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# A Structural Reading of the *Kojiki*

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## — 要旨

本稿は日本神話の構造と歴史についての概説である。日本神話の主たる史料である『古事記』と『日本書紀』はともに八世紀はじめに編纂されている。『古事記』の方が文書としてまとまっているので、以下の考察は『古事記』を中心とする。『古事記』は三書からなり、第一書では神話、第二書では伝説、第三書では初期天皇の歴史を述べる体裁となっている。日本列島はユーラシア大陸の東端に位置しているので、日本神話のモチーフはユーラシアのさまざまな文化からの影響を示している。類似の神話モチーフは中国南方、朝鮮半島、さらにはギリシアやイラン（スキタイ）にも見られる。また、『古事記』は表面的には天皇支配の由来と正統性の主張だが、より深い水準を検討すると、太安万侶は編纂に際し、三書に一体としての構造を持たせることを意図していたという結論に至る。こうした見方は大林太良、吉田敦彦、フランソワ・マセラによる構造分析の成果である。天皇家の由来と正統性を述べるという表面的な意図は否定しがたいが、その下に潜む神話思考とその役割を明らかにすることも同時に必要であると考えられる。なおいうまでもないが、『古事記』、『日本書紀』、『風土記』などの古典神話（記紀神話）だけが日本列島の神話ではない。仏教による神話である仏教神話、中世の神仏習合が生み出した中世神話、そしてアイヌの神話や南西諸島の神話もある。それらを無視するのではないが、本稿では最小限の言及に留め、『古事記』に限定して構造と歴史に関する諸説を紹介し、併せて筆者の意見も述べた。

## I . Introduction

As a mythologist, I wish to clarify the meanings of Japanese mythology both in its totality and its component parts, while making comparisons with mythologies of other areas and discovering the original ideas and expressions. There are other academic disciplines that also deal with Japanese mythology; historians wish to uncover information about the ancient history of Japan, and specialists of Japanese literature read mythology as a piece of literature. Having different goals, mutually profitable exchange among different academic branches is not a simple matter. There are of course exceptions: I have profited greatly from the research of non-Japanese scholars in various fields.

## II. Object and Method

In this paper, Japanese mythology will be explained as both structure and history. Before that, however, we need to define the territory of “Japanese mythology” and the text(s) to be employed. “Japanese mythology” consists of two words: Japanese and mythology, each of which must also be defined. Japan here means a group of people living in a traditional culture, and mythology here means a body of stories edited to show the essence of the culture of this group of people.

Some people say edited mythology is not living myth and therefore not worthy of research. If edited texts are not admitted, only scattered pieces of mythological episodes will be treated. In that case, from an edited text only living myths, so a researcher thinks, are extracted and arranged in order. Is this really a living myth?

A more reasonable way of conducting research is to choose as the object of research a body of written records comprising stories that exhibit the origin of things. Collections of poems do not make a corpus of stories and it is hard, or practically impossible, to extract essential cultural elements from them. Thus, candidate texts are the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon-shoki* (720). The *Manyō-shū* (759-c.780) and the *Fudoki* (Local Gazettes) (713~) cannot be the main texts. Of the first two, the *Kojiki* is more coherent, and thus our discussion of Japanese mythology is based upon this text.

The myths in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki* were compiled in order to justify the legitimacy of rulership of the imperial family and the members of powerful local chiefs who supported the emperor: They are political myths and kingship myths. Many mythologies of the world are of a similar character. Criticism of this type of mythology, with its ideological background, is that it is distorted and that the pure nature of mythology has been damaged. Even though there is no denying this political aspect, if the *Kojiki* is the best surviving literary text that we can employ for the research into Japanese mythology, we must accept the fact and proceed.

That there is a political intention in the *Kojiki* is not the entire issue. The birth of gods and the establishment of the land are themes of creation myth. The death of the goddess **Izanami** due to her giving birth to the fire god **Kagutsuchi** and the failure of the husband **Izanaki** to take his wife **Izanami** back from the land of the dead belong to the myth of the origin of death, and these two episodes tell of the beginning of human condition. The episodes of the origin of fire and cultivating plants are myth of the origin of culture. Indicating these motifs, common in world mythologies, will show the universality of not only Japanese mythology but of Japanese culture in general. The entire Japanese mythology is not completely political nor ideological.

Mythemes or mythological motifs in the *Kojiki* are often shared by mythologies of other countries as I shall show below. By comparing these similar mythological motifs, it is possible to reconstruct the historical formation of Japanese culture and clarify both the originality and universality of the constituent elements of Japanese culture.

The *Kojiki* is the oldest written record in Japan, compiled in 712. The *Nihon-shoki* was compiled in 720, and the *Fudoki* (Local Gazettes) compiled in the eighth century (the order for the compilation was issued in 713). The *Kojiki* is written in Japanese and the *Nihon-shoki* in Chinese. The difference in language may reflect a difference in purpose for these two texts.

Of the two, the *Kojiki* shows more coherence as a document. The *Nihon-shoki* records many variants of the same mythological episode, showing a tendency to value the nature of recording more important than the coherence of myths. Some people argue that since the *Kojiki* rejects variants, the book is more politically biased and mythologically less pure. This however is only one interpretation. Another possible interpretation is that the *Kojiki* regarded the coherence of tradition to be more important and thus refused to include variants. The only way to decide which view is more likely to be correct is to examine how coherent the *Kojiki* is as a literary text. If we find that myth motifs are arranged using a certain characteristic structure and that these motifs show a meaningful unity, then we can say that the *Kojiki* rejected variants for the sake of unity. Whether that structure was intentional or not is another interesting problem, although it might be hard to determine one way or the other.

The structural analysis of myths has been conducted on various levels: One myth motif; the relationship among several motifs; one myth text; and the relationship among several myth texts. If it is shown that the *Kojiki* has a clear structure and that the structure is independent from political intention, then we find in the *Kojiki* a system of cultural value that is free from politics, although that system refers to a limited group of people, i.e. those of the ruling class of central Yamato of the eighth century.

These are the reasons why I think the argument about Japanese mythology being conducted mainly using the *Kojiki* is not far off the mark.

Discussing mainly **Classical Myths** means that other groups of myths that exist in the Japanese archipelago, namely **Buddhist Myths** and **Medieval Myths**, will not be fully treated. Buddhist myths were produced under the influences of the imported Buddhist scriptures and Medieval Myths were produced by combining Classical Myths and Buddhist Myths during the medieval period (after the Kamakura period of the twelfth century). **Ainu Myth** is the product of the indigenous minority Ainu people who mainly inhabit the northern island of Hokkaidō, and **Okinawa Myth** is the product of the people of the southwest islands. These four types of myths will be explained briefly in **Appendices**.

There are several translations of the *Kojiki* in different languages. The list of such translations is given at the end of this paper.

### III. Text

As will be discussed in the section on structure, the *Kojiki* cosmogony and cosmology, starting from the appearance of the world from the chaos and the birth of islands and gods leading to the foundation of kingship, are narrated systematically. This is systematization must have taken place during a certain historical period. The prologue says that this systematization was conducted by an editor named Ōno Yasumaro in 712. Only a few years later, in 720, an official chronicle, the *Nihon-shoki*, was compiled and its first two books are devoted to mythology. There must be a reason for the coexistence of two myth texts, which we will discuss later. In addition, in 713 the central court ordered local chiefs to submit a local gazette (*Fudoki*) describing local products and stories. Some of these local gazettes are still in existence in whole or in part. These local gazettes sometimes contain mythological stories. One benefit of studying Japanese mythology is that there are multiple sources which enable comparisons, through which the

researcher can check if the tradition is unique or shared by different sources.

When we talk about history, we must consider the historical background of how the *Kojiki* was planned and realized. This background is essential to the understanding of the nature of the *Kojiki* and Japanese mythology. Yet there is also the problem of the transmission of the texts: How the *Kojiki* and mythological texts were preserved, transmitted, and transformed up to the present day. We are fortunate to have excellent studies on this important issue (Isomae 1999; 2009). In this paper, therefore, only the history of scholarly research in the present era will be treated.

#### IV. Visible Structures

There are several sets of structures in the first book such as the Takamaga-hara myth, Izumo myth, and Hyūga myth. In addition, a god or a hero moves from one myth to another, so the structure of a god or a hero must also be considered. In sum, we need to consider structure over several different stages and scales at the same time. Further, there are structures of different depth. Some structures are visible but others are not. Deep structures can be uncovered only by careful analysis.

Compared with other mythologies such as the Greek, Indian, and Germanic, mythologies, mythology in the *Kojiki* is well organized due to the editorial work by Ōno Yasumaro. In the following, the general division of the first and second books is presented first and then in the following section a more detailed description of motifs of all three books is given with more comments.

##### 1. Cosmogony (Birth of the Nation)

- Primordial chaos.
- Various gods and goddesses appear and disappear.
- Brother-Sister (**Izanaki** and **Izanami**) pair through sexual union to produce islands and various gods.
- **Izanami** dies when she gives birth to the fire god **Kagutsuchi** and goes to the land of the dead.
- **Izanaki** fails to take **Izanami** back from the land of the dead (Orpheus type. F81.1).

##### 2. Myths in High Heaven (*Takamaga-hara*)

- **Izanaki** purifies himself and in the process produces three divine children of a cosmic scale.
- The sun goddess **Amaterasu** and atmospheric heroic brother god **Susanō** unite symbolically to produce children.
- Wild actions of the brother god **Susanō** causes the sun goddess **Amaterasu** to hide in a cave (*Ama-no-iwato*). The world falls into darkness and turmoil.
- Reappearance of the sun goddess and the salvation of the world through ritual and laughter.
- Punishment of the wild brother god **Susanō** and his expulsion from heaven.

##### 3. Myths in Izumo

- **Susanō** kills the food goddess **Ōgetsu-hime**. From her corpse various seeds of grains appear.

- **Susanō** kills the eight-headed dragon (*Yamata-no-Orochi*) through a trick.
- One of **Susanō**'s descendants is the Land Lord **Ōkuninusi**, who becomes the ruler of the terrestrial world.
- The story of the Hare and the Crocodile (*Inaba no Shiro-usagi*).
- Heavenly gods (*Amatsu-kami*) and Earthly gods (*Kunitsu-kami*).
- Demand of the cession of the land by a heavenly messenger god **Amewaka-hiko** and its failure.
- Sword god **Take-mikazuchi** is sent as a new messenger and he accomplishes the task.
- Earthly gods cede the earthly land to the Heavenly gods (*Kuni-Yuzuri*).

#### 4. Myths in Hyūga

- A descendant of the sun goddess, **Hono-ninigi**, accompanied by subordinate gods, descends from heaven to the earthly land.
- **Hono-ninigi** meets the daughter of the mountain god **Konohana-sakuya-hime** (Flower Princess) and marries her.
- Three children are born from their union and one of the sons goes to the land under the sea and marries a princess of the sea world, **Toyotama-hime**. Through their union a prince, **Ugaya-fuki-aezu**, is born, who becomes the father of the first emperor.

#### 5. Myth of the Imperial Line

- **Ugaya-fuki-aezu**'s son, **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**, proceeds to the central part of the main island of Honshū.
- After being victorious against indigenous enemies, **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko** conducts the enthronement ritual and becomes the first emperor **Jinmu** (*Jinmu tōsei*).
- The story of a prince, **Homuchi-wake**, who fails to become an emperor.
- The story of a prince, **Yamato-takeru**, who also fails to become an emperor.
- The story of empress **Jingū** and her child, Emperor **Ōjin**.

Since the first book is about gods and the second book is about heroes, many studies on Japanese mythology only discuss these two books. As the third book consists of the records of humanly emperors and empresses, it would seem that omitting it from studies of Japanese mythology is a sound choice. Still, if we try to include the third book in Japanese mythology, what would change? The latter part of this paper is an attempt to answer this question. Before that, however, a more detailed description of mythology and additional comments would be helpful for the argument.

#### 〈First book〉

##### ◎Creation of the World (*Kuni-umi*)

• Three Primordial Gods (*Zōke san shin*), Five Separate Gods (*Koto amatsu kami itsu hashira*), Seven Generations of gods (*Kamiyo nana dai*): In the beginning, heaven and earth separated from chaos. In high heaven, three gods appear: **Ameno-minaka-nushi**, **Takami-musuhi**, and **Kami-musuhi**. They are single gods and hide themselves. The land is without fixed form, like a jellyfish in water, wandering here and there. Like reed shoots sprouting forth, a god named **Umashi-ashikabi-hikoji** appears and then **Ameno-tokotachi**. These two gods are also singles and hide themselves.

These five gods are called the Five Separate Gods. Then **Kuni-no-tokotachi** appears, followed by **Toyokumono**. These two are also singles and hide themselves. Next **Uhijini** and his sister **Suhijini** appear. Then **Tsunogui** and his sister **Ikugui**, then **Ōtonoji** and his sister **Ōtonobe**, then **Omodaru** and his sister *Aya-kashiko-ne*. Lastly **Izanaki** and his sister **Izanami** appear. So far, Seven Generations of gods.

➔ The odd numbers three, five, and seven show the influence of Chinese thought. Evolutionary changes are emphasized: The first seven gods are without gender. The following ten gods are in pairs of male and female. First there is an undifferentiated gender condition, then the separation of gender, and finally sexual union and the birth of new lives.

• Marriage of **Izanaki** and **Izanami**: Heavenly gods order **Izanaki** and **Izanami** to fix and make firm the drifting land. The two are given a halberd, which they use to churn the sea as they stand on the floating bridge of heaven (*Ame-no-uki-hashii*). When they pull up the halberd, salt drips from its tip and an island named Onogoro is formed. The two land on the island and build a pillar and a palace. They walk around the pillar in opposite directions and when they meet, **Izanami** utters a greeting first and then they unite. From their union the baby **Hiruko** and then the baby **Awa-shima** are born. They are not regarded as good children and the parents cast them away. After advice from gods, this time **Izanaki** greets **Izanami** first and then things go well.

• Birth of eight grand islands (*Ō-yashima*): **Izanami** first gives birth to *Awaji* Island, then an island called *Shikoku* (Four Countries) because this island had a body with four faces. Then the three islands of *Oki*. Next *Kyūshū*, *Iki*, *Tsushima*, and *Sado* are born. Last of all, she gives birth to the main island of *Honshū*. She thus gives birth to the Eight Great Islands.

➔ The northern island of *Hokkaidō* and the Southwest Islands are not mentioned because they were unknown at that time.

• Birth of gods: Gods are born: Male and female pairs of gods of rocks, stones, and sand; then gods related to the construction of houses. Then aquatic gods such as the sea god **Watatsumi** and the brother-sister gods of estuaries are born. From the estuary gods are born various other aquatic gods. Then wind gods, tree gods, and field gods. From the union of the mountain god and field goddess are born land gods and fog gods. Then the swift ship god **Torifune** (bird ship) and the food goddess **Ōgetsu-hime** are born.

➔ Although most of the gods are born from the union of **Izanaki** and **Izanami**, there are some exceptions, such as the gods born from the union of gods of estuaries and mountain god and field goddess.

• Birth of Fire god **Kagutsuchi** and the death of goddess **Izanami**: When **Izanami** gives birth to the fire god **Kagutsuchi**, she falls ill as her private parts are severely burned in parturition. When she vomits, a male-female pair of metal gods appear. From her excrement, a male-female pair of gods of clay for earthenware came into being. From her urine, a goddess of water and a young god of production, **Waku-musuhi**, appears. Finally, **Izanami** dies and is buried on Mt. Hiba, between Izumo and Hōki. **Izanaki** cries and his tears become a goddess of a marsh. He furiously chops off the head of the fire god off with a sword. The blood gushing out onto a stone

produces various gods of swords and lightning. From **Kagutsuchi's** corpse, eight gods appear, at his head, chest, belly, genitals, left hand, right hand, left leg, and right leg.

➔ Various mythological motifs: 1) Fire is inside a woman's body; 2) The birth of fire is also the birth of death; 3) The first to die becomes the queen of the dead; 4) New things come from death; 5) The connection of fire, metal, and production of earthenware from clay. The appearance of various gods from parts of **Kagutsuchi's** corpse is similar to the case of the food goddess **Ōgetsuhime**, below.

• The land of the dead: **Izanaki** goes to the land of Yomi to bring **Izanami** back. **Izanami** tells **Izanaki** that she cannot go with him immediately, and that he must wait as she has already eaten the food of Yomi. She also says that he should not see her and disappears into the hall. He cannot wait and peeps into the hall with a light. He discovers **Izanami's** body is rotten and full of maggots. On her eight body parts, head, chest, belly, genitals, left hand, right hand, left leg, and right leg sit eight kinds of lightning gods. Taken in fear at the sight, **Izanaki** runs away. **Izanami** orders hags to chase after him saying that he has made her ashamed. Running, **Izanaki** throws down his hair band, which turns into wild grapes. The hags stop and eat them. Next, he throws down teeth of his comb, which turn into bamboo shoots, which the hags stop to eat. Eight lightning gods also chase after him, but when he arrives at the slope that separates the land of the living and the land of the dead, **Izanaki** plucks three peaches from the tree and throws them at the pursuers. The three peaches blow the lightning gods away. When **Izanami** approaches close after him, **Izanaki** blocks the slope with a huge boulder. The two exchange words. **Izanami** declares that she would kill one thousand people a day. In response, **Izanaki** declares that he would produce one thousand and five hundred living people a day. In this way, they divorce. After this incident, the passage of the living into the land of the dead becomes impossible.

➔ International Folklore motifs: Taboo of not seeing, Orpheus type, magical flight, the origin of death, goddess of the underworld. See Thompson 1946. **Izanami** controls both life and death as a great goddess. She stands in opposition to **Amaterasu** who rejects death. The motif of the disconnection of two domains after a journey to the otherworld is the same as the story of visiting the bottom of the ocean by **Yamasachi** (Mountain Luck).

• Purification ritual (*Misogi*) and the birth of three precious gods (*San kishin*): Returning from the land of the dead, **Izanaki** conducts a purification ritual (*misogi*) by washing himself in the river to dispel the pollution of the underworld. Before bathing in the river, various gods appear from his belongings and his clothes as he takes them off. Among the gods are gods that protect the road and travelers, and gods that absorb pollution. Entering the river and washing his body, gods of the sea and sailing come into being. Finally, when **Izanaki** washes his left eye, the sun goddess **Amaterasu** appears; from his right eye the moon god **Tsukuyomi**; and from his nose the windy god **Susanō**. Elated, **Izanaki** gives a necklace of precious stones to **Amaterasu** and orders her to rule the heavenly domain (*Takama-ga-hara*), and **Tsukuyomi** to rule the domain of night, and **Susanō** the domain of sea.

➔ As in the case of **Izanami's** death, gods appear even from polluted things. Unlike monotheistic religions, neither death nor pollution are denied. Gods can appear from death and pollution. **Izanaki** produces three major gods single-handedly from his body and allots

them the three cosmic domains. Japan being a country of many typhoons coming from the sea, **Susanō** rules the typhoons and the sea. **Izanaki**'s parthenogenesis of three children by the waterfront is intentionally contrasted with Empress **Jingū**'s parthenogenesis of Emperor **Ōjin** by waterfront in the second book (three children from a male vs. one child from a female).

• Weeping of Susanō and his expulsion: **Susanō** continues to cry even at a mature age with a long beard hanging down to his chest. His crying causes the trees in the mountains to wither as well as the rivers and seas to dry out. When asked by **Izanaki** why he continues to cry, **Susanō** replies that he wants to see his mother, who lives in the Land of Bottom (*Ne-no-Katasu-Kuni*). Hearing this, **Izanaki** becomes furious and expels **Susanō**.

➔ **Susanō** remains childish even in his adulthood. Even though he was born from his father, he longs for his mother, continues to cry, makes the world chaotic, and is rejected by his father. Lévi-Strauss cites **Susanō** as an example of a crying baby in his *Mythologique II* (Lévi-Strauss 1966: M311) and compares him with similar mythological figures of South American mythology (M86a; M313).

### ◎Myth of *Takama-ga-hara* (High Heaven)

• Meeting of Amaterasu and Susanō and their giving birth to children: **Susanō** visits his sister **Amaterasu** to say farewell. When coming he triggers a violent earthquake with his steps. **Amaterasu**, being suspicious of his intentions, arms herself to the fullest extent and awaits him at the river Yasukawa of Heaven, a boundary of the heavenly kingdom. **Susanō** proposes the exchange of personal belongings to make children out of them. He says that this way, if female children were born from his belongings, that would prove that his heart is pure and he has no malicious intention of attacking her kingdom. The two gods stand on both sides of the river and exchange their belongings: First **Amaterasu** receives **Susanō**'s sword, breaks it into three, chews the pieces and spits them out as fog. The three goddesses of Munakata (goddesses of safe navigation) appear. Next **Susanō** receives jewels from **Amaterasu**. He chews them and spits them out as fog. Five gods, **Oshiho-mimi**, **Ame-no-hohi**, **Amatsu-hikone**, **Ikutsu-hikone**, and **Kumano-kusubi**, appear. **Amaterasu** declares the five gods her children and the three goddesses **Susanō**'s children.

➔ **Amaterasu** arms herself like Athena but she does not fight. On **Amaterasu** in general, see Matsumae 1978.

• Victory Boasting of Susanō and his wild behaviors: **Susanō** boasts that his sincerity is proved and thus he is the winner. He starts behaving wildly in **Amaterasu**'s heavenly domain. He destroys the ditches of **Amaterasu**'s rice paddies and buries water channels with mud. He defecates in the divine hall of celebration of a new harvest and makes the hall impure. **Amaterasu** does not punish **Susanō**, but rather defends him. **Susanō** however does not cease his misbehaviors. He breaks the roof of the holy weaving hall in which **Amaterasu**'s maidens are weaving divine garments and throws down into the hall the skin (or the corpse) of the heavenly dappled horse skinned backward (or the skin and corpse together). One of the weaving maidens is surprised and, striking her genitals against the shuttle, dies.

➔ The dead maiden could be the doublet of **Amaterasu**. As to the meaning of **Amaterasu**'s



weaving, see Miller 1984; Naumann 1982; Naumann 1983.

- **Heavenly Cave (*Ama-no-Iwado*)** : **Amaterasu** hides herself in the heavenly cave (*Ama-no-Iwado*). Consequently, light disappears and all kinds of evil events occur. Gods gather around the shore of the Heavenly River (*Ama-no-Yasukawa*) and discuss how to entice **Amaterasu** out of the cave. Under the direction of **Omoikane**, the god of wisdom, the gods gather roosters that crow at dawn, and call in **Amano-matsura**, the smith god to forge a huge mirror with the help of **Ishikori-dome**. They also make long strings of magatama curved beads. The gods then divine the outcome of their attempt by burning the shoulder bone of a male deer. They then decorate a sacred sakaki tree with long strings of magatama curved beads and the mirror.

➔ As to the ritual side of the Grotto myth, see Matsumae 1980.

- **Ameno-uzume I**: After these preparations, **Ameno-uzume** begins to dance on a tub turned up-side-down exhibiting her breasts and genitals. The gods begin to laugh. **Amaterasu**, hearing the laughter, becomes curious and moving the rock a little peeps out asking **Ameno-uzume** what is going on. **Ameno-uzume**, while turning the mirror toward **Amaterasu**, answers that since a goddess greater than **Amaterasu** is present, the gods are joyous and laughing. **Amaterasu**, not thinking the image in the mirror is herself, comes out of the cave a little to see the image more clearly. Then **Tajikarao**, god of might, who is hiding behind the rock grasps **Amaterasu**'s hand and pulls her completely out of the cave. A sacred straw rope is quickly set up lest the goddess returns into the cave. Thus, light returns again to the world.

➔ The myth of the release of the sun or a goddess of light from a cave is widespread from India to Southeast Asia (Ōbayashi 1960; Witzel 2005a). The inversion of this type of myth is the myth of the shooting of too many suns (Erkes 1925).

### ◎Izumo Myth

- **Expulsion of Susanō and his killing of Food goddess Ōgetsu-hime**: Cutting **Susanō**'s beard, gods extract his toe nails and finger nails, and fining him heavily, expel him from heaven. On his way down he stops at the food goddess **Ōgetsu-hime**'s place, to ask for some food. Surreptitiously viewing the scene where the goddess extracts foods from her nostril, mouth, and anus, **Susanō** becomes furious thinking the goddess is serving him poisonous things to kill him, and kills the goddess. Various kinds of seeds appear from the goddess' corpse: From her head a silkworm appears; from her eye rice; from her ear millet; from her nostril sweet beans; from her genitals wheat; and from her anus soybeans.

➔ As to the sins committed by **Susanō**, see Obayashi 1977b.

- **Killing of the Eight-headed Serpent by Susanō**: **Susanō** arrives at the upper stream of the Hī river in Izumo. Seeing a chopstick floating down the stream, he knows that people are living there. **Susanō** meets an elderly couple and their daughter. Learning that a huge serpent comes to devour the couple's daughter every year, the god tells the couple to make strong sake wine to inebriate the serpent. Seeing the serpent falling asleep, the god cuts the serpent into pieces. He takes the couple's daughter **Kushinada-hime** as his wife. He finds a splendid sword in one of the tails of the serpent and presents it to **Amaterasu**. This sword is called Kusanagi and becomes

one of the three regalia of the imperial family.

➡ A typical Dragon-Slaying myth. The closest parallel myth might be the Hittite Illuyankas myth. See Fontenrose 1980; Ogden 2013; Watkins 1995.

• **Ōkuni-nushi and the White Hare of Inaba** : **Ōkuni-nushi** is the descendant of **Susanō**. This god has eighty elder brothers. Wishing to marry **Yagami-hime** of Inaba, they travel to meet the princess. All their luggage is carried by **Ōkuni-nushi**. On the way, the brothers meet a hare ripped of its skin. The hare is without skin because his plan to travel from an off-shore island to the mainland by jumping on the backs of lined-up crocodiles (*wani*) fails in the last stage, when the hare is attacked and his skin is bitten off. Hearing the hare's story, the wicked brothers of **Ōkuni-nushi** deliberately give the hare a mistaken cure. **Ōkuni-nushi**, arriving late with heavy luggage, tells the hare the proper way to cure its skin. Then the hare reveals his true identity as a god and predicts that it is the youngest, **Ōkuni-nushi**, who will marry **Yagami-hime**. The prophecy comes true.

➡ Many folktales of Southeast Asia countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam tell how a small wise animal, usually a mouse deer, tricks a huge but unwise crocodile and crosses a river by jumping on the backs of lined-up crocodiles. Since there are no crocodile in Japan, *wani* in this story is often explained as a shark. It is possible that this story was imported from Southeast Asia and was adapted into Japanese mythology (Antoni 1982; 2015).

• **Attacks by Eighty Brothers**: The eighty brother gods are angry because the youngest **Ōkuni-nushi** is chosen as the husband. They force **Ōkuni-nushi** to wait at the foot of a mountain to catch a boar that the brothers drive out from the mountain. Then they throw down a huge stone they have heated till it is red hot, saying it is a boar. **Ōkuni-nushi** grabs the stone and being fatally burned, dies. With the help of mother goddesses, however, he is resuscitated. Then the eighty brothers, putting **Ōkuni-nushi** into a space in a huge tree held open by a wedge, crush him by pulling the wedge out. Again, he is resuscitated. In order to avoid further murder attempts, the mother goddesses send **Ōkuni-nushi** to his ancestor **Susanō**.

• **Ōkuni-nushi's Visit to the Land of Ne**: Although **Susanō** is hostile to **Ōkuni-nushi**, his daughter **Suseri-bime** is friendly. **Susanō** puts **Ōkuni-nushi** into a room full of serpents. As **Suseri-bime** gives **Ōkuni-nushi** a magical scarf that expels serpents, he sleeps soundly. The next evening he is put into a room full of centipedes and hornets. Once more he is safe, thanks to **Suseri-bime**'s scarf. Next **Susanō** takes **Ōkuni-nushi** to a field and shoots an arrow into it, ordering him to fetch it. When **Ōkuni-nushi** goes into the field, **Susanō** sets it on fire. This time it is a mouse that saves **Ōkuni-nushi**'s life. The mouse tells **Ōkuni-nushi** to descend into a hole and stay there until the fire burns out. Thus, he succeeds in giving the arrow back to **Susanō**. While **Susanō** is asleep, **Ōkuni-nushi** tries to run away with **Suseri-bime** and **Susanō**'s treasures, such as a harp and weapons. On the way, the harp, touching a post, makes great sound, causing **Susanō** to wake. He chases the couple up to *Yomotsu-hira-saka*, but finding it is impossible to catch them, **Susanō** salutes **Ōkuni-nushi** telling him to conquer the elder brothers by using his weapons and become the ruler of the country.

• Making of the Country by the collaboration of Ōkuni-nushi and Sukuna-bikona: When Ōkuni-nushi is at the Cape of Miho in Izumo, a little god comes to him in a boat. This god is Sukuna-bikona. Ōkuni-nushi builds a country with this god. Sukuna-bikona however goes to the land of Tokoyo before the completion of the work. Being at a loss, Ōkuni-nushi sits on the beach lamenting when a god illuminating the sea comes to him. It is a god named Ōana-mochi who will be worshipped at Mt. Miwa in Nara. Together the two gods complete the task of land-making.

➔ Although one is large (*ō*) and the other is small (*sukuna*), they are quasi twins, symbolizing the fertility of the land they are building. In the process, Sukuna-bikona disappears, but his substitute Ōana-mochi of Mt. Miwa appears in his stead to form another quasi-twin pair to complete the work.

• The First Attempt at the Cession of Earthly Territory: Amaterasu sees the land completed (*Toyō-ashihara-no-mizuho-no-kuni*) and wishes her eldest son Oshiho-mimi to become the ruler of the land. Oshiho-mimi however refuses the task saying the land is not safe yet. Amaterasu therefore dispatches her second son Ame-no-hohi. He becomes subordinate to Ōkuni-nushi and does not come back to Amaterasu for three years. Thus, Amaterasu sends Ame-waka-hiko down. Ame-waka-hiko marries Ōkuni-nushi's daughter Shita-teru-hime and does not report back for eight years. Finally, a pheasant woman is sent. She finds Ame-waka-hiko and tells him to report to Amaterasu. A servant woman, Ame-no-sagume, then urges Ame-waka-hiko to kill the pheasant and he shoots her with an arrow. The arrow goes through the pheasant, killing her, and reaches heaven. In heaven, Takagi-no-kami picks up the arrow and throws it back, saying that if Ame-waka-hiko is rebellious the arrow should kill him. Truly, the arrow hits Ame-waka-hiko and he dies. Learning that Ame-waka-hiko is dead, many come to his funeral. Among them is Aji-suki-takahiko-ne who is the elder brother of Ame-waka-hiko's wife Shita-teru-hime. Since her husband and her brother look very similar, many of Ame-waka-hiko's relatives believe that he is still alive and hug Aji-suki-takahiko-ne. He becomes furious as he is taken for dead and flies away from the funeral.

• The Second Attempt at the Cession of Earthly Territory: Amaterasu asks Omoi-kane, a god of wisdom, who should be sent next. Following Omoi-kane's advice, the sword gods Take-mikazuchi and Ameno-tori-fune are sent. They land on the beach of Izumo and sitting on the tips of swords stuck upside down, they ask Ōkuni-nushi to surrender the land. Ōkuni-nushi replies that he must hear the opinions of his sons. The elder son Kotoshiro-nushi says yes and disappears. The second son Take-minakata demands a fight with Take-mikazuchi, but, being beaten, runs away to faraway Suwa and surrenders. Finally, Ōkuni-nushi says that he will give away the land under the condition that a new palace be given to him (Izumo shrine), where he will be worshipped. The two gods return to heaven and report the completion of the mission.

➔ As to the sword god, see Matsumura 2015.

### ◎Myth of Hyūga

• Descent of the Heavenly Prince: Although the condition for Oshiho-mimi to descend is now ready, he refuses to descend, the reason being that meanwhile a son Hono-ninigi has been

born and **Oshiho-mimi** thinks that this new born baby should descend in his stead as ruler of the land. While **Hono-ninigi** is on the way to the land, he sees a strange shining god between heaven and earth. He dispatches **Ameno-uzume** to inquire who he is. The god says he is **Saruta-hiko** waiting to guide **Hono-ninigi**. Thanks to **Saruta-hiko**'s guidance, **Hono-ninigi**, with five accompanying gods, **Ameno-koyane**, **Futo-tama**, **Ameno-uzume**, **Irikori-dome**, and **Tamano-oya**, and with three regalia, a huge mirror, the sword *Kusanagi*, and a curved magatama jewel, lands on the peak of Mt. Takachiho in Hyūga. **Ameno-uzume** and **Saruta-hiko** marry and their descendants are called Saru-me 'monkey women.' When fishing in the sea of Ise, **Saruta-hiko**'s hand is caught by a huge shellfish and they sink into the sea when the tide rises. **Ameno-uzume** also goes to the sea of Ise and, gathering fishes and sea creatures, asks whether they are willing to offer themselves as food for the heavenly ruler. All agree except for the sea cucumber who remains silent. Angrily, **Ameno-uzume** cuts the sea cucumber with a knife so that it can answer with its newly cut mouth.

➡ The myth of the descent of a ruler has many parallels in Korea and must have been imported and incorporated into Japanese mythology (Matsumae 1983; Obayashi 1984; Obayashi 1991a). On **Saruta-hiko** and **Ameno-uzume** (Yoshida 1965: 221-228).

- **Hono-ninigi**: **Hono-ninigi** meets a beautiful girl, **Konohana-sakuya-hime** (*ko-no-hana*, 'flowers of a tree'), at the cape of Kasasa. Wishing to marry her, he meets the girl's father, the mountain god **Ōyamatsumi**. Hearing this, the father god rejoices and also offers **Hono-ninigi** the elder sister of the girl, **Iwanaga-hime** (*iwa-naga*, 'stone-long'), as a wife. **Hono-ninigi**, however, accepts only **Konohana-sakuya-hime** and sends the elder sister back to her father, because she is ugly. Hearing this, the mountain god tells the heavenly prince that this is a grave mistake. If he accepts the two sisters together as wives, the life of his line will prosper like flowers and be as ever-lasting as a stone. Since however he does not take **Iwanaga-hime** as his wife, the life of his descendants will be short as flowers.

➡ A myth of the origin of death called the "Banana type".

- **Konohana-sakuya-hime** (or Princess Konohana): **Konohana-sakuya-hime** becomes pregnant. **Hono-ninigi** doubts if the child is his. In order to prove her faithfulness, the wife makes a pledge (*ukei*) and setting a birth-hut without doors nor windows afire, gives birth to three children, **Ho-deri**, **Ho-suseri**, and **Ho-ori** (*ho*, 'fire') safely.

➡ This birth in fire is intentionally identified with the birth of **Homuchi-wake** by **Sahobime** in the second book.

- **Brothers, Sea Luck and Mountain Luck**: Of the three children, the eldest, **Ho-deri**, becomes a fisherman and is nicknamed **Umi-sachi**, 'Sea Luck'. The youngest, **Ho-ori**, becomes a hunter and is nicknamed **Yama-sachi** 'Mountain Luck'. There is no mention of the second child, **Ho-suseri**. **Yamasachi** asks his elder brother to exchange tools and obtains a fish-hook. However, he loses his brother's fish-hook in the sea. His brother demands the fish-hook back, refusing any substitute fish-hooks. When, at a loss, **Yamasachi** sits on the beach weeping, an old god of the sea and wisdom, **Shio-tsuchi** 'Passage of currents', appears and advises him to go down to the palace of the sea god **Watatsumi** at the bottom of the sea by using a boat made of knitted straw.

Thus, **Yamasachi** arrives at the sea god's palace safely. As instructed, he climbs up a tree which stands near a well. When a servant girl of the sea princess **Toyotama-hime** comes to fetch water, she notices **Yamasachi** looking at his reflection in the well. **Yamasachi** asks the girl to give him some water. When he receives a bowl of water, instead of drinking the water, he takes a jewel from his necklace and spits it from his mouth into the bowl. The jewel attaches itself to the bowl and cannot be removed. Marveling at this, the girl reports the incident to the princess, who comes to meet **Yamasachi**. **Yamasachi** and **Toyotama-hime** fall in love immediately and marry with the blessings of her father **Watatsumi**. Three happy years pass and **Yamasachi** remembers his duty. Hearing about the lost fish-hook, the sea god summons all the fishes and sea creatures to ask them about the lost fish-hook. The fish-hook is in the throat of a red bream. **Watatsumi** sends **Yamasachi** back with a present of two magical balls that control tidal waves. **Yamasachi** arrives home riding on the back of a *wani*. Using the two magical balls, **Yamasachi** subdues his elder brother **Umisachi**. **Umisachi** becomes **Yamasachi**'s servant and his descendants are called the Hayato clan, the guard of the imperial family.

➔ As to the motif of 'lost fishhook', see Berezkin 2009.

- Princess Toyotama: **Toyotama-hime** then comes to meet **Yamasachi**. The reason is that it is not appropriate for a child of a heavenly god to be born under the sea. She builds a birth-hut by the seashore, thatching the roof with feathers of the sea cormorant. Before the roof is completely thatched, she feels birth pangs and enters the birth-hut. Before entering, she asks **Yamasachi** not to see her childbirth since the tribe of the otherworld must take their original form when giving birth. **Yamasachi** breaks the taboo and looks inside, seeing a giant *wani* rolling around. Ashamed of being seen in that state, **Toyotama-hime** passes the new born baby to **Yamasachi** and returns to her land, closing the passage between the land and the sea. The child is named **Ugaya-fukiaezu** meaning 'The roof of the birth-hut not yet thatched.' Even though they are separated, still **Toyotama-hime** misses her husband and child. So, she sends her younger sister **Tamayori-hime** as foster-mother of the child. When he grown up, **Ugaya-fukiaezu** marries **Tamayori-hime**. From them, four boys are born: **Itsuse**, **Inahi**, **Mikenu**, and **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**. Among them, **Mikenu** goes to the land of Tokoyo and **Inahi** enters into the sea where the sea god **Watatsumi**'s palace is situated.

➔ The corresponding myth in Northern Indo-china is discussed in Ōbayashi 1966. The motif of the transgression by a male of the prohibition issued by a female of not seeing her is identical to the story of **Izanaki / Izanami** and the story of **Homuchiwaka** (see later).

## <Second Book>

- Eastern Expedition of Future Emperor Jinmu: **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko** and his eldest brother **Itsuse** are in Takachiho, but decide to leave Hyūga and go on an expedition to the east in order to rule the country. On the way, they stop at Usa in Toyokuni, Tsukushi, Aki, and Kibi (places on the Inland sea). When the troop comes to the Hayasui Strait, where the tide is wild, there appears a god named Saonetu-hiko riding on a turtle. He guides the troop safely into the bay of Ōsaka. There, a local ruler, **Nagasune-hiko**, attacks **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**'s troop. His brother **Itsuse** is badly hurt. **Itsuse** says that since they are descendants of the sun goddess it is not proper

for them to fight facing east, so they make a detour around the peninsula. While the troop is making a detour, however, **Itsuse** dies.

- **Giant Crow**: **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**, losing his brother, lands at Kumano in the south. There, the troop meets a huge bear, who is in reality a hostile god. Due to its magical power, all the soldiers collapse on the ground. **Amaterasu** and **Takagi-no-kami** are watching the scene from heaven. They ask the sword god **Takemikazuchi** for help. **Takemikazuchi** replies that his sword, not himself, is enough for help. The sword is sent from heaven and is discovered by a man named **Taka-kura-ji** at his home. Being informed about the sword in a divine dream, **Taka-kura-ji** brings the sword to **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**. The power of the sword invigorates the troop. **Takagi-no-kami** also sends a giant crow, **Yata-garasu**, as a guide. Guided by the bird, the troop arrives at Uda, in Yoshino. There the troop meets the hostile tribe brothers **Eukashi** and **Otoukashi**. The younger brother, **Otoukashi**, submits himself to **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko** and discloses his brother's plan to murder **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**. Thus, **Eukashi** is killed by **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko**.

- **Emperor Jinmu**: **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko** enters the central area and at Kashihara of Unebi in Nara holds an enthronement ritual to become the first emperor **Jinmu**. **Kamu-yamato-iware-biko** has a wife and children in Hyūga, but he wants to have a woman for a queen. He marries **Hoto-tatara-isuke-yori-hime**. She is a divine child. The story goes as follows: **Ōmono-nushi**, the god of Mt. Miwa, finds **Seya-datara-hime** attractive and wishes to be united with her. The god changes himself into a red arrow and hits her genitals when the girl is in a toilet set over a stream. When the girl puts the arrow next to her bed, the god shows his true identity. From their union, **Hoto-tatara-isuke-yori-hime** is born.

- ➔ This part of the myth asserts that the descendants of emperor **Jinmu**, i.e. all later emperors, inherit the line of **Ōmono-nushi**, the god of Mt. Miwa, the most powerful local god of the Nara region.

- **Burning Rice Fortress**: Emperor **Suijin** marries **Saho-bime**, a local princess of the Saho area in Nara. **Saho-biko**, the brother of **Saho-bime**, plots a rebellion against the emperor and asks his sister to murder the emperor. She agrees but cannot accomplish the task. She confesses her brother's plan and runs away into her brother's fortress named Inagi ('Rice Fortress'). At that time, **Saho-bime** has a baby in her belly and gives birth to a boy inside the fortress. The emperor, still loving the queen, orders the soldiers to rescue both the queen and the child from the fortress. Predicting the emperor's plan, **Saho-bime** tricks the soldiers and only the baby is given. **Saho-bime** dies with her brother in the burning Rice Fortress.

- ➔ This story of the birth in fire is set to be intentionally similar to the story of the birth of three sons by **Konohana-sakuya-hime**. The scene of the failure of the soldiers' attempt to save **Saho-bime** from the burning fortress corresponds to the scene of **Tajikarao**'s attempt to extract **Amaterasu** from the cave (although it achieves the opposite result).

- **Homuchi-wake**: The boy is named **Homuchi-wake** by the emperor. He is loved very much but does not speak a word even when his beard grows to his chest. One day, he grumbles when

he sees a white bird flying. Hearing this, the emperor orders his servant **Ō-taka** ('Large Hawk') to chase and catch the bird. **Ō-taka** chases after the bird from Kii, through Harima, Inaba, Tanba, Tajima, Ōmi, Mino, Owari, Shinano, and finally catches the bird in Koshi. Still the prince does not speak. The emperor dreams that a god appears telling him that he is **Ōkuni-nushi** of Izumo, and if the emperor makes his shire more beautiful the prince will speak. So, the emperor sends his son to Izumo to worship the god. When a temporary palace is built on the bridge over the Hi river, the prince resides there, and begins to speak. Everyone rejoices. Now that the prince is ready for marriage, the prince and a princess named **Hinaga-hime** stay together at a palace named *Nagaho-no-miya*, whose roof is thatched with the leaves of the betel palm tree. At night, however, **Homuchi-wake** finds that **Hinaga-hime** is in reality a huge serpent. Frightened, **Homuchi-wake** escapes from the princess in a boat, but she chases after him. The ship is pulled up over a mountain, enabling **Homuchi-wake** to return to the palace in Yamato.

➔ The original form of **Yamasachi's** wife is a *wani* and the original form of **Homuchi-wake's** wife is a serpent. **Homuchi-wake**, who does not utter a word as a mature adult ('until a beard eight hand spans long grows down past his chest') is the inversion of **Susanō**, who keeps wailing as a mature adult (exactly the same expression is employed). **Susanō** becomes a hero after conquering the male serpent, while **Homuchi-wake** is chased by a female serpent and fails to be a hero. In the case of **Susanō**, a chopstick flows in the river Hi, while in the case of **Homuchi-wake**, it is he himself who enters into the temporary palace built on a bridge over the river (In Japanese, a chopstick and a bridge are both *hashi*. Not identical, but suggesting a connection). **Homuchi-wake** is the inverted model of an emperor.

- **Tajima-mori**: Emperor **Suijin** dispatches **Tajima-mori** to obtain the immortal fruit of the otherworld. After a long search, **Tajima-mori** finds the fruit and brings it back, but it is too late; the emperor has already passed away. He continues to cry at the emperor's tomb for a long time and eventually dies. This fruit is said to be a mandarin orange.

➔ A story treating the failure of an attempt to obtain immortality.

- **Killing of his twin brother by Yamato-takeru**: Among the children of Emperor **Keikō** are the twins **Ōusu** and **Ousu**. Hearing about the beautiful sisters named **E-hime** and **Oto-hime**, the emperor asks **Ōusu** to bring the sisters to him. **Ōusu**, however, does not follow the order, takes the sisters for himself and presents the emperor with different sisters. The emperor does not accept these sisters. For this reason, perhaps, **Ōusu** seldom appears in front of his father. The emperor therefore asks **Ousu** to bring **Ōusu** to him. As **Ōusu** still does not appear, the emperor asks **Ousu** how his brother is. To this question, **Ousu** answers that he has taken his brother's arms and legs away and thrown them into a mat. Hearing this and frightened of **Ousu's** wild nature, the emperor sends him to southern Kyūshū to conquer the hostile local chief brothers **Kumaso-takeru**.

- **Killing of Kumaso-takeru brothers**: When he is ordered to conquer the Kumaso brothers, **Ousu** is about fifteen or sixteen, before initiation, and his hair-style was still like a girl's. So **Ousu** visits his aunt **Yamato-hime**, who is the priestess at Ise Shrine serving the sun goddess **Amaterasu**. Asking his aunt for her dress, he departs to Southern Kyūshū with a dagger in his

bosom. The Kumaso brothers are celebrating the completion of a new hall. **Ousu** in the guise of a girl joins other girls who enter the hall. Being charming, the brothers let **Ousu** sit next to them. When the brothers are not paying attention, **Ousu** stabs one of the brothers with his dagger. The other tries to run away, but **Ousu** chases him and stabs him from behind. The latter asks **Ousu** who he is before he dies. Hearing **Ousu**'s name and his intention, the dying Kumaso gives **Ousu** a new name, **Yamato-takeru**, 'Brave of Yamato'.

- Killing of Izumo-takeru: On his way home to Yamato, **Yamato-takeru** stops at Izumo and becomes the friend of a local chief **Izumo-takeru**. Pretending to be a friend, **Yamato-takeru** succeeds in exchanging swords. **Yamato-takeru**'s sword is, however, an imitation. **Yamato-takeru** kills **Izumo-takeru** using his own sword.

- Conquest of the Eastern Territory: Emperor **Keikō** immediately orders the returning **Yamato-takeru** to go to the eastern territory for another fight. On his way to the east, **Yamato-takeru** again stops at Ise Shrine and meets his aunt **Yamato-hime**. **Yamato-takeru** laments to his aunt that his father is wishing his death. **Yamato-hime** gives him the magical sword Kusanagi and a bag of flint stones. At Owari, he meets **Miyazu-hime**. After conquering the enemies in the eastern territory, he comes back to Owari. Although the princess is in her menstrual period, **Yamato-takeru** carelessly has sexual intercourse with her. He then goes to Mt. Ibuki in order to conquer the god of the mountain. Being overconfident of his power, he does not take the magical sword Kusanagi with him, saying the sword is unnecessary for the fight. At the mountain, he meets a huge white boar which is the incarnation of the mountain god, but he does not recognize the boar as a god and insults it. Due to the anger of the god, he becomes seriously ill. In illness, he heads for his home Yamato, but dies on the way, at Nobono. Hearing of his death, his wives and children come to Nobono and build a tomb. His soul however turns into a white bird and flies away. When it stops, people make another tomb. But again, the bird flies away, and this time disappears into the sky.

➔ A hero myth. At a same time, this is a story of a prince who failed to become the emperor. He breaks many taboos, which brings about his death.

- Jingū Kōgō and Emperor Ōjin: Emperor **Chūai** is with empress **Okinaga-tarashi-hime** (**Jingū Kōgō**) in the palace of Kashii in northern Kyūshū to conquer the hostile Kumaso tribe of southern Kyūshū. To divine the success of the campaign, the emperor plays the Japanese harp (*koto*). The music causes the empress to fall into a state of possession, and **Takeshiuchi-no-sukune**, the minister, interprets the divine message coming from the empress's mouth. The message says that there is a country full of treasures and the god will give it to the emperor. The emperor however does not believe the message saying all he can see in the west is the sea. Angered, the god punishes the emperor, who dies. To cleanse the land of pollutions caused by the emperor's death, offenses are sought out: flaying alive, flaying backward, breaking down paddy ridges, covering ditches, defecating in the hall, etc. and purifications are conducted.

When the purifications are over, **Takeshiuchi-no-sukune** asks the god once again who will be the next emperor. The god answers that a baby boy in the womb of the empress should rule the country. **Takeshiuchi-no-sukune** asks another question: Who are you? The answer is that she



is **Amaterasu**.

**Jingū Kōgō** ties two large stones around her waist to prevent the child being born while she is on a campaign. When the fleet starts sailing toward Silla, countless fishes carry the ships on their backs and the troop immediately drives into the middle of the territory. Frightened, Silla and Paekche surrender without a fighting and offer tribute. After returning from Silla, **Ōjin** is born. When the mother and the baby are heading for Yamato, two elder sons of emperor **Chūai**, **Kagosaka** and **Oshikuma**, rebel against them in Yamato. **Takeshiuchi-no-sukune** therefore contrives a trick. He decorates **Ōjin**'s boat as a funeral boat, declaring the new-born baby is dead and avoids the enemy's attack. **Kagosaka** and **Oshikuma** conduct an oath-sworn hunt to know whether their rebellion be successful. In that oath-sworn hunt, **Kagosaka** is killed by a boar. In spite of this ill omen, **Oshikuma** still fights, but his troop is defeated through deceit and he commits suicide.

➔ On **Jingū Kōgō**, see Akima 1993. Note that the offences listed are exactly same as those committed by **Susanō** in High Heaven. Parallelism is intentional, suggesting the two sections are intentionally structured in correspondence. If so, the birth of **Ōjin** from **Jingū Kōgō** is the transformation of **Amaterasu**'s appearance from the rock cave. Note that before giving birth to **Ōjin**, **Jingū Kōgō** wears two stones around her waist to delay the delivery. **Ōjin** is the emperor of the sun line (Yoshida 1970; Yoshida 1984).

### 〈Third Book〉

**Lack of Historicity:** The third volume of the *Kojiki* deals with the reigns of Emperor **Nintoku** to Empress **Suiko**. Stories about each emperor are limited to Emperor **Kensō**, and only records about their dates of birth and death, the locations of the palaces, the names of the empresses, the women they married, their children, and the locations of the tombs are given regarding the following ten emperors. No stories are told about them. Even those emperors for whom stories are given, emperors **Nintoku**, **Richū**, **Hanzei**, **Ingyō**, **Ankō**, **Yūryaku**, **Seinei**, and **Kensō**, compared to the stories about them in the *Nihon-shoki*, the descriptions are much shorter and simpler. In the content of the stories, we notice that there is no mention of political and diplomatic activities, and instead we read about the many exchanges of poems and the love affairs of princes and princesses. This is certainly unusual for an official national history. If this situation is the result of accident or neglect, which is very unlikely, we must assume this state was intentionally chosen. We must try to find the reason.

- Emperor Nintoku: Empress **Ishino-hime** is very jealous. However, the emperor continues to invite many beautiful women to the palace. Some of these women are killed by the empress. The story progresses like an opera or a musical, through exchanges of poems between the characters.

- Emperor Richū: Emperor **Richū** is sleeping after celebrating the harvest festival. His younger brother, **Suminoe-no-Nakatsu-miko**, plotting rebellion against the emperor, sets fire to the emperor's palace. A servant named **Achino-atai** saves the emperor from the fire. Another brother of the emperor, **Mizuhawake** comes to the emperor and says that he has no intention of rebellion.

The emperor tells him to go and kill **Suminoe-no-Nakatsu-miko**. **Mizuhawake** accepts the task and kills his rebellious brother.

- **Kinashi-no-Karu-no-miko**: The eldest son of Emperor **Ingyō** is **Kinashi-no-Karu-no-miko**. The emperor being dead, **Kinashi-no-Karu-no-miko** is about to become the next emperor. However, he commits adultery with his real sister (who is born of the same mother) **Karu-no-Ōiratsume**. She has another name, **So-Tōshi-no-Iratsume**, meaning ‘Light shines through her costume.’ When this incestuous affair becomes known, he loses the people’s support and instead his younger brother **Anano-no-miko** becomes the next emperor. **Kinashi-no-Karu-no-miko** is caught and is deported to Iyo. **Karu-no-Ōiratsume** chases after him and they together commit suicide. In this story, the lovers exchange many poems.

- **Emperor Yūryaku**: Emperor **Yūryaku** meets a girl named **Akaiko** in Miwa and promises to invite her to his palace. Forgetting the promise, eighty years have passed. **Akaiko**, after waiting such a long period, finally comes to meet the emperor. The emperor gives her a poem. **Akaiko** replies in a poem. Another time, the emperor meets a girl in Yoshino and makes her his wife. He pens a poem. When he sees a horsefly and a dragonfly, he writes a poem. When the emperor holds a sacred harvest festival under a holy tree in Hase, a court lady makes a mistake. Being angry, the emperor tries to kill her, but the empress consoles him and he decides not to kill her. In this scene, the emperor, the court lady, and the empress all exchange poems instead of conversation.

## V. Deep Structure

Claude Lévi-Strauss showed that myth is structured using such techniques as binary oppositions (vertical, horizontal, symmetrical, and asymmetrical), trinary opposition, exchange, inversion, intermediation, and code. By employing these techniques, a myth makes a story through which various possibilities are weighed. In non-literate societies, this process of myth-making is conducted unconsciously. In literate societies, or more technically advanced societies, however, such structuralization of stories is consciously handled. In Japanese mythology, the contrast between fire and water is repeated as an intermediary. The contrast is either reverted or submerged. If the *Kojiki* was edited with certain intentions, we can assume the entire work is structured intentionally to realize these intentions.

- **Pair Structure**: Importance of the motif of fire and the alternation of fire and water in a structured way in the *Kojiki* has been noted (Obayashi 1975: 24-27). François Macé sought the possibility that this structured alternation of fire and water could be found in the entire *Kojiki*. The following is a summary of Macé’s argument (Macé 1979).

- **Myth Sequence** : A Myth Sequence is produced by combining dyad structures. In a myth sequence, elements that are most often employed are fire and water. Usually fire comes first, followed by water. Fire is analogous to the sun and light. Fire is both destructive and productive. The birth of the fire god, **Kagutsuchi**, causes his mother, **Izanami**’s death and leads to the killing

of **Kagutsuchi** by his father **Izanaki**. This killing however causes the births of many useful gods. Furthermore, after returning from the land of the dead, **Izanaki** purifies himself in the heavenly river. There, he produces the most important triad of **Amaterasu** (the sun), **Tsukuyomi** (the moon), and **Susanō** (the ruler of the sea, but actually, the wild wind). The contrast of fire/death and water/birth is incorporated into the myth intentionally. We can say that the cycle of death and life is allegorized by the cycle of fire and water. It is probably a natural philosophy produced through the observation of natural phenomena.

The most important and basic myth sequence is a “Descending Myth Sequence” (expression in parenthesis is by F. Macé) describing the descent of **Amaterasu**’s grandson **Hono-ninigi** accompanied by heavenly gods to the land. **Hono-ninigi**’s great-grandson is the first emperor **Jinmu**. Certainly, this is the most important part of the entire *Kojiki*: the prototype of the entire structure.

**Hono-ninigi** marries **Konohana-sakuya-hime**, the daughter of the mountain god **Ō-yama-*tsumi***, and from their union are born three boys. One of them, **Ho-ori** or **Yamasachi** (Mountain Luck) goes down to the sea kingdom and marries **Toyotama-hime**, the daughter of the sea god **Watatsumi**. From their union is born a boy, **Ugaya-fuki-aezu**, who when grown marries his mother’s younger sister and his foster-mother **Tamayori-hime**. From their union is born the first emperor **Jinmu**.

**Hono-ninigi** whose origin is in heaven, descends to the earth as a ruler. He then marries the daughter of the god of the mountains; His grandson then marries the daughter of the god of the sea. In this way, his line is empowered to rule the entire world: heaven, land, mountain and the sea. Only then does the imperial line begin from the first emperor **Jinmu**.

Between two contrasting marriages, one in fire and the other by water, is inserted the story of visiting the underwater world. This may also be an intentional composition making use of a mirror structure (chiasmus).

The rhythm of fire and water can be seen in the remaining two myth sequences of the second book: The “**Sujin/ Suinin/ Keikō** Myth Sequence” and the “**Seimu/ Chūai/ Ōjin** Myth Sequence”. In the former, **Saho-hime** gives birth to **Homuchi-wake** in fire and **Homuchi-wake** goes to Izumo (a trip to the otherworld), marrying **Hinaga-hime** by water. However, the princess is, in reality, a serpent, and the marriage ends unsuccessfully. The elements and order are the same as the “Descending Myth Sequence”, but the result is reversed; one is successful but the other is not. This, of course, is an intentional arrangement.

In the latter “**Seimu/ Chūai/ Ōjin** Myth Sequence”, not the birth of fire, but the death of an emperor is mentioned. Then **Jingū Kōgō** with **Ōjin** in her belly goes to the otherworld (Silla). When returning, she gives birth to **Ōjin** at the seaside.

From these three myth sequences in the second book, Macé says that while the first and the second show a strong contrast, the third is in a weakened form. In Macé’s opinion, the tendency is that, while in one book the same three myth structures are repeated, the first and the second are strong and show a striking contrast, but the third is weak.

He then examines other books to see if the same tendency can be found. The ‘**Izanami** Myth Sequence’ of the first book begins with the birth of the fire god **Kagutsuchi** and ends with the birth of the three divine gods by **Izanaki**. This corresponds perfectly to the ‘Descent Myth Sequence’ and suggests the possibility that the structure was imitated. The following ‘**Susanō**

Myth Sequence' of the first book, and the placement of the elements of fire and water is somewhat different. The description of the exchange of personal items between **Amaterasu** and **Susanō** across the river and subsequent birth of children shows the connection of water and birth, the scene is not placed at the end as in other cases. Furthermore, instead of the birth in fire, **Amaterasu** disappears into a cave casting the world into total darkness and later reappears to bring back fire (light in this case) to the world. The order of fire and water is reversed here.

## VI. History

### 1. Ethnological Layers

The Japanese archipelago is situated at the eastern end of the Eurasian continent and is the terminal station for all the culture and products travelling across the continent. From ancient times, multiple cultural flows have arrived and formed overlapping layers here. These layers of mythological motifs have been acknowledged by researchers. Masao Oka who was influenced by the Vienna School of *Kulturkreislehre*, discerned five ethnological clusters (ethnic culture complexes) in Japanese mythology and culture (Oka 2012, originally 1938). Oka's theory has been explained by Ōbayashi in English (Obayashi 1977a; quoted from Obayashi 1991: 4-5).

1. Matrilineal culture of taro-growing and hunting people with secret societies such as those in recent Melanesia: These people were living in Japan by the middle of the Jōmon period, but it is uncertain what language they spoke; the linguistic characteristics of the people of this culture may be considered to have been responsible for the open-syllabic structure of Japanese.
2. Matrilineal culture of dry-rice growing and hunting people: These people entered Japan from southern China towards the end of the Jōmon period and probably spoke an Austroasiatic language.
3. Patrilineal culture of swidden-farming, hunting and stock-raising people: These people represent the northern element of Yayoi culture, and they were probably the first people to introduce an Altaic language into the Japanese Archipelago.
4. Masculine and age-graded culture of wet-rice growing and fishing people: These people, who entered Japan from southern China, represent the southern element of Yayoi culture, and theirs was probably an Austronesian ethnic culture.
5. Patriarchical culture of the rulers organized in patrilineagers: These people entered Japan via the Korean Peninsula at the start of the Kofun period and spoke an Altaic language.

This theoretical frame is generally accepted, but when it comes to allocating all myth motifs mentioned above into the five ethnic culture complexes, there are still many disagreements. In the following, therefore, only characteristic motifs of each complex are mentioned.

• **Hunter's Myth:** No genuine hunter's myth is found. The myth that a mountain goddess (*Yama-no-kami*) gives animals to a hunter is not in the *Kojiki* but is known in local legends of hunters (Naumann 1963; 1964).

• **Jōmon Myth:** Clay figurines are broken and buried in wide areas. This kind of ritual practice suggests that there was a myth of a murdered food goddess whose buried body parts turn into tubers. This type of myth is found among the tuber-cultivating people (Hainuwele type myth). There is a possibility that in the Jōmon period, besides hunting and gathering, the cultivation of tuber plants was practiced.

• **Yayoi Myth:** The killing of the food goddess **Ōgetsu-hime** by **Susanō** in the *Kojiki* and the killing of the food goddess **Ukemochi** by **Tsukuyomi** in the *Nihon-shoki* resulting in the appearances of various plants and animals such as rice, beans, wheat, silkworms, cattle, and horses. This myth of the killing of food goddesses belongs to the same type as the Hainuwele myth, but judging from the kind of plants and animals mentioned, the myth arrived in Japan after Japan passed through the stage of rice cultivation. Another type of story of the origin of grains is through theft. This type is not given in the *Kojiki*, but known in legends (Obayashi 1977a: 7-12).

• **Korean Peninsula:** No decisive archaeological discovery exists for the coming of nomad people into Japan through the Korean peninsula (Kidder 2007). Since the myth of the descent of a ruler from heaven, however, is very similar in both Japan and in Korea, the motif appears to have been imported and adopted as a part of imperial ideology (Matsumae 1983; Obayashi 1984).

• **Possible Elements of the Indo-European Mythology:** Atsuhiko Yoshida went to France as a classist, but came to know Georges Dumézil's theory of the tripartite ideology of the Indo-Europeans. Yoshida argued that the tripartite structure could be found in the combination of major gods in Japanese mythology: The idea probably was first transmitted from the Scythians of the Iranian group to the Altaic nomads; the idea was then transmitted to the Korean peninsula and finally into Japan (Yoshida 1961; 1962; 1963). The idea is further investigated by C. Scott Littleton, Taryō Ōbayashi, and Yoshida himself (Littleton 1995; Obayashi 1977b; Yoshida 1977). We can argue the problem on several levels: 1. Tripartite ways of thinking can be found in myths and rituals of the Indo-European people, especially among the Scythians; 2. Tripartite structure can be found among the gods in the *Kojiki*; 3. If these two points are proved, still we need concrete evidence for a historical connection between the Scythians and the Japanese.

We can be quite certain that the belief in the sword god of the Scythians expanded among the Celts in the west and among the Japanese in the east (Littleton 1995; Matsumura 2015). We must therefore investigate whether the tripartite classification in the *Kojiki* is same as the Indo-European tripartite ideology.

The tripartite structure in the *Kojiki* can be discussed on two levels: One is the theory that the three major gods, **Amaterasu**, **Susaō**, and **Ōkuni-nushi**, represent the three functions of sovereignty, physical power, and fecundity. Another is the more specific theory arguing that the pantheon in the *Kojiki* is more analogous to the tripartite model of the Indo-Iranian branch, which is the ancestor of the Scythians. In the latter case, the comparison should be between the Japanese pantheon and the Vedic pantheon, since the Iranian one was lost by the monotheistic Zoroastrianism. In the Vedic pantheon, reconstructed by Georges Dumézil (Dumézil 1958), the

first function is represented by the magical Varuna and legal Mitra, the second function by the savage Vayu and chivalrous Indra, the third function by the twin Aśvins. In addition, the first function has two supportive gods, Aryaman and Bhaga. In the *Kojiki* mythology, the two aspects of the first function are represented by **Amaterasu** and **Ameno-minaka-nushi**, and the supportive gods are **Takami-musuhi** and **Kami-musuhi**. Then the second function is represented by wild **Susanō** and the sword god **Take-mikazuchi**, and the third function by **Ōkuni-nushi** and **Sukuna-bikona**, the two gods who build the country.

The argument of the tripartite ideology Japanese mythology naturally met criticism, since there was no definite proof. Nomadic people usually do not keep records and we cannot tell whether there was an exchange of ideas between the Scythians and Japanese or not. Unless a new document appears, this attractive theory must remain little more than an attractive hypothesis.

## 2. Historical Background

The compilation of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon-shoki* was ordered by the imperial family with the intention of consolidating the legitimacy of the family's rulership. Compilation started around the end of the seventh century and was completed in 712 and 720 respectively. Around that time, Japan was on the way to becoming a state with a legal system introduced from China. The following chronological table shows major political incidents of the period.

- 645 : Taika Reform
- 672 : Jinshin Riot, Emperor Temmu usurps the throne. The capital moved to Asuka-kiyomihara.
- 684 : Eight Ranks, distinguished by color, were issued
- 701 : Taihō Code promulgated
- 708 : First coin, Wadō Kaichin, issued
- 710 : Establishment of the first permanent capital at Nara
- 712 : The *Kojiki*, compiled by Ōno Yasumaro, completed
- 713 : Compilation of the *Fudoki* (local gazette) ordered
- 718 : Laws of Yōryō Era issued under the leadership of Fujiwara Fuhito
- 720 : The *Nihon-shoki*, under the charge of Toneri Shinnō, completed
- 752 : Dedication of the Great Buddha at the Tōdaiji Temple in Nara
- 759~c.780 : The first collection of poems, the *Manyō-shū*, completed

Strengthening and legitimization of the imperial family's rulership was the foremost purpose of the compilation of these two books. The *Nihon-shoki* is written in Chinese as an official chronicle. In order to affirm objectivity, variant myths are included. In contrast, the *Kojiki* contains no variant myths.

Some people explain this difference as follows: The earlier *Kojiki* does not include variant myths, because it had to be completed in hurry. The fortieth Emperor Tenmu (673-86) was leading the project of editing various traditions, but the project was left incomplete due to his illness and death. The forty-third Emperor Genmei (707-15) then thought the project should be finished and assigned the task to Ōno Yasumaro. Yasumaro produced the *Kojiki*, but due to a lack of time, the

lasy part of the third book remained incomplete. Objections then arose from powerful chiefs whose family traditions were not included. In consequence, the *Nihon-shoki*, which was issued after the *Kojiki*, included variants to appease these complaints.

There is yet another argument: The *Kojiki*, being a book mainly of myths, excludes variants because myths must be true, but variants are not suitable for truth. The *Nihon-shoki*, being essentially a history book, had to list variants. The characteristics of the *Kojiki* listed below indicate strongly that the *Kojiki* rejected variants since they were obstacles for building a well-formed structure. The following are the notable characteristics of the *Kojiki* in contrast to the *Nihon-shoki*.

1. No mention of Buddhism. The *Kojiki* was compiled in a period when Buddhism was very powerful. The *Kojiki* was dedicated to Empress Genmei, who was an ardent believer in Buddhism.
2. Chinese language was avoided as much as possible. Since Chinese characters were the only means for writing, the *Kojiki* is written in Chinese characters. Despite this, the editor, Ōno Yasumaro, attempted to transcribe Japanese words and expressions. This may be an expression of resistance toward Chinese culture, which was invading the traditional, indigenous, culture. The situation might be similar to the case of the compilation of *Edda* in Iceland while Christianization was in progress.

This period was also a transitional stage from a non-literate to a literate society. Literacy meant employing foreign Chinese characters. In non-literate society, mythological tradition had been transmitted orally and in rhythmic poem form. To preserve the essential oral character of myths, and to preserve the rhythm in which myths are kept, the compiler must have had great difficulty using foreign Chinese characters. Unrefined transcription of Japanese words and expressions in the *Kojiki* using Chinese characters is the result of an effort with limited techniques of expression. It may be a product of bricolage.

No refined technique of hexameter, as in Homer, or alliteration, as in Germanic poetry, can be found. The only way the myths could be written down, according to Macé (Macé 2013: 129-132), was to use the combination of the traditional poetic rhythm of sound group sets of odd numbers of syllables: five, seven, five, seven, and a final seven. These five groups can be arranged into two sets of five and seven, and a final single group of seven syllables. The first and second sets are the same, with twelve syllables, and the third is shorter with seven syllables.

As we have seen, the *Kojiki* intentionally allots 1) mythological motifs of the cyclical repetition of fire (light) and water and 2) the motif of visiting the otherworld. These motifs are set in corresponding sections of the three books as ‘myth sequences.’ These myth sequences are integrated into larger units of ‘myth cycles’ in three books. Let’s assume that the structure of the *Kojiki* was constructed in imitation of the rhythm of waka poems where the pattern of two longer (stronger) syllable groups is followed by a short (weaker) syllable group. In that case, the third book was intentionally made weaker compared to the earlier two books, although the structure is identical to them. The third book, in this theory, should be a weaker refrain of the earlier stronger forms.

If the real task of the *Kojiki* is the declaration of the legitimacy of the rulership of the

imperial family, the incomplete state of the third book (too short, neglect of historical incidents, and abnormal numbers of poems) does not support such an assertion. If we accept the rhythm theory as a means of composing a structured text, we can accept the abnormality of the third book. This abnormality could be the result of the compositional restriction and the intentional choice made by the compiler Ōno Yasumaro.

In the *Kojiki*, intentional correspondences are set up between the first book of mythology and the second book of legends. These must be connected to the third book of history. Since the central figures are humans, not gods or heroes, the historical descriptions of emperors do not fit well into the myth-logic template. How is it possible to describe a historical period in mythological narration? The solution may have been the abundant poems in the third book. Poems have an oral rhythm and are closer to mythological narration. This is, perhaps, how it was possible to include a historical book in the mythological text of the *Kojiki*.

## VII. History of Research

Mythological study in Japan began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when Japan abandoned the policy of a closed nation and opened its ports to other countries. As part of the modernization, or westernization, mythological studies were attempted by Chogyū Takayama (1871-1902), Toshio Takagi (1876-1922), and Nobuhiro Matsumoto (1897-1981). However, during the period between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second World War, under the militaristic government, Japanese mythology was employed as tool to indoctrinate people in the divination of the emperor. Scientific research into Japanese mythology was not permitted during that period. After the collapse of the militaristic government, in the liberated post-war atmosphere, Takeo Matsumura (1883-1969), Masao Oka (1898-1982), Akihide Mishina (1902-1971), Takeshi Matsumae (1922-2002), Taryō Ōbayashi (1929-2001), and Atsuhiko Yoshida (1934-) continued to publish their work.

## VIII. Current State of Research on Various Topics

New research is particularly active in two fields in recent years: One is archaeology, and the other is the evaluation of the contribution to Japanese mythology by immigrant people. The former, focused on the degree of Jōmon elements in Japanese mythology (Naumann 1988; Naumann 2000). In the latter, the importance of immigrant peoples in the formation of Japanese mythology tends to be emphasized (Kidder 2007, Como 2009).

- **Heroic God and Hero:** As to heroes in Japanese mythology, see Littleton 1981 and Littleton 1995. As to the divination of the sword, see Matsumura 2015.

- **Amaterasu, the Sun goddess:** Takeo Matsumura and Seiji Okada regard **Amaterasu** a development from a priestess serving a male sun god. Atsuhiko Yoshida sees in **Amaterasu** influence from Indo-European trifunctional goddess of water such as the Iranian Anāhitā, Indian Sarasvatī. Kazuo Matsumura sees the most important character of this goddess as virgin-mother, with the same nature as the Greek Athena and the Christian Virgin Mary (Matsumura 1998). On



**Ameno-uzume**, Nobuhiro Matsumoto sees a relationship with the ritual of laughter and Michael Witzel sees her as a dawn goddess (Witzel 2005a).

- **Rituals:** Takeshi Matsumae (1980) takes the stance of the myth-and-ritual school. He considers myths are born from the enthronement ritual (*Daijō-sai*) and the Yaso-shima festival.

- **Record of A Powerful Tribe:** The Wani clan provided many princess as empresses and concubines and this is one of the reasons why three generations of the imperial line, **Yamasachi**, **Ugaya-fukiaezu**, and the first emperor **Jinmu**, marry *wani* (Como 2009: 172-180).

- **The Way of the Sun:** Mt. Miwa and Mt. Futagami are on the latitude of 34° 32' north. Many important religious sites are located on this east-west line: Hashi-baka tomb (said to be the tomb of Queen **Himiko**) is between the two mountains; to the east of Mt. Miwa are Hase-dera temple, Murō-ji temple, Saigū of the Ise Shrine, and Kami-jima (lit. 'island of gods') in the Ise Gulf; to the west of the Mt. Futagami are Hioki (lit. 'the sun is located'), the Ōtori Shrine of Sakai, the Isonokami Shrine of Awaji Island (Palmer 1991). This set of locations along the movement of the sun is intentional. The importance of Mt. Miwa and the Sun goddess **Amaterasu** is supported by this alignment.

- **Archaeology:** Atsuhiko Yoshida attempts to explain several motifs from the point of view of the archaeology of the Jōmon period (Yoshida 1966). According to Yoshida, the myth of the killing of the food goddess **Ōgetsu-hime** is identical to a myth recorded by Adolf E. Jensen on the island of Ceram in Indonesia. This myth is called the Hainuwele myth after the name of a girl who was born from a coconut tree, killed, cut into pieces and buried, and then turned into yams and taros (Jensen 1966). Yoshida believes that Japanese mythology shares the technique of the cultivation of tuber and accompanying myth of the killing of the food goddess with the Melanesians. In the middle Jōmon period (5,000 to 4,000 BPE) sites in the central area of the main island of Honshū (presently Yamanashi and Nagano Prefectures), many female figurines and pottery artifacts in the form of a female have been discovered. Female figurines are all intentionally broken into pieces and buried over extensive areas in a scattered condition (Maringer 1974; Maringer 1980; Naumann 1983; Naumann 1988; Naumann 2000). Pottery artifacts are formed in the shape of a female body and with a female face. Since some of these potteries show a trace of charcoal, Yoshida suspects that Jōmon people might have used these as lamps, and relates the use of the Jōmon pottery with the myth of the death of the goddess **Izanami** caused by the birth of the fire god **Kagutsuchi**.

According to Yoshida, a female-shaped Jōmon vase used as a lamp is the visual form of the birth scene of **Kagutsuchi** from **Izanami** in Japanese mythology. He also argues that the broken pieces of figurines buried over extensive areas testifies to the early tuber cultivation in the middle Jōmon period. Since direct contact between Japan and Melanesia is hardly likely, we must assume that the myth and ritual of the killed goddess was transmitted either from southeast Asia or from southern China to both Japan and Melanesia.

We must remember, however, that the ritual burial of the broken pieces of figurines is conspicuous in the central part of the main island of Honshū in the middle Jōmon period; it is not ubiquitous at all Jōmon sites. It may be safer to say that not all Jōmon figurines are killed

goddess, but that only very limited numbers were so. Yoshida's interpretation has not met with unanimous approval (Yamagata 1992: 134). Further discussion of this issue of the 'goddess of Jōmon period' seems necessary.

- **Contributions of Immigrants:** Immigrant groups contributed greatly to the establishment of ancient Japanese culture. Among them the Hata kinship group brought into Japan sericulture, new weaving technologies, the story of Weaver Maiden and Cowherd, and the Star Festival (thus astral myth). It has been customary to explain the preponderance of goddesses in Japanese mythology from the continuous influence of the Jōmon goddess worship, such as clay figurines. Part of the influence could be attributed to the Chinese mythological elements brought in by the Hata kinship group.

**Amaterasu** hid herself into the grotto because of **Susanō**'s wild action of throwing down a dead horse's corpse or skin from a hole of the roof of the weaving hall, which caused the death of a weaving maiden. Two elements of the story, sacrifice of a horse and weaving, are both imported elements. In other words, this is an encounter and separation of a male element (cattle-breeding) and a female element (weaving), very similar to the roles of the Cowherd and Weaving Maiden in the Star Festival in Chinese popular culture. This festival is recorded by the literatus Tu Kung-shan in the *Jingchu Suishiji* (*Ching ch'u sui shih chi*), which records annual festivals in southern China in the sixth century. **Amaterasu** and **Susanō** represent female and male elements and they produce new gods by exchanging their belongings. If we read behind this myth the Chinese idea of Ying and Yang, the importance of the imported Chinese technologies and ideas through immigrant groups in the formation of Japanese mythology, especially the supremacy of **Amaterasu** who is female, a heavenly body (sun), the provider of seeds of various crops, and the master of sericulture and weaving becomes clear (Como 2009. Cf. Matsumura 2011).

- **Constellation:** Many people have sought traces of constellations in Japanese mythology. **Saruta-hiko**, with red shining eyes sinks into the sea at Ise as his hand is bitten by a giant clam. Some argued that this god symbolized the Scorpion. Since we have the Sun goddess **Amaterasu** and the moon god **Tsukuyomi** in Japanese mythology, it is quite natural to think there would be more celestial gods. If we add here **Susanō** as a god of the wind, **Izanaki**, the father-mother of these three divine children, would be the Sky and the river where he purifies himself would be the Milky Way.

Some argues that the three pieces of **Susanō**'s long sword, broken by **Amaterasu** to produce three goddesses represent the three stars of the Orion and **Amaterasu**'s jewels are the Pleiades. The dead horse which **Susanō** throws into the weaving hall is the Hyades. Further, the tub in the shape of a ship on which **Ameno-uzume** dances is the Great Bear. In this argument, **Susanō**'s enemy, eight-headed **Yamata-no-Orochi**, should also be a constellation: He is the Scorpion with the bright red star Antares.

This attempt at the identification of gods and constellations lacks support from the text of the *Kojiki* and remains a hypothesis.

In the *Nihon-shoki*, before **Hono-ninigi**'s descent, **Take-mikazuchi** and **Futsunushi** pacify the hostile gods of the land of reed plains. On that occasion, only **Kakaseo** 'Shining Male,' a star god, fails to obey (II.9). This god is also called **Amatsu-mika-hoshi** 'Heavenly Shining Star'

(ibid.). This god might be Venus. **Saruta-hiko** and the Heavenly grotto might be the Pleiades.

**Saruta-hiko** is described in the *Kojiki* as shining at the crossroads of heaven, illuminating heaven above and the land of reed plains below. In the *Nihon-shoki*, the description is given in greater detail: His nose is seven hands in length, his height seven fathoms. A light is shining from his mouth and his eyes are red-shining and like huge mirrors (II. 17). Judging from the location and descriptions of outlook, **Saruta-hiko** is also a heavenly body. Red eyes may suggest Aldebaran ( $\alpha$  Tauri). The star is close to the Pleiades, which could be the cross-roads of heaven (*ama-no-yachi-mata*).

**Ameno-uzume** confronts **Saruta-hiko** and they later marry. The *Nihon-shoki* says that when confronting **Saruta-hiko**, **Ameno-uzume** laughs mockingly, and exhibits her breasts and genitals (II. 17). Since Orion faces Taurus = **Saruta-hiko**, **Ameno-uzume** may be the divinized Orion.

This interpretation of Japanese mythology from the location of stars and constellations is proposed by Takashi Katsumata (cf. Goto in press).

This astronomical interpretation may only be applicable in the section of the ‘Descent of the Heavenly Grandson’ of the *Nihon-shoki* (The *Kojiki* is not much interested in the description of these two deities). Still, this hypothesis suggests that this particular section must have been adopted as a unit. We can further speculate from where this astronomical myth came.

## IX. Trends in Recent Scholarship

From the examples considered, we can discern three notable trends in recent scholarship on Japanese mythological studies: 1) How each myth motif is incorporated into a structure; 2) Weakening of the tendency to explain myths from the traditions of the Jōmon period; 3) A preponderance of insisting on more influence from Chinese thought.

Ōbayashi, Macé, and Yoshida are trying to find myth structure in Japanese mythology by using the techniques of structural analysis. We are still far from understanding when and by whom and with what various materials a structured Japanese mythology was produced.

## Appendices: Buddhist Myth, Medieval Myth, Ainu Myth, Myths of the Southwest Islands, Myth Education

### ○ Myths of the Japanese Archipelago

There are two ways to understand Japanese mythology: One is as the mythology of a traditional cultural zone; and the other is as the mythology of the Japanese archipelago. The *Kojiki* represents the mythology of the traditional cultural zone. This zone has history, and after the *Kojiki*, two new types of myths were born: One refers to Buddhist myth born in Japan, and the other is an amalgamation of Shinto myths and Buddhist myths known as Medieval myths.

Myths of the Japanese Archipelago mean several different types of myths as several different peoples and their cultures have been coexisting in the Japanese archipelago. When the *Kojiki* was compiled, the people who compiled the book did not know about the Ainu in Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyū people of the Southwest Islands. If Japanese mythology is the mythology of the Japanese archipelago, Ainu myths and Ryūkyū myths should also be included.

### ○ Buddhist Myths

When Buddhism was introduced into Japan, emperors and powerful clan leaders soon became believers, temples were built, and people became monks and nuns. In 787, a monk of Yakushi Temple in Nara compiled a book titled the *Nihon-ryōiki* (Miraculous Buddhistic Stories of Japan). In this book, many stories showing the power of buddhas are told (Nakamura 1973).

### ○ Medieval Myths

The aristocracy of the Heian period ended at the end of the twelfth century and a new age of rule by warriors (*bushi* or *buke*), called the Kamakura period, started. Losing their aristocratic support, both Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples felt the need for new supporters: common people and the warriors. A new doctrine of salvation called *Honchi-suijaku*, combining Shintoism and Buddhism, was created. In this doctrine, gods who are closer to the people are explained as earthly avatar of buddhas. Shinto and Buddhism amalgamated, and Shinto myths and Buddhist myth are reinterpreted in this avatar doctrine as new medieval myths.

### ○ Oral Tradition

Myths of the Ainu in the north and the Ryūkyū (or Okinawa) people in the south differ markedly from the *Kojiki* myth since they were transmitted orally. Their myths thus show common traits of myths of non-literate people. Non-literate society does not need letters because there is no need to manage accumulated wealth through the use of written documents. Their society stayed small and there was no class-differentiation and no king (hence no kingship myth). In the case of the Ainu, their economic basis was hunting and gathering. In such a society, the objects of hunting (beasts, birds, and aquatic animals) are regarded as equal to humans, and in stories they often act and talk like human.

### ○ Ainu Myths

The Ainu people have distinct way of life, and for a long time lived separately from the Japanese as they were living in the north island of Hokkaidō. They lived by hunting and gathering and were without letters and writing. It is hard to tell exactly when the Japanese came to Hokkaidō by crossing the Tsugaru Channel, but certainly in the Edo period there were many Japanese merchants in Hokkaidō. In the Meiji era, the government sent Japanese farmers to Hokkaidō to open farms and this policy resulted in the suppression of the Ainu. Recording of the Ainu language and their oral tradition began during this period.

Among this oral tradition are myths called *yukar* (epics), which are regarded as sacred. Since the distinction between *yukar* and folktales is meager, the following mythological motifs are listed regardless of whether they come from *yukar* or folktales.

In *yukar*, gods usually talk in the first person. This may show a trace of a possessed type of shamanism, which we still see in the Southwest Islands (or the Ryūkyūs). Motifs that are not seen in the *Kojiki*, but can be noted in the oral tradition of the Southwest Islands are listed below: Creation of mankind from mud; marriage between human and dog (dog husband). The myth of the origin of grains through theft is also known in the Southwest Islands and in the legends and folktales of Japan, but does not appear in the *Kojiki*. Also known are the stories of the fight between the sun god and a great demon, and the salvation of the sun god from the demon by a

crow or heroic ancestor *Aynurakkur*. Ainu myths are mentioned in Batchelor 1894, Batchelor 1901, Chamberlain 1888, Howell 1951, and Howell 1952.

#### ○ Myths of the Southwest Islands

In the Southwest Islands (or the Ryūkyūs), a Ryūkyū dynasty existed in Okinawa Island. The dynasty maintained diplomatic exchanges with Formosa, China, and Japan. The dynasty kept historical records such as the *Omorosōshi* (1531-1623), the *Ryūkyū Shintōki* (1605), the *Chūzan Sekan* (1650), the *Ryūkyū-koku Yuraiki* (1713), and the *Kyūyō* (1743-45). Though there are many records, most of them show influences from Japanese mythology and show no clear trace of a creation myth. On the contrary, oral tradition shows many original motifs. Many islands hold to the tradition that originally the island was floating but later fixed. The concept of an ideal otherworld over (or in) the sea, called Nirai or Niraikanai, is also popular. This concept is similar to *tokoyo* (the eternal world) in Japanese mythology.

- Flood Myth in which only a brother-sister pair survives and becomes the ancestor of the Ryūkyū people.
- Myth of the origin of grains by theft: This type of the origin of grain is recorded only among the Ainu and in the Ryūkyūs (Mabuchi 1964).
- Myth of the origin of earthquakes: In Ishigaki Island it is told that a huge crab and a huge eel live at the bottom of the earth (*nirai*). The mischievous crab attacks the eel by grabbing the eel's tail with his claws. The eel writhes around due to the pain and that causes earthquakes. Similar myths of the cause of earthquakes are found in Southeast Asia.
- The Dog Husband or Dog Ancestor myth is known among the Ainu and in the Ryūkyūs.

#### ○ Myth Education

In the age of the totalistic regime, myths were taught at schools as a tool for the indoctrination of emperor worship. In that program children were taught that the emperor is a living god since his ancestor was the Sun goddess **Amaterasu**. In Japanese schools after World War II, under the guidance of the occupation authorities, no Japanese myths were taught in schools. This trend has changed in recent years and one or two myth tales are taught in elementary school as examples of traditional stories. The value of Japanese mythology as a cultural heritage cannot be denied: Not teaching Japanese mythology at school is a cultural loss. We must continue to discuss how to teach Japanese mythology in the future (Hirafuji 2010).

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In this paper, I have intentionally avoided reference to books and papers written in Japanese. This choice naturally causes great deficiency because the most advanced studies are often written in Japanese. Most readers of this paper, however, will not read Japanese and these references to books and papers written in Japanese will be of little use to them, only showing the pedantic satisfaction of the author.