstand the historiographically more sophisticated *Nihon shoki* and faded into obscurity for centuries shortly after its composition. Meanwhile, the *Nihon shoki* became the model for the official historiography of the *Rikkokushi* 六国史. Consequently, it is not surprising that the richly developing commentary literature on the *Nihon shoki* also included reflections on its chronology, which eventually became the foundation for modern theories.

The theory that the Japanese empire was founded in a “revolutionary year,” the fifty-eighth year of the cycle, was based on the Daoist-inspired explanations by Miyoshi Kiyoyuki—a descendant of Korean immigrants (Kluge 30)—contained in his *Kaikumei kanmon*.¹¹ This theory was first proposed by Naka Michiyo in 1888 (or 1897) in his publication “Jōsei nenki kō” (上世年紀考).¹² In 1937 (repr. 1967), the historian Kuno Yoshi Saburo (1865–1941), building on this and other earlier studies, examined the chronological construct of the early list of emperors and speculated on why the compilers of the *Nihon shoki* might have chosen the fifty-eighth year of the cycle. He explained that, according to traditional views, seven cycles of sixty years each, totaling 420 years, formed a separate group called the “primary period of the cycle of evolution” (Kuno 207). This group is followed by two additional evolutionary periods until a sequence of twenty-one cycles is reached, covering 1,260 years. Finally, a transitional cycle (“transition period of sixty years,” Kuno 207) is added before a new sequence begins, resulting in 1,320 years. The fact that specialist literature often references either 1,260 or 1,320 years likely originates from

¹¹ On Miyoshi Kiyoyuki, see Kluge 32 and passim.

¹² The “Jōsei nenki kō” was included in the *Meijishi ronshū* 明治史論集. On Naka Michiyo's importance for the revision of the chronology of the *Nihon shoki* by two sexagenary cycles, see also Kuno 198–214; Young 93–95; Brownlee 110–17. I would like to thank Matthieu Felt for referring me to the work of Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 (1877–1955) which is especially relevant in this context.

this context.¹³ Kuno further speculated why the compilers of the *Nihon shoki* chose the year 661 CE (according to the Western calendar, which of course was unknown in Japan at the time) as the starting point for their calculation (207–09). This year was a *shinyū* year in which, according to Miyoshi Kiyoyuki, revolutionary upheavals were anticipated. It was the year of Emperor Tenji’s 天智天皇 (626–672) accession to the throne and the culmination of significant state reforms from previous years (Kuno 208). Thus, according to this system’s logic, the year 661 CE served as a starting point for counting back one great cyclical period, i.e., twenty-two cycles or 1,320 years, thereby arriving at a defined beginning: Jinmu Tennō’s accession to the throne. According to the *Nihon shoki*, this event also occurred in a *shinyū* or *kanoto tori* year, that is, the fifty-eighth year of a cycle. The date of this event, 1,320 years before Tenji’s accession, was thus determined for purely calendrical reasons of which, as scholars suspect, the compilers of the *Nihon shoki* were aware. However, the problematic nature of such speculations is made evident by the fact that analogous calculations based on the research of Naka can yield different results. John Young, for example, uses a cycle of 1,260 years instead of 1,320 and therefore arrives at the year 601 CE, not 661 CE, as a possible starting point for the calculations done by the compilers of *Nihon shoki* (94).

Subsequent research has thus operated with two different fixed points to construct an exact date for Jinmu’s accession to the throne. Various subtractions, i.e., 1320/1260–661/601, were conducted to establish the chronological fixpoint for the empire’s foundation, resulting in the dates 659 or 660 BCE according to the Western calendar; the difference arises from counting the first year. However, it remains debatable whether the issue is truly this straightforward. The analysis of additional sources will show that the assertion presented above can indeed be questioned.

The text of the *Kakumei kanmon* itself provides a starting point. The brief text written in Classical Chinese mentions an aspect that is, to my

¹³ In an earlier publication, I considered the timespan of 1,260 years as plausible (Antoni, *Kojiki* 376). Zöllner gives the timespan of 1,320 years, following Miyoshi Kiyoyuki (“Zeit und die Konstruktion” 53).

knowledge, not further discussed in the Japanese discourses cited. After briefly mentioning the era of Kamuyamato Iwarebiko Tennō (i.e., Jinmu) in the palace at Himuka (present-day Miyazaki in southern Kyushu) and his journey eastwards (*tōsei*), the text states that the first emperor built his palace in Kashihara (Kashihara no miya 橿原宮) on New Year's day, spring, of the year *shinyū/kanoto tori* which he designated as the founding year (*gannen* 元年) of his reign (Miyoshi 875). However, the text continues, “this was the third year of the reign of King Xi of Zhou” (Miyoshi 875). Historically, this refers to the sixteenth king of the Chinese Zhou dynasty and fourth king of the Eastern Zhou, Zhou Xi-wang 周僖王 (alt. 周釐王, or Ji Huqi 姬胡齊), who reigned from 682 to 677 BCE.¹⁴

The Song-shi

The *Kakumei kanmon*'s mention of King Xi of Zhou in relation to Jinmu is corroborated by a non-Japanese text, the *Song-shi* 宋史. This Chinese historical record similarly notes Jinmu's establishment of his residence in Kashihara during the reign of King Xi of Zhou. Originating during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) and finalized in 1343 (1345?), the *Song-shi* stands as the official dynastic history of the Song dynasty (960–1279).¹⁵ Regarding Jinmu, it delineates:

The fourth son of Hiko-nakisa was called Emperor Shinmu, and he took up residence in Kashihara Palace in the land of Yamato in the first year of his reign. It was the time of King Xi of Zhou. (*Song shi*, ch. 491)

彥瀲第四子號神武天皇、自築紫宮入居大和州橿原宮、即位元年甲寅、當周僖王時也。

¹⁴ See the entry “Zhou Dynasty Rulers” in Theobald's *ChinaKnowledge*.

¹⁵ On the *Song-shi*, see the detailed entry in Theobald's *ChinaKnowledge*.

The inclusion of the name Hiko-nakisa, that denotes the divine father of Iwarebiko called Ugayafukiaezu, signifies the use of either the *Nihon shoki* or the scholarship of Miyoshi who had previously made allusions to King Xi of Zhou in his works.

Miyoshi Kiyoyuki’s scholarly work, which is characterized by sinological expertise, diverges greatly from contemporary Japanese interpretations, as he chronologically aligns Jinmu’s founding of the empire with a non-Japanese, specifically Chinese dynastic history and calendar. Consequently, the establishment of the Japanese empire is implicitly construed as part of the Chinese timeline, which diminishes the national distinctiveness posited in modernity. However, the modern Japanese discourse remains silent on this matter, as it essentializes the linearity of the imperial line and understands it exclusively within the category of national history.

If we instead delve into the pre-modern transnational chronology of other commentaries on the ancient accounts of the *Nihon shoki*, we are lead directly to a pivotal source from Japan’s Middle Ages, the *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (1339) by Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房 (1293–1354).

Kitabatake Chikafusa’s Jinnō shōtōki

The *Jinnō shōtōki*, which has been attributed a vital role in the genesis of modern Shinto nationalism, includes correlations between Chinese dates and the commencement of Jinmu’s reign (Varley 84–88; Bohner 218–20). Herbert Paul Varley’s (1931–2015) translation faithfully follows the text of the NKBT edition (*Jinnō shōtōki* 69), except for the controversial decision to insert the Western date “660 B.C.” into the text as if it was an inherent component of the original (Varley 88).¹⁶ It is evident, however, that

¹⁶ “The beginning of Emperor Jinmu’s reign, 660 B.C., corresponded to the seventeenth year of King Hui, the seventeenth sovereign of the Chou dynasty in China; and Jinmu’s fifty-seventh year of rule was the third year of King Ting, the twenty-first sovereign of Chou. This latter year was also the date of the birth of Lao-tsu, the patriarch of Taoism. The period from the time of the death of Shakya in India until the first year of Jinmu’s reign was about 290 years.” On general problems with Varley’s translation, see Miller.

such a date could not have been known in Japan at the time the *Jinnō shōtōki* was written, prior to any acquaintance with the Western calendar, and hence could not have been part of the original text.

In Bohner's translation,¹⁷ the passage reads slightly different (1: 220).¹⁸ Nonetheless, it becomes evident that the *Jinnō shōtōki* also provides a precise timing for Jinmu's accession in correlation to the absolute chronology of the Chinese calendar. Regarding the details, however, disparities emerge between the *Kakumei kanmon* and the *Jinnō shōtōki*. While the *Kakumei kanmon* aligns the year of accession with the third year of the reign of King Xi of Zhou, traditionally dated to the period 682–677 BCE according to the Western calendar,¹⁹ the *Jinnō shōtōki* situates the commencement of Iwarebiko's reign during the seventeenth year of the seventeenth king of the Zhou, King Hui 周惠王, traditionally reigning from 676 to 652 BCE. The date presented in the *Jinnō shōtōki* thus already corresponds with the later conversion to 660 BCE to a certain extent. However, as elucidated earlier, this conversion could not have occurred at the time of the *Jinnō shōtōki*, given that the Western (Gregorian or Julian) calendar was not introduced until centuries later.

¹⁷ For a critical discussion concerning the ideological implications of Bohner's work, see Wachutka.

¹⁸ "This age's initial year VIII/X (58) is the seventeenth year of the prince King Hui of the Chinese Jou dynasty reigning as the seventeenth generation. The fifty-seventh year IV/VI (54) coincides with the third year of the twenty-first prince of the Jou dynasty King Ding. In this year Lao-tzu was born. He is the ancestor of Taoism. From the time when India's Shaka Nyorai entered Nirvana to the initial year (of reign) VIII/X (58) it is 290 years. This emperor ruled the empire (tenka) for seventy-six years and lived for 127 years" (original in German). Bohner's comments on this can be found in a separate volume: "惠王 Hui-wang, of the Eastern Jou dynasty, calculated as 676–651 BC; seventeenth year = 660. He is succeeded by his son King Hsiang 651–618; followed by his son King Tjing 618–612, . . . the year 604 is a 丁巳 [Yin-yin] year; in this year, according to tradition, Lao-tzu was born, the 'ancestor of the doctrine of the Dau (Tao)' 道教, as Chikafusa calls him" (2: 69; original in German). This volume of Bohner's work is not available in European libraries; my thanks go to Michael Wachutka in Kyoto for providing the relevant passages.

¹⁹ According to another calculation, King Xi of Zhou ruled 681–677 BCE (see the entry "The Regional State of Jin 晉" in Theobald).

In summary, it can be stated that the chronological lists of Chinese emperors have served as benchmarks for an absolute chronology of Jinmu’s purported ascension to the throne since the Heian period, during the Japanese Middle Ages (*Jinnō shōtōki*, 1339), and simultaneously in the Chinese *Song-shi* (1343/1345). Miyoshi Kiyoyuki underscored the particular significance of the fifty-eighth year within the context of the Chinese sixty-year cycle, which prompted the change of the *nengō* from Shōtai 昌泰 to Engi 延喜 during his lifetime (Kluge 26–29).

Nevertheless, further speculations on foundational cycles that might have led to an absolute date for the establishment of the empire must be left to the historians of modern Japan, particularly Naka Michiyo. The historical sources, as demonstrated, indicate that Jinmu’s chronology was interwoven with the chronology and historiography of imperial China. It was only within this temporal framework that Jinmu’s establishment of the empire acquired a definitive position in the linear progression of time. The synchronization of Chinese and Japanese founding history ultimately culminated in the emergence of the year “660 BCE” as a precise date. To gain a closer understanding of this process, I want to focus on the evolution and impact of another intellectual system pivotal for the further advancement of the calendar system in East Asia that was put forth by the Jesuits during their time in China and Japan.

Early Modern Period

In his discussion of the temporal and structural aspects of modernity in Japan, Reinhard Zöllner references a pre-modern document whose veracity has only recently begun to gain recognition in Japanese scholarship: the work of Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) (Zöllner, “Zeit” 53). Once regarded as mere baroque travel literature, Kaempfer’s monumental treatise on Japan is now being reassessed for its historical significance. It offers a uniquely detailed portrayal of Japan at the close of the seventeenth century,

during the Genroku period.²⁰ Kaempfer's work holds particular weight because contemporary Japanese experts such as Imamura Eisei 今村英生, also known as Gen'emon 源右衛門 (1671–1736), provided him with authentic materials which enabled him to conduct a thorough historical examination of his subject, Japan, to a degree that would have been unattainable through mere empirical or participant observation. Moreover, Kaempfer draws from earlier sources, including accounts on Japan written by early Jesuit missionaries in East Asia. It is within these accounts that the legendary date of Jinmu's enthronement was converted to the Christian calendar and dated to the year 660 BCE for the first time.

The Jesuits: João Rodrigues

Within the field of Jesuit scholarship, the historian of religion Georg Schurhammer S.J. (1882–1971) alludes to what appears to be the earliest known historical documentation of this particular date in his compendium *Shin-tō, der Weg der Götter* (1923). Extracted from the historical writings of Portuguese clergyman João Rodrigues (1561/62–1633),²¹ Schurhammer cites the following passage:

“This [Hiko-nagisatake-ugaya-fuki-aezu no Mikoto] had four sons, of whom the youngest succeeded him as ruler, being the first to take the title of king, and calling himself Jimmu Ten wo. And from him they begin their reckoning of time until now. He began to reign in 659 BC.” (19)²²

²⁰ On Kaempfer, see among others, Antoni “Engelbert Kaempfers Werk” and “Review Article.”

²¹ For details, see Schurhammer, “P. Johann Rodriguez Tçuzzu.”

²² Regarding Rodrigues (Rodriguez), I am indebted to Professor Sven Osterkamp (University of Bochum) for the valuable information that in addition to his church history of Japan, which is quoted by Schurhammer, his earlier grammar of Japanese *Arte da lingoa de Iapam* (1604–08) already lists the year 660 as the beginning of the reign of “Jimmu Tenvō” (fol. 236r). This contrasts with Schurhammer's quote from the church history, in which the year 659 is given. For this, see also Doi et al. 475.

In a subsequent scholarly publication, Schurhammer elaborates on the beginnings and contextual background of Rodrigues’s historiographical endeavors, along with those of his predecessors, particularly Luis Frois (1532–1597). However, he does not revisit the subject of Jinmu’s coronation. Schurhammer asserts that Rodrigues’s scholarly contributions, which occupied his attention until his passing in 1633, survive in the form of two manuscripts housed in Madrid and Lisbon (“P. Johann Rodriguez Tçuzzu” 29). Based on these manuscripts, Schurhammer delineates the structural framework of Rodrigues’s project as envisioned by the priest himself. Unfortunately, the original manuscripts authored by Rodrigues remain beyond reach, thus making further critical scrutiny impossible. Nevertheless, if one is to subscribe to Schurhammer’s assertions, it appears that the legendary ascension of Jinmu to the throne in 660 (or 659) BCE has been acknowledged as an established historical event among Jesuit scholars in Japan and Macau in the early seventeenth century.

Engelbert Kaempfer

At this juncture, we return to Kaempfer and his work on Japan, written approximately sixty years later. For reasons explained below, I will not use the new critical edition of Kaempfer’s original work *Heutiges Japan* (first published in 2001) as my primary source despite its accurate representation of his original elaborations.²³ Instead, I will rely on the English translation by Johann Caspar Scheuchzer (1702–1729) (*History of Japan*, 1727) and the German edition published by Christian Wilhelm Dohm (1751–1820) (*Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan*, 1777). In their commentaries and annotations, these first printed editions of Kaempfer’s work reflect the scholarly discourse of their time. Additionally, they had a substantial impact on Europe’s intellectual discourse about the Far East, particularly regarding the closed-off island kingdom of Japan in the eighteenth century.²⁴

²³ For a review of this edition, see Antoni “Review article.”

²⁴ For a first introduction to Kaempfer’s work, especially regarding the religions of Japan,

Two sections in Kaempfer's work *History of Japan*, or *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan*, are of particular interest in our context, especially concerning the dates of the "founding of the empire" by Jinmu: volume I, book 1, chapters 6–7 (*History* 81–111 [Reprint 131–59]; *Geschichte* 97–117), and volume I, book 2, chapters 1–4 (*History* 143–82 [Reprint 251–308]; *Geschichte* 163–221).

Volume I, Book 1, Chapters 6–7

In general, it can be said that the figure of Jinmu has a prominent presence in Kaempfer's historical records. Reflecting the understanding of the time, there is no doubt about the historicity of the empire's founder, although Kaempfer cites several theories on the origin of the Japanese people and the Japanese state (*History* 81–96 [Reprint 131–52]; *Geschichte* 97–117). He typically provides "Sinmu" or "Sijn Mu"²⁵ with precise historical dates according to the Christian calendar.

For instance, at the beginning of the sixth chapter in the first book, the following is stated regarding the legendary arrival of a Chinese group in Japan during the reign of Kōken Tennō 孝謙天皇 (r. 749–758): "(This) was in the 7th year of the reign of Koken, 453 years after Synmu, first Emperor of Japan, and 209 before the birth of our Saviour" (Kaempfer, *History* 83 [Reprint 133]; "Dies ist das Jahr 453 nach Sijn Mu, dem ersten japanischen Kaiser, und das Jahr 209 vor Christi Geburt"; *Geschichte* 98).²⁶ The seventh chapter addresses the divine genealogy of the Japanese emperors, and here we learn more about the chronology based on Jinmu:

see Antoni "Engelbert Kaempfers Werk."

²⁵ Kaempfer's *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan* mostly uses "Sijn Mu," also "Dsin Mu"; Kaempfer's *The History of Japan* mainly opts for "Sinmu." The original manuscript, *Heutiges Japan*, uses "Syn Mu" and "Sym Mu."

²⁶ In the German edition *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan*, the page number on page 98 is incorrectly listed as 88.

This much is true, that the genuine Japanese History begins but with the reign of this first Monarch, who liv'd about 660 Years before Christ. And herein the Chinese are gone far beyond them, for they begun to write the History of their Country at least 2000 years before, and they shew, what I believe no other nation can boast of, a succession of Monarchs, with an account of their lives, government, and remarkable actions down to this time, for now upwards of 4000 Years. (Kaempfer, *History* 100 [Reprint 158])

For Kaempfer, then, there was no question that the Japanese chronology was linear. At the end of the chapter, Kaempfer connects this to his time by writing:

They look upon Sin Mu Ten Oo, as the greatest of the third race of the now living Inhabitants, in whose family the hereditary right to the crown with a more than human authority was continued down to Kinsan Kiwotei, the present 114th Mikaddo,²⁷ that is 2360 years, computing to the year of Christ, 1700 (*History* 101 [Reprint 159]); *Geschichte* 117).²⁸

660 BC, the year of Jinmu's accession to the throne, was set as the starting point of this linear chronology. To understand how Kaempfer arrived at this year, we turn to book 2 of volume I: “Of the Political State of Japan.”

²⁷ “Kinsan” here refers to the emperor in power at a given time, better known today as *kinjō tennō* 今上天皇. In Kaempfer's chronology, this refers to Emperor Reigen 霊元天皇 (1654–1732). According to the modern official chronology of Japanese emperors, however, Reigen was the 112th and Nakamikado 中御門天皇 (1702–1737) the 114th tennō.

²⁸ From the wording in this passage, it becomes clear that Kaempfer's report cannot be dated to before the year 1700. It also has to be noted that the original manuscript *Heutiges Japan* has a slightly different chapter count. The explanations on the imperial chronology, found in chapter seven of *History of Japan* and *Geschichte und Beschreibung Japans*, are part of chapter six (“Von der Japaner Ursprung nach Ihrer eigenen Fabuleusen Meinung” 79–83) instead, including the passage: “. . ., biß zu dem itzigen Kinsan Kiwo tei, alß den 114de Mikkado, daß ist, 2360 Jahre biß zu dem Jahre unseres heilandes 1700” (Kaempfer, *Heutiges Japan* 83).

Volume I, Book 2, Chapters 1–4

In “Of the Political State of Japan,”²⁹ Kaempfer devotes the first chapter to the “Names of the Gods, Demi-Gods and Emperors” (*History* 143–48 [Reprint 251–58]; Kaempfer, *Geschichte* 163–72.) At the outset, Kaempfer reflects on the chronology of Japan, which he divides into three eras: “a fabulous, a doubtful, and a certain” (*History* 143 [Reprint 251]; *Geschichte* 163). The first era encompasses the earliest periods of what is now referred to as Japanese mythology. However, Kaempfer does not elaborate on the content, merely listing it as part of a chronological framework. Noteworthy here is a historiographical approach that runs throughout Kaempfer’s entire work: the events of the time of the gods—as well as those of later history—are placed in a direct, albeit from a modern perspective fantastical, relationship to Chinese history. For example, in the passage on Ninigi no mikoto, Kaempfer writes: “Ni ni ki no Mikotto reigned 318533 years. During his whole reign Sattei Ki was Emperor of China” (*History* 144 [Reprint 252]; *Geschichte* 164). Similarly exaggerated dates are also found in the *Nihon shoki*. In Kaempfer’s work, they form the chronological framework of a surreal linear chronology.

The second era, which he terms the “doubtful Aera,” follows the “fabulous” period and extends up to the enthronement of Jinmu. Here, Kaempfer delineates an era that, by contemporary standards, lies between the mythical Age of the Gods and the onset of the semi-historical epochs of the early emperors. Again, references to Chinese history play a central role. The earliest history of China provides the temporal structure for the initial period of Japanese rule. Kaempfer’s point of departure for the linear chronology is the legendary Chinese emperor “Fuki” (*History* 145 [Reprint 254]), or

²⁹ Kaempfer, *The History of Japan* 143–82 [Reprint 251–30]; Kaempfer, *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan* 163–221: “Politische Verfassung des japanischen Reiches. Auszug aus den japanischen Annalen, vom Anfang ihrer Chronologie bis zum Jahr Christi 1692”; cf. Kaempfer, *Heutiges Japan*, 117–71: “Von der Policy dieses Reiches.”

Fu Xi 伏羲, one of the foundational figures in Chinese mythology.³⁰ This mytho-legendary figure also serves as both a starting and a fixed point in classical linear calendars. Kaempfer observes:

The Chinese make him their first Emperor and the founder of their Monarchy, and many among them pretend that from his reign down to this present age, they can show an accurate History of their Empire, and a true Chronological succession of their Emperors. (*History* 145 [Reprint 254–55])

Kaempfer’s work sheds light on the skepticism among Japanese historians regarding the purportedly extensive reign of Fu Xi. The assertion that Fu Xi commenced his reign a staggering 20,446 years before the reign of Jinmu (Synmu), or 21,106 years before the birth of Christ, has been met with considerable doubt. Kaempfer then directs attention to Reverend Father Philippe Couplet S.J. (1623–1693), a prominent Jesuit scholar highly regarded for his expertise in Chinese historical chronologies. As highlighted by Kaempfer, Couplet dates the start of Fu Xi’s (“Fohi”) reign to the year 2953 before Christ in the preface of his chronological tables (*History* 146 [Reprint 256]; *Geschichte* 168), offering an alternative viewpoint to conventional interpretations.

Kaempfer’s accounts proceed to detail the lineage of legendary Chinese rulers, each linked to specific dates with Jinmu as the fixed point in Japanese chronology. For instance, the reign of the Chinese emperor Huang Di 黃帝 / 黄帝 (r. trad. 2696–2598 BCE), transcribed as “Hoam Ti” by Kaempfer, is dated to the year 2689 before Christ, that is 2,029 years before Jinmu. Couplet dates Huang Di’s enthronement to the year 2697 before Christ, as Kaempfer notes (*History* 146 [Reprint 256]; *Geschichte* 168).³¹

³⁰ See also the entry on “Fu Xi 伏羲” in Theobald’s *ChinaKnowledge*. On the connection of the mythical primordial emperor Fu Xi to the intellectual and historical complex of Daoism, see Mungello 242.

³¹ This passage, with the mention of Couplet and Mentzel, is also found in the original version of Kaempfer’s text: “. . . nach herrn Couplets Rechnung (: welchen der H Dr Menzelius treulich folgt :)” (*Heutiges Japan* 121, line 110–11).

This meticulous alignment established a temporal framework that endures in traditional Chinese chronologies to this day.

The third and last period in Kaempfer's system and thus that of the "Ecclesiastical Hereditary Emperors" "begins with the year before Christ 660, being the seventeenth year of the reign of the Chinese Emperor Kaiwo, or as the Chinese pronounce it, Huivam, who was the seventeenth Emperor of the family of Sjeu" (*History* 148 [Reprint 259]; *Geschichte* 173). The new edition of Kaempfer's original text adds the *kanji* 惠王, which were part of the oldest manuscript, to the name of this Chinese emperor (Kaempfer, *Heutiges Japan* 124). This is a tremendous help in reconstructing his identity; we are in fact dealing with none other than King Hui, the seventeenth ruler of the Zhou dynasty, already known to us from the *Jinnō shōtōki*.

In the chapters 3–5, Kaempfer presents an extensive catalog of Japanese emperors alongside their notable achievements that encompassed a total of 114 tennō, commencing with Jinmu and extending to Kaempfer's time, circa 1690/92. Each reign is precisely dated, referencing two fixed chronological points: the year according to the Gregorian calendar, which reflected Kaempfer's cultural background, and the year following Jinmu's ascension to the throne. For instance, in the case of Emperor Go-Kōmyō 後光明天皇 (1633–1654), Kaempfer provides the following date for his enthronement: "the year of Synmu 2303, of Christ 1643" (*History* 197 [Reprint 328]).

However, Kaempfer's scholarly inquiry advances beyond mere numbers. In his commentary on Jinmu, the first in the list of 114 Japanese emperors, Kaempfer introduces a seemingly inconspicuous yet fundamentally significant detail. He notes:

SYN MU, and with full Title Syn Mu ten Oo, founded the Japanese Monarchy in the 58th year of the 35th Chinese Cyclus, when Teikwo, or according to the Chinese pronunciation, Hoyvam³² was already

³² I.e., as explained above, King Hui of Zhou (Kaempfer, *Heutiges Japan* 133, with *kanji* for "Tei woo").

enter'd the eighth year of his Reign, in the year before Christ 660, and the 78th of his Age. (Kaempfer, *History* 159 [Reprint 274]; *Geschichte* 185–86)³³

This departure from the traditional chronology marks the first assertion of an absolute linearity within the Chinese sixty-year cycle, with Jinmu as an intrinsic component. Kaempfer establishes a linear progression for the cyclical sequences, anchored in the accession of the mythical Chinese emperor Fu Xi.

Furthermore, Kaempfer draws attention to a notable circumstance within this context. He observes that his Japanese contemporaries endeavored to conceal the consistent counting of their sexagesimal cycle, motivated by personal and political considerations:

The reason of which will appear plainly, if we consider the natural pride of this nation, and how far short they would fall, in this particular, of their neighbors the Chinese, who can show a succession of Cyclus's for many centuries before the very foundation of the Japanese Monarchy. (Kaempfer, *History* 156 [Reprint 270]; *Geschichte* 182)

This acknowledgment suggests that the linear perspective of the cycles based on Chinese chronology was familiar to Japan during Kaempfer's time but remained hidden due to national sensitivities and pride.

The contemporary discourses in Europe, as illuminated by the commentaries in the 1727 and 1777 editions of Kaempfer's texts, are of relevance for our analysis. In his comprehensive “Introduction,” dated May 1, 1727, Scheuchzer discusses the principles of chronology espoused in Kaempfer's

³³ Dohm remarks on this: “Die hier folgenden Nachrichten unseres Kämpfers, nebst denen, welche Deguignes (in der Gesch. der Hunnen S. 196 sc) liefert, sind die einzigen Quellen einer vollständigen japanischen Geschichte die wir bisher in Europa erhalten haben” (Kaempfer, *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan* 185n*); English translation: “The following report by Kaempfer, alongside the work of Deguignes (in *Geschichte der Hunnen*, page 196), is the only source for a complete Japanese history available in Europe to this day.”

work. He remarks on the “Chronology of the Japanese” in the second book of *The History of Japan* that

no attempt of this kind having ever been made, though I find it mention'd in F. Couplet, that the Chronological Tables of the Japanese Monarchy, printed in Chinese characters, were, in his time, in the Library of the King of France, and that its beginning was therein likewise fixed to the year before Christ 660. (Kaempfer, *History* xxiv [Reprint lvii])

Given the prominence of Couplet's name within Kaempfer's writings, further investigation into this reference and the materials within the “Library of the King of France” is warranted.

Philippe Couplet

With Couplet's work, the narrative of European observations on Japan finally returns to the Jesuits. Despite confessional differences, even the Protestant Kaempfer appears to have valued their academic contributions, a sentiment particularly noteworthy given the recent conclusion of the Thirty Years' War in Europe. The extensive literature on Couplet (e.g., Heyndrickx) is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I want to highlight Nicolas Standaert's article “Jesuit Accounts of Chinese History and Chronology and their Chinese Sources” (2012), in which he discusses the records on Chinese history and chronology by the Jesuit mission from the late seventeenth century onwards. Notable figures include Martino Martini (1614–1661), António de Gouveia (1592–1677), and Philippe Couplet (1622–1693). Standaert underscores Martini's pivotal role in establishing conversion dates for the Chinese and Christian chronology. Martini begins his calculations with the enthronement of Fu Xi in 2952 BCE and synchronizes the following sixty-year cycles with the Christian calendar until the year 1 CE. This amounts to forty-four complete cycles and fifty-seven years of the forty-fifth cycle. This methodology has since formed the basis

for aligning Chinese and Christian calendar systems. David Mungello offers a more detailed analysis of Couplet’s work, elucidating the historical context of his endeavors (239). Couplet’s seminal text, *Tabula chronologica monarchiae Sinicae*, published in Paris in 1686, served as the foundation for Kaempfer’s calculations. His interest in Chinese studies, particularly the calendar, was ignited by a lecture delivered by Martino Martini in Leuven in 1654 (Standaert 42). Thus, Kaempfer’s comprehension of contemporary academic discourse was commendable, and his translators Scheuchzer and Dohm were equally well-versed in the pertinent research.

In this context, I want to direct the attention to Dohm’s comments on Kaempfer’s work. Of particular interest is Dohm’s commentary on Kaempfer’s reference to Couplet’s chronological tables which he used as the basis for his calculations. Kaempfer states:

Der ehrwürdige Pater Couplet setzt in der Vorrede seiner chronologischen Tabellen den Anfang der Regierung des Fohi in das 2953te Jahr vor Christi Geburt. (*Geschichte* 167)

The Rev. Father *Couplet*, in the Preface to his Chronological Tables, puts the beginning of the reign of *Fohi* in the year before Christ 2953. (Kaempfer, *History* 146 [Reprint 255])

In a note to this passage, Dohm highlights, with a reference to Couplet’s work, what he considers to be an oversight by Kaempfer. He makes a mistake in dating the beginning of Fu Xi’s reign; the correct year is 2952, not 2953.³⁴ Dohm also addresses the issue of successive cycles. Kaempfer equates the year 660 BCE with a precise date in the Chinese cycle, as phrased by Dohm:

Syn Mu und mit seinem völligen Titel Syn My ten Oo, legte den Grund der japanischen Monarchie im 58ten Jahr des 35ten japanischen Cykli. (Kaempfer, *Geschichte* 185–86)

³⁴ Mathews’ *Chinese-English Dictionary* dates Fu Xi’s accession to the throne to 2852 BCE (Mathews 1165).

Syn Mu, and with his full Title *Syn My ten Oo*, founded the Japanese monarchy in the 58th year of the 35th Chinese Cyclus. (Kaempfer, *History* 159 [Reprint 274])³⁵

Going beyond the work of an editor, Dohm also corrects Kaempfer's description, noting: "Nach Deguignes Berechnung ist das Jahr 660 vor Christi Geburt das 58te des 34sten sinischen Cyklus" ("According to Deguigne's calculation, the year 660 BC is the 58th of the 34th Sinic cycle"; Kaempfer, *Geschichte* 186n*). Dohm's discussion of this issue draws from several contemporary sources and offers a nuanced understanding of the scholarly discourse surrounding Kaempfer's work. One of his key references is the author Joseph De Guignes (1721–1800, referred to as Deguignes by Dohm), who will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Joseph De Guignes

Joseph De Guignes, a distinguished French orientalist and sinologist, gained renown for his monumental historical work *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux* (1756–1758), published in four volumes. This seminal work was later translated into German by Johann Carl Dähnert (1719–1785) and published in Greifswald between 1768–1771 (De Guignes, *Allgemeine Geschichte*).³⁶ One of the work's subtitles states that it is based on texts from the King's Library ("Ouvrage tiré des livres chinois, & des manuscrits orientaux de la Bibliothèque du Roi"). Recalling Scheuchzer's mention of "the Library of the King of France," it is reasonable to presume that Couplet used the very

³⁵ The English edition of 1727 (*History*) correctly refers to the "Chinese cycle," while the German edition of 1777 (*Geschichte*) incorrectly refers to the "Japanese cycle." This is a substantial error.

³⁶ The German edition is used for all quotations from this work.

same resources De Guignes accessed for his historical endeavors.³⁷ Thus, we have come full circle.

De Guignes dedicates a portion of his history of Asia to Japan (182–98), which makes his insights highly significant for the present chapter. Citing Kaempfer as his source, De Guignes discusses Jinmu:

Er [“Sin=bu”] stiftete diese Monarchie im J. 58 des 34 Chinesischen Cyclus, d.i. im J. 660 vor C. G. . . . Der Anfang seiner Regierung ist auch der Anfang der angenommenen Japanischen Zeitrechnung. (De Guignes 184–85)

He [“Sin=bu”] founded this monarchy in the year 58 of the 34 Chinese Cycle, i.e., in the year 660 BC. . . . The beginning of his reign is also the beginning of the adopted³⁸ Japanese chronology.

At first glance, it might seem that De Guignes, having relied on Kaempfer’s data which in turn stemmed from Couplet and ultimately from Martino Martini, holds no further significance in our discussion. However, De Guignes introduces a new crucial aspect to the chronology.

While Kaempfer calculates the beginning of Jinmu’s reign with reference to the Chinese cycle, he provides the subsequent linear dates of Japanese emperors only in relation to the Christian and Jinmu calendars. De Guignes, however, synchronizes the Christian dates with the continuous cycle of the Chinese calendar not only for Jinmu’s era but for all Japanese emperors.

De Guignes’ passages on the Japanese emperors primarily consist of lists of dates without narrative embellishments. Based on Kaempfer’s data, a

³⁷ In a personal communication, Professor Osterkamp referred to the Japanese work (*Jūsen*) *Wakan kōtō hennen gōunzu* (重撰)倭漢皇統編年合運圖 in this context. Using this text as a basis, Julius Klaproth (1783–1835) already published a detailed essay on the subject in 1833 (“Notice d’une chronologie chinoise et japonaise”). Regarding the materials available in Paris, see also Kraft 94, 99, 111.

³⁸ The meaning of the original German term “angenommen” is not entirely clear in this context. Does the author mean “adopted” or “supposed”? Based on the context, the meaning “adopted” appears more reasonable.

table detailing the corresponding dates of all Japanese emperors up to the year 1689 is presented over ten pages (De Guignes 185–95). Each emperor is cataloged with their names transcribed into Chinese characters, alongside the dates of their death denoted by consecutive Chinese cycle number, the consecutive year of the cycle, and the corresponding year of the Christian calendar. For example, the entry on Jinmu is dated as follows: “SSIN-BU-tenn=oo, Chines. Schin=vu . . . : Cycl. 36 / Jahr 16 / v.C.G. 582” (“SSIN-BU-tenn=oo, Chinese Schin=vu . . . : Cycl. 36 / year 16 / BC 582”; De Guignes 185).

Notably, De Guignes not only acknowledges the early empress Jingū-kōgō 神功皇后 (“SSIN-KOO=oo=kūū”) but also equates her with Himiko 卑弥呼, a figure solely documented in Chinese annals (“Die Chineser nennen sie Pi=mi=hu. Sie führte mit den Coreanern Krieg”; “The Chinese call her Pi=mi=hu. She waged war on the Koreans”; 186–87). The specific date is the fiftieth cycle, twentieth year, 269 before Christ (De Guignes 186–87).³⁹ The amalgamation of Kaempfer’s and De Guignes’ contributions yields a comprehensive timeline of historical dates, extending beyond Jinmu and intricately interwoven with an eighteenth-century version of the Chinese calendar that was meticulously calculated by Jesuit scholars. This combination of sinological and Jesuit scholarship on calendars not only provided a robust chronological framework for Japanese history but also underscored the interconnectedness of chronologies across cultures. The enthronement of the alleged first emperor Jinmu, which heralds the “founding of the empire,” served as a pivotal component of this ecumenism of chronology. Aligned with the fifty-eighth year of the thirty-fourth (or thirty-fifth)⁴⁰ Chinese cycle, Jinmu’s era corresponded to the year 660 BCE in the Western calendar. Within this calendrical continuum, Jinmu and subsequent Japanese rulers assumed their roles as arbiters of their own time,

³⁹ Kaempfer discusses Jingū (“Singu Kogu”) in *History of Japan* (164–65 [Reprint 282–83]) and *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan* (197), but Himiko is not mentioned.

⁴⁰ In another personal communication, Professor Osterkamp recognized the thirty-fourth cycle instead of thirty-fifth cycle as correct based on Couplet’s work *Tabula chronologica Monarchiae sinicae juxta cyclos annorum* 60.

their reigns contextualized within the broader narrative of world history and global chronology.

Conclusion

However, it was not until the Meiji period that these universalist foundations were severed. While synchronization with the Christian calendar was retained (based on either the Julian or Gregorian system, a matter that Reinhard Zöllner examines in depth), any Chinese influences were disavowed (Zöllner, “Zeit” 50). Generally, the political discourse of the Meiji period ignored the Chinese origins of the linear “imperial calendar” *kōki*. Yet, the foundation for the calendrical correlations and synopses between East Asian and Occidental Christian calendars lies precisely in these origins.

During the Edo period, the combination of the calendrical systems of the Occident, China, and Japan—with Jesus’ birth, Fu Xi, and Jinmu as their respective starting points—was facilitated by Couplet, Kaempfer, De Guignes, and others, and underscores the transcultural and truly global nature of this endeavor. However, the Meiji government seems to have severed this transcultural origin of the calculations which led to the supposed year of Jinmu’s enthronement, possibly due to socio-psychological motives akin to those described in Kaempfer’s work. Consequently, the Japanese element of the calendrical triad mutated into a purely national project, fostering a monogenetic, linear chronology with 660 BCE as its fixed point.

This process mirrored broader trends, wherein significant Chinese elements of Japan’s traditional culture, especially those associated with Confucianism, were either erased from collective memory or reinterpreted through a Japan-centric lens.⁴¹ Similarly, Christianity, particularly in its Catholic-Jesuit iteration, faced fundamental rejection from the Meiji

⁴¹ On the reinterpretation of Confucian ethics during the Meiji period, see Antoni, *Shintō* 219 and Antoni, *Kokutai* 218–19.

government.⁴² Hence, the motivation to derive the founding date of the Japanese empire solely from a national genesis seems explicable. In contrast, during Japanese antiquity and premodernity, there was generally no issue with regarding Jinmu himself as part of the continental tradition, as evidenced by legends like those of Wu Taibo 吳泰伯 and another figure of ancient Chinese tradition, the Daoist saint Xu Fu 徐福.⁴³

In essence, the fundamental importance of transnational and transcultural foundations in shaping the modern Japanese *kōki* calendar cannot be overstated. Even the Japanese nation-state since the Meiji period has acknowledged the global and East Asian roots of its own culture, albeit with certain aspects obscured for political expediency.

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⁴² European scientific as well as academic literature could, however, be imported to Deshima via Batavia, including the works of Couplet and others through the mediation of Andreas Cleyer (1634–1697), who exerted great influence on Kaempfer in Batavia (on Cleyer and also Mentzel, see Kraft 116–22 and *passim*).

⁴³ On Wu Taibo, see David Weiß' chapter "A Confucian Founding Myth" in the present volume. Concerning Xu Fu from the Qin Period 秦 (221–206 BCE), see the entry "Dongxianzhuan" in Theobald's *ChinaKnowledge*. However, this strand of the tradition cannot be pursued here; reference should be made to the currently highly active research in this field, e.g. Ng, Wai-ming. *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan*. State University of New York Press, 2019.

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Work on Myth in Medieval Japan Zeami's *Golden Island*

Raji C. STEINECK

This chapter discusses Zeami's late work Kintōshō. In it, and perhaps through it, Zeami who was at the time banished to the remote island of Sado came to terms with his banishment. The text includes a Noh play called Kitayama in which Zeami portrays his place of exile as a mythical place of origin, thus elevating it to a position of central importance. He does so via a version of the story about the beginning of Heaven and Earth from ancient imperial mythology, which connects the mythical tale to the mandalas of esoteric Buddhism. Zeami's work is therefore exemplary of the "work on myth" in medieval Japan. During that period, various social classes, regions, and institutions enhanced their status through connections with and retellings of imperial mythology. Since the early modern era, scholars started to view these variations as distortions of the original, "true" myth, but they significantly contributed to the dissemination of imperial mythology and paved the way for its reimagining as a national mythology in the modern era.

Imperial Mythology: Medieval Metamorphoses

According to Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945)—one of the first philosophers to take myth seriously as a form of rationality with a "logic" of its own—the "characteristic and outstanding feature of the mythical world" is the "law of metamorphosis" whereby "[n]othing has a definite, invariable, static shape. . . . Everything may be turned into everything" (81). Japan's imperial mythology, as first crafted and recorded in the eighth century *Records of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki* 古事記) and *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*

日本書紀) shows that this may not necessarily be true of the worlds recounted in mythological narration. However, it is true of the myths themselves. They stay alive and relevant by assuming new forms and shapes according to the age. Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996) has famously described myths as “stories with a highly stable narrative core and an equally high degree of variability on its margins” and argued that it is precisely the constant re-fashioning and re-application of mythical stories—the “work on myth”—that imbues them with the power they hold over our imagination (*Arbeit am Mythos* 40).¹ Blumenberg mainly thought of the European reception of Greek and Latin mythology, but here again, Japanese imperial mythology, especially its medieval reception and further development, is a case in point. Drawing on a work by Zeami 世阿弥 (1363–1443), the central figure in the elevation of Noh drama to an elaborate and highly distinguished art form, I shall demonstrate in this chapter how imperial mythology was modified and appropriated in medieval Japan to elevate the status of peripheral places and marginalized people, and how, by the same token, its central motifs came to circulate widely through the regions of the realm and the diverse strata of society.

The mythology of the creation of the Japanese islands, their pacification by several generations of gods, and their subjection to eternal rule by descendants of the heavenly deities was initially crafted to justify imperial rule and to give their divinely sanctioned place to the main aristocratic clans at court. It was included in the official history of the *Chronicles of Japan* and functioned as a reference point for state-sponsored ritual events in the veneration of the Deities of Heaven and Earth (*jingi* 神祇; later subsumed under the umbrella term “Shinto”), as well as for new redactions of local and regional myths collected in provincial gazetteers (*Fudoki* 風土記). In the ensuing centuries, it also played a role in petitions to the court that attempted to secure the status of aristocratic clans which came under pressure by shifts in courtly power relations (*ujibumi* 氏文; Isomae 72–86). Because all these documents were either sanctioned by the imperial court or

¹ Unfortunately, I do not have the English translation (Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*) on hand.

appealed to its authority, they took great care to remain compatible with the overall framework created in the *Chronicles*, which, by listing variants of certain mythical stories, provided some leeway for further additions and interpolations.²

The tendency to promote local or familial agendas by way of amalgamating one's own tradition with imperial mythology did not subside when central control by the imperial court weakened in late antiquity. Quite to the contrary, with the regionalization of power that was the hallmark of the medieval period (late eleventh–sixteenth century) in Japan, it passed the threshold to outright appropriation. Aristocratic houses, major fanes, but also the newly emerging non-aristocratic, professional groups ideologically strengthened their position by creating origin myths that made use of central elements from imperial mythology. Zeami's last work *Golden Island* (*Kintōsho* 金島書) is a case in point.³ Its eight scenes revolve around the subject of Zeami's exile to Sado Island, a traditional place of banishment in North Western Japan. The series culminates in the seventh scene, titled "Northern Mountain" (*Hokusan* 北山), which presents the remote island as a second place of origin of the Japanese islands—sublating Zeami's exile to the status of pilgrimage to a sacred land.

Zeami's collection is exemplary for medieval work on myth on several counts. Firstly, it appropriates central motifs from imperial mythology to elevate a part of the country that was peripheral to the ancient, authoritative sources. Secondly, it speaks not from a place of courtly authority but was produced by a commoner, thus representing the social diversification of medieval mythographers who used and variegated the pertinent lore. Thirdly, it integrates and fuses imperial mythology with Buddhist doctrines

² See for example the *Izumo no kuni no miyatsuko no kamu yogoto* 出雲國造神賀詞 (*Kojiki*, NKBT 453–56, English translation in Bock 102–5), the *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* 住吉大社神代記 (Okimori et al. 1–70, 71–118) and my analysis of both in Steineck 288–91, 297–303).

³ "Golden Island" (*kogane no shima* 金の島) is a poetic name for Sado. The work also goes by the title *Kintōshū* 金島集 (*Golden Island Collection*; see *Kintōshū*). For an English translation, see Matisoff, "Kintoshō."

and imagery in accord with the “esoteric-exoteric” Buddhist paradigm that dominated the ideational space of the time.

In this way, medieval mythographers like Zeami took significant liberties in accommodating imperial myths to their end. This led to their dismissal as “unreliable” in early and classical modernity (Saitō 14; Isomae 105). Nevertheless, I argue that this process of adaptation and appropriation contributed to making imperial mythology relevant to regions and segments of society that were not connected to it before.

Moreover, on a theoretical level, Zeami’s *Golden Island* shows how myths may be consciously crafted and adapted to new historical situations. It thus serves to vindicate Blumenberg’s thesis that myths are constituted by reception and variation. In the course of history, successful myths stay relevant by “migrating” across media, contexts, and cultural domains. They shed old and include new narrative elements, depending on the people who adapt them and their cognitive repertoire. Last but not least, their initial telos—the part of reality they serve to justify or explain—may be replaced in accord with the situations and needs of those who accept and use the myths to make sense of the world they live in.

In the following, I will first locate *Golden Island* in the context of Zeami’s life and work and summarize its structure and content. I then analyze the mythological elements and techniques apparent in the “Northern Mountain” scene in detail to substantiate the above claims. I demonstrate how, on a semantic level, Zeami adds new motifs to imperial origin mythology, especially an element that gives Sado pride of place as one of the first islands and identifies it as one part of the twofold mandala of esoteric Buddhism. On a syntactic level, these changes (most of which have precedents in other medieval sources) exemplify the new medieval mythological “grammar” in which imperial mythemes were integrated into the fundamentally Buddhist “exoteric-esoteric system” (*kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制)⁴ that dominated during this period. Finally, in appropriating imperial

⁴ This term was famously coined by historian Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄 (1926–1993), see the contributions to a special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* on his theory by Kuroda himself, Taira Masayuki 平雅行, and Sueki Fumihiko 末本文美士.

mythology to elevate the status of his place of exile, *Golden Island* stands for a shift in the pragmatic dimension where commoners and representatives of the periphery accommodated imperial mythology for their own purposes. I briefly touch on other medieval sources to illustrate how *Golden Island* represents a broad tendency in all these regards.

Golden Island: Context, Structure, and Content

Golden Island is the last dated work Zeami wrote for the stage, and it reflects on the first eighteen months of his exile on Sado island. Shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori 足利義教 (1393–1441) had banished Zeami to Sado in 1434. The exact reasons remain obscure, but the verdict came as the culmination of a longer period of decline in shogunal favors (Yamazaki and Matisoff, 227–28). In any case, Zeami claimed his innocence via a reference to Yoshida Kenkō's 吉田兼好 (c. 1283–c. 1350/52) *Essays in Idleness* (*Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草), speaking of one who “once wished, though without blame, to see the moon of exile” (Matisoff, “Kintoshō” 449; Zeami, *Kintoshō* 252).

The exact duration of his exile is equally unclear. The colophon of *Golden Island* dates the work to the second month of Eikyō 永享 8, corresponding to the early spring of 1436. The fact that the final scene depicts the “firelight Noh” ceremony at Tōdaiji in Nara has led some to believe that Zeami had returned to central Japan by that time, but the ending lines imply that it was written while he still resided on the island (Zeami, *Kintoshō* 257; Matisoff, “Kintoshō” 442). In the most recent study of the piece, Ishii Yuka 石井悠加 suggested that Zeami may have produced a draft on Sado and refined it for the stage after his return to central Japan (52). Given that provisions at his place of exile were scant—he even complained to his son-in-law and successor Konparu Zenchiku 金春禪竹 (1405–c. 1470) about a lack of writing paper (Zeami, “Konparu” 319)⁵—the numerous

⁵ This letter to Zenchiku, dated sixth month, eighth day, was probably written in the summer of 1435, the second year of his exile.

references to other literary works in the final version speak in favor of that theory.

Golden Island itself has been variously described as a collection of “irregular dances” (*kusemai* 曲舞; Zeami, *Kintōsho* 255) or “minor songs” (*kouta* 小謡; Ishii 51). *Kusemai* proper is a dance with changing rhythms accompanied by a drum. It is typically performed by a single actor to “a longish song by the chorus, in the course of which the main actor usually interpolates once or twice a short line known as the *ageha*” (O’Neill 103). However, the term also refers to longer pieces containing a dance in that fashion. In this larger sense, it may apply to *Golden Island*, which comprises two pieces expressly so designated. The genre became popular in the late fourteenth century and was integrated by Zeami’s father Kan’ami 観阿弥 (1333–1384) into Noh drama, where it often appears in the culminating scenes. *Kouta* are pieces extracted from Noh drama for separate, isolated production at banquets, religious ceremonies, and the like, so the two designations do not contradict each other.

While single parts of *Golden Island* are composed in a way that they could stand for themselves and could be performed in isolation, the work as a whole develops in a consistent sequence, with the mood gradually changing from sadness and a sense of loss to reconciliation and even eulogy. Susan Matisoff has articulated this in terms of a changing emphasis from the motif of exile to that of pilgrimage (Matisoff, “Images”). In terms of Zeami’s own classification,⁶ *Golden Island* may therefore be grouped as a “congratulatory” piece despite expressions of grief and disconsolation in its earlier sections. This is consistent with the widely shared idea that “Zeami intended the whole of *Kintōsho* to serve as an offertory piece to be sung at *takigi noh*, the firelight performances held annually in the second month at Kofukuji” (Matisoff, “Kintoshō” 443). There is no record, however, of the piece having ever been performed in this way. That may be in part because the above intention was somewhat at odds with what Ishii has described as one of the outstanding innovative characteristics of *Golden*

⁶ *Shūgen* 祝言, compare the list and examples given in “Five Tonalities” (*Go’on* 五音) (Zeami, “Go’on” 206–27).

Island, namely the fact that it is a “first person” account in the strongest possible sense: assuming that Zeami wanted to perform the piece himself, he would have been not only its author and actor but also its protagonist and primary subject (Ishii 51–52).

As mentioned above, *Golden Island* comprises eight scenes which tell the story of Zeami’s travel to his place of exile and the subsequent exploration of its cultural and religious significance: 1) Wakasa, 2) Sea Route, 3) Place of Exile, 4) Hototogisu, 5) Izumi, 6) Ten Shrines, 7) Northern Mountain, 8) Firelight Ceremony.⁷

Ishii has analyzed the particular mood of each of the eight scenes in detail (52–59). As I have mentioned earlier, their overall development may be described in emotional terms as one from sadness to reconciliation and even celebration. In political terms, Sado, initially understood as geographically and culturally peripheral, is gradually re-evaluated and eulogized as an integral and even sacred part of the imperial realm.

“Wakasa,” the first scene, depicts the situation at the outset of travel, contrasting the place name which indicates youth with Zeami’s old age and wistful, resigned emotional state. It also alludes to one of the Eight Sceneries of Xiaoxiang (Jap. *shōshō hakkei* 瀟湘八景), a theme known at court from Chinese literati paintings. The selected image of fisher boats returning in the evening connects to an image that suggests an old man recalling the glory of spring/youth (Ishii 57). “Sea Route” then gives a lyrical account of the grand landscapes seen throughout the journey by boat, celebrating the splendors of each place and the divine beings with which they are connected, among them the snow-covered Hakusan mountain that the piece will later connect with the deity Izanami and Sado Island. The development of this scene already presages the development of the whole piece, from the lament of exile to the symbolic and celebratory re-integration into the imperial realm. “Place of Exile” then describes the land travel upon arrival on Sado. By calling up place names reminiscent of the capital and

⁷ In Japanese: Jakushū 若州, Kairo 海路, Haidokoro 配処, Hototogisu 時鳥, Jissha 十社, Hokusan 北山, Takigi no jinji 薪の神事. The translation of the section titles follows Matisoff, “Kintoshō.”

previous exiles, it emphasizes both the distance and the remaining connection to the capital. The scene culminates in the allusion to the above-mentioned poem from the *Essays in Idleness* about innocently viewing the moon of exile.

“Hototogisu”—here (and often) written with Sinographs literally meaning “time bird”—is titled after the Japanese name for the lesser cuckoo (*cuculus poliocephalis*), whose call signals the beginning of summer. The bird is further strongly associated with Buddhism because its call is understood to resemble the title of the Lotus Sutra in its Japanese reading *hokkekyō* (法華經). The scene once more emphasizes the themes of banishment and nostalgia. It recounts how Zeami upon visiting the local Hachimangū Shrine learns how the exiled poet aristocrat Kyōgoku Tamekane 京極為兼 (1254–1332) had asked the local *hototogisu* to remain silent because he could not bear how their calls reminded him of his time at court, and how the birds obliged to Zeami’s day. The scene ends with a song by the protagonist in which, in the words of Matisoff, Zeami “allows himself to sink into the deepest grief expressed at any point in *Kintōsho*” (“Images” 456).

With “Izumi” (literally “source” or “fountain” but here designating a place), the scene moves on in time to autumn and takes a more hopeful turn. In an excursion to the West of the island, Zeami, the protagonist and narrator, discovers the place where two-hundred years earlier, Emperor Juntoku 順徳天皇 (1197–1242) had died after twenty-one years of exile. The section quotes or alludes to eight poems, all meant to describe Juntoku’s mood, although only two were actually composed by that emperor. The first poem mentioned is by Juntoku’s father Go-Toba 後鳥羽 (1180–1239), who was exiled to another remote island, Iki. The next reaches further back in time to the beginning of recorded literary history, quoting Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂 (ca. 660–742).⁸ While these two poems again emphasize the contrast between the place of banishment and the splendor of the capital, the next ones take up the literal meaning of the place name “Izumi” and broach the subject of pure and cool water, associated with the

⁸ See Ishii 53–54 for a full list.

Buddha Way. From here on, *Golden Island* takes on a note of hope and even celebration. In the words of Matisoff, the motif of exile from here on gives place to the motif of pilgrimage (“Images” 456–62).

The next section “Ten Shrines” moves six months further ahead in time to the spring of the following year (1435) and presents a eulogy to ten deities of Sado that were revered in a sacred place at Izumi. This then leads to an inquiry about the origin story of Sado Island, which is the topic of the following “Northern Mountain” scene. Here, the myth of Izanagi and Izanami is connected to the veneration of the Hakusan deity—a motif already present in the “Sea Route” section—and Sado is elevated to the second original island found or created in the beginning and depicted as a manifestation of the Womb Mandala (see below for a detailed explanation). The final (and originally untitled) scene returns (virtually) to celebrations at the Kasuga shrine and Kōfukuji temple in the ancient capital of Nara, but a concluding poem stresses that the whole collection was done by virtue of staying in Sado and praises its unending splendor.

The Mythology of “Northern Mountain” and its Sources

As the summary above has shown, Zeami skillfully connects his fate to that of illustrious, even imperial, precedents in the first two thirds of *Golden Island*. Especially the “Hototogisu” and “Izumi” scenes present the realization that his exile connects him with famous poets and august personages who were banished to the same place. This leads up to a turning point where Sado is then celebrated as a sacred part of the realm by way of a sustained mythological discourse. A prefatory eulogy in “Ten Shrines” sets the tone for the account of the “divine secrets of this country”—which here in deliberate ambiguity stands for both Sado and Japan—given in the seventh and culminating scene “Northern Island.”⁹

⁹ For the following, see Zeami, *Kintōsho*, 255–56 and Matisoff, “Kintōsho” 454–57. Since the scene covers only two pages in the original and four in the English translation,

In the prose introduction, Zeami recounts that he inquired about these secrets with an old man from the area. The following is therefore presented as a local tradition—but a local tradition that clearly integrates itself into that of the imperial realm. This is obvious from the first lines which present some of the central motifs. Most important is the fusion of imperial mythology with the (originally Buddhist) “exoteric-esoteric” framework. The country’s name is first given as Akitsushima—the “mating dragonfly island,” a lyrical appellation the *Chronicles of Japan* attribute to the legendary first emperor Jinmu 神武天皇.¹⁰ This epithet, however, is immediately connected to the Buddhist expression “a remote land, like scattered millet” (*sokusan hendo* 粟散辺土) that indicates the distance of Japan from India and China, thought of at the time as the land of origin and the current center of the Buddhist teaching, respectively. Yet, the next turn of phrase describes Japan as “the land where heaven and earth were opened into being,” thus reinstating its primary value and connecting its mythical essence to the legitimation of imperial rule: “The descendants of Amateru Ōkami / Have fittingly continued / The line of descent of the sun / Unbroken to this day.”¹¹

This interweaving movement is continued in the following lines. They present “The Original Land of Mahāvairocana [the Cosmic/Sun Buddha]” (*Dainichi honkoku* 大日本国, which may also be read *Dai nihon koku* or

I desist from giving page numbers for each quotation. They should be easy enough to locate.

¹⁰ 「妍哉乎、國之獲矣。．．．雖內木錦之眞迹國、猶如蜻蛉之臀帖焉。」由是、始有秋津洲之號也 (*Nihon shoki* 31). Transliterations vary. Aston’s otherwise useful translation gives “‘Oh! What a beautiful country we have come possessed of! Though a blessed land of inner-tree-fiber, yet it resembles a dragonfly licking its hinder parts.’ From this it first received the name of Akitsushima” (134), omitting both the concession that it is a “truly narrow” (*masaki/shinsaku* [no]) country and the sexual image of mating dragonflies with its connotation of fertility and abundant harvests (“Akitsu-shima”).

¹¹ English translation modified after Matisoff, “Kintosho” 454; cf. Zeami, “Kintōsho” 255. Amateru Ōkami, “The August Deity Shining over the Heavens” is an alternative name of the sun deity Amaterasu, who is presented as the ancestor deity of the imperial house here, following the *Records of Ancient Matters* (and not the main account of the *Chronicles of Japan*).

“Great Country of Japan”) as the first of the country’s names “in the divine realm” (which is how I propose to translate *shintō* 神道 here¹²) and explain it by reference to the appearance of the golden letters “Dainichi” at the bottom of the sea. Neither the name of the country nor its explanation are Zeami’s inventions. Takahashi Yūsuke 高橋悠介 has identified several medieval sources, associated with both Shinto and Buddhist institutions, for this motif, which Zeami adapted freely to connect them to the *Golden Island* Sado in the following *kuse* section.¹³

Expanding on the above motifs, the chorus in the *kuse* then finally explicitly introduces Sado. Its song changes the origin myth of the Japanese islands to say that, when the “heavenly ancestors” (Izanagi and Izanami) lowered their spear from the heavenly bridge, there appeared Awaji to the south and Sado to the north, “providing both the Womb and Diamond Mandalas.” There seems to be no precedent for juxtaposing Awaji to Sado in this way (Takahashi 533), and Zeami himself appears to be ambiguous as to which island manifests which of the two mandalas: the sequence of their listing would suggest Awaji is the Womb and Sado the Diamond Mandala, but the later identification of Izanagi with Awaji and Izanami with Sado suggests the opposite.

Zeami is quick to connect this innovation with a more traditional motif, that is, the idea that the Japanese islands rest on the petals of a Lotus flower (Zeami mentions seven, another source eight), an image for the seat of enlightened beings. Again, he adds the epithet “golden” to reinforce the link with the designation of Sado as *Golden Island*, which he now introduces

¹² I cannot discuss here in full what this subsumption of a name referring to a Buddha under the category of *shintō* says about Zeami’s—and possibly the medieval Japanese—understanding of the religious domain, but clearly, the text does not conceive of “Buddhas” and “gods” as entities belonging to separate ontological or denominational domains.

¹³ Takahashi (531–32) lists *Ruiju gaiken shō* 類聚既驗抄, *Jingi onyō shō* 神祇陰陽抄, *Nihon shoki shi kenmon* 日本書紀私見聞, and *Keiran shuyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集. See also the partly overlapping passages presented in endnote 159 of NST 24: 495–96.

via a poem he attributes to the deified arch-poet Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903).¹⁴

In his response to the chorus, the protagonist follows up on the motif of the twofold mandalas mapped onto two origin regions in the South and North, respectively. His song states that Izanagi has appeared as Kumano gongen 熊野権現, the avatar of a—here unspecified—Buddha or Bodhisattva in Kumano, a region of holy mountains to the south of both Kyoto and Nara. Izanagi is “sowing seeds” and overseeing the governing of the country. Similarly, Izanami manifests as avatar of Hakusan in North-Western Japan, “harvesting seeds” and providing wealth and happiness for the populace.

Izanagi was traditionally associated with the above-mentioned Awaji Island, said to be his place of withdrawal and rest after his active phase. He was also revered in Ise, the main sanctuary of the sun deity Amaterasu, as her “father and mother.”¹⁵ He had been identified with the deity Kumano gongen, generally understood as an avatar of Kannon, the bodhisattva of universal compassion, for centuries, but this identification was not univocal: the *Chōkan kanmon* 長寛勘文, a collection of learned opinions submitted to the court between 1163 and 1164, mentions one opinion opting for the identity of Izanami and the Kumano avatar (“Chōkan kanmon” 246). This latter opinion still resonates in “Northern Island” and may explain why the chorus’ first identification of Awaji and Sado with the twofold mandala appears to suggest that the Womb Mandala—which is also considered as the mandala of compassion—manifests in the south.

¹⁴ Michizane, a specialist of Chinese literature and poetry who rose to high rank at court, died in exile at Dazaifu in South-West Japan. He was later deified as Kitano Tenjin 北野天神 after various calamities at court had been attributed to his posthumous wrath.

¹⁵ *Amaterasu ōkami no fubo* 天照大神之父母 (“Chōkan kanmon” 238). This designation rests on the origin story of that deity that is given in the *Records of Ancient Matters* and mentioned as a variant in the *Chronicles of Japan*. In the pertinent version, Izanami dies after giving birth to a fire deity, and Izanagi unsuccessfully attempts to bring her back from the land of the dead. Upon return, he enters a river to purify himself. The sun deity Amaterasu is born from washing his left eye, the moon deity Tsukuyomi from washing the right eye, and Susanoo from washing his nose (*Kojiki* 70–71).

The protagonist's response, however, settles for the identification of Izanagi and the Diamond Mandala with the southern regions of Awaji and Kumano, versus Izanami and the Womb Mandala with the northern Hakusan area and Sado. Izanami is indeed identified as the deity of Hakusan in the related origin myth, allegedly based on a divine message from the eighth century which states that she is presently known as "Great Bodhisattva Mysterious Principle" (Myōri daibosatsu 妙理大菩薩) (Hōdaibō 549),¹⁶ an avatar of the Eleven-Headed Bodhisattva Kannon. Furthermore, the correlation between Izanagi and the Diamond Mandala on the one hand, and Izanami and the Womb Mandala on the other, was well established in esoteric Shinto writings, although they are usually identified with the central Mahāvairocana Buddha and not with other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas (see, e.g., "Jingi hishō" 377).

Having set out the sacred significance of Sado, the final section of "Northern Island" returns to and reevaluates Zeami's personal fate. His exile has become a blessing, even an opportunity for enlightenment. His coming to this hallowed place must be the result of a beneficial karmic bond from a previous life. The eulogy for Sado's pristine landscape, its "mountains of themselves high, the sea of itself deep," culminates in lines from the Zen classic *Blue Cliff Record* (*Biyan Lu* 碧巖錄, Jap. *Hekiganroku* 碧巖錄, c. 1125) to illustrate that he has achieved a liberated state of mind in which he can accept and express things just as they are: "The heart which tells completely / Of the clouds on the mountains, / The moon on the sea."¹⁷ This final turn to a Zen source is not an arbitrary or eclectic move. Prior to his exile, Zeami had undergone several years of Zen training, most

¹⁶ The name appears to be specific to the Buddhist aspect of Izanami as the essence or "original ground" (*honji* 本地) of the Hakusan deity. The extant version of the Hakusan origin myth is from the late seventeenth century, but the identification of Izanami with Hakusan gongen is already mentioned in various medieval documents like the *Jinten ainoshō* 塵添壺囊鈔 of 1532, itself a compilation of older sources ("Hakusan gongen").

¹⁷ *Kataritsukusu, san'un kaigetsu no kokoro* 語り尽くす、山雲海月のころ, adapted from 話尽山雲海月情 (phonetic reading: *wajin san'un kaigetsu jō*, japanized reading: *san'un kaigetsu no nasake o hanashi tsukusu* [mo], "to fully tell the feelings of mountains, clouds, the sea, and the moon"), *Hekiganroku*, case 53; cf. Iriya et al. 212.

probably at Fuganji, the first Sōtō Zen temple in the Yamato area.¹⁸ That connection still held: he signed *Golden Island* with his clerical name Shami Zenbō 沙弥善坊, and he (or his son-in-law Zenchiku) gave Fuganji a donation for holding memorial services for himself and his wife (Kōnishi 295–97). The quote therefore also signals a personal appropriation of the mythology recounted in “Northern Island.”

“Northern Island” and Medieval Work on Myth

Turning from the “what” to the “how,” in the following I analyze the technical aspects of Zeami’s “work on myth” and how it represents wider trends in medieval mythology.

As evident from the previous section, “Northern Island” contains changes compared to ancient imperial mythology in all three semiotic dimensions: the semantic, the syntactic, and the pragmatic. These are often closely interrelated. For example, the addition of Buddhist motifs, such as the letters of Dainichi/Mahāvairocana on the bottom of the sea or the lotus petals on which Japan is seated, not only adds new semantic content. It also creates a change in the religious syntax. In line with a pattern well-established in medieval Japan, the Japanese gods and their actions are here intimately connected to Buddhist salvific symbols and figures. This connection is most prominent in the identification of Izanagi and Izanami with the Kumano and Hakusan avatars, respectively. Matching deities with Buddhist salvific figures as their original essence was common in Zeami’s time. In “Northern Island,” however, we can see how that relation has become ambiguous: it remains unclear what is “original ground” and what is “local trace.” This does not mean that Zeami prioritizes the gods over Buddhas

¹⁸ The exact years of his training are unclear, but Ōtomo Taishi 大友泰司 assumes the years 1421–1428 to be most probable (Ōtomo, “Hoganji” 111; see also Kōnishi). Ōtomo later expanded on the topic in *Zeami to zen* 世阿弥と禅 to prove a direct link between Zeami and Dōgen via the figure of Taiyō Bonsei 太容梵清 (1378–1439?), but much of the argument in that book remains speculative.

and Bodhisattvas, as the scene ends on a clear Buddhist note. Rather, Zeami uses a commonly accepted pattern in adapting imperial mythology to fit with the dominant “exoteric-esoteric” intellectual paradigm of the time. As a result, he posits an intimate relation between local deities and Buddhist salvific figures that is not present in the *Chronicles of Japan* or the *Records of Ancient Matters*.

Notably, however, this semantic and syntactic change is realized by mythological techniques already employed in the ancient chronicles. The first is the creation of figurative identities, that is, identities based on metaphorical “cross-domain mapping” (Lakoff and Johnson 58). A prominent example from ancient imperial mythology is Amaterasu who is clearly an anthropomorphic deity but also identified with the sun—when she hides in a cave after being shamed by her brother, the world grows dark. Lesser known but equally illustrative are the “eight great deities of Izushi” whom the *Records of Ancient Matters* identifies with eight material treasures brought by a prince from Korea. It nevertheless next reports of a daughter.¹⁹

The interpolation of new attributes, objects, and motifs into well-known stories is another common mythological device used since ancient times.²⁰ We have seen above how Zeami introduces the letters of Mahāvairocana and the lotus petals from which the Japanese islands emerge into the origin myth of the realm. While he can rely on precedent for these additions, he complements them with the new epithet “golden”—a detail that is not present in his sources. This may appear as a minor embellishment, but it prepares for his much more conspicuous and substantial interpolation: the introduction of the “golden isle” of Sado as a second original land mass beside Awaji. This brings the “variability of the margins” that Blumenberg

¹⁹ Izushi no yamae no ōkami 伊豆志之八前大神 is mentioned in the Ōjin 応神 chapter (*Kojiki* 256–59). On figurative identity, see also Steineck 204–10.

²⁰ An example can be found in the *Gleanings from Ancient Words* (*Kogo shūi* 古語拾遺) from the early ninth century, which prolong the mythical genealogies of the Nakatomi, Inbe and Ōtomo clans all the way up to the first generations of the gods in support of the status of the latter two (Inbe 13–14; see also Steineck 295–96).

noted as a characteristic of mythical stories almost to the center, the “narrative core.” Yet, the myth remains recognizable regardless.

Here again, the semantic addition also creates a syntactic shift, this time in terms of sacred and political geography: traditionally, Sado was a remote and peripheral place, which is exactly why it was chosen as a place of banishment. Zeami, however, stages it together with the somewhat less peripheral but still remote Hakusan region on a par with Awaji and Kumano. As a result, and in the pragmatic dimension, his status changes from exile to pilgrim, symbolically anticipating his restitution as a faithful subject of the imperial realm.

Contraction, the opposite of addition and amplification, is an equally common tool of mythological variation. “Northern Island,” like the ancient text of the “great purification” ritual (*ōharae* 大祓; *Kojiki* 423–33) and many other texts, omits the first generations of the gods. Furthermore, Zeami does not specify the divine ancestors who mandate Izanagi and Izanami to create the lands. These abbreviations may just be made for narrative expedience, as the initial parts of ancient origin mythology would not impact his story.²¹ A further one, however, stands in the service of at least one of his interpolations: not mentioning the brine that, in the ancient chronicles, drops from the spear after Izanagi and Izanami stirred the sea and coalesces into the first island, makes place for the lotus petals rising from the ground and possibly—depending on how one imagines things—also for the letters of Mahāvairocana appearing on the bottom of the sea. These additions in turn motivate the introduction of the twofold mandala (both of which have Dainichi at their center) which justifies the interpolation of a second originary island.

Many of these aspects of Zeami’s work on myth in “Northern Island” are common to medieval Japanese mythography, and his changes to imperial origin mythology appear by no means radical in comparison. The origin myth of Mount Hiei, the main seat of the Tendai School of Buddhism that still dominated the religious field in the medieval period, shows

²¹ In the case of the ancient ritual, one might argue that the same contraction serves to gloss over the differences between the mythology of the *Records* and the *Chronicles*.

how tenacious the link could become. The story is prominently told in the *Record of Great Peace* (*Taiheiki* 太平記) that—ironically in light of its title—details the conflicts leading to the downfall of the shogunate in Kamakura (*Taiheiki* 478–86). The only element its origin myth retains from imperial mythology is the reference to a reed that transforms into land, reminding one of the thing “in form like a reed-shoot” that first emerges after the separation of Heaven and Earth and transforms into the first god Kuni no Tokotachi (Aston 2).

The Hiei origin myth, however, completely changes the context of that motif: Here, Shakyamuni Buddha observes from a place in the Heavens a wave resounding with the line “all living beings have Buddha nature” (*is-sai shujō shitsu'u busshō* 一切衆生而有仏性, *Taiheiki* 478). He decides to spread his teaching in the land first reached by that wave. The wave chances on a reed leaf, which turns to an island bearing Mount Hiei. The rest of that story, fascinating as it is, needs not concern us here; what is important is to see how freely medieval mythographers used topoi from the ancient imperial sources. However, this does not mean that these became irrelevant.

Quite to the contrary, the fact that motifs from imperial mythology could be adapted freely made them available for use by a broad spectrum of interested parties—this is perhaps the most important change in the pragmatic dimension exemplified by Zeami’s “Northern Island.” Over time, imperial mythology had become more and more accessible and applicable beyond the domain of the court aristocracy and the court-sponsored shrines. In the medieval period, it was no longer under the control of the court and could thus be freely claimed to bolster the status of a broad range of institutions, regions, and even individuals like Zeami. Because of that, the mythology diffused into a wide array of genres and media. It became the subject of Noh plays like Zeami’s *The Heavenly Spear* (*Sakahoko* 逆鉾) or *The Grass Mowing Sword* (*Kusanagi* 草薙), performed for both elite audiences and at temples and shrines for a wider public, and of didactic tales and chronicles of various fanes (e.g., the beginning of the *Divine Realm Collection*, *Shintōshū* 神道集; Sakamoto 1–3), which provided content for itinerant preachers who would reach audiences on all levels of society

including beggars (Kaminishi 103–18). Additionally, it was at the center of digressions in warrior epics like the *Tale of the Heike* (*Heike monogatari* 平家物語) (e.g., on divine swords; Takagi 345–47), dramatically recited to the accompaniment of the Japanese lute (*biwa* 琵琶) by itinerant artists, and the above-mentioned *Chronicle of Great Peace*, not to mention doctrinal tracts like the *Secret Excerpts on the Gods of Heaven and Earth* (*Jingi hishō* 神祇秘鈔; 376–78), that circulated among learned clerics and beyond. Many of these introduced variations on the original stories, very often proposing new chains of identification between sacred entities and, in the case of learned tracts, often also the elemental cosmic forces (Abe 377). Others, among them Noh plays like *The Heavenly Spear* or the origin myth as told in the *Divine Realm Collection*, remained closer to the plot as recounted in the ancient chronicles. Whatever the degree of variation, they all contributed to the spread of figures, storylines, and topoi from imperial mythology which in this fashion came to assume significance for ever broader parts of the population.

Conclusion

Zeami's final opus for the stage has proven exemplary for medieval work on imperial myth in several respects. In its liberal interpolation of Buddhist motifs, it follows an established paradigm that accommodates what was once a separate mythological tradition to the dominant "exoteric-esoteric" framework of the period. On the other hand, its culminating scene "Northern Island" remains close enough to the original storyline to follow some of the techniques that allowed to adapt imperial mythology to new contexts and to local or otherwise parochial concerns. The main technique used to this end, that is, the matching of deities and Buddhas or Bodhisattvas via the pattern of "original ground" and "local trace," is one widely shared at the time. We have seen how the hierarchy initially implied in this pattern where the Buddhist salvific figure would be the essence or "original ground" is blurring by Zeami's time, although there is no indication that he generally treats the Buddhist side as less important. We have further

seen that the logic of figurative identification that is characteristic for this pattern was already present in ancient mythology, which may have facilitated the inclusion of Buddhist motifs and figures in the first place.

A more specific aspect of *Golden Island* is the interpolation of Sado as a second place of origin of the Japanese islands which rearranges the geographical hierarchy between Zeami's place of exile and the political and religious center of Japan. However, here again, Zeami did not act without precedent, as shown by the case of the origin myth of Mount Hiei and Enryakuji. Techniques of variation such as figurative identification, addition and contraction were regularly employed at the time and allowed a wide range of groups from diverse regions to bolster their status by connecting to imperial mythology. The one aspect that makes *Golden Island* something of an outlier, in medieval mythography as well as in the domain of performative art, is the extreme degree to which it links imperial mythology to the individual fate of its author. This may also have placed a limit on its transmission and use on the stage, especially in a ritual context.

Nevertheless, the piece is instructive regarding "work on myth" in general, as it shows, on the one hand, how this work includes conscious decisions and deliberate interventions by individual actors; on the other hand, these deliberate variations need to be validated by a larger community. In Zeami's case, his use of imperial mythology in several of his pieces, including *Golden Island*, functioned as part of such validation and contributed to the proliferation of imperial mythology in medieval Japanese society. Yet, *Golden Island* itself may have been too personal an account—and ultimately too much focused on the capital and court—to set off a new strand of regional mythology: the memory of Zeami that became part of local lore is not connected to *Golden Island* but to a mask he carved during a draught for a dance to pray for rain—successfully, as legend has it (Hamaguchi 33–34).

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Images of Imperial Power in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* Exploring Different Relationships between Emperors and Local Deities

Maral ANDASSOVA

The Kojiki and Nihon shoki were compiled in the early eighth century and present a cycle of myths detailing the imperial line's rise to power. However, the way each of these works depicts the relationships between the emperors and local deities is different. In Kojiki, the emperors actively worship local deities and depend on their spiritual powers, while they are simply subdued in Nihon shoki, demonstrating absolute power wielded by the imperial line.

This chapter features three episodes from the two ancient sources which stand exemplary for their contrasting approaches to imperial power: Ōkuninushi transferring the rulership of the land to the Heavenly Deities, the son of Suinin tennō regaining his ability to speak, and prince Homudawake exchanging his name with the deity of Tsunuga. A comparison of these episodes in Kojiki and Nihon shoki will show that the differences between them are closely related to the message each text aims to convey to the reader. Nihon shoki clearly adheres to the philosophy of the Ritsuryō state and is based on ideas of ancient Chinese statehood, wherein the emperor was considered a divine entity from Heaven with absolute power. In contrast, Kojiki seemingly tries to revive the image of the emperor common before the establishment of a centralized government—a king who's right to rule is based on the approval of local clans.

Introduction

The Imperial Court compiled the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 in 712 and 720 respectively and with them presented a cycle of myths about how the descendants of the Heavenly Deity Amaterasu became rulers of the land. A central episode of these texts describes how Amaterasu's grandson, Ho no Ninigi, descended to Earth and established the imperial lineage of Japan. In addition, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* include myths related to Earthly Deities, local deities which represent areas of ancient Japan, such as Izumo, Yamato, and Kumaso, and are led by the god Ōkuninushi. However, the relationship between the emperors and these local deities is depicted differently in the two works.

This chapter aims to analyze the differences in the depiction of relationships between the emperors and local deities in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and to understand the unique portrayal of the emperor in *Kojiki* in the context of these relationships. These differences are closely related to the messages conveyed by each text. Traditionally, scholars have treated *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as a unified corpus of Japanese myths, commonly referred to as *kiki shinwa* 記紀神話 (“myths of the records and chronicles”) or *nihon shinwa* 日本神話 (“myths of Japan”), but contemporary scholarship challenges this approach, emphasizing the distinct cosmologies and narrative styles of the two texts. *Nihon shoki* adheres to the philosophy of the Ritsuryō state (*ritsuryō kokka* 律令国家) and is based on ideas of ancient Chinese statehood, wherein the emperor was blessed by the so-called Mandate of Heaven—granting him absolute power. In contrast, *Kojiki* tries to revive an earlier image of the emperor lost due to the implementation of the Chinese worldview prominent in *Nihon shoki*. This chapter argues that this is why *Kojiki* describes the local ruling families or clans not as submissive to the emperor but as having to provide active approval for the emperor's decisions.

Literature Review

Pioneering scholars like Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 (1916–2008) have identified *Kojiki* as a self-contained text with its own structure, where each myth is interconnected. Saigō argues that all elements in *Kojiki*—for example worlds like the Central Land of the Reed Plains (Ashihara no nakatsukuni) and individual mythical episodes—are connected to each other and have to be considered as parts of a larger whole. Previous studies have considered the Central Land of the Reed Plains to be Japan’s old name,¹ but Saigō proposes that the Central Land of the Reed Plains in *Kojiki* did not just refer to Japan but meant the world as a whole. Thus, the worlds in *Kojiki* are related to each other as elements of a greater narrative and should not be treated as separate episodes and myths (Saigō, *Kojiki no sekai* 30–48).

This methodology has affected subsequent studies, such as the research by Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光. Kōnoshi also treats *Kojiki* as a self-contained work. Moreover, he determines that *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were based on different cosmologies with different logics (Kōnoshi, *Kojiki to Nihon shoki* 81–135). *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* include similar stories but are told differently, with the myth of Izanagi and Izanami serving as a poignant example. On the one hand, in *Kojiki* Izanami dies and leaves for the Land of Yomi. Izanagi follows her, and, after a conflict between the two, he flees to Himuka in Tsukushi. There, he cleanses himself from the evils of Yomi, creating Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo in the process. The *Nihon shoki* version, on the other hand, has Izanami die only after giving birth to the three deities together with Izanagi. Notably, Kōnoshi highlights that in *Nihon shoki*, Izanagi is labeled the *yō* deity (*yōshin* 陽神), embodying the male principle, and Izanami is called the *in* deity (*inshin* 陰神), representing the female principle. He clarifies that the text is therefore based on the Chinese concept of *inyō* 陰陽 (“yin and yang”) which is why

¹ Tsugita Uruu 次田潤 (1884–1966) states that Toyoashihara no mizuho no kuni, another term from *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, is a poetic name for Japan (186) and Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司 (1902–1991) notes that this is the old name of the country (10).

Nihon shoki and *Kojiki* should be analyzed as separate works (Kōnoshi, *Kojiki to Nihon shoki* 120–26).

Kōnoshi's research has had a significant impact on contemporary *Kojiki* studies. His understanding of the two ancient sources became widely accepted among scholars of academic societies, such as the Association for Ancient Japanese Studies (*Kodai bungakkai* 古代文学会), the Association for Early Japanese Literature (*Jōdai bungakkai* 上代文学会), and the Japanese Literature Association (*Nihon bungaku kyōkai* 日本文学協会).² This shows a strong tendency among Japanese academics to regard the two books as being written according to a different logic.³

The writing style of these two texts has also been the subject of academic discussion. In contrast to *Nihon shoki*, which is written in Classical Chinese, *Kojiki* has a special writing style—a mixture of Chinese and

² Many scholars have criticized Kōnoshi's method as they try to go beyond the texts and connect them to other works of the Nara (710–794) and Heian (794–1185) periods. For instance, the Association for Ancient Japanese Literature has published a series of special issues of the journal *Kodai bungaku* 古代文学 as a result of several symposiums and seminars in the years 2021 to 2023 in which they discussed methods to overcome Kōnoshi's point of view (*Tokushū: Koyūmei* 特集・固有名; *Tokushū: "Kodai bungaku" to kyōyuchi* 特集・「古代文学」と共有知; *Tokushū: "Hirakareta" tekisuto e* 特集・「開かれた」テキストへ).

The points discussed in these issues include the use of proper nouns, citations, and commentaries. Ōtsuka Chieko's 大塚千紗子 focus on the proper noun Toyoashihara no mizuho no kuni and the evolution of its meaning in various ancient texts, including *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki* and *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記, is a notable example. Yamamoto Daisuke 山本大介 and Watanabe Ryōichi's 渡部亮一 focus on *Nihon ryōiki* and its citations of Buddhist sutras highlight the “outside” influences found in the text. In addition, Kaneoka Rie's 兼岡理恵 study on the history of commentaries of *Izumo no kuni no fudoki* 出雲国風土記 and its connections to the medieval and modern periods as well as Kanazawa Hideyuki's 金沢英之 analysis of the inside (*naibu* 内部) and outside (*gaibu* 外部) of ancient literature texts are also noteworthy.

³ Many scholars, including Mōri Masamori 毛利正守, Kanai Seiichi 金井清一, Taniguchi Masahiro 谷口雅博, and Tokumori Makoto 徳盛誠 have adopted Kōnoshi's method, called *sakuhinron* (作品論), in their research. However, Kōnoshi's perspective does not encompass the variants present in the *Nihon shoki*. This aspect was critiqued by Matsumoto Naoki 松本直樹, further adding to the criticism voiced in the articles mentioned in footnote 2.

man'yōgana 万葉仮名, the ancient Japanese writing system in which Chinese characters are used phonetically. In addition, the word order in *Kojiki* does not conform to the rules of Classical Chinese. In this regard, *Kojiki* has been treated as a text bearing traditions from before the introduction of writing. This is supported by the observation that it includes many repetitive and rhythmic narratives reminiscent of oral storytelling (Miura, *Kodai* 23–28). According to Miura Sukeyuki 三浦佑之, *Kojiki* is oriented towards antiquity and contains oral legends and myths, while *Nihon shoki*, completed eight years later, is oriented towards the history of the Yamato imperial court, which supported the new Ritsuryō state (*Kojiki kōgi* 257–70).

However, Umezawa Isezō 梅沢伊勢三 (1919–1989) points out that the *Kojiki* contains many expressions and descriptions that would not have been written without consulting *Nihon shoki*. He therefore concludes that *Kojiki* should be regarded as a text written after the compilation of *Nihon shoki* (Umezawa, *Kikiron* 79–89; Umezawa *Kojiki* 5–14). Despite the generally accepted opinion that *Kojiki* was written before *Nihon shoki*, Go Tetsuo 呉哲男 agrees with Umezawa and argues that the compilation of *Nihon shoki* led to the creation of *Kojiki* (Go 231–48). His theory is not based on the details of the compilation process but more so on the psychological motives that led the Yamato imperial court to start creating *Kojiki*. He assumes that the compilers of *Kojiki* were well-acquainted with the nature and content of *Nihon shoki*, as the order of *Nihon shoki*'s compilation was given as early as 681 CE. According to Go, the Yamato court aimed to be part of the global world with its center in China. This caused the compilation of *Nihon shoki* as a text not only written in Classical Chinese and based on Chinese philosophy, as explained above, but also citing ancient Chinese texts. However, the compilation of the *Nihon shoki* could have been perceived as the “written word” suppressing oral tradition (Go 237). Go argues that this led to a newfound appreciation of oral tradition, as well as to a backlash against the written word as a “handicap.” This backlash caused an attempt to recover the “communal nature of emotion” (*kyōkan (kanjō) no kyōdōsei* 共感 (感情) の共同性) lost through the use of writing, and it was before this background that the *Kojiki* was established (Go 237, 239, 244). In other words, the opposition against the Chinese worldview of

Nihon shoki made the Yamato court rediscover the value of their oral traditions. Go calls this process “ancient nationalism” (Go 54). This led the Yamato court to create *Kojiki*, with a writing style and narratives that differ from *Nihon shoki*. However, it only appeared to be a remnant of oral traditions on the surface. The world or heart of antiquity present in *Kojiki* was not depicted as it was in reality but as an ideal recreation meant to represent the identity of Yamato in contrast to the Chinese worldview of *Nihon shoki*.⁴

Another example highlighted by Go is the depiction of Yamato Takeru. While *Nihon shoki* portrays Yamato Takeru as having a good relationship with his father, Emperor Keiko 景行天皇 (trad. 71–130 CE), and as a good son, which is typical for Confucian philosophy, *Kojiki* portrays him as a tragic hero who was shunned and exiled by his father. Go proposes that the compilers of the *Kojiki* aimed to create a hero who differed from the Chinese worldview.⁵ Yamato Takeru thus became an emotional figure appealing to sympathy through whom the tragic nature of anti-institutional narratives could be actively addressed (Go 235–250).

The perspectives put forth by scholars like Kōnoshi, Umezawa, and Go shed light on the contrasting images of the emperors and their relationships with the Earthly Deities in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. It is against this

⁴ In the preface to *Kojiki*, Ō no Yasumaro writes that “during the times of antiquity, both words and meanings were unsophisticated” (*inishie no toki ha, koto to kokoro to tomo ni sunahoni shite* 上古の時は、言と意と並に朴にして; *Kojiki*, SNKBZ 24; Philippi 43). This sentence could be understood as *Kojiki* representing words as they were in ancient times. In his argumentation, Go disagrees with this notion.

⁵ One of the researchers who supports Go’s theory is Saitō Hideki 斎藤英喜. The keywords used by Saitō are “global and local identity.” Saitō explains that *Nihon shoki*, written in Classical Chinese and according to the Chinese worldview, aimed to embody a “global standard” for Japan (*Yomikaerareta nihon shinwa* 60–61). As imperial Chinese globalism homogenized the East Asian world, it created anxieties about self-identity in these countries. The dissolution of the myths of their own countries through the spread of Chinese myths throughout the East Asian cultural sphere caused an identity crisis. The *Kojiki* thus emerged as a text that attempted to secure a local identity lost to globalism (Saitō, *Yomikaerareta nihon shinwa* 62–63).

background that I will discuss the meaning of these differences between the texts as well as the peculiarities of the emperors in *Kojiki*.

Emperor Jinmu and Yamato

Kojiki – Marriage with the Daughter of Ōmononushi

According to *Kojiki*, Amaterasu's grandson Ho no Ninigi descends from Heaven and arrives at Takachiho. His descendant, the mythical first emperor Jinmu, decides to move east to establish his government. When he arrives at Kumano, a large bear appears before him which causes Jinmu and his troops to suddenly feel faint. Jinmu regains his strength when he is given the sword that Takemikazuchi had used to pacify the Central Land of the Reed Plains, and the unruly deities of Kumano are pacified. Guided by a giant crow, Jinmu reaches Yamato and settles in the palace of Kashihara (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 141–57).

Despite already having been married at Takachiho, he searches for a maiden to become his empress. He marries Isuke-yori-hime, the daughter of Ōmononushi who resides in Yamato (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 157–61).⁶ This scene is portrayed in *Kojiki* as follows: “The home of Isukë-YÖRI-PIME-NÖ-MIKÖTÖ was by the river SAWI. The Emperor journeyed to Isukë-YÖRI-PIME's home and slept there one night” (Philippi 181).

The River Sai 狭井川 runs north of the Sai Shrine 狭井神社,⁷ an auxiliary shrine of the Miwa Shrine which worships the *aramitama* 荒御魂 (“rough aspect”) of Ōmononushi, whose name can be translated as “chief of the

⁶ The deity Ōmononushi is worshiped as the main deity of the Miwa Shrine on Mount Miwa in the city of Sakurai. This region was known as Yamato in ancient times and is said to have been the place where Jinmu established his first government. The term Yamato not only served as a name for the province itself but also by extension as the name for Japan as a whole and for the dynasty of emperors ruling it.

⁷ The characters 狭井 are read *sawi* in ancient Japanese but *sai* in the modern language. For reasons of readability and transparency, the modern reading was chosen for the river and shrine.

mono” (Nishimiya 120). The term *mono* as it appears in words such as *mononoke* 物の怪 or *mono ni tsukareru* 物に憑かれる means “spirit” or “supernatural entity” (Saitō, *Kojiki seichō suru kamigami* 215). Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 (1887–1953) describes *mono* as spirits and supernatural or demonic beings that cannot be understood or controlled (189–90). In *Kojiki*, the chief of these spirits, Ōmononushi, causes a series of devastating plagues and epidemics that affects the country during the reign of Emperor Sujin 崇神天皇 (trad. 148–30 BCE). The region of Yamato is thus portrayed as a place teeming with uncontrolled spirits, *mono*, and Ōmononushi represents this place as the chief of these *mono*.

Significantly, Jinmu enters the territory of this deity singing songs, which often symbolizes a channel of communication between humans and deities. Although not explicitly mentioned in the narrative, we can therefore assume that Jinmu encountered the energy of *mono* spreading in Yamato when he entered the place where the *aramitama* of Ōmononushi dwells. Not only that, but Jinmu also spends one night in the house of Ōmononushi’s daughter Isukekori-hime by the Sai River. The marriage between Jinmu and Isukekori-hime is presented as a form of divine marriage (“one-night marriage”; *hitoyo kon* 一夜婚).⁸ The children born from such a marriage usually become noble beings or priests who worship ancestral deities. Between Jinmu and Isukekori-hime, three children are born: Hiko-yaimimi, Kamuyaimimi, and Kamununakawamimi, the youngest of whom inherits his father’s throne as the second (mythical) emperor Suizei 綏靖天皇 (632–549 BCE).

Kojiki therefore tells the story of the “tutelary deity” (*jinushigami* 地主神) of Yamato, Ōmononushi, whose daughter marries Jinmu and gives birth to the next emperor, thus continuing the lineage of the imperial family.

⁸ A “one-night marriage” is a form of divine marriage between a god, or a person equivalent to a god, and a human. Another example is the marriage between Ho no Ninigi and Konohana Sakuya-hime which results in a pregnancy after just one night together. To prove her faithfulness, Konohana Sakuya-hime sets fire to her maternity house and gives birth to Hoori, Hoderi, and Hosuseri. The extraordinary circumstances of their birth are proof that they are the children of Ho no Ninigi—sacred beings who inherited the blood of the Heavenly Deities (Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku* 4: 115–16).

Based on this episode, we can understand how Emperor Jinmu treats Ōmononushi. Instead of defeating him, Jinmu communicates with the deity, marries his daughter, and takes his power as his own to strengthen his position as Yamato's ruler. Notably, this depiction of Jinmu reflects the way Wada Atsumu 和田萃 describes how the Yamato kings performed rituals in honor of Ōmononushi at Mount Miwa before the Miwa clan began to worship the deity in the middle of the sixth century (323–40). Thus, the image of Jinmu mirrors the Yamato kings who existed before the establishment of the Ritsuryō state.

Nihon shoki – Marriage with the Daughter of Kotoshironushi

The story of Jinmu's Eastward Campaign (*Jinmu tōsei* 神武東征) in the *Nihon shoki* is very similar to that of the *Kojiki*. However, Jinmu does not marry Ōmononushi's daughter. Instead, he seeks out sons and daughters from several noble families who tell him that Kotoshironushi had taken Tamakushi-hime as his wife and conceived a beautiful child called Isuzu-hime. She is taken to court and becomes Jinmu's full wife (*Nihon shoki* 1: 230–33). Jinmu's wife in the *Nihon shoki* is thus no longer the daughter of Ōmononushi, the tutelary deity of Yamato, but of Kotoshironushi.

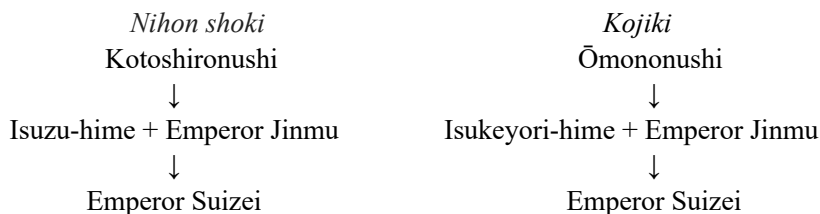


Fig. 1. Genealogy of Emperor Jinmu

But what kind of deity is Kotoshironushi? He is the deity of words or verbal expressions of the divine will and is said to be capable of oracular utterances (Yoshii 184–218). During the *kuni yuzuri* 国譲り (“cession of the

land”) myth, Kotoshironushi is portrayed as the son of Ōkuninushi and as submissive to the will of the Heavenly Deities. When asked by Takemikazuchi to cede his land to the Heavenly descendants, Ōkuninushi postpones the decision by sending Takemikazuchi to his two sons. Kotoshironushi, who was fishing at the time, agrees to accept the rule of the Heavenly Deities, surrenders his spear, and leaves Izumo. In *Nihon shoki*, Kotoshironushi also appears in other passages related to Izumo and Yamato. However, there is no mention of a shrine that worships him in either the *Izumo fudoki* nor the sections of the *Jinmyōchō* 神名帳 relating to the Izumo province (Iwamoto 477–79). The fact that this deity was seemingly not enshrined in Izumo led Abe Shinji 阿部真司 to suggest that the connection between Kotoshironushi and Izumo was fabricated (107–15). Yoshii Iwao 吉井巖 (1922–1995) argues that Kotoshironushi was originally a deity with deep ties to the Katsuragi clan and was enshrined in the *hasshinden* 八神殿 at the imperial court “as a guardian deity of the imperial household” (203). According to Yoshii, this role of Kotoshironushi as a deity charged with protecting the Imperial Court could have been the reason why he became the father of Jinmu’s consort in *Nihon shoki* (184–218).

The differences between *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are clear. In *Kojiki*, Jinmu marries the daughter of Ōmononushi, an uncontrolled spirit in Yamato that later inflicts a curse during the reign of Sujin, and incorporates his spiritual power into the imperial line. Jinmu makes peaceful contact with the deities of Yamato, even though they could be dangerous to him. In *Nihon shoki*, Jinmu instead marries the daughter of a deity who is already loyal to him. He is portrayed as an emperor whose superiority over the local deities is not to be questioned.

These differences are significant because of Jinmu’s will as it is expressed at the outset of his Eastward Campaign. In the *Nihon shoki*, he states that when his heavenly ancestor Ho no Ninigi descended from Heaven, the earthly world was dark and disorderly, but Ho no Ninigi “fostered justice” (*tadashiki wo yashinahi* 正を養ひ), brought order, and ruled over the “western border” (*nishi no hotori* 西偏; *Nihon shoki* 1: 193; Aston 1: 110). However, the remote regions do not yet “enjoy the blessings of

imperial rule” (*miutsukushibi ni uruhohazu* 王沢に霑はず; *Nihon shoki* 1: 193–94; Aston 1: 110),⁹ i.e., royalty had not yet reached it. Jinmu therefore declares that he would conquer the East to bless it with imperial virtue.

The land ruled by the descendants of Amaterasu is therefore represented as the center of order, and Jinmu establishes his rule by extending that order to other lands. Moving eastward from Hyūga, Jinmu destroys those who disobey him. *Nihon shoki* frequently uses the words *tsuminafu* 誅ふ (“eradication of the wicked”) and *chūsatsu* 誅殺 (“execution of criminals”) to describe the treatment of those who defied imperial rule.¹⁰ The character *chū* 誅 means to kill the wicked or the guilty, and those who do not accept the emperor’s sovereignty are deemed as such (Mizubayashi 126). The emperor’s authority and power to put to death “evil gods” (*akushin* 邪神) and “demons” (*kishin* 鬼神) and to uphold righteousness are regarded as absolute. The idea of conquering Yamato through military force can thus be considered the concept behind the depiction of Jinmu’s expedition in *Nihon shoki* (Mizubayashi 125–27).

It becomes apparent that the image of the emperor in *Nihon shoki* was greatly influenced by concepts of ancient Chinese statehood such as the

⁹ 而遼遼之地、猶未_レ霑_二於王沢_一 (而るを、遼遼なる地、猶未だ王沢に霑はず; *Nihon shoki* 1: 192–94). This phrase is based on the following sinocentric ideas: the subjugation of the people by virtue of the Son of Heaven, the spread of the sovereign’s government, the extension of imperial influence, and the assimilation of new territory.

¹⁰ For example, the character 誅 is used in a passage about subduing the Earthly Deities. The way Takemikatsuchi and Futsunushi subdued them is described as follows: 於是二神誅_二諸不_レ順鬼神等_一 (*kokoni futahashirano kami, moromoro no matsurohanu kamitachi wo tsuminahi* 是に二神、諸の順はぬ鬼神等を誅ひ; *Nihon shoki* 1: 118–19), which means “Thereupon the two Gods put to death all the rebellious spirits and Deities” (Aston 1: 69). Furthermore, the character 誅 is used to describe how Emperor Keikō 景行天皇 (trad. 13 BCE–70 CE) gained control over the Eastern Land: 因_レ以免_二降者_一、而誅_二不_レ服_一 (*yorite, shitagafu hito wo yurushi, matsurohanu wo tsuminafu* 因りて、降ふ者を免し、服はぬを誅ふ; *Nihon shoki* 1: 392–93) which translates as “Therefore he pardoned those who surrendered, and put to death those who would not submit (Aston 1: 214)”. In addition, the word 誅殺 is used in the passages of Emperor Yūryaku 雄略天皇 (trad. 418–479 CE; *Nihon shoki* 2: 170; Aston 1: 348), Emperor Kimmei 欽明天皇 (509–571 CE; *Nihon shoki* 2: 406; Aston 2: 60), and Emperor Sushun 崇峻天皇 (522–592 CE; *Nihon shoki* 2: 509; Aston 2: 112) in the meaning of executing or putting to death.

idea of a Mandate of Heaven (*tenmei shisō* 天命思想) and the idea of prosperity through the spread of imperial virtue (*ōka shisō* 王化思想). As Ōtsu Tōru 大津透 explains, Chinese emperors were considered rulers of the universe, having been appointed Heavenly Sons by the order of Heaven (“‘Nihon’ no seiritsu” 8–29), and the state under their rule was regarded as the center of the world. The emperor who rules the world with virtue must spread this virtue to the surrounding areas and extend his control. Historians have highlighted that the first centralized government established in Japan in the seventh century, the Ritsuryō system, was based on these exact ideas of ancient Chinese statehood (Ōtsu, *Ritsuryō kokka*). Thus, we can see that *Nihon shoki*, compiled to demonstrate the worldview of the Ritsuryō state, formed an image of Jinmu as an emperor symbolizing absolute power who spread imperial virtue to remote regions, killed rebellious deities, and married the daughter of Kotoshironushi, a deity already loyal to him.

In contrast, *Kojiki* has Jinmu move east to find the best place to reside in and peacefully carry out the kingdom’s government. There is no mention of the spread of imperial virtue or the establishment of order in Yamato. Accordingly, *Kojiki* does not portray rebellious deities as evil and does not use the word *chū suru* 誅する. Instead, it employs the term *kotomuke* 言向け, which means “to direct words” or “to negotiate” (Mizubayashi 125).¹¹ As can be seen not only in the legend of Jinmu Tennō but also in the *kuni yuzuri* myth, the pacification of Earthly Deities in the first volume of *Kojiki* and of local deities in the second volume is conducted mainly through

¹¹ There are two main theories to interpret the meaning of this word. The first is that the Heavenly Deities direct their “words” towards Ōkuninushi. Kurano, a representative of this theory, states that the Heavenly Deities subdue the rebellious Earthly Deities by the power of words used with religious significance (12–14). The second theory says that *kotomuke* means that the Earthly Deities direct the “word of submission” towards the Heavenly Deities. Accordingly, Kōnosshi proposes that *kotomuke* describes, for example, Ōkuninushi’s verbal agreement to the rule of the Heavenly Deities (*Kojiki no tassei* 134–50). From the episode of Ōkuninushi ceding his land to the Heavenly Deities, we can therefore see that negotiations played a major part in the process of establishing imperial rule.

negotiation. Jinmu in the *Kojiki* is therefore portrayed as an emperor who “directs words” to the deities, establishes peaceful contact with them at the place where they reside, and incorporates their power to strengthen his position. This image is similar to that of the Yamato kings prior to the Ritsuryō government—kings who, according to Wada, performed rituals worshipping Ōmononushi at Mount Miwa. If we follow Go’s theory that the *Kojiki* was compiled as an answer to *Nihon shoki*, we can assume that the compilers of the *Kojiki* tried to revive this exact image of the emperor as a reaction to the Chinese image of the emperor in *Nihon shoki*.

Emperor Suinin and the Deity of Izumo

Kojiki – Homuchiwake’s Journey to Izumo

According to *Kojiki*, Prince Homuchiwake 譽津別, the son of Emperor Suinin and his first empress Saho-hime 狭穗姫命, is born unable to speak (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 205). Miura explains that this inability to speak indicates the absence of a soul from the prince’s body (*Kodai* 345). However, once the prince hears the cry of the high-flying swan, he speaks his first words. The emperor sends his servant Yamanobe no Ōtaka 山辺大鷯 to capture the bird. The bird is believed to be an external soul or a soul substitute (Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku* 6: 147; Miura, *Kodai* 348), and presenting the bird to the prince may be an attempt to place the soul within his body. The ritual was unsuccessful, however, because even as the swan is brought before Homuchiwake, the prince remains unable to speak freely.

Emperor Suinin 垂仁天皇 (trad. 69 BCE–70 CE) then has a dream in which the Great God of Izumo appears and says, “If my shrine is repaired and built like the emperor’s palace, then the prince will surely speak.” This dream implies that the prince’s speech disorder is caused by a curse inflicted by the angered deity of Izumo. The emperor dispatches the prince to worship the deity at his shrine in Izumo and once he does so, Homuchiwake is finally cured of his muteness (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 205–9).

The curse inflicted by the Great God of Izumo has its roots in the negotiations between this deity and Amaterasu during the *kuni yuzuri* myth which is presented in the next section.

Amaterasu and Ōkuninushi

In the first volume of *Kojiki*, the Great God of Izumo appears under several names, the most prominent being Ōnamuchi and Ōkuninushi. At the beginning of his story, he is called Ōnamuchi. However, after visiting Ne no katasukuni, his name changes to Ōkuninushi, which can be translated as Great Master of the Land (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 75–97). Saigō interprets this as a transformation of the deity from Ōnamuchi to the ruler over the Central Land of the Reed Plains (*Kojiki no sekai* 98–101). Ōkuninushi is therefore portrayed as the initial creator and owner of the Earthly Realm.

Once Ōkuninushi finishes creating the land, Amaterasu, the main deity of the Plain of High Heaven (Takama no hara), decides that this land should be ruled by her child, and she sends an envoy to subdue the Earthly Deities under Ōkuninushi's leadership. Ame no Oshihomimi and Ame no Wakahiko are sent first but fail. Only the third envoy, Takemikazuchi, succeeds in his mission. Persuaded by Takemikazuchi, Ōkuninushi agrees to cede the land to the Heavenly Deities, but only under one condition (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 101–12). The gods of Heaven have to build a shrine for Ōkuninushi that is as magnificent as the palaces of the Heavenly Deities. Only then, Ōkuninushi would conceal himself and wait “in the less-than-one-hundred eighty road-endings” (Philippi 134) and none of the Earthly Gods would oppose the Heavenly Deities. Thus, a palace is built and the deity Kushiyatama worships Ōkuninushi, serving the holy feast.

Here, we can see that the *Kojiki* features Ōkuninushi as the initial ruler over the land and includes the Heavenly Deities worshiping representatives of the Earthly Deities to gain their approval. We can see some parallels in the story of Homuchiwake which is told in the second volume of *Kojiki*. As discussed above, a curse inflicted by the Great God of Izumo is the cause of the prince's inability to speak. Saitō Hideki 斎藤英喜 (1955–2024)

assumes that the promise made by the Heavenly Deities during the Age of the Gods was not kept, and the shrine dedicated to the Great God of Izumo had fallen into ruin (216). The deity therefore cursed the imperial prince and demanded that his palace be repaired (Saitō 215). It again becomes apparent that in *Kojiki*, the emperors, descendants of Amaterasu, must show respect towards Ōkuninushi as the original ruler over the Land of the Reed Plains and worship him in order to maintain their right to rule.

The Deity of Izumo in Nihon shoki

Nihon shoki, too, portrays Homuchiwake as a prince who cannot speak. However, his speech is restored when he sees the swan crossing the sky and asks what it is (*Nihon shoki* 1: 316–17). In contrast to *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki* does not mention that a curse from the Great God of Izumo causes the prince's muteness and does not describe Homuchiwake's visit to Izumo. In other words, the deity of Izumo does not have enough power to curse the offspring of the Heavenly Deities in *Nihon shoki*. This is again rooted in the way *Nihon shoki* describes Ōnamuchi's position as a representative of the Earthly Deities in the Age of the Gods episodes. Earthly Deities are depicted as evil deities (*kishin* and *akushin*) who are executed and killed (*chū suru*) by envoys sent from Heaven (*Nihon shoki* 1: 119). As discussed above, the *Kojiki* does not employ this terminology and instead uses expressions like *kotomuke* (言向け), which implies a peaceful subjugation through negotiation (Mizubayashi 125–27).

Similar to *Kojiki*, Ōnamuchi cedes the Central Land of the Reed Plains to the Heavenly Deities in *Nihon shoki*, but there are no conditions for his surrender; he neither demands the Heavenly Deities to build a shrine for him nor to honor him. Accordingly, there is no description of the holy feast being served. In addition, *Nihon shoki* omits the creation of the land by Ōnamuchi as well as the story of how he became the Great Master of the Land—both of which are prominent narratives in *Kojiki*. This means that Ōnamuchi in *Nihon shoki* is portrayed as a submissive Earthly Deity who gave his land to Amaterasu but was not worshipped by her descendants.

It is remarkable that the way in which both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* describe the relationships between the imperial family and the deities of Izumo during the Age of the Emperors seemingly mirrors the respective depictions of the Heavenly and Earthly Deities featured in the Age of Gods. In *Kojiki*, envoys sent by Amaterasu and Takamimusubi negotiate with Ōkuninushi and ensure his worship according to his demands. In accordance with this story, Suinin Tennō sends his son to worship the Great God of Izumo to appease him. *Kojiki* thus portrays the Izumo deity Ōkuninushi as the initial owner and ruler of the Central Land of the Reed Plains, and the emperors continue to worship this deity during the Age of Emperors to ensure their rule. By contrast, in *Nihon shoki*, heavenly envoys execute Earthly Deities because they are unruly and evil, and Ōnamuchi surrenders his land without any conditions. The Heavenly Deities are thus depicted as figures whose orders have absolute power. In this way, *Nihon shoki* shows that the emperor's rule is absolute, and his family's prosperity is not dependent on the benevolence of the Great God of Izumo. Izumo is nothing but one region of ancient Japan and the rulership over this region naturally belongs to the imperial family. Accordingly, the Great God of Izumo holds no power over the emperors and cannot curse an imperial prince with muteness. Thus, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* differ greatly in how the Heavenly Deities and their descendants treat Izumo.

Emperor Ōjin and Kehi no ōkami

Kojiki – Worshipping Kehi no ōkami

A third narrative that highlights the different nature of the emperors in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* is the story of Ōjin Tennō 応神天皇 (trad. 270–310 CE) and his relationship with Kehi no ōkami. In *Kojiki*, Ōjin's father Emperor Chūai 仲哀天皇 (trad. 192–200 CE) dies because he doubts the oracle of the gods which tells him to conquer Silla. His imperial wife, Empress Jingū 神功皇后 (trad. 201–269 CE), takes up this quest in his stead, leads

the army to Silla and has its king swear allegiance to Japan. Upon returning to Tsukushi, she gives birth to her son Ōtomowake.¹² Before returning to Yamato, Takeuchi no Sukune 武内宿禰 takes the prince to Tsunuga to perform a purification (*misogi* 禊ぎ). There, the local deity Izasawake appears in a dream and says, “I would like to change my name to the name of the prince” (Philippi 268). Takeuchi no Sukune then gives his blessing and promises to make the change according to the deity’s commands. In response, the deity demands that the prince must visit the beach on the following morning, then Izasawake will offer a gift of appreciation in return. The prince does as he is told, and as he arrives at the beach, it is filled with dolphins whose noses have been broken. The prince states: “You have given me fish from your own august food” (Philippi 269), and the deity is honored with the new name Miketsu ōkami. This deity is also known as the Kehi no ōkami (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 253–54).

There are three prominent theories regarding the name-changing in this passage: (1) Izasawake replaces his name with that of the prince and the prince takes Izasawake’s name as his own (*Kojiki*, SNKBZ 253), (2) The deity takes the prince’s name as his own (*Kojiki*, SNKS 181), (3) the two exchanged names with each other (Motoori 418–19).

To consider these theories, we need to clarify what the changing of names means. According to Miura, granting a name means granting spiritual power and abilities (*Kōgoyaku Kojiki* 124). For example, the imperial prince Yamato no Oguno is given the personal name of Kumaso Takeru upon defeating him. By changing his name to Yamato Takeru, the prince is transformed from a youth into a grown man, as indicated by the characters used to write both names—*oguna* 童男 for “young boy” and *take* 武 for “warrior” or “bravery.” The prince thus inherits the brave heart of Kumaso Takeru by receiving his name. In the case of Ōjin Tennō, Miura states that he was called Ōtomowake before the changing of names, but Homudawake 誉田別尊 (Emperor Homuda) after it took place. The process of changing names with the deity Izasawake thus stimulated the growth of Ōtomowake

¹² Ōtomowake is the personal name of Emperor Ōjin who is also known as Homudawake no mikoto 誉田別尊 or Homuta no Sumeramikoto 譽田天皇.

and was part of the initiation necessary to become an emperor (Miura, *Kōgoyaku Kojiki* 161).

In this regard, we can analyze how the prince's character changed after receiving a new name. When Izasawake first appeared to Takeuchi no Sukune in a dream, Takeuchi no Sukune replied on behalf of the young prince. However, the prince spoke directly to the deity after changing his name. He said, "You have given me fish from your own august food" (Phillippi 269). In the original text in archaic Japanese this phrase is written as 於レ我給ニ御食之魚 (Kojiki, SNKBZ 252) and can be read as *ware ni mike no na wo tamaheri* (われに御食の魚 (な) を給へり; Sakashita 22). According to Sakashita Keihachi 阪下圭八 (1927–2012), in this context, the phrase *mike no na* can have two meanings. The first is written using the characters from Kojiki: 御食の魚, which means "fish from the august food." The second meaning is derived from an alternative character for the phrase 御食の名 meaning "the name of *mike*" (Sakashita 20–22). Sakashita assumes that by saying *ware ni mike no na wo tamaheri*, the prince gave a new name to the deity of Tsunuga, thus changing the deity's name from Izasawake to Miketsu ōkami (19–29).

Thus, we can conclude that the act of changing names in the myths is not limited to the literal meaning of changing names. It is a process that changes the status of both the prince and the deity and builds a new relationship between them. Regarding the prince, being given the deity's name grants him abilities and power and could be seen as something similar to a rite of passage that makes Ōtomowake the emperor. The prince then gives a new name to the deity of Tsunuga, by which he also gains the ability to worship said deity.

Why then was it necessary that the prince worshiped Kehi no ōkami, the local deity of Tsunuga, and obtained power from him? Kuratsuka Akiko 倉塚曄子 (1935–1989) explains that Tsunuga was a strategic traffic point between the regions of Koshi and Yamato. Kehi no ōkami was the guardian god of this key point of continental traffic (Kuratsuka 82–85), which means that he can be regarded as a god of borders. Considering the strategic importance of Tsunuga, Yamato "must have felt the need to seize ritual

control” over this region (Kuratsuka 83). This correlates with Akasaka Norio’s 赤坂憲雄 assessment that kings in archaic societies were expected to hold control over the boundaries of their territory (155–60). In order to do so, the deities associated with these peripheral regions had to be worshipped. This suggests that the story of Ōtomowake exchanging names with the deity of Tsunuga functioned as an explanation as to how the imperial family gained ritual control over such an important traffic point as Tsunuga. Notably, this process is portrayed as a story in which prince Ōtomowake receives the power to worship the deity of Tsunuga, Kehi no ōkami, during the name-changing ritual. Gaining the power of the deity itself through this worship, Ōtomowake is in turn able to obtain ritual control over the borders, which aids him in extending his territory.

In accordance with the other passages from *Kojiki* introduced above, this narrative highlights the codependent relationship between local deities and the imperial line. In this context, Ōtsu’s description of enthronement ceremonies (*sokui girei* 即位儀礼) from the Yamato period is especially intriguing. During these ceremonies, the new king of Yamato had to be approved by representatives of powerful clans and local ruling families in order to be enthroned (Ōtsu, *Shinwa kara rekishi he* 211–16). However, the establishment of the Ritsuryō state brought about a centralization of power and strengthened the position of the imperial family, giving the emperor superiority over the nobles and local clans. This caused the emperor’s enthronement ceremony to change significantly.¹³ The *Kojiki* passage analyzed in this section reflects this image of the king of Yamato from before the centralized government based on Chinese statehood was established: a king who had to be approved by local ruling families in order to gain and retain his position of power. For this reason, emperor Ōjin in *Kojiki*

¹³ In the sixth and seventh centuries, the coronation ceremony (*sokuishiki* 即位式) consisted of a process in which the vassals offered treasure to the new king (*daiō* 大王) as a symbol of kingship, upon which the king ascended to the high throne (*takamikura* 高御座) and the vassals worshipped him. Under the Ritsuryō system, the ceremony of offering treasure by vassals was replaced by the Inbe and Nakatomi clans presenting the treasure and offering words of congratulation (*yogoto* 寿詞) (Ōtsu, “‘Nihon’ no seiritsu” 19).

acquires the qualifications of an emperor by worshiping the local deity of Tsunuga, Kehi no ōkami, and receiving spiritual authority from him.

Kehi no ōkami in Nihon shoki

The main text of *Nihon shoki* also contains Emperor Ōjin's narrative. Just like in *Kojiki*, the prince is born in Tsukushi and is led by Takeuchi no Sukune to visit the palace of Kehi no ōkami in Tsunuga in the second month of the thirteenth year during the reign of Empress Jingū (*Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 1: 449). Upon his return, the empress presents him with sake and blesses him with songs. However, there is no mention of Homudawake performing *misogi* in Tsunuga,¹⁴ nor of him exchanging names with Kehi no ōkami. The episode of the changing of names is only introduced as a variant in the section on the reign of Emperor Ōjin (*Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 1: 469). With this variant, the compilers of *Nihon shoki* explicitly added an explanation regarding the origin of the emperor's personal name. We can therefore assume that the change of names in *Nihon shoki* does not correlate with an initiation that gives the prince the power to worship Kehi no ōkami and become an emperor. In other words, he could have become Emperor Ōjin without going to Tsunuga.

In *Nihon shoki*, the strategic traffic point of Tsunuga is thus depicted as being firmly integrated into the Ritsuryō state and submissive to the imperial court. Accordingly, the deity of Tsunuga does not bestow spiritual power onto the prince and does not initiate his transition into an emperor. In other words, the prince did not need to communicate with or worship local deities to become the emperor. This corresponds to the other passages from *Nihon shoki* discussed so far. In all episodes, the image of the emperor

¹⁴ *Misogi* is a form of purification and was usually performed before conducting a ritual for the deities. Since there is no mention of Homudawake undergoing *misogi* in *Nihon shoki*, we can assume that he does not conduct any ritual in Tsunuga. This stands in contrast to *Kojiki*, where Ōtomowake exchanges names with the deity of Tsunuga. Such an act can be interpreted as a ritual, after which the prince received the ability to worship the deity.

in *Nihon shoki* was clearly influenced by ideas of the ancient Chinese Empire, according to which the emperors symbolized absolute power as the sons of Heaven. They were supposed to establish order in their peripheries by spreading imperial virtues. Thus, border regions such as Izumo and Tsunuga are portrayed as submissive to imperial power.

This stands in stark contrast to the way *Kojiki* depicts the same episode. Ōtomowake is portrayed as building a deep relationship with the deity of Tsunuga, Kehi no ōkami, and receiving spiritual authority from him—an act that can be interpreted as an initiation turning prince Ōtomowake into Emperor Ōjin. *Kojiki* therefore depicts the emperor as someone who depended on the approval of local clans and court nobility, an image of kingship prominent before the Ritsuryō state was established (Ōtsu, *Shinwa kara rekishi e* 211–16). If we follow the hypothesis that *Kojiki* was written after *Nihon shoki*, this difference could support the idea that *Kojiki* tried to counteract the Chinese worldview promoted by *Nihon shoki* and revive an idealized image of the emperor which was lost with the formation of a centralized government.

Conclusion

In both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the emperors extend their control over various territories. However, the methods they use could not be more different. In *Nihon shoki*, the emperors spread imperial virtue and order over the peripheral lands and defeat evil deities. They are portrayed as Sons of Heaven wielding absolute power that cannot be doubted. Conversely, in *Kojiki*, the emperors come into contact with local deities, worship them, and gain the power to extend their control from these deities. Their sovereignty is not based on military force but on worshipping the deities of regions they wished to control.

These differences are closely related to the messages conveyed to the readers of each text. *Nihon shoki* adheres to the philosophy of the Ritsuryō state and is based on ideas of ancient Chinese statehood, wherein the emperor was considered a divine entity from Heaven with absolute power. In

contrast, *Kojiki* tries to revive the image of the emperor as a ruler who was approved by local clans and worshiped deities such as Ōkuninushi and the deity of Tsunuga, Kehi no ōkami. They are therefore similar to the kings of Yamato who did not demonstrate their superiority over the local deities but extended their control by worshiping them and gaining their spiritual power. This could indicate that *Kojiki* aimed to provide the Yamato court with its own identity separate from a centralized government based on the Chinese ideal of statehood put forth by *Nihon shoki*.

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Reconsidering the Mythology of Goddesses With Special Reference to the Kingship-protecting Sun Goddess

Kazuo MATSUMURA

Two themes are treated in this chapter. Firstly, I will discuss the possibility that we might be able to obtain better insights into the comparative study of mythology by analyzing visual symbols in the myths and religions of areas and ages of which there are no or scarce written records. Secondly, I will analyze a selection of myths and religions of goddesses of such areas and ages. I argue that there is a possibility that a type of sun goddess or kingship-protecting goddess existed in the Eastern Mediterranean area of the Neolithic and Bronze ages and also in Japan during the Bronze/Iron age (i.e., from the Yayoi era to the Tumulus era).

Japan and the East Mediterranean

In Japanese mythology as it is recorded in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), we see the sun goddess Amaterasu as the kingship-protecting goddess and ancestor of the ruling imperial line. Many scholars agree that before Amaterasu there was a male sun god. In theory, both the sun god and the sun goddess are possible options, and the choice would be made in accordance with the historical condition of a particular society. Most societies chose the male sun god, and a sun goddess as kingship-protecting goddess like Amaterasu is indeed rare. I have been looking for such a type of goddess outside of Japan for many years and now, I think that I have finally found similar goddesses in the Eastern Mediterranean area of the Bronze age.

Minoan culture had three scripts known as Cretan Hieroglyphs, Linear A and Linear B (Olivier). Linear B was deciphered by Michael Ventris and John Chadwick in 1952 as an older form of Greek named Mycenaean (Ventris and Chadwick; Duhoux and Davies). Cretan Hieroglyphs and Linear A are still undeciphered and we do not know what languages they represent, although it is surely not Greek (Decorte; Salgarella and Castellan; Schoep). This situation has seriously hindered research into Minoan history, culture, and mythology (Duhoux and Davies). A concrete reconstruction of any coherent mythological cycles in Minoan as well as Mycenaean iconography therefore appears impossible (Blakolmer 23). This difficult problem, it seems, can only be solved by comparing the Minoan culture with neighboring cultures and searching for similarities. In doing so, we could obtain keys to decipher the enigmatic elements of Minoan culture.

At the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea lies the Levante region, which included Syria, Ugarit, and Phoenicia, the Hittite Empire in the north, in the south Egypt, and at the western end Crete and Knossos. These four areas had rather close commercial, political, and cultural interactions. To explain this situation, we must take into account the currents of the Mediterranean Sea. A sea current flows in a large circle around these four areas, passing to the south of Crete, downward to the coast of Egypt, then moving horizontally from west to east, reaching the coast of Syria, where it changes to flow north, passing through the channel between the Anatolian Peninsula and Cyprus, and then, flowing south, returns to the southern coast of Crete (Agouridis 4, fig.1).

Even though we cannot read Cretan Linear A documents, documents from Syria, Egypt, and the Hittites are available. However, just like the other three, Crete provides us with abundant iconographic items. Since Syria, Egypt, and the Hittites recognized Crete, we can compare the cultures of all four areas. As we will see later, the cultures of these four corners of the eastern Mediterranean seem to have shared a common mythical and religious tradition about a kingship-protecting sun goddess.

The discovery of the Minoan culture is mainly attributed to the excavations and publications by British classicist Arthur J. Evans (1851–1941). He began the excavation of Knossos in 1900 and continued to work on it

for more than a quarter of a century. Evans thought Knossos was a palace and reconstructed murals and architectures (*Mycenean Tree*, “Minoan and Mycenean”; Momigliano), although his reconstruction has sometimes been criticized.¹

Up to the present, a large amount of Linear B documents has been discovered and deciphered. Most of them are inventory documents and there are no mythological texts. If we wish to know about Mycenean mythology, the situation is not much different from the case of the earlier Minoan mythology: we must rely mainly on iconographic materials.

In the Minoan iconography, there are numerous goddesses in imposing postures, in elevated position, and with gorgeous accessories. They look more powerful than young male gods. Another significant point are the “palaces” found across Crete, the most notable among them being Knossos. Unlike the later Mycenean palaces surrounded by high defensive walls, the Minoan ones do not have such walls, suggesting a peaceful society. Motifs decorating the walls of the palaces are very distinct and different from the motifs of the Mesopotamian palaces such as those in Babylon or Susa. On the walls of the Cretan palaces, we see flowers, water birds, animals such as bulls, monkeys, cats, and snakes, and aquatic animals such as dolphins and octopuses, with human figures also making an appearance. Most of the men and women are young, and they play and rest, but are never depicted in fight (Higgins).

The Minoan culture eventually weakened and was absorbed into the Mycenean and the later Classical Greek culture as a result of several disasters such as the volcanic eruption of Santorini (Thera) and consequent tsunami, the Mycenean invasions, the “Sea People” invasions, and so on.² Still, its cultural heritage seems to have survived the Dark Age and resurged in the Archaic and the Classical periods of Greece (Burkert 10–53).

It is hard to evaluate how much the pre-Greek Minoan culture contributed to the formation of Greek mythology. Many researchers, including

¹ For a critical discussion of Evans’s work, see, e.g., Alexiou; Bintliff; Bonney; Castleden; Eller; French; Harlan; Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship*.

² On the “Sea People,” see Birney; Sandars.

Martin Persson Nilsson, estimate the contribution to have been very high, which is understandable given how frequently famous mythological episodes are located in Crete. For example, the sovereign god Zeus is born to his mother Rhea in a cave on Mt. Aigaion in Crete (Hesiod, *Theogony* 477 and following). In another myth, Zeus is fascinated by Europa, the princess of Phoenicia, and changes himself into a white bull, carries her on his back across the sea and arrives in Crete. Through their union, the future king of Crete, Minos, is born (Apollodorus 3. 1. 1.; cf. *Iliad* 14. 321). Lastly, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus pretends to be a Cretan and talks about the prosperity of the island in order to hide his true identity (19. 172 et seqq.).

In addition, it seems that the rulers of Crete were vassals of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt, the first dynasty of the New Kingdoms (1570 BCE – c.1293 BCE). A large vase was found in a tomb in the Valley of Kings on which bulls' heads are painted with the sun between the horns (Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship* 117–18). Abstract depictions of so-called “bull's horns” or “horns of consecration” in various sizes can be found in many locations in the “palace” of Knossos. They are regarded as typical symbols of Minoan culture and may have also represented a cosmic mountain from which the sun appears (Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship* 103–13). In many iconographies, a double-headed axe is placed between the bull's horns which could mean that these axes may have also symbolized the sun. Such double-headed axes of various sizes have been discovered throughout Crete (Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship* 114–30).

The earliest phase of Minoan culture seems to have developed through various means of exchange with Egypt. As we will see below, Hathor, the kingship-protecting sun goddess, and her son Horus, the king who is protected by his mother, are viewed as a pair. The Cretan iconography of a pair, consisting of a goddess and a younger male god, may have been created after this Egyptian model (Goodison; Marinatos, “Indebtedness”; Marinatos *Minoan Kingship*).

In ancient Egypt, the goddess Hathor played an important role. Her name means “house of Horus,” which suggests that she was the protective goddess of Horus, the deified pharaoh, and of his kingship. It is only in a later period that Hathor's role as kingship-protecting goddess was taken over by

Isis. Hathor wears the cow's horns on her head, and the sun disk is placed between the horns. She has another name, Sekhmet, the female form of "the powerful," and is regarded as the eye of the sun god Ra. Hathor is thus both a sun goddess and a protective goddess of kinship (Hart 61–65).

I have already mentioned that the culture of the Minoan Crete had probably been strongly influenced by the pharaonic Egypt. This becomes especially apparent when items from Crete are compared with Egyptian iconographies and myths: for example, the image of the great goddess paired with a younger god, the horns of consecration, the cosmic mountain, and the double-axe which symbolized the sun. But the Egyptian influence during the Bronze Age also extends to Syria, Elba, and Levant. Among the excavated items from 2000–1600 BCE, there are cylinder seals that were made in Syria under Egyptian influence, suggesting a cultural exchange between Syria and Egypt during this period. On some of these seals, we see the picture of a goddess with cow's horns and a sun disk in between, blessing a king who wears an Osiris-like crown on his head (Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship* 16, 64, 123, 156). The Egyptian influence is obvious. Is it a possible conclusion, then, that these seals were imported into Bronze Age Syria from Egypt? Perhaps not, because in the Ugarit myth of Baal and Yam from the fourteenth and thirteenth century BCE, a sun goddess named Shapash appears (Gibson 38). There is a possibility that the kingship-protecting sun goddess who is similar to the Egyptian Hathor and appears on Syrian cylinder seals could be the Syrian Shapash.

In Ugaritic mythology, Shapash does not play a very great role. In the Baal and Yam myth, a prominent role is instead given to the Mesopotamian goddess Anat. Also, the male Mesopotamian god Shamash is more popular as the personification of the sun than Shapash. Just as in the case of Egypt, where the older Hathor was replaced by Isis, the older kingship-protecting sun goddess Shapash was replaced by a newer goddess, probably under the strong influence of Mesopotamia. The name Shapash itself is reminiscent of the male Mesopotamian sun god Shamash and suggests that the name of the goddess was adapted from Shamash (Matthiae).

The most prominent goddess in Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Canaan area was Inanna, a goddess of fertility who was known by different names

depending on the area, for example as Ishtar, Astarte, Asherah, and—most importantly—Anat (Stuckey). This newer, more powerful goddess of fertility might have replaced the older kingship-protecting sun goddess Shapash.

Another example can be found on the Anatolian peninsula, formerly the territory of the Hittites. On a relief at the open-air temple of Yazilikaya, near the capital city of Hattusa (modern day Bogazkale), twelve gods are depicted, probably of Indo-European origin (Masson). The cultural influence the Hittites received from Egypt is obvious, too, when we see the sphinxes at the gates of Hattusa or exhibitions at the Anatolian Civilization Museum in Ankara. The Battle of Kadesh in 1274 BCE took place between the Hittites and Egypt. Afterwards, Rameses III (r. 1279–1213 BCE) of the eighteenth dynasty of the New Kingdom period concluded a peace treaty with the Hittites and took Hittite princesses as his wives—of course marriages of convenience (Lloyd 114–15; Bryce 221–45). There was, however, an older mythological tradition on Anatolia which was absorbed into Hittite mythology: that of the Hatti people.

In our comparison of sun goddesses in the eastern Mediterranean area, non-Indo-European Hatti mythology is of great importance. A goddess called “the Sun Goddess of Arinna” is a case in point. She is named after her center of worship at the religious city of Arinna, which was close to the capital Hattusa. Her husband was a storm god, and a male sun god was born to the couple. Like Hathor and Shapash, she seems to have been a kingship-protecting sun goddess (Beckman, “Hittite Religion” 89; Hoffner 24, 38; MacQueen 175–78).

It can be expected that a thorough comparison between the texts and iconographies of various locations in the eastern Mediterranean can advance the research on Cretan culture and Cretan goddesses. After all, there are many pictures of a seated goddess facing a standing young male god, often accompanied by a solar symbol, in Crete. As shown, pictures of the same combination are found in Egypt, Syria (including Cyprus), and Anatolia. In all of these examples, the young male god may represent a king and the sun goddess his mother and the giver of kingship (Marinatos, *Minoan Kingship* 151–58).

Historical Connection and Typological Comparison

Up until recently, discussions on solar deities were conducted typologically. Because male sun gods are more common than sun goddesses, only Amaterasu from Japan and the Sun Goddess of Arinna of the Hittites are well-known. After examining the sun goddesses of the four eastern Mediterranean areas, their depiction and the kind of ideals they were based on, I concluded that the sun goddess is the one who gives birth to a solar king and guarantees his rulership as his mother.

Previously, when dealing with Amaterasu, I argued that the impossibility of her identity—being both mother and virgin at the same time—was caused by the ideal image of transcendency held by a ruling male group. The same transcendent ambivalence can be found in the Virgin Mary of Christianity and Athena of Greek mythology. However, a goddess can take several different roles at the same time: Athena is not only a virgin-mother goddess but also a warrior goddess, a goddess of weaving, and a goddess of wisdom. Through the reexamination of Amaterasu, I found that this goddess can also be characterized as a kingship-protecting sun goddess.

I argue that the kingship-protecting sun goddess Amaterasu is not an isolated mythological figure. Though they are but few, similar characteristics can be found in Hathor of Egypt, Shapash of Syria, the Sun Goddess of Arinna of the Hittites, and the sun goddess of Crete. These four goddesses of the eastern Mediterranean may have developed comparable traits through continuous cultural exchange among the four areas. As I have shown, the concept of a kingship-protecting sun goddess combined with her son as a ruler may have first arisen in Egypt. However, the origin of this iconography or the routes of its diffusion are not of primary importance to the present discussion. What seems more vital is that this concept of a king as a consort, son, or lover combined with a kingship-protecting sun goddess has been a stable trope. Intriguingly, this same type of combination can be found in different historical societies of both West (Egypt, Crete, Anatolia, and Syria) and East (Japan).

Of course, I am not denying the validity of studies from the historical perspectives of cultural stimulation or diffusion. The case of the kingship

protecting sun goddess is an interesting object of research both typologically and in the context of cultural diffusion. As I will discuss in the following, the existence of Himiko 卑弥呼 has been a great influence on the formation of the theology of Amaterasu.³

Himiko

The Chinese dynastic record *Weizhi* 魏志 says that there was a state named Yamatai, the largest among several countries in Wa (the name of the Japanese archipelago in Old Chinese), and a delegate from that country came to meet the Chinese emperor. The book also talks about the route to Yamatai and the time required to reach it, its social conditions, and its rulers. As for the rulers, the book states that there were two female rulers, the first of which is described in more detail. Because Yamatai was ruled by a woman, another name for it was Queen's Country. According to this Chinese record, the first female ruler of Yamatai is described as follows:

The country formerly had a man as ruler. For some seventy or eighty years after that there were disturbances and warfare. Thereupon the people agreed upon a woman for their ruler. Her name was Himiko. She occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people. Though mature in age, she remained unmarried. She had a younger brother who assisted her in ruling the country. After she became the ruler, there were few who ever saw her. She had one thousand women as attendants, but only one man. He served her food and drink and acted as a medium of communication. (Tsunoda 5–6)

³ As to the possible influence from the West on the formation of the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu, I presented a paper in 2021 at the 14th International Conference of the IACM (International Association for Comparative Mythology) titled “The Birth of Amaterasu: Diffusion of a Goddess Image.” What follows are sections from this paper on Himiko: Triangular-rimmed (TR) deity-beast mirrors, the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu), Amaterasu and the mirror, and Cybele.

In the following section, it says that Himiko sent a messenger to Wei via Tai-fang:

In the sixth month of the second year of Ching-ch'u (238 AD), the Queen of Wa sent the grandee Nakashonmi and others to visit the prefecture of Tai-fang, where they requested permission to proceed to the emperor's court with tribute. The Governor, Liu Hsia, dispatched an officer to accompany the party to the capital. In answer to the Queen of Wa, an edict of the emperor, issued in the twelfth month of the same year, said as follows. . . . (Tsunoda 6)

On this occasion, the title of "Queen of Wa Friendly to Wei" was conferred upon Himiko and she was given a gold seal with a purple ribbon and other presents. Among them were one hundred bronze mirrors. Himiko is said to have died in the late 230s CE. Her tomb was constructed between 230 CE and 250 CE and is considered by some to be Hashihaka kofun 箸墓古墳 in Sakurai, Nara (Kidder).

From Himiko to Amaterasu

Based on the *Weizhi*, it can be assumed that the political turmoil in third-century Japan ended with the ascension of Queen Himiko. Nonetheless, we should not think that she ruled single-handedly. According to the *Weizhi*, she never appeared in public, and her messages were delivered through her brother. This is a typical instance of joint rulership between sister and brother. The reason given for Himiko's seclusion is that she was a shaman.

The kingdom of Yamatai is said to have been ruled peacefully until Himiko died. After that there was another period of war and turmoil, which was again subdued with the ascension of a woman from Himiko's line called Ito.

As mentioned above, the *Weizhi* includes Himiko sending a delegate to be recognized as the ruler of Wa by the Chinese emperor. As tokens of recognition, she was given a gold seal and one hundred mirrors. If this

account is to be believed, Himiko might have made more copies of that type of mirror and distributed them to subordinate local chiefs in order to strengthen her alliance with them.

Triangular-rimmed (TR) deity-beast mirror

From tumuli all over Japan, bronze mirrors along with swords and jewels, which are seen as symbols of power of the buried rulers, have been excavated. One type of mirror is the triangular-rimmed (TR) deity-beast mirror (*sankakubuchi shinjūkyō* 三角縁神獸鏡), so named because it has a rim with a triangular cross-section and depicts the Queen Mother of the West (*Xi-wangmu* 西王母) accompanied by a tiger and a dragon. According to Gina L. Barnes, mirrors with this deity-beast design only began to be produced in China in the second century BCE. The cult of the Queen Mother was active at this time when the Yellow Turban Revolt (184–205 CE), a Taoist revolt against the late Han Dynasty, took place. Due to the social disturbance caused by this Taoist rebellion, many political refugees may have come to Japan, bringing TR deity-beast mirrors with them (Barnes 12).

The Queen Mother of the West

This goddess was originally thought to be an androgynous guardian of mountains, but at a certain period the male side was separated from the female and became the King of the East (Dongwanggong 東王公). Later she was included in the mountain worship of Taoism, and since the mirror was regarded as an important object in Taoism, her figure came to be depicted on TR deity-beast mirrors.

Three sections of an old geographic account, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經), mention the Queen Mother of the West. The oldest part of this book is thought to have been composed during the Warring State Period (fifth century BCE to third century BCE) with later

additions made in the Qin and Han periods (third century BCE to third century CE):⁴

Book 2 *The Classic of the Western Mountains*: The form of the Queen Mother of the West is human, with a leopard's tail and the teeth of a tiger. She is skilled at whistling; and over her dishevelled hair she wears the *sheng*. (Knauer 64)

第二 西山經 西王母其狀如人豹尾虎齒而善嘯蓬髮戴勝是司天之厲及五殘

Book 12 *The Classic of Northern Regions within the Seas*: The Queen Mother of the West wears the *sheng*, leaning on a stool. To the south there are the three green birds, who collect food for the Queen Mother of the West. (Knauer 64)

第十二 海內北經 西王母梯几而戴勝杖其南有三青鳥為西王母取食

Book 16 *Classic of the Western Great Wilderness*: There lives a person, the *sheng* on her head, having a tiger's teeth and the tail of a leopard. Her name is the Queen Mother of the West. (Knauer 64)

第十六 大荒西經 有人戴勝虎齒有豹尾穴處名曰西王母

In the *Shanhaijing*, the Queen Mother of the West is thus imagined as a divinity with the teeth of a tiger and the tail of a leopard, who lives in the mountainous area in the far west of China.

In the *Han shu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*), Book 11, we read that in the spring of the year 3 BCE, shortly before the collapse of the Western Han, a fanatic movement emerged:

There was a great drought. In the area east of the passes, the people were exchanging tokens in preparation for the advent of the Queen

⁴ The following quotations from the *Shanhaijing* and the *Han shu* in English are taken from Knauer, 64–66. Original Chinese passages are added from Guo 172, 709, 847–48. Some of the Chinese characters are substituted with their Japanese equivalents.

Mother of the West. They passed through the commanderies and kingdoms, moving west to within the passes and reaching the capital city. In addition, persons were assembling to worship the Queen Mother of the West, sometimes carrying fire to the rooftops by night, beating drums, shouting and frightening one another. (Knauer 65–66)

大日千。關東民傳行西王母壽、經歷郡國、西入關至京師。民又會衆祠西王母、或夜持火上屋、擊鼓號呼相驚恐

Amaterasu and the Mirror

In Japan, mirrors became symbols of rulership and also of the sun goddess Amaterasu. This development is reflected in the mythology of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. During the myth of the Heavenly Rock Cave (Ama no iwato), the gods make the first mirror to lure Amaterasu from the cave. They show the mirror to Amaterasu and, seeing her own face in the mirror and thinking it strange, she steps out a little from the cave. Then, the mighty god Tachikarao takes her hand and pulls her out completely. This scene clearly indicates the strong tie between Amaterasu and the mirror.

When her grandson Ninigi descends to the earthly land below later in the narrative, Amaterasu gives him the mirror, sword, and curved jewel which are said to become the three imperial regalia. As to the mirror, she says that it is equivalent to her spirit and must be worshiped like herself. The mirror was therefore the symbol of Amaterasu herself.

Cybele

The origin of the Queen Mother of the West is not clear. Based on iconographic studies, Elfriede R. Knauer suggests that she could be based on the figure of Cybele from Asia Minor. Depictions of Cybele with a lion on her lap are known from Olbia, a Greek colony on the northern coast of the

Black Sea from the sixth century BCE (Vermaseren; Johnson).⁵ As Herodotus records, there were trade activities between the Greeks and the Scythians at Olbia (18). The Greeks therefore certainly knew of Cybele, and depictions of her were not rare in Olbia. There is a possibility that figures of Cybele were brought to the border of China and used as the model for the Queen Mother of the West.

Regarding the cult surrounding Cybele, Herodotus mentions an episode about the Scythian prince Anacharsis who was killed by his relatives due to his worship of the Mother of the Gods:

... When Anacharsis was coming back to the Scythian country after having seen much of the world in his travels and given many examples of his wisdom, he sailed through the Hellespont and put in at Cyzicus;

where, finding the Cyzicenes celebrating the feast of *the Mother of the Gods* with great ceremony, he vowed to this same Mother that if he returned to his own country safe and sound he would sacrifice to her as he saw the Cyzicenes doing, and establish *a nightly rite of worship*.

So when he came to Scythia, he hid himself in the country called Woodland (which is beside the Race of Achilles, and is all overgrown with every kind of timber); hidden there, Anacharsis celebrated the goddess' ritual with exactness, *carrying a small drum and hanging images about himself*.

Then some Scythian saw him doing this and told the king, Saulius; who, coming to the place himself and seeing Anacharsis performing these rites, shot an arrow at him and killed him. (Herodotus 76; emphasis added)

Putting the issue of the historicity of the episode aside, Cyzicus and the nearby Mt. Dindymus seem to have been the center of an ancient cult of the Mother of the Gods (Asheri et al. 636). Note the description of her

⁵ For exemplary depictions of Cybele, see Vermaseren CXXII: plate 505; CXXIII: plate 511; CXXIV: plate 512; CXXIX: plate 535; CXXXI: plate 539; CXXXV: plates 547 and 548; CXXXVII: plate 551; CXLI: plate 579.

worship: “The participants of the nocturnal feast . . . carried the tambourine . . . and figurines of gods on their breast . . . as is confirmed also by representations” (Asheri et al. 636–37). This description reads quite similar to the one of the Queen Mother of the West in the *Han shu* quoted above, especially the section “sometimes carrying fire to the rooftops by night, beating drums, shouting and frightening one another.”

Amaterasu, Himiko, and the Queen Mother of the West

Without a doubt, when the mirrors arrived from China, artisans skilled in producing them came, too. For the present discussion, it is of little importance when these artisans came, or whether they came directly from China or by way of Korea. Rather, we should consider that, when they reached Japan, they brought information about their gods and the world depicted on the mirrors with them. More precisely, we should consider whether the myth of the Queen Mother of the West was introduced to Japan as well.

Bronze mirrors given by the Chinese emperor to Japanese rulers like Himiko, as well as the copies made in Japan, would have been distributed from the Yamatai kingdom to subordinate local chiefs as symbols of their alliances. After the death of a local chief, the mirror would have been buried together with him. For Himiko, should she have indeed existed, the mirror would have been the symbol of her political power. In the center of this mirror, the figure of the Queen Mother of the West was depicted. Thus, the mirror, Himiko, and the Queen Mother of the West all referred to the same power.

Later in the seventh century, when the sovereign god was changed from the male Takamimusubi to the female sun goddess Amaterasu in the Yamato court, it was only natural that her symbol would be a traditional bronze mirror with the figure of the Queen Mother of the West at its center. There are neither written documents nor archaeological objects that support this hypothesis. Still, this assumption would persuasively explain the

relationship of Himiko, the mirror, the Queen Mother of the West, and Amaterasu.⁶

Conclusion

I have discussed the possible origin of Amaterasu from two perspectives: one is typological and the other historical. When the image of the sun goddess was conceived, possibly in place of the sun god, the model for this new deity could have been Himiko, the queen of the Yamatai kingdom, and her symbol the mirror. Through the imported Chinese triangular-rimmed deity-beast mirrors, distributed throughout the kingdom by Himiko, the image of the Queen Mother of the West was introduced into Japan, and this might have strengthened the feminine aspect of sovereignty. There are two other aspects of sovereignty intertwined within the figure of Amaterasu: one is that of a virgin-mother, which has counterparts in the Virgin Mary and the Greek goddess Athena; the other is that of the king-ship-protecting sun goddess, which has counterparts in the goddesses of the eastern Mediterranean Sea during the Bronze Age.

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⁶ For my previous thoughts on Amaterasu in a typological analysis, see Matsumura, "Alone among Women." For my understanding of the *Kojiki*, see Matsumura, "A Structural Reading." For additional thoughts on the Queen Mother of the West, see also Fracasso. For an interpretation of the mirrors excavated in Japan, see Edwards.

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Contributors

ANDASSOVA, Maral

Maral Andassova received her doctorate in Literature from Bukkyo University (Kyoto) in 2013. At the time of attending the conference, she was Assistant Professor at the Waseda Institute of Advanced Studies, and she is now an adjunct researcher. Her recent book *Yureugoku yamato* ゆれうごくヤマト was published by Seidosha in 2020. Her current research is focused on the Izumo myths that appear in eighth century texts such as *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Izumo fudoki*, and rituals performed by Izumo priests, as well as the relationship between the Yamato court as the central authority and local deities.

ANTONI, Klaus

Klaus Antoni is a Senior Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen. His research focuses on the intellectual and religious history of Japan, in particular Japan's political mythology and the relationship between religion (Shinto) and ideology. Other focal points are the earliest sacred scriptures of Japan, comparative mythology, and Japanese narrative studies (legends and tales). Antoni's main publications include *Kojiki – Aufzeichnung alter Begebenheiten* (annotated translation of the *Kojiki*, 2012), and *Kokutai – Political Shintô from Early-Modern to Contemporary Japan* (2016). Currently, he is researching the legend of Jinmu tennō.

ÁROKAY, Judit

Judit Árokay is a Professor of Japanese Studies at Heidelberg University. Her research focuses on pre-modern Japanese literature, especially waka poetry and poetic theory (*karon* 歌論, *kagaku* 歌学), theoretical approaches

to language in Early Modern Japan and the evolution of waka rhetoric. Among other topics, she has published on poetical language (e.g., *Die Erneuerung der poetischen Sprache*, 2010; “Kikōbun no naka no koten: Edojidai joseitabi nikki o rei ni” 紀行文の中の古典: 江戸時代女性旅日記を例に, published in *Koten no saisei* 古典の再生, 2024) and poetry and womanhood (*Poetik und Weiblichkeit*, 2001). Recently, she has been engaged in the creation of an interactive digital map of poetic places (*utamakura* 歌枕 / *meisho* 名所) in Japan. She is also the editor of the online journal *Bunron*.

DOLKOVSKI, Julia

Julia Dolkovski is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen and was a member of the research project “De/Sacralization of Texts.” She received her MA from the University of Tübingen with her thesis *The Depiction of Amaterasu in the Videogame Ōkami* in 2020. In her dissertation, she continues her research and investigates how contemporary media reflects strategies of reading and interpreting the myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. She has published on myth making in *Ōkami* (“Japanische Mythologie as Quelle gegenwärtiger Populärkultur: Mythmaking im Videospiel *Ōkami*,” *Inklings: Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* 30, 2024) and wrote the article “Does Japan have a Bible? Imagining the Sacred Texts of Shinto in Nineteenth-Century America” (*New World Bibles: Scriptural Practices and Religious Innovations in Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism*, forthcoming) in cooperation with Louise Neubronner.

FELT, Matthieu

Matthieu Felt is an Assistant Professor of Japanese at the University of Florida. He received his PhD from Columbia University in 2017. In his research, Felt focuses on Japanese literature, history, religion, and mythology. His publications include “Visits to the Palace of the Sea God in Ancient and Medieval Japan” (*Religions* 15 (3), 2024), *Meanings of Antiquity*

(2023), and “Nihongi Banquet Poetry” (*Monumenta Nipponica* 76/2, 2021). He has also translated the “Tale of the Dirt Spider,” published in the collection of medieval tales *Monsters and the Fantastic* (2018).

HIRAFUJI, Kikuko

Kikuko Hirafuji is a Professor at the Department of Shinto Studies and Head of the Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics at Kokugakuin University in Tokyo. She specializes in mythology, particularly focusing on how mythology has been interpreted and treated in modern and contemporary Japan. She is interested in exploring how people have used mythology to express various ideas and concepts. Specifically, she researches the following subjects: The history of the study of mythology in modern Japan, the study of mythology and colonialism, and mythology in contemporary society (in art and pop culture). She has published numerous articles and monographs, for instance “Shinwagaku to daijōsai” 神話学と大嘗祭 (*Shintō shūkyō* 神道宗教 254/255, 2019) and *Shinwa de tadoru kamigami* 神話でたどる日本の神々 (2021).

ISOMAE, Jun'ichi

Jun'ichi Isomae is a scholar and Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. His main areas of research are Japanese religions, mythology, and critical theory. Currently, he is especially interested in the paradox of evil acts committed by actors who believe they are doing good, as well as the concept of the divine and the phenomenon of bias/discrimination. His most important publications include *Hermeneutics on Scripture* (2009), *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan* (2014), and *Listening to the Voices of the Dead* (2024).

LISIECKI, Marcin

Marcin Lisiecki is a Professor at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His academic interests focus on Japanese and Polish nationalist discourse, Japanese film, research on the *Kojiki* and the Japanese myths, as well as mythology and popular culture. He is the author and co-editor of many books and articles, for example, *Kokutai-no hongi w japońskim dyskursie nacjonalistycznym* (*Kokutai-no hongi in Japanese nationalist discourse*, 2010), “Myth and Mythologization in Ideology and Politics” (*Sprawy Narodowościowe* 47, 2015), *Komunikacja międzykulturowa w polityce* (*Intercultural Communication in Politics*, 2019), “Maps of Japan and the Reproduction of Japanese National Identity in Popular Culture” (*Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 60, 2021).

MATSUMURA, Kazuo

Kazuo Matsumura is a Professor Emeritus of Comparative Mythology and History of Religions at the Department of Transcultural Studies, Wako University, Tokyo. His fields of research are cultural anthropology and folklore, as well as religious studies. He is the author of *Mythical Thinkings* (2014), “Nelly Naumann’s Contribution to the Study of Japanese Religion and Myth” (*Religious Studies Review* 32, 2006), “Heroic Sword God” (*Cosmos* 31, 2015), “The Voyage of Yoshitsune to the Island of Yezo” in the volume *Power and Speech* (2016), and many more publications.

NEUBRONNER, Louise

Louise Neubronner received her master’s degree in Japanese Studies with a thesis on Ueda Akinari’s *Ugetsu monogatari* and his Kokugaku thought. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen and was a member of the interdisciplinary research unit “De/Sacralization of Texts”. In her

dissertation, she focuses on texts by Motoori Norinaga, Ueda Akinari, Yamagata Bantō, and Hirata Atsutane, and the way in which these scholars sacralize and desacralize the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* through their readings of the *kamiyo* myths. Her publications include a review of Matthieu Felt's *Meanings of Antiquity* (*Japan Review* 39, 2024) as well as the article "Does Japan have a Bible? Imagining the Sacred Texts of Shinto in Nineteenth-Century America" (*New World Bibles: Scriptural Practices and Religious Innovations in Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism*, forthcoming), written together with Julia Dolkovski.

SCHLEY, Daniel F.

Daniel F. Schley is a Research Associate in the SNSF project "Time and Emotion in Medieval Japanese Literature" at the University of Zurich. In his research, he explores the history of political and religious ideas, religious violence, historiography, and historical thought. He has published, among others, on the topics of sacred kingship (*Herrschersakralität im mittelalterlichen Japan*, 2014), Japan's modern monarchy (*Japans moderne Monarchie*, 2022), perceptions of time at the eleventh-century court ("Ritualzeit," *Asiatische Studien* 75/1, 2021) and Watsuji Tetsurō's cultural theory (e.g., "Passagen zur Lebenskunst mit dem jungen Watsuji Tetsurō," *Humanistische Anthropologie*, 2021). He is currently preparing a monograph on Miki Kiyoshi's philosophy of history.

SCHMID, Sarah Rebecca

Sarah Rebecca Schmid is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies at the University of Zurich and the lead curator of the project "Japanese Buddhist Art in European Collections" (JBAE). She received her doctorate in 2022 at the University of Zurich with the thesis *Mythological Narratives in the Context of Japanese Imperialism*.

Recently, she has published on “The Survival of Minamoto no Yoshitsune” (*Bochumer Jahrbuch für Ostasienforschung* 45, 2023).

STEINECK, Raji C.

Raji C. Steineck is a Professor of Japanology at the University of Zurich, visiting professor at Yamaguchi University’s Research Institute for Time Studies, and principal investigator of the European Research Council’s Advanced Grant project “Time in Medieval Japan” (TIMEJ). His research interests combine the history of ideas in Japan, the theory of symbolic forms, and the philosophy of time. He has published a monograph on ancient Japanese mythology as part of his *Critique of Symbolic Forms* (in German, two volumes, 2014 and 2017; further volumes in preparation).

WACHUTKA, Michael

Michael Wachutka is an Associate Professor at the University of Tübingen and Director of the Tübingen Center for Japanese Studies (TCJS) in Kyoto. His research focuses on the intellectual and religious history of Japan, especially on questions of national identity, variously defined “spiritual culture,” and popular folk beliefs, the evolution, personalities, and self-identity of *Kokugaku*, the mythology and canonization of classical Shinto scriptures, and historical aspects of the *tennō* system. His most recent books are *Kokugaku in Meiji-period Japan* (2013), *Staatsverständnis in Japan* (co-editor, 2016), *Religion, Politik und Ideologie* (co-editor, 2018), and *Heilige Orte und sakraler Raum in den Religionen Japans* (2025, forthcoming).

WEISS, David

David Weiss is an Assistant Professor of Japanese literature and intellectual history at Kyushu University. His research focuses on the history of

ideas, especially the mythology of ancient Japan and its function in Japan's cultural memory, including its utilization in modern nation-building and in justifying colonial rule. More broadly, he is interested in the intercultural transfer of ideas and questions of identity formation. He has recently published *The God Susanoo and Korea in Japan's Cultural Memory* (2022) and *Korea, Japan, and the Vienna School of Ethnology* (co-editor and contributor, 2024). At the moment, he is working on a project that traces German and Austrian influences on early theories of Japanese ethnogenesis through a case study of Oka Masao (1898–1982).

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Klaus Antoni is a Senior Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen. He specializes in the intellectual and religious history of Japan, in particular Japan's political mythology and the relationship between religion (Shinto) and ideology.

Julia Dolkovski is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen whose work bridges the fields of mythology and media studies. She wrote her MA thesis on myth in the video game *Ōkami* and now investigates how contemporary media reinterpret the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

Louise Neubronner is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen. Her research focuses on intellectual disputes during the Edo period that reflect conflicting interpretations of the *kamiyo* myths. She previously explored related themes in her MA thesis on Ueda Akinari's Kokugaku thought.

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