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The *Kojiki*'s Worldview: Entangled Worlds of Gods and Humans

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Introduction

THE *Kojiki* 古事記 consists of three fascicles. This tripartite structure is commonly understood to organize the work's content in the following manner: the first fascicle depicts the world of gods, the second, a world inhabited by both gods and humans, and the third, the world of humans. However, does such a simplistic reading really enable us to grasp the inner structure of the *Kojiki* as a literary composition? In the preface, the author Ō no Yasumaro 太安万侶 explains the work's structure in the following way:

In general, the account starts with the beginning of heaven and earth and ends with the august reign of Owarida 小治田.

Thus, everything from Ame no Minakanushi no Kami 天御中主神 through Hikonagisatake Ugayafukiaezu no Mikoto 日子波限建鵜草葺不合命 is included in the first fascicle.

Everything from Heavenly Sovereign Kamuyamatoiwarebiko 神倭伊波礼毗古 through the august reign of Homuda 品陀 is included in the second fascicle.

Everything from Emperor Ōsazaki 大雀 through the august reign at the grand palace of Owarida is included in the third fascicle.

These three fascicles are brought together and presented to Your Majesty with reverence.¹

(Preface)

* This article is a translation of Taniguchi Masahiro 谷口雅博, "'Kojiki' no sekai ninshiki: Kōsaku suru kami no sekai to hito no sekai" 『古事記』の世界認識—交錯する神の世界と人の世界—. *Higashi Ajia bunka kenkyū* 東アジア文化研究 2 (2017), pp. 1–15.

1. Translations from the *Kojiki* follow the author's transcription of the original *kanbun* text, which is based on Nishimiya, *Kojiki*. The translations of the *Kojiki* into English by Philippi and Heldt as well as the recent translation into German by Antoni have been consulted.

Ō no Yasumaro does not mention a boundary between an age of gods and an age of humans. This distinguishes the *Kojiki* from the *Nihon shoki* 日本書記, whose first two fascicles are titled “fascicles of the age of gods” and suggest a different worldview. There are sections in all three fascicles of the *Kojiki* that seem to depict a world of gods *and* humans or a two-layered world inhabited by both gods and humans. In this article I will consider the *Kojiki*’s worldview by examining characters that seem to be related to both worlds, such as Ōkuninushi no Kami 大国主神 in the first fascicle, Yamatotakeru no Mikoto 倭建命 in the second fascicle, and the emperors Nintoku 仁徳 and Yūryaku 雄略 in the third fascicle.

Heavenly Time and Earthly Time

In considering the *Kojiki*’s worldview, I think it worthwhile to start from an investigation of how time is presented in the *Kojiki* myths. This includes not only direct descriptions of the passage of time but also the succession of generations. When parents give birth to a child, this signifies the birth of a new generation and thus results in a perception of the passage of time. However, one has to take into consideration the mode of the birth of deities in the *Kojiki*. The deities who appear at the beginning of heaven and earth are not born through sexual reproduction involving a male and a female deity but are rather depicted as beings who “became” (*narishi* 成). Consequently, there is no relationship between “giving birth” and “being born” and thus no succession of generations. That there is no succession of generations seems to suggest that there is also no perception of the passage of time. Conversely, on earth the two deities Izanagi no Mikoto 伊耶那岐命 and Izanami no Mikoto 伊耶那美命 produce lands and deities through sexual reproduction. It seems probable that this is the reason why the flow of time is not felt in heaven, whereas it is perceived on earth. However, the lands produced by Izanagi and Izanami do not give birth to a succeeding generation, and neither do the deities born through their union bring forth one generation after the other. The event that truly sets in motion the succession of one generation after the other, and thus the steady flow of time, is the marriage of Susanoo no Mikoto 須佐之男命 and Kushinadahime 櫛名田比売.

The different perception of time in heaven and on earth is observable in various episodes. For instance, in the myth of the pacification of the Central Land of Reed Plains (*Ashihara no nakatsukuni* 葦原中国) we are informed that three years passed after Ame no Hohi no Kami 天菩比神 was sent down to earth and eight years passed after Amewakahiko 天若日子 was dispatched. The passage of time is probably mentioned in this case since the deities have been dispatched to earth. The “eight days and eight nights of feasting” mentioned in the episode of Amewakahiko’s funeral also seems to be based on the perception of time on earth. In the *Nihon shoki*’s description of the

same scene (chapter 9, variant 1), the location of the funeral is identified as “heaven” and no specific number of days is provided. In the *Kojiki*'s second fascicle, we are told that at the beginning of his eastward expedition Emperor Jinmu 神武² stayed at the palace of Okada 岡田 in Tsukushi 竺紫 for one year, at the palace of Takeri 多祁理 in the land of Aki 阿岐 for seven years, and at the palace of Takashima 高嶋 in Kibi 吉備 for eight years. This section of the text, too, describes the flow of time on earth. In the myth of Amaterasu Ōmikami's 天照大御神 concealment in the Heavenly Rock-Cave, on the other hand, the phrase “eternal night (*tokoyo* 常夜) reigned” is employed. The birds appearing in this scene are called “long-crying birds of *tokoyo* 常世.” And the deity Omoikane no Kami 思金神 is in a later section of the text called Tokoyo no Omoikane no Kami 常世思金神. These expressions seem to reflect the perception of the Plain of High Heaven as a realm of eternity.³

It would be wrong to identify the Plain of High Heaven with the *tokoyo* to which Sukunahikona no Kami 少名毗古名神 or Mikenu no Mikoto 御毛沼命 crossed over, not to speak of the *tokoyo* discovered by Tajimamori 多遲摩毛理. In the *Kojiki*, *tokoyo* refers to an otherworld that is only described in the first and second fascicles. If we assume that the term *tokoyo* does not connote a specific location but rather an eternally existing world, the Plain of High Heaven can in fact be characterized as *tokoyo*. It is probably due to this reason that the expressions “long-crying birds of *tokoyo*” and Tokoyo no Omoikane no Kami appear in episodes set in the Plain of High Heaven.

As mentioned above, in the Plain of High Heaven there is no mention of the birth of children through sexual reproduction. This is because the relationship of “giving birth” and “being born” would introduce the passage of time into this eternal realm. The only deity in the Plain of High Heaven whose taking shape involves a relationship of “giving birth” and “being born” is Ninigi no Mikoto 迺迺芸命 (and his sibling Honoakari no Mikoto 火明命). This is related to a problem I have already addressed in an earlier article: it seems that Ninigi descends to earth instead of his father Ame no Oshihomimi no Mikoto 天忍穗耳命 (who had originally been ordered to descend) since he was born as a deity with earthly qualities.⁴ In order to marry a female deity after his descent to earth and create a lineage that is connected through succeeding

2. Against convention, the translator decided against adding dates for the individual emperors mentioned throughout the article since they are treated as protagonists of the *Kojiki* (which does not contain any dates) rather than as historical persons. The introduction of a chronology was one of the innovations of the *Nihon shoki*, which depicts the flow of time in a different manner than the *Kojiki*. The historicity of some of the emperors is disputed.

3. This is according to a footnote in Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 43: “Here *tokoyo* 常世 refers to a world of immortals, that is, to the Plain of High Heaven as perceived from the Central Land of Reed Plains.”

4. Taniguchi, *Kojiki no hyōgen to bunmyaku*, pp. 161–71.

generations with the first emperor, it was necessary for the deity dispatched to earth to have earthly qualities. The text moreover reports that Ninigi's son Hiko Hohodemi no Mikoto 日子穗穗手見命 dwelt at the palace of Takachiho 高千穂 “for five hundred and eighty years.” This expression also suggests an awareness of the flow of time on earth.

Preceding Ninigi, Susanoo descended to the earth, married a female deity, and created a lineage spanning successive generations. The appearance of an old man and an old woman called Ashinazuchi 足名稚 and Tenazuchi 手名稚, respectively, in the episode of Susanoo's descent signifies that the flow of time on earth had already been set in motion.⁵ There is no one in the Plain of High Heaven who is explicitly described as old. The name of the goddess Ishikoridome no Mikoto 伊斯許理度売命, who is mentioned in the episode of Amaterasu's concealment in the Heavenly Rock-Cave, is written in the *Nihon shoki* using a Chinese character with the meaning “old woman” (姥). However, at least from the characters used in the *Kojiki*, such a meaning of the name cannot be inferred. Seven of Ashinazuchi and Tenazuchi's eight daughters are devoured by a great eight-headed serpent that appeared every year. They are devoured annually without giving birth to children of their own. In other words, the same course of events is repeated every year. In this manner, the same cycle is repeated endlessly and time cannot progress in a linear fashion. I propose that this was one of Susanoo's roles in the mythical plot to enable the passage from cyclical to linear time. In order to change a closed world, an outsider's involvement is necessary. Through Susanoo's marriage with Kushinadahime and the subsequent birth of their children, time begins to flow in a linear fashion from one generation to the next.⁶

Ōkuninushi is Susanoo's descendant in the sixth generation (or in the seventh, if one counts Susanoo's child as the second generation). While it is impossible to compare the two cases directly, if one takes Susanoo and Amaterasu as belonging to the same generation, it can be pointed out that Amaterasu's descendant in the sixth generation is Jinmu's son, the second emperor, Suizei 綏靖, whose reign is treated in the *Kojiki*'s second fascicle. Furthermore, if one takes into consideration Ōkuninushi's genealogy, it spans seventeen generations of deities, counted from Susanoo's child

5. Kobayashi, “Mihitaki no okina.” Kobayashi points out that “among all deities, expressions of old age are only used with regard to these two” and argues that the passage of time during the birth and upbringing of Ashinazuchi and Tenazuchi's eight daughters and their eventual sacrifice to the great eight-headed serpent—all events that are not covered in the *Kojiki* in detail—is expressed in the terms “old woman” and “old man.” When considering the modes of perception and description of time in the *Kojiki*, these remarks are extremely relevant and important. Generally, old people only exist on earth.

6. In the genealogical section following the description of Susanoo's deeds, Susanoo is said to give birth to children. As will be explained below, this mode of describing genealogies as patriarchal successions corresponds to the imperial genealogies in the second and third fascicles.

downward. Perhaps it is for this reason that the god Ōkuninushi, although his account is contained in the first fascicle, is described in some respects like a human.

First Fascicle: Ōkuninushi

The god Ōkuninushi, whose tale is told in the *Kojiki*'s first fascicle, has five different names:

This deity took as his wife a daughter of Sashikuniō no Kami 刺国大神 with the name Sashikuniwakahime 刺国若比売. There was born the child Ōkuninushi no Kami, also called Ōnamuchi no Kami 大穴牟遲神, also called Ashihara no Shikoo no Kami 葦原色許男神, also called Yachihoko no Kami 八千矛神, also called Utsushikunitama no Kami 宇都志国玉神. Altogether he has five names.

(First fascicle, genealogy of Susanoo's descendants)

When one examines the accounts dealing with this deity, one can infer that even though they are tales set in a mythical world, elements of the mundane world are superimposed onto them.

For instance, in an episode relating how the deity (here called Yachihoko) wooed a woman, a character otherwise reserved for emperors (*kō* 幸)⁷ is used to describe his action. For his wife a character connoting “empress” (*kisaki* 后) is employed. In this respect, Ōkuninushi overlaps with the emperors described in the second and third fascicles. Moreover, when Ōkuninushi fashions the land, a deity appears to assist him in this task. In exchange for his assistance, this deity demands to be worshipped by Ōkuninushi. A deity worshipping another deity seems like a strange occurrence, as worshipping gods is the responsibility of humans.⁸

Now Ōkuninushi no Kami lamented and declared: “How am I to fashion this land by myself? What deity can I join with so that we can fashion this land together?” At this time, there was a deity who approached, lighting up the sea. This deity spoke: “If you worship me, I will help you to fashion the land. But if you do not do so, it will be difficult for the land to reach completion.” Then Ōkuninushi no Kami said: “In that case, in what manner should I worship

7. In this instance, the character is used as part of the compound *idemashi* 行幸 (imperial visit).

8. There is one more similar case in the first fascicle of the *Kojiki*. Before his descent to earth, Amaterasu hands Ninigi the mirror that had been used to lure her out of the Heavenly Rock-Cave and instructs him to revere it as if he were worshipping in her presence. The text continues that the mirror and another deity (probably Omoikane) “are worshipped at the shrine of Isuzu of the bell-bracelets,” that is, at the Inner Shrine of Ise. The fact that Amaterasu and Ōmononushi no Kami 大物主神, the deity that assisted Ōkuninushi in fashioning the land, are the only two deities that are worshipped by other deities suggests their importance in the *Kojiki*.

you?” He replied saying: “Worship me on the eastern mountain of the green fence in Yamato.” This is the deity who dwells on Mount Mimoro 御諸.

(First fascicle, Ōkuninushi’s creation of the land)

Moreover, and this applies to Susanoo as well, the entries in the genealogy of Ōkuninushi’s descendants take the form “... took as wife XX. There was born YY.” This corresponds to the form of the imperial genealogies in the second and third fascicles. In general, the myths related to Ōkuninushi show parallels to the accounts of the emperors contained in the second and third fascicles. Although Ōkuninushi’s account belongs to the mythical portion of the work, he is partially described like a character belonging to the mundane world. This connection to the mundane world is emphasized by the fact that many concrete toponyms are mentioned in the myths of Ōkuninushi. Moreover, Ōkuninushi’s alternate name Utsushikunitama no Kami (deity Soul of the Manifest Land) also seems to draw attention to his connection to the mundane world. This name appears one time in the genealogy quoted at the beginning of this section and one time within a narrative. However, in the narrative, all manuscripts use the character *nushi* 主 (master) rather than *tama* 玉 (soul), suggesting that Utsushikunitama no Kami 宇都志国主神 (deity Master of the Manifest Land) was the original form of the name.⁹ The narrative runs as follows:

So when he did as he was told and went to the place where Susanoo no Mikoto dwelt, that deity’s daughter Suseribime 須勢理毗売 came out and saw him, whereupon they exchanged looks and pledged themselves to each other. She went back inside and told her father: “A beautiful deity has come here.” Then the great deity went out to see for himself and said: “This is the one called Ashihara no Shikoo.” Then he invited him inside and made him sleep in a chamber filled with snakes.

...

And so [Susanoo] pursued them [Ōkuninushi and Suseribime] as far as the gentle decline of Yomi 黄泉, where he gazed outward and called out to Ōnamuchi no Kami, saying: “With the sword of life and the bow-and-arrow of life you are holding pursue your brothers and smite them on the hill crests. Chase after them and sweep them into the river rapids. Then, my boy, become Ōkuninushi no Kami, and Utsushikunitama no Kami, and make my

9. This seems to be the only instance where the character *nushi* is confused with *tama* or vice versa. There is a similar case relating to the name Okinaga no Mate no Ōkimi 息長真手王, in which some manuscripts use the character for “soul” (玉) rather than “king” (*ōkimi* 王) as the last character. However, this case should not be conflated with the confusion of the characters *nushi* and *tama* discussed above. Onoda, *Shohon shūsei Kojiki*.

daughter Suseribime your chief wife. Dwell by the foot of Mount Uka 宇迦, root the posts of your palace firmly into the base of the bedrock, and raise the roofbeams up as high as the Plain of High Heaven, you scoundrel!"

So he pursued his eighty brothers, bearing this sword and bow-and-arrow. He pursued them, and smote them on the hill crests. He chased after them and swept them into the river rapids. Then he began to create the land.

(First fascicle, Ōkuninushi's visit to the land Ne no Katasu)

When Susanoo first sees the god his daughter Suseribime has brought home, he says: "This is the one called Ashihara no Shikoo (Ugly Male of the Reed Plains)." This name signifies that he is a deity from the Central Land of Reed Plains, that is, the earth. After his flight from the land Ne no Katasu 根堅州, Susanoo shouts after his son-in-law: "Become Ōkuninushi no Kami (the deity Great Land Master)!" Therefore the narrative starting with the tale of the naked hare of Inaba 稲羽 and leading to the flight from Ne no Katasu is often considered a tale of the deity's maturation: starting out as Ōnamuchi, he finally becomes Ōkuninushi and begins his task of creating the land. However, in this interpretation, Susanoo's second command, "Become Utsushikuninushi no Kami!" tends to be overlooked. One reason for this is that the various modern editions of the *Kojiki* change this name to Utsushikunitama no Kami and interpret it as meaning "the deity of the land soul of the earth." This is then subsumed as one of the many qualities of Ōkuninushi and not given much further attention. However, that the two names Ōkuninushi and Utsushikuninushi are used side by side at this central turning point in the deity's maturation process suggests that both names are of equal importance. If the first name signifies that he is the master (*nushi*) of the great land (*ōkuni*), the second implies that he is the master of the manifest land (*utsushikuni*). Is it not possible that the one name relates to Ōkuninushi's role as ruler of the divine world and the other to his role as ruler of the human world?

Since I have already discussed the term *utsushi* elsewhere,¹⁰ I will not repeat the details here. However, to summarize my findings, the term *utsushi* is used when a being belonging to the divine world manifests itself in the world of humans or, vice versa, when a being belonging to the human world manifests itself in the world of gods. Thus, to become the master of *utsushikuni* means nothing else than to become the ruler of the mundane world of humans. That the tale of Ōkuninushi's visit to Ne no Katasu begins with the appellation Ugly Male of the Reed Plains (Ashihara no Shikoo) and ends with the name Master of the Manifest Land (Utsushikuninushi) being

10. Taniguchi, "Ōkuninushi no kami."

applied to the deity seems to suggest that the Central Land of Reed Plains is transformed into the Manifest Land (*utsushikuni*).

The following scene at the end of Izanagi's visit to Yomotsu Kuni contains the first appearance both of the term *utsushi* and of the appellation "Central Land of Reed Plains":

Then Izanagi no Mikoto proclaimed to the peaches: "As you have aided me, so may you also aid any green-grass mortal (*utsushiki aohitokusa* 都志伎青人草) from the Central Land of Reed Plains who falls into painful straits and suffers in anguish." ... Izanami no Mikoto said: "My beloved brother, if you do this, I will each day strangle to death one thousand of your land's grass mortals." To this Izanagi no Mikoto replied, proclaiming: "My beloved sister, if you do this, I will each day build one thousand five hundred birth huts." From that point on each and every day one thousand people have died, while one thousand five hundred people have been born.

(First fascicle, Yomotsu Kuni)

A number of commonalities can be observed between Izanagi's words and the ones Susano'o addresses to Ōkuninushi quoted above. In both cases, the words are uttered at the gentle decline of Yomi, a boundary marking the exit from an otherworld, and in both cases the words *utsushi* and *ashihara* (reed plains) are mentioned.

It is not clear what Izanagi's expression "any green-grass mortal (*utsushiki aohitokusa*) from the Central Land of Reed Plains" signifies. Judging from Izanami's words "your land's grass mortals," the expression must refer to something that at this point in time already existed in Izanagi's land, that is, in the Central Land of Reed Plains. If read as an origin myth of population growth, it is also possible to interpret the two deities' words as relating to a future point in time after the beginning of the age of humans; however, the formulation here translated as "from that point on" (*koko o mochite* 是以) supports the reading that exactly from this point in time the population of humans increases by five hundred each day. This formulation is used a total of thirty-eight times in the *Kojiki*. In thirty-four cases it is used as a conjunction within the narrative thread. Since, in the remaining four cases, the expression is used to explain the origins of a later phenomenon, it is possible to interpret the case under discussion here in the same way. However, judging from the expression "your land's grass mortals" and from the fact that the passage is dealing with "any green-grass mortal" from the "Central Land of Reed Plains," which is the designation of a mythical world, one is surely justified in concluding that at this point in time there already existed "green-grass mortals." This conclusion is further supported by the manner in which these "grass mortals" are counted. In contrast to the deities mentioned in the *Kojiki*'s mythical section (and to the

emperors and members of the imperial family descended from these deities) who are counted using the character “pillar” (*hashira* 柱), here the character “human” (*tari* 人) is employed to count the “green-grass mortals.” All of this suggests that humans were believed to have existed during the age of gods. Therefore, the prior understanding that the world of gods (first fascicle) comes to an end, to be followed by a world in which gods and humans intermingle (second fascicle), and finally evolve into a world of humans (third fascicle), has to be revised. It might be more correct to state that the *Kojiki* from beginning to end describes a world of gods *and* humans. Possibly, this world is in the first fascicle described from the perspective of a divine world and in the second and third fascicles from the perspective of a human world. Whenever these two worlds come into contact, things described as *utsushi* appear. Of course, a chronological progression takes place between the beginning of the first and the end of the third fascicle. However, this progression cannot be reduced to a transition to the age of humans after the age of gods has come to an end. It rather entails a change from narratives that are set in the world of gods to narratives that are set in the world of humans.

If the name Ōkuninushi signifies that the deity has become the ruler of the Central Land of Reed Plains as a land of gods, the parallel name Utsushikuninushi might well imply that he has become the ruler of the Central Land of Reed Plains that is inhabited by the green-grass mortals. The two names might thus express Ōkuninushi's role as ruler over this double-sided world that includes both the world of gods and the world of the green-grass mortals. In this way, we can infer from Susanoo's words addressed to Ōkuninushi at the edge of Ne no Katasu the two-layered nature of the Central Land of Reed Plains that is both a world of gods and a world of green-grass mortals.¹¹

Second Fascicle: Yamatotakeru

As suggested by the common characterization of the *Kojiki*'s second fascicle as a fascicle of gods and humans, deities often play a role in its narrative. In particular, the account of the first emperor Jinmu Tennō shows a strong connection to the age of gods. For instance, it contains a narrative of how the ancestral deities of the imperial family Amaterasu and Takagi no Kami 高木神 aid their descendant Jinmu's eastern expedition and reports that after his accession to the throne in Yamato he made a daughter of Ōmononushi no Kami 大物主神 his empress. The account of Sujin Tennō's 崇神天皇 reign reports that Ōmononushi caused many plagues until he was placated through the worship of his direct descendant Ōtataneko 意富多多泥古 resulting in

11. Taniguchi, “Ōkuninushi no kami.”

tranquility for the realm and prosperity for the people. The account of Suinin Tennō's 垂仁天皇 reign reports that the great deity of Izumo had put a curse on the emperor's son Homuchiwake 本牟智和氣 and demanded to be worshipped. Ōjin Tennō's 応神天皇 birth and reign is prophesized by Amaterasu and the three gods of Sumiyoshi 住江. Moreover, before his accession to the throne, Ōjin exchanges names with the deity Kehi no Ōkami 氣比大神. As these examples show, many deities appear in the plot of the second fascicle. However, in all these instances, the deities appear in dreams or through the divine possession of a human; no direct encounter of deity and human occurs.¹² The exception to this rule is Yamatotakeru, who, returning from his western expedition, “subdued and pacified all of the mountain deities, river deities, and deities of the sea-straits” only to be ordered by his father Keikō Tennō 景行天皇 to embark on a further expedition to “subdue and pacify the unruly deities and the unsubmissive people of the twelve regions to the east.” During this eastern expedition Yamatotakeru met a large number of deities face to face. Not only are we told that he “subdued and pacified all the unruly mountain and river gods and unsubmissive people,” but also that he confronted the deity of the sea crossing at Hashirimizu 走水, the deity of Ashigara 足柄 pass (a white deer), the deity of Shinano 科野 pass, and the deity of Mount Ibuki 伊服岐 (a white boar). How can this exception be explained?

Moreover, if deities are mentioned in other narratives, their appearance is usually related to oracles or worship, whereas Yamatotakeru competes with the deities who cross his way and subdues them. This is also an important difference. There is only one further example in the *Kojiki* of a human subduing deities: the account of Jinmu's eastern expedition is brought to a close with the words “Thus he subdued and pacified the unruly deities and drove off the unsubmissive people...” But is Yamatotakeru in fact a human?

If one pays attention to the expressions used in the recurring phrases about the subjugation of the east and the west, one realizes that deities are included in the standard phrasing of “unsubmissive people” and “unruly deities.” Here one can already infer the duality of gods and humans. Apart from that, Yamatotakeru kills the deity of Ashigara pass, who appears before him in the form of a white deer, and subdues the deity of Shinano pass. When he wants to cross an ocean called Hashirimizu, the local sea god hinders his progress by stirring up waves, but Yamatotakeru's wife Ototachibanahime 弟橘比売 appeases the deity's wrath by throwing herself into the waves. Finally, he tries to take the deity of Mount Ibuki (a white boar) with his bare hands

12. One could possibly raise the story of Prince Homuchiwake's marriage with a woman called Hinagahime 肥長比売, related in the account of Suinin's reign, as one example of a direct human-divine encounter. The narrative contains elements of a human-animal marriage tale, since Hinagahime's real form is a snake.

but is instead dazed by the deity, ultimately resulting in his death. Yamatotakeru's defeat in this scene is related to the fact that he left behind the sword Kusanagi 草那芸 at the dwelling of a woman called Miyazuhime 美夜受比売.

In this way, Yamatotakeru is presented as a being who encounters many deities. Might this not be due to the fact that he himself was perceived as a nearly-divine being? However, to subdue deities even Yamatotakeru depended on an object that enabled him to achieve this task. What is needed to subjugate a deity is, of course, an object that is connected to the world of gods—in Yamatotakeru's case, the sword Kusanagi. During his eastern expedition, Jinmu's success also depended on such an object, namely a sword that was sent down from heaven instead of Takemikazuchi no Kami 建御雷神.¹³ The intention that underlies the appearance of the sword Kusanagi in this episode was probably to turn the account of Yamatotakeru's eastern expedition into a narrative of the Ise Shrine's, that is, Amaterasu's divine authority. However, in addition to that, one can also say that since it was a mighty sword that had emerged from the great eight-headed serpent, Kusanagi was deemed a manifestation of power that was necessary in order to subdue a deity.¹⁴ But even so, it probably takes a godlike being to handle such a sword.

In the end, Yamatotakeru was defeated by a deity because he had parted with his sword. Even his demise has a divine quality about it:

Now he changed into a giant white bird that soared into heaven and flew toward the shore.

(Second fascicle, account of Keikō's reign)

After his demise, Yamatotakeru is buried by his wives and children who rush to his side from Yamato. But, as quoted above, he turns into a giant white bird who flies away. The story continues like this:

He flew on from that land and rested at Shiki 志幾 in the land of Kōchi 河内. So they built a tomb at that place in which to lay his soul to rest. They named this tomb White Bird Tomb. But [the bird] yet again soared into heaven and flew away.

(Second fascicle, account of Keikō's reign)

In this way, he ultimately soared into "heaven." This "heaven" is possibly nothing else than the Plain of High Heaven mentioned in the *Kojiki*'s first fascicle as the world of

13. On the significance of this sword in the account of Jinmu's eastern expedition, see Inoue, "Kuni o tairageshi tachi."

14. Taniguchi, *Kojiki no hyōgen to bunmyaku*, pp. 249–61.

gods.¹⁵ This conclusion is suggested by some verses, in Yamatotakeru's exchange of songs with Miyazuhime:

But menstrual blood adhered to the hem of Miyazuhime's robe. Noticing this menstrual blood, he sang an august song:

Far off in the firmament
of heavenly Kagu 香具 Mountain
sounding like a sharp sickle
a swan soars across
 as slender and delicate
 as your supple arms.
 Although I wish to use it
 as my pillow...
 Although I desire
 to sleep with you...
 On the hem
 of the robe you are wearing
 the moon has risen.

Then Miyazuhime sang an august song in reply:

O high-shining
prince of the sun,
O my lord
ruling in peace!
 years new as raw gems
 have come and gone,
 moons new as raw gems
 have come and gone.
 Little wonder it is
 that while waiting for you,
 on the robe
 I am wearing
 the moon should rise.

(Second fascicle, account of Keikō's reign)

The part relevant to the present discussion is “Far off in the firmament / of heavenly Kagu Mountain / sounding like a sharp sickle / a swan soars across.” The expression “sounding like a sharp sickle” is commonly taken to mean something along the lines of “squawking in a sharp and loud manner.”¹⁶ Most annotators agree that this part of

15. The relationship between “heaven” and the “Plain of High Heaven” is discussed in Sunairi, *Yamatotakeru densetsu no kenkyū*, and Obata, “Gen Yamatotakeru monogatari.”

16. SNKBZ 1, headnote, p. 229.

the song functions as an introduction to the following verses on Miyazuhime's slender and supple arms. Therefore, the verses "Far off in the firmament / of heavenly Kagu Mountain / sounding like a sharp sickle / a swan soars across" are often viewed as a description of Miyazuhime as well. But this view is questioned by some researchers.¹⁷ Is it not equally possible to view these verses as a description of Yamatotakeru himself? There are other songs, like the divine words of Yachihoko or Ōjin Tennō's song about the crab from Tsunuga 角鹿, in which the speaker begins by calling himself in the third person and later changes to the first person. Especially if one considers Ōjin's song, in which the emperor likens himself to "a crab from far-away Tsunuga," it does not seem unlikely that the verses "sounding like a sharp sickle / a swan soars across" might refer to Yamatotakeru himself. If one reads these verses as foreshadowing Yamatotakeru's later ascent to heaven in the form of a giant white bird, he can in a very real sense be said to soar across "heavenly Kagu Mountain." While Kagu is the name of a mountain situated in Yamato, "heavenly Kagu Mountain" in the *Kojiki* refers to a mountain located in the Plain of High Heaven.¹⁸ To sum up, Yamatotakeru can be understood as a human/deity who has to return to the Plain of High Heaven that still continues to exist in the *Kojiki*'s second fascicle. Due to his position in the *Kojiki*'s plot he could become an ancestral figure of the imperial lineage that after Chūai Tennō's 仲哀天皇 death continued with Ōjin and Nintoku.

Third Fascicle: Nintoku Tennō and Yūryaku Tennō

As mentioned at the outset of this article, the *Kojiki*'s third and last fascicle is commonly thought to depict the age of humans. However, there are aspects in the account of Nintoku, the first emperor described in the third fascicle, that show his deep connection to the age of gods.

First, there is a scene in which Nintoku sings the following song:

When to the glittering
cape of Naniwa 難波
I go and stand
to look over my land,
I behold

17. Yamaji, *Kiki kayō hyōshaku*.

18. Aoki Shūhei argues that because "'heavenly Kagu Mountain' is well known as an important mountain for the imperial family, one can therefore also read this as an expression referring to Yamatotakeru himself as a representative of the imperial family." However, he suggests that the verse "a swan soars across" hints at Miyazuhime. Aoki, *Kodai bungaku no uta to setsuwa*, p. 88. I plan a separate study on Kagu Mountain in the *Kojiki* that also includes the Kagu Mountain mentioned in the scene contained in the first fascicle where Izanami divinely passes away.

Awa 淡 Island,
 Onogoro 於能碁呂 Island,
 Ajimasa 檳榔 Island.
 Remote are the islands I behold.

(Third fascicle, account of Nintoku's reign)

Nintoku sings this song when, in pursuit of a female called Kurohime, who has fled in fear of the empress Iwa no Hime's 石之日壳 jealousy, he arrives on Awaji 淡路 Island, from where he surveys the sea. The island of Awa mentioned in this song is the first island Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to, right after the malformed deity Hiruko 水蛭子. The birth of both Hiruko and Awa Island were considered failures and thus they were not included in the number of the two deities' children. Whereas Hiruko was set afloat on the ocean, there is no mention that Awa Island met with the same fate. It can thus be considered to have continued to exist as the earliest-born island. Onogoro Island, in turn, came into being even before the two deities started giving birth to islands and served as the base for this task. It is thus the oldest island of all. That Nintoku surveys these islands should not be taken to mean that islands bearing these names actually existed in Osaka Bay, but rather that Nintoku viewed islands of the mythical world. In other words, the world of gods is superimposed onto the mundane world. Apart from its role in this narrative, this song is thought to have been recited by emperors when they performed the rite of surveying the land (*kunimi* 国見).¹⁹ This is a special occasion that enables the emperor to perceive the islands mentioned in the myths, which are invisible under normal circumstances. But why is this song mentioned in the account of Nintoku's reign? A possible reason is that the song is mentioned at the beginning of the third fascicle in order to emphasize that the divine world and the human world overlap. The tale of Iwa no Hime's jealousy parallels the mythical tale of Suseribime's jealousy towards Ōkuninushi's lovers. The account of Nintoku's reign contains many such passages alluding to the mythical world. Another example is the emperor's exchange of songs with Takechi no Sukune over the auspicious omen of a wild goose laying eggs in Japan. The setting of this scene is the Island of Women (*Onnashima* 女島) mentioned in the myth of Izanagi and Izanami giving birth to lands. The occurrence of such a large number of passages connected to the world of gods cannot be considered a coincidence.

It would not be a correct assessment of the *Kojiki*'s structure to view the second fascicle as describing a world inhabited by both deities and humans, and the third fascicle as describing a world of humans. The *Kojiki* does not draw a sharp line between the two fascicles but rather connects them by hinting at connections with the divine world

19. Tsuchihashi, *Kodai kayō to girei no kenkyū*.

throughout both fascicles. The story of the brothers Akiyama no Shitabiotoko 秋山之下氷壯士 and Haruyama no Kasumiotoko 春山之霞壯士 who competed for the hand of Izushiotome no Kami 伊豆志袁登壳神 can be raised as an example. This story, which is related at the end of the second fascicle, is parallel to the famous myth of Umisachi 海幸 (fortune of the seas) and Yamasachi 山幸 (fortune of the mountains) at the end of the first fascicle insofar as in both cases the younger brother triumphs over his senior. It has been shown that this myth, positioned as it is in a section that bridges the second and third fascicles, also marks a transition from father-son succession to a mode where brothers could succeed to the throne and thus functions as a legitimation for cases in which a younger brother, rather than the oldest, became emperor.²⁰ Aoki Shūhei proposes to subject the mythical contexts throughout the *Kojiki*'s three fascicles to close analysis and suggests that just as the mythical world continues from the first to the second fascicle, it serves as a foundation of the mundane world in the second and third fascicles.²¹ The tale of Akiyama and Haruyama's rivalry, moreover, contains the following description:

Then, when [Haruyama no Kasumiotoko] told his mother of his troubles, his august mother replied, saying: "While we are in this world, we should adopt the ways of the deities. Is it because he has adopted the ways of the green-grass mortals (*utsushiki aohitokusa*) that he does not pay what he owes?"

(Second fascicle, account of Ōjin's reign)

The mother utters these words when she learns that the elder brother refused to give Haruyama the things he had promised him in case he succeeded to marry Izushiotome. She concludes that the elder brother does not give what he has promised his brother since he has adopted the ways of green-grass mortals rather than the ways of the deities, as he was supposed to. In this scene, the green-grass mortals, discussed in the second part of this study, reappear. There is a mutual relationship between gods and green-grass mortals insofar as both are depicted as entities that can influence the elder brother Akiyama's behavior. This suggests that gods and green-grass mortals coexist. Izushiotome, the female for whose favors the two brothers compete, is the daughter of the eight-fold great deity of Izushi 伊豆志 who was brought to Japan by Ame no Hihoko 天之日矛. The story of Ame no Hihoko itself is poorly connected to

20. Fujisawa, "Akiyama no shitabiotoko."

21. Aoki, *Kojiki kenkyū*. In the preface titled "Expressions in the *Kojiki*," he states, "To answer the question how myth is expressed as a logical structure permeating the *Kojiki* through an examination of individual expressions forms the object of the chapters in the first part on 'Myth'" (p. 18). Moreover, he explains, "The basic standpoint of the first part on 'Myth' is to read the whole *Kojiki* as a myth that was written down (put into writing)" (p. 18).

the *Kojiki*'s overall plot. Therefore, it is difficult to place it in the *Kojiki*'s chronology. However, if one considers that Tajimamori, who is mentioned in the account of Nintoku's reign, is a descendant of Ame no Hihoko in the fifth generation and Okinagatarashihime no Mikoto 息長帯比売命 (better known as Jingū Kōgo 神功皇后), a descendant in the seventh generation, Izushiotome can hardly be called a being of the age of gods. The tale of the two brothers Akiyama and Haruyama is presented in a way that makes it impossible to ascribe it completely to either the divine age or the human age. The term *miyo* 御世 (here translated as "this world") in the mother's reply is an expression that is otherwise reserved for the reigns of emperors in the *Kojiki*. From these observations we can infer the validity of the hypothesis that this tale related at the end of the second fascicle serves as a bridge to the third fascicle.

Finally, I want to touch upon Yūryaku Tennō. Yūryaku is often discussed in relation to Yamatotakeru. Certainly, there are many commonalities between the two characters: both kill their elder brother(s), both are called *oguna* 童男 (young man), and the names of both contain the character *take* 建 (Yūryaku is a posthumous name; throughout the text, the emperor is called Ōhatsusewakatakeru no Mikoto 大長谷若建命). But there is one decisive difference between the two: while Yamatotakeru dies before ascending to the throne, Yūryaku becomes emperor by killing one potential imperial heir after the other. There are still many open questions to be solved that are also related to the *Kojiki*'s quality as a literary work, before this crucial difference (despite both characters' inclination to resort to violence) can be explained. Leaving this question aside, Yūryaku is also an emperor who transcends the distinction between gods and humans. This becomes exceedingly apparent in the scene in which he meets the deity Hitokotonushi no Kami 一言主神 (one word master) on Mount Katsuragi 葛城. Even in the second fascicle, which is commonly characterized as depicting the age of gods and humans, Yamatotakeru is the only one who encounters deities face to face, yet Yūryaku, whose reign is contained in the third fascicle, also has a direct encounter with a deity.

On another occasion, when the heavenly sovereign made his majestic way up Mount Katsuragi, the hundred officials in his retinue were all wearing red sashes and blue robes that he had bestowed upon them. At the time, a person came climbing up from the opposite side of the mountain. His majestic retinue was the same as the heavenly sovereign's. Even the manner of garb and the number of people were exactly identical. And so the heavenly sovereign, seeing this, inquired, saying: "There is no other king in the land of Yamato. Who are you to come here in this manner?" Straightaway he replied with the same words as those of the heavenly sovereign.... Hereupon the heavenly sovereign again addressed him, saying: "Declare your name. Then after both

of us have declared their names, let us loose our arrows.” To this, he replied, saying: “Having been asked first, I will give my name first. I am the god who can bring good or ill with a single word, Hitokotonushi no Ōkami of Mount Katsuragi!” The heavenly sovereign now grew fearful and spoke, saying: “I am struck with awe, O my great deity! Since there are ministers of the mortal world (*utsushiomi* 宇都志意美) [in your retinue], I was not aware of your presence.” And so saying, he first removed his mighty great sword and his mighty bow and arrows, and then he had his hundred officials strip off their robes, prostrate themselves before the deity, and make an offering of their garb and gear to him.

(Third fascicle, account of Yūryaku's reign)

There are different interpretations for the term *utsushiomi* appearing in the passage quoted above. According to an old theory, the term signifies “manifest body” (*utsushiōmi* 現し大身) and refers to the manifestation of Hitokotonushi, but this reading has been proved wrong. In contrast to the modern Japanese five-vowel system, ancient texts like the *Kojiki* distinguished between eight different vowels. According to this ancient system, the vowel in *mi* 美 (the character used in the text) does not correspond to the one in *mi* 身 (body). It is therefore not possible that the former character was used as a phonetical representation of the latter meaning. At present, there are two competing hypotheses as to the meaning of the expression. Advocates of the first hypothesis propose the reading “corporeal form” (*utsushiōmi* 現し大靈) and argue that the expression refers to the fact that the deity has appeared in human form.²² Proponents of the second hypothesis take the expression to mean “minister(s) of the mortal world” (*utsushiōmi* 現し大臣) (the Japanese expression makes no distinction between singular and plural). While some supporters of this hypothesis believe that the expression refers to Yūryaku's role as a retainer of Hitokotonushi belonging to the mortal world,²³ others point out that there is no other case in the *Kojiki* of an emperor referring to him- or herself as the retainer of a deity. Therefore, they argue that the expression refers to Hitokotonushi's retinue and take the whole sentence to signify that Yūryaku did not realize he was speaking to a deity since the latter was accompanied by mortal ministers.²⁴ For various reasons, this last reading seems the most convincing and has therefore been adopted in the translation above. That Yūryaku refers to the deity's attendants as “ministers of the mortal world” (*utsushiomi*) rather than just as “ministers” (*omi*) probably signifies their belonging to another dimension (the world of

22. Nishimiya, *Kojiki*, p. 200, headnote.

23. Okumura, “‘Utsusemi’ no gengi.”

24. Mōri, “‘Utsushiomi’ kō”; “‘Utsushiomi’ to ‘utsusemi.’”

humans) as seen from the perspective of a deity. If this conclusion is correct, the term *utsushi* is used in the same way as in the first and second fascicles. In other words, the expression *utsushi* is employed in the *Kojiki*, when the world of gods and the world of humans touch.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have examined the multilayered character of the divine world and the human world. In conclusion, I want to touch upon some of the characteristics shared by the deities and humans discussed in this article.

Yamatotakeru, Nintoku, and Yūryaku are all referred to as “prince of the sun” (*hi no miko* 日の御子) in songs.

(1) Yamatotakeru: See page 16 of this article.

(2) Nintoku Tennō:

O high-shining
prince of the sun
 how fitting it is
 for you to ask this,
 truly well it is
 for you to ask this,
 for I am the longest-lived
 in this age.
 In the sky-filled
 land of Yamato
 of wild goose eggs
 have I never heard.

(Third fascicle, account of Nintoku’s reign, the wild goose egg)

(3) Yūryaku Tennō:

In Makimuku 纏向 lies
 the palace of Hishiro 日代.
 It is a palace where shines
 the morning sun,
 a palace where gleams
 the evening sun.
 ...
 This is what it is
 that fills me with awe,
o high-shining
prince of the sun!

Of this same affair
is a tale told in words
such as these.

(Third fascicle, account of Yūryaku's reign, song of a court lady from Mie)

This appellation sets those three apart from other emperors as something special. This leads to the question why this appellation was granted to Yamatotakeru, who never became emperor in the first place. However, if we consider “prince of the sun” as a special appellation referring to persons that are connected to the world of gods, Yamatotakeru's inclusion in the list becomes understandable. Ōkuninushi, on the other hand, is presented as a person who ruled the earth before the advent of the imperial family.²⁵ As the first ruler of the earth, Ōkuninushi is depicted as a being with human-like elements in the world of gods. In contrast, Yamatotakeru, Nintoku, and Yūryaku are depicted as persons with god-like elements or with the ability to establish a connection to the world of gods. In the *Kojiki*, the world of gods and the world of humans appear to be overlapping. However, this does not mean that anyone can freely go back and forth between the two worlds, but rather that there are special persons who can on special occasions cross back and forth between the worlds. But it must be emphasized that the *Kojiki* is characterized by a three-layered structure of “deities, emperors, humans” or, perhaps, “deities—emperors/humans.” This makes it difficult to press the cosmos depicted in the *Kojiki* into the dichotomy “world of gods / world of humans.” This particular point will be a topic for future research.

(Translated by David Weiss)

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25. Aoki Shūhei, moreover, argues that Ōkuninushi shares some of the characteristics of the “princes of the sun.” Aoki, *Kodai bungaku no uta to setsuwa*.

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