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Notes on Usage

General Conventions

- From 2015 to 2021, the printed installments of the Kokugakuin *Kojiki* project appeared in the dedicated publication *Kojiki gaku* (volumes 1–7). Since 2022 they have been published in *Kokugakuin Daigaku Kenkyū Kaihatsu Suishin Kikō kiyō* 國學院大學研究開発推進機構紀要 (abbreviated in citations as KKSJK).
- The English translations included in the project generally follow the stylistic conventions and citation format detailed in the *Monumenta Nipponica* style sheet (http://dept.sophia.ac.jp/monumenta/pdf/MN-Style-Sheet_201809.pdf).
- In the interest of readability, phonetic transcriptions of names, terms, and phrases from the *Kojiki* and other Nara-period texts are rendered in a modified Hepburn system of romanization and according to the modern dictionary pronunciation. No attempt is made to indicate archaic Japanese phonetic distinctions such as the *kō* 甲/ *otsu* 乙 vowels. Likewise, archaic usages that later evolved into extended vowel sounds, such as in the honorific prefix “Oho,” are indicated by a macron, “Ō.”
- Phonetic transliterations from archaic texts follow the rendering given in the *yomikudashi* 読下し version of the edition cited. The translation generally omits the phonetic glosses given in the original text.
- The *pinyin* system is used to transliterate Chinese terms.
- In principle characters are given for Japanese and Chinese names and terms at the first instance where they occur in each issue of *Kojiki gaku* / KKSJK. They are only repeated in that issue when they are the subject of discussion or if necessary for clarity.
- Citations to the *Kojiki* and other archaic texts indicate the page numbers of both

the original text (generally speaking, the *kanbun* 漢文 text) as reprinted in the modern edition cited and the *yomikudashi* version adopted by that edition.

- Cross-references to other passages in the *Kojiki* cite the *Kojiki gaku* / KKSJKK version of the text when possible. In cases of passages from sections not yet covered by *Kojiki gaku* / KKSJKK, citations are to the SNKBZ version edited by Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu.
- Information in the notes added by the translator is indicated by the acronym TN.
- Bibliographic details of the different commentaries and other works cited are given in the list of references included in each issue. Footnotes use a shortened citation format. Only the surname is used for citations to modern (Meiji and later) authors; citations to premodern works give the author's full name.

Studies on the *Kojiki*

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Chapter 19: The Heavenly Rock Cave (III)

Finding this strange, Amaterasu ōmikami thereupon opened the door of the Heavenly Rock Cave a crack. From within she declared (1): “Since I am in hiding (2), the Heavenly Plain (Amanohara 天原; 3) should surely be dark and Ashihara no nakatsukuni completely dark as well. How is it that Amenouzume 天宇受売 is doing entertaining things (4) and all the myriad deities are laughing?” Amenouzume then said (1), “A deity even more noble than you is [here]; that is why we are joyful and laughing and doing entertaining things.” As she said this, Amenokoya no mikoto 天兒屋命 and Futodama no mikoto 布刀玉命 brought the mirror forward and showed it to Amaterasu. Wondering all the more, Amaterasu ventured a step out of the door and looked into [the mirror]. At that moment, Tajikarao no kami 手力男神, who had been standing hidden [at the side of the door], took her hand and pulled her out [from the cave]. Immediately, Futodama no mikoto stretched a boundary rope (5) behind Amaterasu and said, “Henceforth, you shall never again go back inside!” When Amaterasu came out [from the cave], light shone as a matter of course throughout Takamanohara and Ashihara no nakatsukuni.

Text Notes

1. “From within [Amaterasu] declared ...” (*uchi yori norashishiku* 内告);
“[Amenouzume] said ...” (*mōshishiku* 自言)

Most commentators today read the graph 内 in 内告 as *uchi yori* and take it

to mean “from within [the Heavenly Rock Cave].” The combination of graphs is unusual, and various of the early manuscripts propose alternatives, with some incorporating in the syntactic unit the following graph 因 (here read *yorite* and taken as part of Amaterasu’s statement with the meaning “since”). The Urabe Kanenaga-bon 卜部兼永本 manuscript (1522) and the lineage of manuscripts descending from it insert the particle graph 者 between 内告 and 因 and read the three graphs 内告者 as *hisoka ni tsugetamaeba* ヒソカニツケ玉へハ (“[she] said quietly to herself”). As Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 points out, if the compilers intended the phrase to be read as *uchi yori*, the natural graph sequence would be 自内.⁽¹⁾ It is perhaps for this reason that the Urabe-lineage manuscripts adopt the reading that they do. Norinaga, for his part, holds that the original phrasing must have incorporated the graph 自 in some manner. Retaining the particle 者, he reads the combination 内告者 as *uchi yori noritamaeru wa* (“what she declared from within was . . .”).

One problem with adopting the Urabe-lineage manuscripts’ reading *hisoka ni* (“quietly to herself”) is that Amaterasu’s statement becomes a soliloquy, which makes Amenouzume’s replying to it a little unnatural. Some hold that the statements of the two deities should not be taken as a dialogue on the grounds that Amenouzume’s utterance is introduced by a simple *mōshishiku* 白言 (“[she] said”), whereas if it were intended as an answer to Amaterasu the more usual phrasing would be “said in response” (*kotaete mōshishiku* 答白 or *kotaete mōshite iishiku* 答白言). The fact that the text does not use the term “to ask” (問) in connection with Amaterasu’s utterance also suggests the possibility that the two statements do not constitute a dialogue. On the other hand, were this the case, it would imply that Amenouzume spoke having “felt” or “perceived” Amaterasu’s words. Ultimately the precise nature of the relationship between the two utterances remains unclear.

Further comment: Differences in narrative description in the *Kojiki*

and *Nihon shoki*. So long as one does not get caught up in details, it is relatively easy to visualize the scenes depicted in the *Kojiki*. But attention to details of the narrative uncovers numerous places where something is puzzling or it is difficult to imagine exactly what is happening. This is true of what follows after Amaterasu opens the door of the Heavenly Rock Cave “a crack.” Take her declaration “How is it that Amenouzume is doing entertaining things and all the myriad deities are laughing?” Many points remain to be clarified regarding the reading and meaning of the term rendered here as “doing entertaining things” (*asobi o shi* 楽), but assuming that it is intended to encompass the totality of Amenouzume’s actions, the declaration suggests that Amaterasu was able to grasp accurately the situation outside even while within the cave.

The *Nihon shoki* would seem to present relatively fewer narrative incongruities of this sort. In the case of the passage at hand, the main text of the seventh section of the Age of Deities chapter reads as follows:

Amenouzume no mikoto 天鈿女命, the ancestor of the Sarume no kimi 猿女君 lineage, took in her hand a rush-wrapped halberd, stood before the door of the Heavenly Rock Cave, and adroitly put on a droll performance (*takumi ni wazaoki o nasu* 巧作俳優). She adorned her hair with *sakaki* leaves from Amenokaguyama, tied back her sleeves with sashes of clubmoss vine, lit torches, set a tub upside down, and went into a divine trance. Hearing this, Amaterasu said, “I am presently secluded within the cave, and one would think that eternal night surely extends throughout Toyoashihara no nakatsukuni. How is it that Amenouzume is laughing joyfully (*eraku* 嬉楽) in this way?” She thereupon opened the boulder door a crack with her hand to see [what was happening]. At that moment, Tajikarao took hold of Amaterasu’s hand and pulled her out.⁽²⁾

Here Amenouzume stands before the door to the cave → engages in the droll performance → goes into a trance. Amaterasu “hears” (*kikoshimeshite* 聞之) what is happening and asks why Amenouzume is “laughing joyfully.” Only then does she open the door to the cave a crack and look out. According to the editors of the SNKBZ version of *Nihon shoki*, the graph 嘯 used in the passage is a variant of the graph 囂, meaning “to laugh loudly.” In other words, Amaterasu hears the laughter, thinks this strange, and opens the cave door.

The second variant states merely that after the various offerings had been assembled, “At that moment, Amenokoya no mikoto, the ancestor of the Nakatomi, took them and offered a divine prayer. Thereupon the sun deity opened the boulder door and came out.”⁽³⁾ The third variant, however, having described Amenokoya and Futodama assembling the offertory items and intoning “solemnly a gracious litany,” continues:

At this time the sun deity heard this and said, “People recently have spoken many [liturgies], but none until now has been so beautiful as this.” She thereupon opened the boulder door a crack to see [what was happening]. At this time Tajikarao was waiting at the side of the boulder door and immediately pulled it open, whereupon the radiance of the sun deity filled the land.⁽⁴⁾

Here, Amaterasu “hears” the liturgy intoned by Amenokoya and Futodama and is drawn by its beauty to open the door. “Hearing” is the decisive factor leading to her emergence from the cave.

As with this passage, there are a considerable number of instances in the *Kojiki* where reliance on the written text alone does not yield an internally coherent picture. By contrast, one can see in the *Nihon shoki* an effort to secure overall coherence. Does this reflect a difference in the character of the two works or is it a result of stylistic differences arising from the effort to produce a “Japanese”

written text as opposed to one written in Chinese? If the latter, does not the divergence derive ultimately from the intellectual and cultural foundations underlying the two linguistic forms?

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2. “Since I am in hiding” (*a ga komori imasu ni yorite* 因吾隱坐而)

The presence of the honorific verbal form *imasu* 坐 here results in what is known as a “self-honorific expression,” wherein entities use honorific language in reference to themselves. Such expressions can be found both in songs (*kayō* 歌謡) and speech in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, in *Man'yōshū* poems, and in literary works from the Heian period onward. Yamaguchi Yoshinori 山口佳紀, who has analyzed the character of such expressions as found in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* songs, divides them into two categories: “true self-honorific expressions” and “pseudo-self-honorific expressions.” The latter occur, he argues, in cases of a shift in grammatical person or where the presence of an intermediate figure who conveys the statement might be assumed. He further argues that the “true self-honorific expressions” found in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* songs all involve nonrelational honorifics such as *mi* 御, *imasu/masu* 坐, *misu* 見す, or *kesu* 着す, which do not presuppose an interaction between different parties. By contrast, examples of true self-honorific expressions dating from Heian and later sources are relational honorifics such as *tamau* 給ふ or *mairu* 参る that do imply interaction.⁽⁵⁾

Outside the context of songs, some instances of self-referential use of the nonrelational honorific *mi* can be found also in passages of speech in the *Kojiki* where deities express their feelings. One example is Susanoo’s declaration when he reaches the region of Suga 須賀 in Izumo that “Now that I have come here, my heart is at ease” (*a ga mikokoro sugasugashi*” 我御心須々賀々斯).⁽⁶⁾ Another is Ōmononushi’s statement when he appears to Emperor Sujin 崇神 in

a dream: “This [calamity] is [by] my intent” (*kore wa waga mikokoro zo* 是者我之御心).⁽⁷⁾ There are not many such cases in the *Kojiki*, but the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* includes a number of soliloquy-like statements by deities incorporating the honorific *mi*. In one, found in the account of the village of Yasuki 安来 in Ou 意宇 district, Susanoo is said to have declared: “My heart is now at peace” (*a ga mikokoro wa yasukeku narinu* 吾御心者、安平成). The account of Tada 多太 village, Aika 秋鹿 district, describes a son of Susanoo as declaring: “My heart is now bright and true” (*a ga mikokoro akaku tadashiku narinu* 吾御心、照明正真成).⁽⁸⁾

The *Izumo no kuni fudoki* contains several instances of self-referential use of the honorific *masu/imasu*. One is the declaration “This is the shrine where I wish to dwell” (*a ga shizumarimasamu to omou yashiro* 吾静将坐志社), uttered by Amatsuko no mikoto 天津子命, the ancestral deity of the Iki 伊支 lineage, in the account of Yashiro 屋代 village, Ou district. Another is the statement “This is the entrance to the mountain over which I rule” (*a ga shikiimasu yamaguchi no tokoro nari* 吾敷坐山口处在), uttered by Susanoo’s child Tsurugihiko no mikoto 都留支日子命 in the account of Yamaguchi 山口 village, Shimane 嶋根 district.⁽⁹⁾

Apart from the instance at hand of Amaterasu’s declaration, one can find only a few examples of self-referential use of the honorific *masu/imasu* in speech in the *Kojiki*. One is the statement uttered by Kamu yamato iwarebiko no mikoto 神倭伊波礼毘古命 (the future Emperor Jinmu 神武) and his elder brother Itsuse no mikoto 五瀬命: “Where should we dwell so as to rule peacefully over the earthly realm? Let us go to the east” (*izuku ni imasaba, tairakeku ame no shita no matsurigoto o kikoshimesamu, nao himukashi ni yukamu to omou* 坐何地者、平聞看天下之政。猶思東行). Another is Emperor Ōjin’s 応神 statement to the young maiden Yakawaehime 矢河枝比売 in the village of Kohata 木幡: “When I return tomorrow, I shall stop by your house” (*are, asu kaeri idemasamu toki ni, namuji ga ie ni irimasamu* 吾、明日還幸之時、入坐汝家).⁽¹⁰⁾ In the latter instance the

presence of a conveyor of the statement might also be presumed. If so, it would be what Yamaguchi would characterize as a pseudo- rather than true self-honorific expression.

Another pertinent instance of a self-honorific expression in a speech passage occurs in the descent of the Heavenly Grandson episode:

Thereupon, Amaterasu ōmikami and Takaki no kami 高木神 issued a command. Addressing Masakatsu akatsu kachihayahi ame no oshihomimi no mikoto 正勝吾勝々速日天忍穗耳命, they proclaimed: “It has been [humbly] reported to us (*mōsu* 白) that the pacification of Ashihara no nakatsukuni is now complete. In accordance with this, our [noble] command (*kotoyosashi tamaishi* 言依賜), thus descend [to that land] and rule over it.”⁽¹¹⁾

Here we see a self-referential use of the honorifics *mōsu* and *tamau*. These are relational honorifics, which according to Yamaguchi’s thesis, do not occur in true self-honorific expressions in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* songs. Their occurrence in this passage might be due to differences in usage in song and prose, or perhaps here, too, the presence of a conveyor of the proclamation may be presumed.

Use of the self-honorific *imasu* in Amaterasu’s statement “Since I am in hiding” may well bear on the question that has presented the early transcribers of the text and commentators with a persistent challenge: Is Amaterasu’s utterance a query to Amenouzume or a soliloquy? In our present state of knowledge, it remains uncertain whether use of the term *imasu* in it offers a key to resolving the question, but might the presence of a conveyor of her utterance be presumed (making it in Yamaguchi’s terms a pseudo- rather than true self-honorific expression)? If so, might this affect also the interpretation of the nature of Amenouzume’s divine trance?⁽¹²⁾

3. “The Heavenly Plain” (Amanohara 天原)

This is the only occurrence in the *Kojiki* of the term Amanohara. In all other instances the term used is Takamanohara or simply “heavens” (*ame* 天). Ōta Yoshimaro 太田善磨 holds that the notion of Takamanohara as a heavenly realm above the earth was constructed by adding the element “high” (*taka* 高) to the earlier term “heavenly plain” (Amanohara 天原), which can be found in the *Man'yōshū*.⁽¹³⁾ Seen in this light, Amanohara here might be interpreted as the remnant of the earlier stage of the formation of this notion. Elsewhere in the *Kojiki*, however, Takamanohara occurs in passages of narrative description as the term for an objectively perceived entity. It thus seems more likely that here Amanohara was chosen to convey the perspective of Amaterasu who speaks as one who exists within that realm.

4. “Entertaining things” (*asobi* 楽)

Most commentators read the graph 楽 (“music,” “joyful,” “take pleasure in”) here as *asobu*, but the compilers of the *Nihon shisō taikēi* edition of *Kojiki* adopt the reading *eraku*.⁽¹⁴⁾ The graph recurs in Amenouzume’s subsequent statement: “that is why we are joyful and laughing and doing entertaining things” (*yorokobi warai asobu* 歡喜咲楽). Motoori Norinaga and Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 read the first three graphs 歡喜咲 of Amenouzume’s statement as *eragi* and *eraki*, respectively, which Norinaga explains as meaning “to enjoy and laugh happily.”⁽¹⁵⁾ The compilers of the NST edition note as the basis for their reading of 楽 as *eraku* for both Amaterasu’s initial query and Amenouzume’s response that the Kengen-bon 乾元本 manuscript (1303) of the *Nihon shoki* glosses the digraph 噓楽 in the corresponding passage as *eraku* (for this passage, see above, further comment to text note 1). They also point out, as does Norinaga, that the thirty-eighth imperial proclamation (*senmyō* 宣命) in the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 includes the phonetic transcription *eraki* 惠良伎.⁽¹⁶⁾ It is not clear, however, that the *Shoku Nihongi*

example is semantically equivalent to the instance in the passage at hand. It also is possible that the *Nihon shoki* gloss *eraku* was added to explain the meaning of the graph 噓. Given these considerations, we have adopted the more common reading *asobu* here.

5. “Boundary rope” (*shirikumenawa* 尻久米繩)

This is what is called today *shimenawa* 注連繩, a straw rope hung before or around a site to demarcate sacred space.⁽¹⁷⁾ The main text of the seventh section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* transcribes this term as 端出之繩 (“rope with loose ends”) and adds a gloss indicating that it should be read *shirikumenawa*.⁽¹⁸⁾ Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 define it as a rope made of straw with the ends left unbound.⁽¹⁹⁾ Many commentators, such as Nakajima Etsuji 中島悦次, interpret the element *kume* as deriving from the verb *kumu* 組む (“to weave together / to put together”).⁽²⁰⁾ Others, such as Tsugita Uruu 次田潤, take it to mean “basket”/“cage” (*kago* 籠).⁽²¹⁾ Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi understand it as the continuative form (*ren'yōkei* 連用形) of the lower bigrade (*shimo nidan* 下二段) verb *kumu*, meaning “to leave hanging out.”⁽²²⁾

Endnotes

- (1) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 378–79.
- (2) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 76–79.
- (3) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 82–83.
- (4) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 84–85.
- (5) Yamaguchi, “‘Kojiki,’ ‘Nihon shoki’ kayō ni okeru ninshō tenkan to jikei hyōgen.”
- (6) *Kojiki gaku* 5 (2019), p. 6 (Japanese original).
- (7) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 182–83.
- (8) Uegaki, *Fudoki*, pp. 140–41, 186–87.
- (9) Uegaki, *Fudoki*, pp. 140–41, 160–61.

- (10) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 140–41, 260–61.
- (11) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 112–13.
- (12) For this last point, see *Kojiki gaku* 4 (2018), p. 24 (Japanese original) ; KKSkk 15 (2023), p. 219 (English translation).
- (13) Ōta, *Kodai Nihon bungaku shichōron*, vol. 2, pp. 139–40.
- (14) Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, p. 53.
- (15) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 378–79. Norinaga reads the entire four-graph phrase as *eragi asobu*. Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, pp. 341, 343. Saigō reads it as *eraki asobu*.
- (16) Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, 503. See Aoki Kazuo et al., *Shoku Nihongi*, vol. 4, pp. 102–103.
- (17) Kokugakuin Digital Encyclopedia of Shinto: <https://d-museum.kokugakuin.ac.jp/eos/detail/?id=9616>.
- (18) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 78–79.
- (19) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 66n5.
- (20) Nakajima, *Kojiki hyōshaku*, p. 100.
- (21) Tsugita, *Kojiki shinkō*, p. 119.
- (22) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 66n5.

Chapter 20: Origin of the Five Grains

Thereupon the myriad deities all conferred together and levied a penalty of one thousand expiatory items (1) on Susanoo no mikoto; cut his beard, fingernails, and toenails; had [his wrongdoings] dispelled; and expelled him with a divine expulsion. [Susanoo] next (2) asked Ōgetsuhime no kami 大気都比売神 for things to eat. Ōgetsuhime took various tasty things from her nose, mouth, and buttocks, prepared them in a variety of ways, and presented them. Having observed what she was doing, Susanoo thought that Ōgetsuhime was soiling what she presented and killed her. Things were thereupon born from the body of the slain deity. From her head, silkworms were born; from her two eyes, rice seeds were born; from her two ears, millet was born; from her nose, azuki beans were born; from her

genitals, oats were born; from her buttocks, soybeans were born. Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto 神産巢日御祖命 thereupon had these seeds that had come into existence collected (3).

Text Notes

1. “One thousand expiatory items” (*chikura no okito* 千位置戸)

Commentators differ in their approach to this expression. Motoori Norinaga and later commentators such as Kanda Hideo 神田秀夫 and Ōta Yoshimaro, Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司, Saigō Nobutsuna, and Nakamura Hirotochi 中村啓信 define it as “[expiatory] items (*okito* 置戸) placed on multiple stands (*chikura* 千位).”⁽¹⁾ Others, such as the compilers of the NST edition of *Kojiki*, Nishimiya Kazutami 西宮一民, and Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu, take the two elements in combination to mean a stand or “a place to put [items].”⁽²⁾ In fact, however, the two interpretations largely coincide, for as Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi note, “*Okito* is a place to put things. To take it simply as a place, however, would not be consistent with speaking of levying *ōse[ru]* 負ほせ[る] [a penalty on someone]. Does it not thus make sense to understand *okito* as indicating the items put in the appropriate place?”⁽³⁾ For further discussion of the term *okito* and use of the graph 戸 in it, as well as in compounds such as *kotodo* 事戸 (“declaration of eternal estrangement”) or *togoito* 詛戸 (“conjurament items”), see text note 1 and the further comment appended to it in chapter 11, “The Land of Yomi (III).”⁽⁴⁾

2. “Next” (*mata* 又)

Opinion divides as to whether the unspecified subject of the phrase “next asked Ōgetsuhime for things to eat” is Susanoo or the myriad deities. In the *Kojiki* the term *mata* (“next”/“again”) usually has an introductory function, as in the phrases “Next they sang the song” (*mata utaite iwaku* 又歌曰), or “Again he took as his spouse . . . (*mata* ○○ *o metorite* 又娶○○).”⁽⁵⁾ In almost all such instances,

however, there is continuity in content between the preceding passage and the one that follows after *mata*. Particularly in the first book of the *Kojiki*, instances of the use of *mata* are overall rare, and there are no other examples of it being used to introduce a completely new topic. If the *mata* that begins the second sentence here is taken to mark a new topic, this has to be regarded as an irregular usage.

As commentators traditionally have taken Susanoo to be the one seeking food from Ōgetsuhime, this episode has come to be seen as an independent myth that was later interpolated into the *Kojiki* narrative. This has led, some would say, to losing sight of the episode's connection with what precedes and follows, and to its being treated as an isolated story. In line with the usual function of *mata* to indicate continuity, it also is possible, however, to interpret the passage in a way that brings out a connection with the preceding episode. Nishimiya Kazutami holds that the subject that seeks food from Ōgetsuhime is the myriad deities rather than Susanoo: "Hungry after expelling Susanoo, the myriad deities request food" from Ōgetsuhime. Susanoo observes Ōgetsuhime's actions in offering the food items and kills her.⁽⁶⁾ Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu also take the myriad deities to be the subject that seeks food from Ōgetsuhime, but state that the reason for the myriad deities' doing so is not clear. "Is not the most probable interpretation that they did so to provide Susanoo with food?" Neither Nishimiya nor Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi refer explicitly to the usage of *mata* as ground for their interpretation, but the general pattern of that usage might be said to support readings such as theirs that emphasize continuity in the myth storyline.

On the other hand, the second and third books of the *Kojiki* contain at least ten instances where *mata* serves to indicate an additional story element or a shift in focus and thus marks the introduction of content different from that found in the preceding passage. One example is a passage in the chronicle of Emperor Jinmu where, following the presentation of a series of songs sung by Jinmu's forces

in the battle against the Tsuchigumo 土雲, the narrative uses *mata* to mark the transition to a series of songs about a different battle. In the chronicle of Emperor Sujin, *mata* serves to indicate the transition from an account of the legend of the deity of Mt. Miwa 三輪 to a completely different story about the dispatch of Ōbiko no mikoto 大毗古命 to the Kōshi road 高志道. In another example from the chronicle of Emperor Suinin 垂仁, *mata* marks the introduction of an episode concerning the dispatch of Tajimamori 多遲摩毛理 to the eternal realm (*tokoyo no kuni* 常世国), a story that has no connection to the episode preceding it.⁽⁸⁾

In the first book as well, the use of *mata* to indicate a shift in topic can be found in the exchange of poems relating the deeds of Yachihoko no kami 八千矛神 (one of the names used of Ōanamuji/Ōkuninushi). Following the completion of the sequence of poems recounting Yachihoko's courtship of Nunakawa hime 沼河日売, the narrative continues, "Again, this deity's primary consort Suseribime no mikoto 須勢理毘売命 was extremely jealous."⁽⁹⁾ As this example occurs within the context of a series of stories about Yachihoko's relations with women, it might be argued that it does not indicate a true shift in topic. Nevertheless, this example also suggests that the semantic scope of *mata* is broad enough to allow the raising of questions as to the degree of narrative continuity. If the myriad deities are to be taken as the subject in the passage at hand, it thus would make sense to consider as pertinent factors the use of *mata* along with the absence of a specified subject. At the same time, it should be noted that the opening sentence of the following episode also lacks a specified subject: "Now, driven out [of the heavens, Susanoo] descended to a place called Torikami 鳥髮, upstream on the Hinokawa 肥河 river in Izumo."

Further comment: The place of the myth of the slaying of Ōgetsuhime (the origin of the five grains) within the *Kojiki* narrative. The myth of the slaying of Ōgetsuhime and the origin of the five grains is situated between the Rock Cave of Heaven episode and the story of Susanoo's slaying of the

eight-tailed serpent. The Rock Cave story ends with the following statement: “Thereupon the myriad deities all conferred together and levied a penalty of one thousand expiatory items on Susanoo; cut his beard, fingernails, and toenails; had [his wrongdoings] dispelled; and expelled him with a divine expulsion.” The story of Susanoo’s slaying of the eight-tailed serpent begins: “Now, driven out [of the heavens, Susanoo] descended to a place called Torikami 鳥髮, upstream on the Hinokawa 肥河 river in Izumo.” In that these two episodes fit together neatly, the intervening episode of the origin of the five grains has generally been held to be a later interpolation. On the other hand, as mentioned in the preceding note concerning use of the particle *mata*, in recent years a number of commentators have interpreted the subject seeking food from Ōgetsuhime as the myriad deities rather than Susanoo and have thus emphasized continuity with the preceding passage. Nishimiya Kazutami has indeed argued that so long as a different subject is not explicitly named, the subject of the phrase following *mata* should be understood to be the same as that of the preceding phrase and that thus the subject here should be seen as the myriad deities.⁽¹⁰⁾

Park Mi-kyong 朴美京 has supported Nishimiya’s argument. Comparing cases where the phrase “Next [they] sang the song” (*mata utaitte iwaku*) is written with the graph 又 (又歌曰, sixteen instances) with ones where it is written with the graph 亦 (亦歌曰, four instances), she points out that in the latter cases the subject is clearly indicated, whereas in the former it is not. She thus concludes that in instances where *mata* is written with the graph 又, the subject should be understood to be the same as that of the preceding phrase.⁽¹¹⁾ To be sure, it is possible to reach a resolution of the *mata* issue by taking the myriad deities as the subject seeking food from Ōgetsuhime. But even if that facilitates not treating this episode as an interpolation, it cannot be said that it establishes the ground for denying the disjuncture in content between this episode and the preceding one. Regardless of whether this episode is a later interpolation or not, the basic

question remains as to why this myth is situated at this point in the narrative.

One problem is the myth's setting. Is it Takamanohara or Ashihara no nakatsukuni or somewhere else? Since in the immediately preceding episode Susanoo is expelled by the myriad deities and in the following one he descends to Mt. Torikami in Izumo, presumably this episode should be understood as occurring while he is still in Takamanohara or at some place where he stops prior to descending to Izumo. If the subject that seeks the food is taken to be the myriad deities, it would suggest that the episode occurs while he is still in Takamanohara. But can Ōgetsuhime be understood as a deity dwelling in Takamanohara?

The name Ōgetsuhime appears multiple times in the *Kojiki* myths:

1. The giving birth to the land episode: “The land of Awa 粟 is called Ōgetsuhime 大宜都比売.”⁽¹²⁾
2. The giving birth to deities episode: “Next [Izanaki and Izanami] bore Ōgetsuhime no kami 大宜都比売神.”⁽¹³⁾ By way of reference, the following episode of Izanami's departure from this world states that as she lay injured after giving birth to the fire deity, other deities related to food were born: “Next appeared Wakumusuhi no kami 和久産巢日神. The child of this deity is called Toyoukebime no kami 豊宇気毗売神.”⁽¹⁴⁾
3. The origin of the five grains: In this passage Ōgetsuhime's name is transcribed successively as 大氣都比売神, 大氣都比売, and 大宜都比売神.
4. The lineage of Ōtoshi no kami 大年神: “Hayamato no kami 羽山戸神 took Ōgetsuhime no kami 大氣都比売神 as his spouse, and they bore the child Wakayamakui no kami 若山咋神.”⁽¹⁵⁾

It is unlikely that all the entities named above are the same deity. In item 1, Ōgetsuhime is one the “alternative names” assigned to various of the islands that Izanaki and Izanami give birth to. There are eighteen such “alternative names” mentioned in the giving birth to the land episode, and among these no other appears subsequently as a deity in the narrative. This Ōgetsuhime is clearly the land of Awa. It is unlikely, too, that the Ōgetsuhime of item 4 is the same as that of item 3 (the deity killed in the present episode). Hayamoto no kami, the deity who takes the Ōgetsuhime of item 4 as his spouse, is identified as a grandson of Susanoo. Even within a mythological framework, is it not improbable that the grandson would take as spouse the female deity slain by the grandfather? That leaves items 2 and 3. In terms of the myths’ narrative development, the Ōgetsuhime who appears in item 2 is plausibly the same as the Ōgetsuhime slain by Susanoo in item 3.

The Ōgetsuhime of item 2 is borne by Izanami, but like the other offspring produced by Izanaki and Izanami, she is not born in Takamanohara. She would seem to belong to the earthly realm, yet, as with Toyoukebime, another food deity figuring in the myths, it would not be strange for her to be found in Takamanohara. Toyoukebime is identified as the child of Wakumusuhi no kami, who is born immediately before Izanami departs from this world, but in the descent of the Heavenly Grandson episode, she is described as one of the deities dispatched from Takamanohara to Ashihara no nakatsukuni.⁽¹⁶⁾

Another example of a deity who straddles the boundary between the two realms is Takemikazuchi no kami 建御雷神. Takemikazuchi is one of the deities produced from the blood that adhered to Izanaki’s sword when he killed Kagutsuchi no kami 迦具土神, the fire deity, but in the episodes dealing with the pacification of Ashihara no nakatsukuni, Takemikazuchi appears as a deity residing in Takamanohara.⁽¹⁷⁾ The sixth variant of the fifth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* bridges the disjuncture in the association

of Takemikazuchi with the two different locales by first mentioning, prior to its account of Takemikazuchi's production, that the blood dripping from Izanaki's sword "became the multitudinous rocks lying in the Amanoyasu riverbed 天安河辺 [in Takamanohara]. This became the ancestor of Futsunushi no kami 経津主神," who is subsequently described as acting together with Takemikazuchi in the pacification of Ashihara no nakatsukuni.⁽¹⁸⁾ The differing approaches to situating Takemikazuchi in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* may be said to further illustrate the contrast between the efforts of the compilers of the latter to construct a logically coherent storyline and the more cavalier attitude taken by the compilers of the former (see the further comment to text note 1 of chapter 19). Taken together, the examples of Toyoukebime and Takemikazuchi suggest that the locale for the origin of the five grains myth cannot arbitrarily be restricted to the earthly realm.

The name Ōgetsuhime appears only in the *Kojiki*, but the eleventh variant of the fifth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* includes an alternative story of the slaying of the food deity Ukemochi no kami 保食神. In this case, however, the slayer is not Susanoo, but Tsukuyomi no mikoto 月夜見尊, and the story is incorporated at the end of the different variants of the account of the birth of Amaterasu, Susanoo, and Tsukuyomi:

Amaterasu ōmikami, who then already resided in the heavens, declared: "I hear that in Ashihara no nakatsukuni there is a food deity, Ukemochi no kami. You, Tsukuyomi no mikoto, go and see." Having received this command, Tsukuyomi no mikoto descended [to Ashihara no nakatsukuni] and went to see Ukemochi no kami. Ukemochi no kami thereupon turned her head [in different directions]. When she faced the land, grains emerged from her mouth. When she faced the sea, fish both broad finned and narrow finned emerged from her mouth. When she turned toward the mountains, rough-furred [animals] and soft-feathered [birds] emerged from her mouth. She

readied all those items, arranged them on a multitude of stands, and offered them as a feast. Tsukuyomi no mikoto flushed with anger and declared: “How dirty! How disgusting! How is it that you offer me as something to eat things that you have spit out from your mouth!” He thereupon unsheathed his sword, struck Ukemochi no kami with it, and killed her. After that he reported [to Amaterasu] the accomplishment of his mission, stating in detail what had happened. Hearing this, Amaterasu was extremely angry and declared: “You are an evil deity! I do not wish to see you!” From that point Amaterasu and Tsukuyomi no mikoto resided apart from each other, and day and night were separated.

Amaterasu ōmikami later sent Amanokumahito 天熊人 [to Ashihara no nakatsukuni] to see the situation. Ukemochi no kami was indeed already dead. But from the head of this deity, cattle and horses had appeared. Above her forehead, millet (*awa* 粟) had appeared. Above her eyebrows, silkworms had appeared. From within her eyes, barnyard millet (*hie* 稗) had appeared. From within her stomach, rice had appeared. From her genitals, oats, soybeans, and azuki beans had appeared. Amanokumahito gathered up all these things and took them and offered them to Amaterasu. Delighted, Amaterasu declared: “These things should provide sustenance for the verdant blades of grass, the mortals of the visible realm, to eat!” She thereupon designated millet, barnyard millet, oats, and beans as seeds for dry fields, and rice as seed for paddy fields. She also appointed village headmen accordingly. Thereupon rice seeds were planted for the first time in the heavenly narrow fields and long fields. That autumn the luxuriant heads of ripening grain made a splendid sight. She also was able to take the silkworm cocoons into her mouth and draw threads from them. From this the way of raising silkworms first appeared.⁽¹⁹⁾

As seen here, in the *Nihon shoki*, the stage for the story of the slaying of the food deity is Ashihara no nakatsukuni. At the same time, although this story is related within the context of a variant, it functions as an explanation for the origin of the heavenly rice fields that figure in the main text and variants of the seventh section of the Age of Deities chapter.⁽²⁰⁾ (The story also serves as an account of the reason for the separation of the sun and moon.) By comparison, in the *Kojiki*, the rationale for placing the story of Ōgetsuhime at this point of the overall narrative remains uncertain.

One possible explanation may lie in the fact that this story is situated at the turning point in the portrayal of Susanoo. Having been expelled from Takamanohara, Susanoo descends to Izumo, where he vanquishes the eight-tailed serpent. As this shows, from this point his forcefulness serves a positive purpose. But until this point, from his wailing and ascent to the heavens to his destructive behavior in Takamanohara, that forcefulness has had a negative impact. The myth of the slaying of Ōgetsuhime may be said to incorporate both dimensions: violence in the killing of the female deity and positive consequences in that the death leads to the origin of the five grains. This dual characteristic is perhaps a reason why the story has been situated at the point where the evaluation of Susanoo appears to shift. We should keep in mind, though, that regardless of whether Susanoo's forcefulness has a positive or negative impact, his fundamental character as a deity does not change. Is not it rather a matter of different settings and contexts for the display of that character? Opinions on this point may differ, but one may argue that Susanoo does not himself change.

To return to the issue of how to understand the narrative structure of this episode, the identity of the figure that gathers the items produced from Ōgetsuhime's body may be said to raise doubts about the thesis that it is the myriad deities who seek food from Ōgetsuhime. Why is the figure who gathers the items not the myriad deities but Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto? As is

widely recognized, Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto appears largely in Izumo-linked myths, such as when Ōanamuji is killed by his eighty elder brothers or Ōkuninushi seeks to find out Sukunabikona's 少名毘古那神 true form. On those occasions Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto provides support to the Izumo deities in a manner befitting the name “ancestral deity” (*mioya no kami*). This circumstance suggests that the Ōgetsuhime myth, in which Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto also acts in a supportive fashion, likewise belongs to the Izumo-linked body of myths. Above I argued that the Ōgetsuhime of this myth and that of item 4, mentioned in the account of the lineage of Ōtoshi no kami, are likely different entities. Nevertheless, the fact that a female deity of that name appears in the Ōtoshi no kami lineage suggests a close association with Izumo-linked myths. Is that not also a likely reason why this episode has been placed at this point in the *Kojiki* narrative, when it shifts from the Takamanohara cycle of myths to the Izumo cycle? And does not this episode further suggest that Susanoo's uncontrollable wildness continues unchanged, even after his beard and fingernails and toenails have been cut and he has been expelled from Takamanohara? It thus serves to foreshadow that he possesses the strength to vanquish the eight-tailed serpent and the capacity to rule as the great deity of Nenokatasu kuni 根之堅州国. This circumstance, too, seems likely to underlie the choice to situate this myth at this juncture of the narrative.

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3. “Had these seeds that had come into existence collected” (*kono nareru tane o torashimeki* 令取茲成種)

From Motoori Norinaga on, the sequence of graphs 令取茲成種 has usually been read as “had these items collected and used them as seeds” (*ko[re] o torashimete tane to nashi[tamai]ki*).⁽²¹⁾ In recent years, however, Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu have read it as “had these seeds that had

come into existence collected” (*kono nareru tane o torashimeki*). Okimori Takuya 沖森卓也 has similarly read it as *kono nareru tane o torashimetamaiki*.⁽²²⁾ Since both approaches to the sequence are possible, which one chooses depends on how one interprets the overall direction of the narrative. Here, doubts about the appropriateness of reading the graph 成 in this context as *nasu* have led to our adopting the reading “had these seeds that had come into existence collected.” It should be noted, however, that this reading cannot be unequivocally confirmed and that instances of reading 成 as *nasu* can be found in some cases in the *Kojiki*, as in the account of the contest of strength between Takemikazuchi and Takeminakata no kami 建御名方神: “[Takemikazuchi] allowed [Takeminakata] to take his arm, whereupon [Takemikazuchi] immediately turned his arm into a pillar of ice (*tatsuhi ni torinashi* 取成立水), and again turned it into a sword blade (*tsurugi no ha ni torinashi* 取成劍刃).”⁽²³⁾

Further comment: Susanoo and Tsukuyomi no mikoto: The contrasting perspectives of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. As discussed in the further comment to text note 2 above, the eleventh variant of the fifth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* incorporates an account of the slaying of a food deity that in important regards both parallels and contrasts with the *Kojiki* version of this myth.⁽²⁴⁾ Among the differences is that in the *Nihon shoki* variant the slayer is Tsukuyomi no mikoto, not Susanoo, while the deity who gathers the items that emerge from the food deity’s corpse is not Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto, but an entity named Amanokumahito, who acts at the command of Amaterasu. These differences in turn shape the broader implications of the two versions of the food deity myth and its place within the overall narrative line of the two texts.

In the case of the *Kojiki*, Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto and Susanoo figure centrally in the ordering of the earthly realm and the production of the crops that sustain the lives of those who inhabit it. Susanoo goes on to save a maiden

from the eight-tailed serpent. The maiden's name, Kushinada hime 櫛名田比売, is generally held to incorporate the element "rice" (*ine* [*ina*] 稲).⁽²⁵⁾ Susanoo also appoints a headman for his hall, giving him the title Inada no miyanushi 稲田宮主 ("headman of the rice fields hall"). Susanoo is thus presented as an entity who reigns over the earthly realm as the bringer of the successful production of rice, something that the genealogy of one of his descendants, Ōtoshi no kami ("bountiful harvest deity"), confirms.⁽²⁶⁾ Ōkuninushi, another of Susanoo's descendants, goes on to engage in the consolidation of the earthly realm in partnership with Sukunabikona no kami, a child of Kamumusuhi mioya no mikoto. Researchers have pointed out that Sukunabikona also has the character of a grain deity.⁽²⁷⁾ In this way, in the *Kojiki*, the story of the slaying of Ōgetsuhime and the production of the five grains, which occurs with the support from Takamanohara of Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto, serves as a link between the preceding passages and the following consolidation of the land by Susanoo and his descendants, for which Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto continues to offer vital support. Amaterasu and the myriad deities retreat into the background, and the narrative shifts its focus for the moment to developments taking place in the earthly realm.

By contrast, in the *Nihon shoki*, Tsukuyomi's role is limited to the slaying of Ukemochi no kami, and he does not figure in the subsequent consolidation of the earthly order. That will all take place under the direction of Amaterasu, whose position as the supreme deity is confirmed by her command for the separation of day and night, her having the items produced from Ukemochi's corpse brought to Takamanohara, and her specification that these items should be used for nourishing the populace.

The Ōgetsuhime story also points up an aspect of Susanoo's distinctive character and place in the overall narrative. Susanoo is different from the other deities figuring in the myths in his restless movement, which carries

him successively across borders from one realm to the next, from the seas, to Takamanohara, to Ashihara no nakatsukuni, to Nenokatasu kuni. His presence in those different realms may be a source of turmoil, but it is not simply that. It also serves to bridge and link those realms. In this regard the Ōgetsuhime story, situated at the juncture between the shift in narrative focus from the events of Takamanohara to those of Ashihara no nakatsukuni, should be seen as related to the unfolding of the overall narrative, not simply as a fragmentary, “floating legend” that has been anchored here arbitrarily.

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Endnotes

- (1) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 383–86; Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 216n1; Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 3, pp. 116–17; Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, pp. 348–50; Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 44n25.
- (2) Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, p. 54n1, pp. 338–39; Nishimiya, *Kojiki*, p. 52n4; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 67n6.
- (3) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 67n6.
- (4) See *Kojiki gaku* 2 (2016), pp. 25, 60–66 (Japanese original); KKSJK 14 (2022), pp. 199–207 (English translation).
- (5) See, for example, Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 154–55; *Kojiki gaku* 5 (2019), pp. 12–13.
- (6) Nishimiya, *Kojiki*, p. 53.
- (7) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 67.
- (8) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 154–55, 188–89, 210–11.
- (9) *Kojiki gaku* 6 (2020), pp. 36–37.
- (10) Nishimiya, “Kojiki jōkan bunmyaku ron,” pp. 25–42.
- (11) Park, “‘Gokoku kigen shinwa’ to Susanoo no mikoto zō.”
- (12) *Kojiki gaku* 1 (2015), pp. 38–39 (Japanese original); 6 (2020), p. 284 (English translation).
- (13) *Kojiki gaku* 1 (2015), pp. 46–49 (Japanese original); 6 (2020), p. 268 (English translation).
- (14) *Kojiki gaku* 1 (2015), pp. 58–59 (Japanese original); 7 (2021), p. 326 (English translation).

translation).

- (15) KKSJK 15 (2023), pp. 145–47 (Japanese original).
- (16) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 116–17.
- (17) *Kojiki gaku* 2 (2016), pp. 2–3 (Japanese original); 7 (2021), p. 309 (English translation); Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 106–107.
- (18) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 42–43, 116–17.
- (19) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 58–61.
- (20) Regarding these fields, see KKSJK 15 (2023), pp. 244–45.
- (21) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 391.
- (22) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 68–69; Okimori, *Shinkō Kojiki*, p. 39.
- (23) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 108–109.
- (24) The translation of this further comment abridges and paraphrases the Japanese original. For the latter, see *Kojiki gaku* 4 (2018), pp. 61–65.
- (25) See below, chapters 21 and 22.
- (26) See KKSJK 15 (2023), pp. 146–48, 178–83. See also Kohama, “‘Kojiki’ Ōgetsuhime denshō no tokushoku.”
- (27) Yoshida Atsuhiko, *Hōjō to fushi no shinwa*, pp. 90–98; Sakashita, “*Kojiki*” no *katariguchi*, pp. 84–88.

Chapter 21: The Eight-tailed Serpent (I)

Now, driven out [of the heavens, Susanoo] descended to a place called Torikami 鳥髮, upstream on the Hinokawa 肥河 river (1) in Izumo. At that moment, [a] chopstick came floating down the river. Susanoo no mikoto thought that people must be living [further] upstream, so he set out in search of (2) them. [He found] two people, an old man and an old woman, [sitting] with a maiden between them and weeping. “Who are you?” [Susanoo] asked. “I am the son of the earthly deity Ōyamatsumi no kami 大山津見神 (3),” the old man replied. “My name is Anazuchi 足名椎, my spouse’s name is Tanazuchi 手名椎 (4), and my daughter’s name is Kushinada hime 櫛名田比売.” “And why are you weeping?” [Susanoo] then asked. “I used to have eight daughters,” [Anazuchi] replied, “but the eight-

tailed serpent from Koshi 高志 (5) has come every year and devoured them. Now is the time for it to come again—that is why I weep.” “What does it look like?” [Susanoo] asked. “Its eyes are red like *akakagachi* cherries,” [Anazuchi] replied. “It has one trunk, eight heads, and eight tails. Club moss and cypress and cedar trees grow on its trunk, and it stretches across eight valleys and eight peaks. If you look at its belly, [you can see] blood oozing from it everywhere.” [Note: “*Akakagachi*” are what are called today “ground cherries” (*hōzuki*; 6).]

Text Notes

1. “A place called Torikami, upstream on the Hinokawa river” (*Hinokawakami, na wa Torikami to iu tokoro* 肥河上、名鳥髮地)

The section on the district of Nita 仁多 in the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* mentions a mountain called Torikamiyama 鳥上山: “The Yokotagawa 横田川 river has its source in Torikamiyama mountain, which is located thirty-five *sato* 里 southeast of the [Nita] district headquarters, and it flows northward.⁽¹⁾ It constitutes the upper reaches of what is commonly called the Hinokawa 斐伊河 river.”⁽²⁾ The Hinokawa river runs the length of the western part of the Izumo region. The section in the *Fudoki* on the district of Izumo includes a passage on what it describes as “the Izumo great river” (Izumo *ōkawa* 出雲大河). The passage explains that this river is in fact the lower reaches of the Hinokawa and notes that its source lies in Torikamiyama and that it traverses the districts of Nita, Ōhara 大原, and Izumo before finally emptying into Kamudo 神門 lake.⁽³⁾ In the *Kojiki*, the Hinokawa river figures in the second book in the chronicle of Emperor Suinin as the setting for the rites performed to worship the Great Deity of Izumo (Izumo *ōkami* 出雲大神), who had put a curse on the emperor’s son and asked to be worshiped in return for removing it. In the chronicle of Emperor Keikō 景行 it is the setting for the subjugation of Izumotakeru 出雲建 by Yamatotakeru no mikoto 倭建命.⁽⁴⁾ From the Yamato perspective, this river was likely seen as epitomizing the

land of Izumo. The *Kojiki* may be said to further depict the eight-tailed serpent as a symbol of the Hinokawa river (the *Nihon shoki*, on the other hand, does not pay particular attention to the river). The slaying of the eight-tailed serpent, the symbol of the Hinokawa river, may perhaps be intended as an allegorical representation of the pacification of the Izumo realm.

2. “To seek for” (*magu* 覓)

Some texts read the graph 覓 as *motomeru*, but since the main text of the ninth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* glosses the digraph 覓国 as *kunimagi* 矩式磨儀 (“in search of a land”),⁽⁵⁾ here we have adopted the reading *magu*. The meaning of this verb is “to search for.”

3. Ōyamatsumi no kami 大山津見神

The deity Ōyamatsumi appears initially in the *Kojiki* as one of the offspring produced by Izanaki and Izanami as they give birth to the land.⁽⁶⁾ In the present section, Susanoo descends from Takamanohara and takes as his spouse Kushinada hime, the granddaughter of Ōyamatsumi. Their offspring, Yashimajinumi no kami 八島士奴美神, takes as his spouse Konohana chiru hime 木花知流比売 (“falling flowers maiden”), who is identified as the daughter of Ōyamatsumi, and they produce offspring in turn. Subsequently, Ninigi no mikoto similarly produces offspring with a daughter of Ōyamatsumi after descending from Takamanohara, in this case a maiden named Konohana no sakuya bime 木花之佐久夜毗売 (“blooming flowers maiden”). That deities associated with both the Izumo- and Takamanohara-lineage myths alike descend from the heavens, take as spouses the daughters or granddaughter of Ōyamatsumi, and produce offspring with them, shows this deity’s importance within the *Kojiki* narrative. The contrast between the names of the two Konohana maidens seems intentional, with the one associated with Izumo myths given a name incorporating the element

“falling” (*chiru*) and the one associated with Takamanohara myths given a name incorporating the element “blooming” (*saku*).⁽⁷⁾

4. Anazuchi 足名稚; Tanazuchi 手名稚

These two names traditionally have been read as Ashinazuchi and Tenazuchi. They have been understood to carry the meaning of either “spirit (*chi* 靈) that caresses (*nazu* 撫ツ) the feet (*ashi* 足) / the hands (*te* 手),” or “spirit [of something] without (*nazu* 無ツ) feet/hands.” The latter interpretation has further supported the hypothesis that the two names in combination convey the idea of a serpent spirit. Here, however, we have adopted the readings Anazuchi and Tanazuchi, in line with the interpretations of Kawashima Hideyuki 川島秀之 and Sema Masayuki 瀬間正之, as well as the phonetic transcriptions provided by Nakamura Hirotoishi.⁽⁸⁾ These researchers draw different conclusions about the meaning of these readings, though. Nakamura takes the names to mean “spirits that caress affectionately their child’s hands and feet,” an interpretation that does not diverge greatly from the traditional one. Sema, by contrast, takes the two names to mean respectively “spirit of the paddy ridges (*aze* 畔)” and “spirit of the rice paddies (*ta* 田).”⁽⁹⁾ If one takes the maiden’s name Kushinada hime to mean “wondrous rice fields,” in line with the *Nihon shoki* transcription of it as 奇稻田, Sema’s interpretation allows for consistency in the names of the three deities, with parents and child alike having names related to rice cultivation. We have thus followed his interpretation here.

5. “The eight-tailed serpent from Koshi” (*Koshi no yamata no orochi* 高志之八俣遠呂知)

Opinions differ as to whether the name Koshi here should be understood as Koshi 越 meaning the Hokuriku 北陸 region lying along the Japan Sea coast of northern Honshu or as the village of Koshi 古志 in the Kamudo 神門 district of

Izumo. In a subsequent passage the deity Yachihoko no kami (Ōkuninushi) travels to “the far-off land of Koshi” (*tōtōshi Koshi no kuni* 遠々し高志の国) in pursuit of Nunakawa hime. In that instance “Koshi” is understood to mean the “land beyond” (Koshi/Etsu 越). Drawing from that example, some take “Koshi” here to indicate a region beyond the Great Land of Eight Islands (Ōyashimakuni 大八島国).⁽¹⁰⁾ This line of interpretation takes the eight-tailed serpent to be a deity who comes from beyond Ashihara no nakatsukuni. As such it is not readily compatible with a view of the eight-tailed serpent as epitomizing the Hinokawa river or its flooding.

The interpretation of the “Koshi” figuring in this passage as referring to the village of Koshi in the Kamudo district of Izumo fits more smoothly with the equation of the eight-tailed serpent with the Hinokawa. It is not easy to explain the intent behind singling out this place as the locale associated with the serpent, but in that the Hinokawa river terminated in Kamudo lake in the district of the same name, the compilers perhaps sought to convey the river’s entirety by referring to both its lowest reaches and its source in Torikami. The *Izumo no kuni fudoki*, on the other hand, states that the village of Koshi takes its name from the fact that people from the land of Koshi had stayed there when they came to dam a river and make a pond (the same account declares that these events took place “at the time of Izanami”).⁽¹¹⁾ Thus, even if the name is taken to refer to the village of Koshi in the Kamudo district, one might argue that Koshi in the Hokuriku region lies behind it.⁽¹²⁾

The term *oroichi* 遠呂知 has been held to mean “spirit of the peak” or “spirit of the tail,” thereby indicating a great serpent, but such interpretations remain speculative. Apart from this passage in the *Kojiki*, no other occurrence of a phonetic transcription of the word *oroichi* can be found in ancient Japanese literature.

Further comment: “Koshi” in the *Kojiki*. The *Kojiki* has ten references to

the place name Koshi. They are as follows:

1. “I used to have eight daughters,” [Anazuchi] replied, “but the eight-tailed serpent from Koshi has come every year and devoured them.” (Book 1, “The Eight-tailed Serpent,” the passage at hand)
2. This Yachihoko no kami set out to woo Nunakawa hime of the land of Koshi. (Book 1, “Yachihoko no kami”)⁽¹³⁾
3. Yachihoko no kami could not find a [suitable] spouse in the Land of Eight Islands (Yashimakuni 八島国), and hearing that in the far-off land of Koshi . . . (Book 1, “Yachihoko no kami”)⁽¹⁴⁾
4. Next, Hikosashi katawake no mikoto 日子刺肩別命 (the ancestor of the Tonami no omi 利波臣 lineage of Koshi, the Kunisaki no omi 国前臣 lineage of Toyokuni 豊国, the Iohara no kimi 五百原君 lineage, and the Tsunoga no ama no atai 角鹿海直 lineage) . . . (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Kōrei 孝靈”)⁽¹⁵⁾
5. Again, during this reign, [Emperor Sujin] dispatched Ōbiko no mikoto 大毘古命 to the Koshi road (*Koshi no michi* 高志道) and his son Takenunakawawake no mikoto 建沼河別命 to the twelve eastern roads to put down rebellious people there. He also dispatched Hikoimasu no miko 日子坐王 to the land of Taniwa 丹波 and had him kill Kugamimi no mikasa 玖賀耳之御笠 (this is the name of a person). (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Sujin”)⁽¹⁶⁾
6. When Ōbiko no mikoto went to the land of Koshi, [he encountered] a young woman wearing a short overskirt who was standing on Herasaka 幣羅坂 slope in Yamashiro 山代 and singing a song. (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Sujin”)⁽¹⁷⁾
7. Ōbiko no mikoto thus went as first commanded to the land of Koshi. Takenunakawawake no mikoto, returning from the eastern regions to

which he had been dispatched, met his father, Ōbiko no mikoto, at Aizu 相津. That is why that place is called Aizu [“meeting place”]. Having thus accomplished the task of pacifying the lands to which they had been dispatched, they returned to report this [to the emperor]. (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Sujin”)⁽¹⁸⁾

8. The next [son] was Ikatarashihiko no miko 五十日帶日子王 (he is the ancestor of the Kasuganoyama no kimi 春日山君 lineage, the Koshino no kimi 高志池君 lineage, and the Kasukabe no kimi 春日部君 lineage). (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Suinin”)⁽¹⁹⁾
9. [Emperor Suinin ordered Ōtaka 大鷲 to catch the swan.] Therefore this person pursued the swan. From the land of Ki 木 he went on to the land of Harima 針間, and continuing the pursuit, crossed over into the land of Inaba 稲羽. Then he went on to the lands of Taniha 旦波 and Tajima 多遲麻 and continued the pursuit toward the eastern regions. He went on to the land of Chikatsuōmi 近淡海, crossed over the land of Mino 三野, and from the land of Owari 尾張, continued to pursue [the bird] into the land of Shinano 科野. At length he pursued it into the land of Koshi, and there, at the harbor of Wanami 和那美, he stretched out a net, captured the bird, took it back to the court, and presented it [to the emperor]. (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Suinin”)⁽²⁰⁾
10. Then, Takeuchi no sukune no mikoto 建内宿禰命, leading the prince [the future Emperor Ōjin 応神], thought to have him perform ablutions. After passing through the lands of Ōmi 淡海 and Wakasa 若狹, he made a temporary palace at Tsunoga 角鹿 at the head of the Koshi road (*Koshi no michi no kuchi* 高志前) and stayed there. (Book 2, “Chronicle of Emperor Chūai”)⁽²¹⁾

If one compares these passages with the corresponding sections of the *Nihon shoki*, the most immediately noticeable difference is that the only one of the *Nihon*

shoki passages to mention the place name Koshi is the section corresponding to item 10. Even in that case, strictly speaking, the *Nihon shoki* describes Takeuchi no sukune as going to the “land of Koshi” (Koshi no kuni 越国), not “the head of the Koshi road.”⁽²²⁾ This circumstance suggests that in the *Kojiki*, “Koshi” carries a nuance particular to that text and not found in the *Nihon shoki*. In essence, for the *Kojiki*, “Koshi” would seem to signal a locale lying outside the emperor’s dominion.

The passage that conveys this sense most clearly is item 3. In that passage Yachihoko no kami declares that because he could not find a spouse in the Land of Eight Islands, he set off for the land of Koshi. Regarding the formulation Land of Eight Islands (Yashimakuni), Komaki Satoshi 駒木敏 argues that although it is not a formal epithet found in court protocols specifying the format for imperial proclamations and the like, Yashimakuni encompasses the sense of Great Land of Eight Islands (Ōyashimakuni) and thus likewise carries the implication of the “realm” or the name of the country as a whole. Komaki further holds that Yachihoko’s journey in quest of a spouse represents the pacification of Koshi, which although spatially part of Ōyashimakuni, had not yet been incorporated substantively into the central dominion. Consequently that episode also expresses the idea of “ordering the dominion” as a part of the process of “land consolidation” (*kunizukuri* 国作り).⁽²³⁾ The character of Koshi or the Koshi road (in other words, the region lying along the road) as the object of pacification can also be seen in items 5 to 7. This distinctive treatment of Koshi in the *Kojiki* as being in the process of incorporation into the dominion contrasts with the approach seen in the *Nihon shoki*. In the passage from the chronicle of Emperor Sujin corresponding to item 5, the *Nihon shoki* lists Kunuga no michi 北陸 (in other words, the lands along the Koshi road) as a region not yet fully under control. Unlike the *Kojiki*, however, it also explicitly lists Koshi no shima 越洲 as one of the eight “islands” produced by Izanaki and Izanami that make up the Great Land of Eight Islands

(Ōyashimakuni 大八洲国).⁽²⁴⁾

Seen in this context, it seems likely that the “Koshi” linked to the eight-tailed serpent has the same connotations. Although there are those who, like Norinaga, interpret Koshi as an Izumo place name,⁽²⁵⁾ the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* links that place name to people who came from the land of Koshi, as mentioned in the text note above. The *Kojiki*’s treatment of the eight-tailed serpent deserves further exploration as a mythological representation of rebellious lands. This characteristic of Koshi bears also on the implications of the fact that item 10 identifies the future Emperor Ōjin’s ablutions as being performed at “Tsunoga at the head of the Koshi road.”⁽²⁶⁾

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6. “Ground cherries” (*hōzuki* 酸醬)

The *Kojiki* compilers gloss the term *akakagachi* (transcribed phonetically) as meaning the same as “today’s” *hōzuki*. *Hōzuki*, often called in English “Chinese lantern plant,” have a bright red berry (hence the alternative English name of “ground cherry”) encased within a papery orange globe-like structure. The graphs 酸醬 refer to the inner berry. The commentators to the SNKBZ edition of *Nihon shoki* explain the graph 酸 (“sour”) as alluding to the acidity of the berry’s juice and the graph 醬 (*hishio*, the mash from which soy sauce is produced) as evoking the large number of seeds present in the juice. They note as well that the graph 漿 (*komizu*, “thin rice gruel”), found in an alternative transcription of *hōzuki* as 酸漿, evokes the juice’s viscous texture.⁽²⁷⁾

Endnotes

- (1) One *sato* as defined in ancient Japan was equivalent to 533.5 m in modern terms. Thirty-five *sato* would thus be 18.68 km. (TN)
- (2) Uegaki, *Fudoki*, pp. 256–57.
- (3) Uegaki, *Fudoki*, pp. 218–19.

- (4) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 208–209, 220–23.
- (5) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 120–21.
- (6) See *Kojiki gaku* 1 (2015), pp. 46–48 (Japanese original); 6 (2020), p. 269 (English translation).
- (7) On this point, see also text note 7 in chapter 24 below.
- (8) Kawashima, “Kojiki shinmei no gengi shaken”; Sema, “Kojiki shinmei e no apurōchi josetsu,” pp. 331–33; Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 46.
- (9) Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 46n3; Sema, “Kojiki shinmei e no apurōchi josetsu,” pp. 331–33.
- (10) See *Kojiki gaku* 6 (2020), pp. 23–26. Great Land of Eight Islands is an epithet for the land under imperial rule. The account of Izanaki and Izanami giving birth to the land notes that the term alludes to the two deities’ first having given birth to the eight islands named there. The *Kojiki* does not include Koshi among the eight. See *Kojiki gaku* 1 (2015), pp. 38–40, 45 (Japanese original); 6 (2020), p. 274, 283 (English translation).
- (11) Uegaki, *Fudoki*, pp. 230–31.
- (12) For further discussion of this issue, see Taniguchi, “‘Kojiki’ yamata no orochi taiji shinwa no kūkan ninshiki.”
- (13) *Kojiki gaku* 6 (2020), pp. 23–24.
- (14) *Kojiki gaku* 6 (2020), pp. 23–24.
- (15) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 170–72.
- (16) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 188–89.
- (17) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 188–89.
- (18) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 192–93.
- (19) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 196–97.
- (20) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 204–205.
- (21) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 252–53.
- (22) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 468–69.
- (23) Komaki, “‘Kojiki’ kunizukuri kami no kayō.”
- (24) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 26–28, 30–31, 32–34, 276–78.
- (25) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 396.
- (26) On this point, see Inoue, “‘Kojiki’ ni okeru ‘Tsunoga’ no seikaku.”
- (27) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 91–92, 91n4.

Chapter 22: The Eight-tailed Serpent (II)

Hayasusanoo no mikoto thereupon made a declaration to the old man. “Will you present this daughter of yours to me?” he asked. “[Your request] fills me with awe,” the old man replied, “and yet, I am not familiar with your name (1).” “I am the younger brother of Amaterasu ōmikami,” Susanoo declared. “I have just now descended from the heavens.” “To hear that fills us with awe,” Anazuchi and Tanazuchi said. “We will present [our daughter] to you.” Hayasusanoo no mikoto thereupon transformed the maiden into a peerless long comb (2), which he stuck into his hair bun. “Make [strong] liquor by brewing it many times,” he commanded Anazuchi and Tanazuchi. “Also, encircle [this place] with a fence, make eight gates in the fence, set up eight shelves at each gate, put a large basin on each shelf, and fill each basin with the many-times-brewed liquor. Then wait.”

[Anazuchi and Tanazuchi] prepared the items as commanded and waited, whereupon the eight-tailed serpent appeared, just as [Anazuchi] had said [it would]. It dipped a head into each basin and drank the liquor. It drank until it was so drunk that it lay down and fell asleep. Then Hayasusanoo no mikoto drew the ten-hands-long sword he bore at his side and cut the serpent up into pieces (3). The Hinokawa river ran red with blood (4). Now, when [Susanoo] cut into the [serpent’s] innermost tail, the blade of his sword broke. Wondering at this, he used the sword tip to slice [the tail] open and looked inside. There lay the great *tsumuha* 都牟羽 sword (5). [He] extracted the great sword and, thinking it to be something strange (6), reported [its discovery] and presented it to Amaterasu (7). This is the great sword Kusanagi 草那芸 (8).

Text Notes

1. “[Your request] fills me with awe, and yet, I am not familiar with your name” (*Kashikoshi. Mata, mina o satorazu* 恐。亦、不覚御名)

In line with the usual reading of the graph 亦 as *mata* (“again,” “also”), most text editions and commentators today construe this sequence of graphs as here. It is difficult, however, to parse satisfactorily the phrase’s overall meaning. Motoori Norinaga glosses the graph 亦 as the adversative conjunction *keredo* (“although,” “but”). He reads the phrase as a whole as *kashikokeredo mina o shirazu* and takes it to mean “although I should quickly say yes . . .”⁽¹⁾ Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro read the phrase as *kashikoki ni mo mata mina o satorazu* 恐きにも亦御名を覚らず, with *ni* functioning as a conjunctive particle meaning “and further” and *mo* as a conclusive particle conveying emotion: “Although I am filled with awe, I am not familiar with your name.”⁽²⁾ As no other instances of such a usage of 亦 can be found in the *Kojiki*, both these readings also pose difficulties.

As for the second half of this phrase (“I am not familiar with your name”), the verb *satoru* here does not seem to mean simply “I do not know.” Does not Anazuchi say he is “filled with awe” in part because he should recognize his interlocutor yet fails to do so? By way of comparison, when Ōanamuji goes to Nenokatasu kuni and encounters Suseribime, her father, Susanoo, declares, “This is the miserable man from Ashihara.” Similarly, when Hoori 火遠理 travels to the palace of the sea deity and catches the attention of Toyotamabime 豊玉毗売, her father, the sea deity, states, “This is Soratsuhitaka 虚空津日高, the son of Amatsuhitaka 天津日高.”⁽³⁾ In the passage at hand, Anazuchi is the father of a maiden courted in a similar manner. Nevertheless he is unable to perceive who the man is. Seen from this perspective, does it not make sense to take the phrase in question to mean “Your request fills me with awe, and it is most regrettable that I do not recognize who you are”?

Ueda Baku 植田麦 takes this interpretation a step further. For reference, let us

quote here his reading of the implications of this passage:

Anazuchi's statement "I am not familiar with your name" does not mean simply that he does not know his interlocutor's name, but rather that he does not understand his interlocutor's true nature. In response, Susanoo does not reveal his name but instead describes himself as Amaterasu's younger brother, who has descended from the heavens. This manner of self-identification likely reflects the associations the name Susanoo has acquired in the preceding passages: a violent deity who wreaked havoc in Takamanohara. Instead, what is emphasized here is his kinship with his sister, who stands at the pinnacle of the heavenly deities. Likewise, there is no reference to his having been banished: he has descended voluntarily from the heavens. With this statement, Susanoo's role in the narrative takes a dramatic turn.⁽⁴⁾

2. "[Susanoo] thereupon transformed the maiden into a peerless long comb" (*sunawachi yutsu tsumakushi ni sono otome o torinashite* 乃於湯津爪櫛取成其童女而)

Some scholars hold that Susanoo turns Kushinada hime into a comb (*kushi* 櫛) because combs were regarded as magical objects endowed with the power to ward off malevolent influences. Others link the choice of this implement to the appearance of the same graph in the transcription of the maiden's name (櫛名田比売). Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu argue that "Susanoo does not make the maiden smaller but transforms her as is into a comb. That Susanoo then inserts this comb into his hair bun serves to emphasize his immense size."⁽⁵⁾

3. "Cut the serpent up into pieces" (*sono hemi o kirichirashishikaba* 切散其蛇者)

The creature previously called “the eight-tailed serpent” (*yamata orochi* 八俣大蛇) is here referred to as a “snake” (*hebi/hemi* 蛇). This shift presumably serves to make clear that the creature was, in fact, a giant snake deity. Since this passage describes Susanoo’s slaying the creature, referring to it here as a mere “snake” might also be intended to belittle it.

4. “The Hinokawa river ran red with blood” (*Hinokawa chi ni narite nagareki* 肥河变血而流)

As noted in the preceding chapter, the *Kojiki* links the eight-tailed serpent closely to the Hinokawa river. The phrase at hand is one instance of these links. The *Nihon shoki* does not establish such links.

5. “The great *tsumuha* sword” (*tsumuha no tachi* 都牟羽之大刀)

The meaning of the term *tsumuha* is unclear. The passage states that when Susanoo sliced open the tail of the serpent, “there lay the great *tsumuha* sword.” The phrasing suggests that *tsumuha* is probably not the sword’s name, but rather a term describing its attributes, similar to the “ten-hands-long sword” (*totsuka no tsurugi*) that Izanaki used to slaughter Kagutsuchi.⁽⁶⁾

6. “[Thinking it to be] something strange” (*ayashiki mono* 異物)

Matsumoto Naoki 松本直樹 argues that the expression “something strange” does not convey a positive or negative appraisal of the sword. Rather the phrase indicates that Susanoo is unable to assess the great sword’s true value and thus seeks Amaterasu’s judgment of it.⁽⁷⁾ Tosa Hidesato 土佐秀里, on the other hand, takes the phrase to mean that Susanoo sees the great sword as possessing a mysterious value.⁽⁸⁾

7. “Reported [the discovery of the sword] to [Amaterasu]” (*mōshiaigetamaiki*

白上)

Most commentators interpret this phrase as conveying two separate actions, *mōshi* 白し (“to humbly report”) and *agu* 上 ぐ (“to present [sth to sb],” “to offer respectfully”). Matsumoto Naoki, however, points out that no example can be found in the *Kojiki* of the verb *agu* 上 ぐ used alone with the meaning of “to offer.” He thus concludes that the term *mōshiagu* here should be understood as meaning just “to humbly report.” He argues further that the text makes no explicit reference to the transporting of the sword to the heavens.⁽⁹⁾

One other instance of the digraph 白上 can be found in the *Kojiki*, in the episode where Ōkuninushi encounters Sukunabikona. In that episode, having been told that the strange deity who came from beyond the sea is Sukunabikona and is the child of Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto, Ōkuninushi seeks to confirm this with the deities of the heavenly realm. He thus “reported [the matter] to Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto” (*Kamumusuhi no mioya no mikoto ni mōshiagetamaishikaba* 白上於神産巢日御祖命).⁽¹⁰⁾ This instance contains no reference to the offering of a specific object, but rather, describes an entity from the earthly realm making an inquiry to a deity from the heavenly realm and receiving the latter’s instructions. If this example is adopted as a point of reference, one might perhaps also interpret *mōshiage* in the passage at hand as describing a request for guidance, in this case a request from Susanoo, who was unable to decide how to handle the sword, to Amaterasu. Would Susanoo’s refraining from deciding things on his own then also imply that he saw the sword as possessing a certain value?

8. “The great sword Kusanagi” (*Kusanagi no tachi* 草那芸之大刀)

Kusa means “stink,” a word that incorporates a sense of disgust and aversion. *Nagi* is an ancient term for “snake.” Satake Akihiro 佐竹昭広 suggests that the name Kusanagi expresses the feelings of fright and danger that snakes, with their ferocity, aroused in people. Okada Seishi 岡田精司 takes Kusanagi to be a general

term and suggests that a number of swords with this name may have existed.⁽¹¹⁾

Views diverge as to this name's place in the myth narrative. In its account of Yamatotakeru's 日本武尊 expedition to the east, the *Nihon shoki* includes a variant explaining that the sword, which Yamatotakeru used to escape from being trapped by rebels, acquired the name Kusanagi as a result (see the following further comment). The main text of the eighth section of the Age of Deities chapter notes the existence of this variant.⁽¹²⁾ The *Kojiki*, however, does not include any comparable explanation of the name's derivation. If the term "great *tsumuha* sword" is assumed to be a descriptive rather than proper name, it is possible that the myths referred to the sword as Kusanagi ("terrible snake") from the beginning.

Further comment: The Kusanagi sword. The Kusanagi sword emerges from one of the tails of the eight-tailed serpent slain by Susanoo. The main text of the eighth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* transcribes the name as Kusanagi no tsurugi 草薙劍 and the *Kojiki* transcribes it as Kusanagi no tachi 草那芸之大刀.⁽¹³⁾ According to the main text of the *Nihon shoki*, Susanoo subsequently presented the Kusanagi sword to "the heavenly deity" (Amaterasu), and the *Kojiki* and the first variant of the ninth section of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* relate that it was bestowed on Ninigi together with a large curved jewel and mirror at the time of his descent from heaven.⁽¹⁴⁾ According to *Kogo shūi*, during the reign of Emperor Sujin, the sword was entrusted to Toyosukiirihime 豊鍬入姫 and worshiped at Kasanui 笠縫 in Yamato.⁽¹⁵⁾ The *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* relate that when Yamatotakeru set off on his expedition to the east during the reign of Emperor Keikō, he stopped to worship at the Ise Shrines and there received the Kusanagi sword from Yamatohime 倭比売, his aunt. At Suruga 駿河 he encountered rebels who tried to trap him by setting fire to the grassy plain, but he escaped by mowing the grass with the sword. On his way back to the court, he stopped at Owari. Having left the sword there

with Miyazuhime 美夜受比売, he faced the mountain deity at Ibukiyama 伊吹山 without the sword's protection and, as a consequence, eventually succumbed to the noxious vapors loosed by the deity.⁽¹⁶⁾

The chronicle of Emperor Keikō in the *Nihon shoki* goes on to record that the Kusanagi sword that Yamatotakeru had carried is now kept at Atsuta Shrine 熱田社 in Ayuchi 年魚市 district, in the land of Owari.⁽¹⁷⁾ A much later section of the text states, however, that in the seventh year of the reign of Emperor Tenchi (668), the monk Dōgyō 道行 stole the Kusanagi sword and tried to flee to Silla, only to encounter a storm and turn back.⁽¹⁸⁾ The precise circumstances of what occurred are unclear, but a subsequent entry for 686 records that a divination traced the illness of Emperor Tenmu to the anger (*tatari*) of the Kusanagi sword and that as a result it was sent forthwith to the Atsuta Shrine.⁽¹⁹⁾ It has thus been pointed out that the Kusanagi sword possibly was kept for a time at the court until the reign of Tenmu.

According to a variant explanation incorporated in the chronicle of Emperor Keikō in the *Nihon shoki*, the name Kusanagi derives from the fact that it “mowed” (*nagi* 薙) the “grass” (*kusa* 草) when rebellious forces tried to trap Yamatotakeru by setting fire to the grass. The story of cutting the grass with the sword, however, appears only in this variant explanation and in the *Kojiki* narrative, which is considered to represent a late stage in the formation of the legend. The *Nihon shoki* main text simply relates that Yamatotakeru forestalled the rebels' plot by using a flint to set a backfire.⁽²⁰⁾ It also has been argued that other instances of the term *nagu* used to mean to “mow” cannot be found in ancient texts. Although the *Nihon shoki* variant explanation states that the sword “mowed down the grass” (*kusa o nagiharau* 薙攘…草), the *Kojiki* relates that Yamatotakeru used it to “cut down the grass” (*kusa o kariharai* 刈撥草). *Wamyō ruijushō* 和名類聚抄 gives the reading *kusakiri* for the digraph 刈薙 and *Ruiju myōgishō* 類聚名義抄 gives the reading *karu* for the graph 薙. The *Nihon shoki* variant explanation of

the derivation of the name Kusanagi is thus held to be forced.⁽²¹⁾ As mentioned in the text note, the explanation of the name held at present to be most persuasive is that *kusa* derives from the word “stink,” which incorporates a sense of disgust or aversion, and that *nagi* is a local dialect for snake.⁽²²⁾

The Kusanagi sword is held to be one of the three imperial regalia and is offered to the emperor during the ceremonies of accession. Ancient sources, however, do not describe a fixed set of the three items of jewel, mirror, and sword as the imperial regalia, and this has long been a point of debate.

Figure 1 reproduces the descriptions in the *Nihon shoki*, *ritsuryō* codes, and ritual protocols of the items presented by the attendant vassals to the new emperor as regalia at the time of accession. These items are summed up as “insignia,” a designation expressed by different combinations of graphs meaning “imperial seal” (*jifu* 璽符, *ji* 璽, *jiin* 璽印, *jiju* 璽綬). With the institution of the *ritsuryō* administrative system, this process was specified in article 13 on accession to the throne (*senso* 踐祚) in the Code Concerning Deity Matters (*Jingiryō* 神祇令). Subsequently the ceremony was shifted together with the recitation by the Nakatomi of the *Amatsukami no yogoto* 天神寿詞 (Celebratory Liturgy of the Heavenly Deities) from the accession ceremony (*sokuishiki* 即位式) to the second day of the Daijōsai, where it was conducted as “the preliminary rites of the day of the dragon” (*tatsunohi zendan gyōji* 辰日前段行事).⁽²³⁾

Figure 1

1. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of Emperor Ingyō 允恭天皇,” first year, twelfth month

The assembled vassals rejoiced. The same day they presented the **imperial insignia** (*jifu*) and paid obeisance to him.⁽²⁴⁾

2. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of the Period Prior to the Accession of Emperor

Seinei 清寧天皇”

Leading the assembled vassals, Ōtomo no Muroya no *ōmuraji* 大伴室屋大連 presented the **imperial insignia** (*ji*) to the crown prince.⁽²⁵⁾

3. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of the Period Prior to the Accession of Emperor Kenzō 顯宗天皇”

The myriad officials gathered in great numbers. Crown Prince Oke 億計 took the **imperial insignia** (*ji*), and put them on the emperor’s seat.⁽²⁶⁾

4. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of Emperor Keitai 繼體天皇,” first year, second month, *kinoeuma* day

Ōtomo no Kanamura no *ōmuraji* 大伴金村大連 knelt and presented the **imperial insignia** (*jifu*) of the **mirror and sword** to the emperor and paid obeisance to him.⁽²⁷⁾

5. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of the Period Prior to the Accession of Emperor Senka 宣化天皇”

The assembled vassals offered the **sword and mirror** to His Highness Takeo hirokuni oshitate 武小広国押盾尊 [Emperor Senka] so that he acceded to the imperial throne.⁽²⁸⁾

6. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of the Period Prior to the Accession of Empress Suiko 推古天皇”

The myriad officials presented a petition urging [Suiko to accede to the throne]. The third time they presented it, she at length accepted. Thereupon they offered the **imperial insignia** (*jifu*) to her.⁽²⁹⁾

7. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of Emperor Jomei 舒明天皇,” first year, first month, *hinoeuma* day

The great ministers and assembled high officials together presented the **imperial insignia** (*jiin*) to Prince Tamura 田村皇子 [Emperor Jomei].⁽³⁰⁾

8. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of the Period Prior to the Accession of Emperor

Kōtoku 孝徳天皇”

Empress Ametoyotakara ikashihi tarashihime 天豊財重日足姫天皇
[Empress Kōgyoku] took the **imperial insignia** (*jifu*) and bestowed
them [on Emperor Kōtoku], yielding the throne to him.⁽³¹⁾

9. *Nihon shoki*, “Chronicle of Empress Jitō 持統天皇,” fourth year, first
month, *tsuchinoetora* day

The head of the Office of Deities Nakatomi no Ōshima no asomi 中臣
大島朝臣 read the *Amatsukami no yogoto*. When he finished, Imibe no
sukune Shikobuchi 忌部宿禰色夫知 presented the **sacred insignia**
(*shinji* 神璽) of the **sword and mirror** to the empress.⁽³²⁾

10. *Jingiryō*, article 13, accession to the throne

On the day of the accession the Nakatomi should read the *Amatsukami
no yogoto*. The Imibe should present the **sacred insignia** (*shinji*) of the
sword and mirror.⁽³³⁾

11. *Gishiki*, Protocol for accession and Daijōsai, 2

The Office of Deities [head] Nakatomi enters from the eastern door
of the Giranmon 儀鸞門 gate, carrying [a branch of] sakaki. When
he reaches the place marker [*hen* 版], he kneels and offers up the
Amatsukami no yogoto. (The assembled officials all kneel together.) The
Imibe present the **sacred insignia** (*shinji*) of the **sword and mirror**,
and all withdraw together.⁽³⁴⁾

As to what specifically the terms *jifu* and *ji* refer, the sources quoted in figure
1 indicate that it included only the two items of mirror and sword. Some scholars
take the term “sacred insignia” (*shinji* 神璽) figuring in article 13 of the *Jingiryō*
on accession to the throne as meaning “jewel,” and consequently hold that this
article speaks of the “three imperial regalia” of jewel, mirror, and sword.⁽³⁵⁾ As
the explanation of this article in the commentary *Ryō no gige* 令義解 states,

however, “‘insignia’ (*ji*) is a term used of the mirror and sword.” “Insignia” (*ji*, *shinji*) thus appears to be a descriptive term characterizing the mirror and sword. The now-lost commentary *Ryōshaku* 令釈, quoted within *Ryō no shūge* 令集解, adds, “According to the Tang codes, *ji* is a seal made of white jade.”⁽³⁶⁾ This usage, too, shows that *ji* cannot be understood as meaning “jewel” as such.⁽³⁷⁾ To be sure, the pertinent entry in the chronicle of Empress Jitō in the *Nihon shoki* lists the four graphs 神璽劍鏡 without any intervening possessive. It thus would not be impossible to interpret the sequence of graphs as referring to the three items of “jewel, sword, and mirror.” Nevertheless, the entries in the *Jingiryō* and *Gishiki* do include the possessive (神璽之劍鏡). In these cases, *jingi* clearly serves to characterize “mirror and sword” and the phrase does not make sense if it is interpreted as “jewel.”

According to Sasō Mamoru 笹生衛, offerings to the deities (including miniature replicas) found at ancient ritual sites almost always include jewels, mirror, and sword as a set of three items.⁽³⁸⁾ The idea of offering deities “three sacred articles” was thus unquestionably well established throughout the archipelago from ancient times. It does not necessarily follow, however, that this same set was offered to the new emperor as part of the ceremony of accession to the throne. The account of the people of Wa in the *History of the Wei* records that when Himiko 卑弥呼, the Wa queen, sent an envoy to the Wei court, the Wei Emperor Mingdi 明帝 bestowed on her various items. In addition to a gold seal with purple cords, these were “things that she liked” (*kōbutsu* 好物), including two swords five-*shaku* 尺 long and one hundred bronze mirrors. She was to show these to the people of her land so they would know the emperor’s regard for her.⁽³⁹⁾ Why were swords and bronze mirrors “things that she liked” and why was it that she should show them to the people of her land?

As is well known, from the Kofun period, the central rulers distributed bronze mirrors to regional leaders as signs of authority.⁽⁴⁰⁾ It is thought that superiors

likewise presented subordinates with swords with inlaid inscriptions on the blade or blade back as a strategy for establishing a political hierarchy.⁽⁴¹⁾ In an age when the inhabitants of the archipelago had not yet developed the skills to make mirrors and swords, these items all had to be imported from abroad. Those able to possess these items were thus either the highest ruler—the great king (*daiō* 大王)—who was able to obtain them from abroad through diplomatic relations, or the powerful central and regional figures who received them from the king. Wa rulers such as Himiko and the regional leaders consequently alike sought the mirrors and swords that symbolized their political status and showed that their position was recognized by the Chinese court or the central Wa ruler.⁽⁴²⁾

If we can assume that the *Nihon shoki* accounts of presentation to the new ruler of a mirror and sword reflect the historical actuality of the value placed on these symbols of political authority, that situation presumably continued even after the technological skills for producing those items were transmitted to the archipelago. The ongoing value of these items can be seen in the reign of Jitō, when the new elements of the reading of the *Amatsukami no yogoto* by the Nakatomi and the presentation of the sacred insignia of the mirror and sword by the Imibe were added to the accession ceremony.⁽⁴³⁾ The codification of these elements in the *Jingiryō* further solidified their position within the political order. The regalia of the mirror and sword presented as part of the rites of accession and the “three sacred items” used in deity rites may partially overlap, but as the above discussion shows, it is likely that they differed in nature.

It also cannot be said for sure that the Kusanagi sword was used from the time that it became customary to present a mirror and sword as part of the ceremony of accession. As mentioned in the text note, a number of swords known as “Kusanagi” likely existed in the ancient period. Given this circumstance, quite probably one “Kusanagi” that was thought to be endowed with special spiritual powers came to be singled out in conjunction with the consolidation of the custom

of presenting a sword in the accession ceremony. It was this “Kusanagi” that then became the Kusanagi symbolizing imperial authority.

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Endnotes

- (1) Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 391, 399.
- (2) Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 218, 218n11.
- (3) *Kojiki gaku* 6 (2020), pp. 7, 9; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 128–29.
- (4) Ueda, “Susanoo no mikoto no jiko kitei to bunmyakujo no imi.”
- (5) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 70n4.
- (6) See *Kojiki gaku* 2 (2016), pp. 2–3 (Japanese original); 7 (2021), p. 309 (English translation).
- (7) Matsumoto, “Amaterasu ōmikami ni mōshiage tamaiki, kore wa Kusanagi no tachi zo’ ni tsuite.”
- (8) Tosa, “Kibutsu to ibutsu.”
- (9) Matsumoto, “Amaterasu ōmikami ni mōshiage tamaiki, kore wa Kusanagi no tachi zo’ ni tsuite.”
- (10) See KKSJK 14 (2022), p. 121 (Japanese original).
- (11) Satake, *Kogo zatsudan*, pp. 30–31; Okada, *Kodai saishi no shiteki kenkyū*, pp. 242–45.
- (12) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 92–93, 374–75.
- (13) A note incorporated within the *Nihon shoki* main text states that according to one variant the sword’s original name was Ama no murakumo no tsurugi 天叢雲劍 and that this was changed to Kusanagi at the time of Yamatotakeru. Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 92–93. The *Kojiki* also refers to the sword as the “great *tsumuha* 都牟羽 sword” (some manuscript versions have *tsumugari* 都牟刈 rather than *tsumuha*).
- (14) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 92–93, 128–29; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 114–15. The main text of section nine of the Age of Deities chapter of the *Nihon shoki* does not refer to the bestowal of these items, and the second variant mentions only a mirror as being bestowed on Oshihomimi (Ninigi’s father, who initially was to descend to Ashihara no nakatsukuni). *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 138–39.

- (15) Nishimiya, *Kogo shūi*, p. 38.
- (16) Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 222–35; Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 374–85. The *Kojiki* and *Kogo shūi* place the episode of escaping the fire at Sagamu 相武 [相模] rather than Suruga. Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 224–25; Nishimiya, *Kogo shūi*, p. 24.
- (17) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 388–89.
- (18) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 4, pp. 278–79. *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (late twelfth century) and *Atsuta daijōgū engi* 熱田太神宮縁起 identify Dōgyō as coming from Silla.
- (19) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 4, pp. 460–61.
- (20) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 374–75.
- (21) Halla and Mōri, “‘Kusanagi no tsurugi’ ni tsuite.”
- (22) Yoshida Kenji, “Atsutasha to kusanagi no tsurugi kara mita sanshu no jingi seiritsu no ichi sokumen,” pp. 203–205; Okada, *Kodai saishi no shiteki kenkyū*, pp. 245–48.
- (23) See the articles on *senso daijōsai gi ge* 踐祚大嘗祭儀下 in *Gishiki*, pp. 109–10; and *senso daijōsai jō, tatsunohi dan* 踐祚大嘗祭条・辰日段 in Torao, ed., *Engi shiki*, vol. 1, pp. 438–39. Kamo Masanori 加茂正典 holds that the shift from the accession ceremony to the Daijōsai of the Nakatomi recitation of *Amatsukami no yogoto* and the presentation by the Imibe of the sacred insignia (*shinji* 神璽) of the mirror and sword occurred after the Daijōsai for Emperor Kōnin 光仁天皇 (709–781, r. 770–781). Kamo, *Nihon kodai sokui gireishi no kenkyū*, pp. 159–89.
- (24) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 100–101.
- (25) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 220–21.
- (26) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 236–39.
- (27) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 288–89.
- (28) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 346–47.
- (29) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 528–29.
- (30) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 4, pp. 38–39.
- (31) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 4, pp. 110–11.
- (32) Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 4, pp. 500–501.
- (33) *Ryō no gige*, p. 79.
- (34) *Gishiki*, pp. 109–10.

- (35) Nishimiya, “Sanshu no jingi ni tsuite.”
- (36) Miura et al., *Teihon Ryō no shūge shakugi*, pp. 178–79.
- (37) Article 40 of the section of the codes on the format for official documents and seals (*Kushikiryō* 公式令) concerns the “imperial sacred seal” (*tenshi shinji* 天子神璽). which states that the term “refers to the celebratory seal (*yogoto no shirushi* 寿璽) [presented] in the ceremony of accession. It is a treasure and is not actually used.” From this it appears that an object referred to as *shinji* also existed, but the article describes it as a seal that was kept as a treasure rather than used for official purposes.
- (38) Personal communication.
- (39) Ishihara, *Gishi wajin den*, p. 51.
- (40) Kobayashi, *Kofun jidai no kenkyū*.
- (41) Kawaguchi, “Zuijintō to ōkimi no seiritsu”; Satō, “Yūmei tōken no kashi, kenshō.”
- (42) In the fourth and fifth centuries it appears that the Wa kings secured these symbols of authority directly from abroad, while the regional leaders obtained such items from the Wa king or by relying on the king to negotiate for them on their behalf. See Satō, “Kofun jidai no ōkimi to chiiki shuchō no fukuzoku kankei.”
- (43) Okada, *Kodai saishi no shiteki kenkyū*, pp. 35–83.

Frequently Used Bibliographic Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for frequently cited compendia and sources

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- KKSKK *Kokugakuin Daigaku Kenkyū Kaihatsu Suishin Kikō kiyō* 國學院大學研究開発推進機構紀要. 2009–.
- MNZ *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* 本居宣長全集. Ed. Ōno Susumu 大野晋 and Ōkubo Tadashi 大久保正. 23 vols. Chikuma Shobō 筑摩書房, 1968–1993.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 日本古典文学大系. 102 vols. Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1957–1967.
- NKBZ *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 日本古典文学全集. 51 vols. Shōgakukan 小学館, 1970–1976.
- NST *Nihon shisō taikai* 日本思想大系. 67 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1970–1982.
- SNKBZ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集. 88 vols. Shōgakukan, 1994–2001.

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