

Studies on the *Kojiki*

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Chapter 2: The Seven Generations of the Age of Deities (*kamuyo nanayo* 神世七代)

(First part)

The deity that next came into existence was named Kuninotokotachi no kami 国之常立神 (1). Next appeared Toyokumono no kami 豊雲野神 (2). These two deities also came into existence as solitary deities, and they hid their bodies. Next came into existence a deity named Uhijini no kami 宇比地迺神 (3), and next his sister-spouse (4), Suhichini no kami 須比智迺神.

1. Kuninotokotachi no kami (国之常立神):

For the digraph *tokotachi* 常立 (“eternal foundation”), see the entry in the previous chapter for Amenotokotachi no kami 天之常立神. In the main text (*honsho* 本書) of the *Nihon shoki*, as well as in the first, fourth, and fifth variants, this deity, identified as Kuninotokotachi no mikoto 国常立尊, is the first mentioned, indicating that there were some versions of the myths in which this deity was the very first to emerge. The element *kunino* 国之 presumably was intended to convey this deity’s connection to the emergence of the foundations for the earthly world. It may seem that in the *Kojiki* as well the appearance of the Special Celestial Deities (*koto amatsu kami* 别天神; see chap. 1, note 10), marks

the dividing line between the realms of Heaven (*ame* 天) and Earth (*kuni* 国), but in fact all the deities up to the Izanaki-Izanami pair may be seen as having come into being in Takamanohara.

2. Toyokumono no kami (豊雲上野神):

Commentators are largely in agreement that the element *toyo* 豊 (“luxuriant”) is meant as an expression of praise (*bishō* 美称). As to the digraph *kumono* 雲野, Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 held that the first graph was borrowed for its sound value (*shakuji* 借字) to convey the word *kumo* 久毛, which, he said, meant both “gathering and consolidation of matter” and “germinate.”⁽¹⁾ He argued that the second character, *no* 野, should be read *nu* 又 and carried the meaning of *numa* 沼 (“marshland”).⁽²⁾ The name of the deity thus portends, in Norinaga’s view, the subsequent emergence of the land of habitation (*kokudo* 国土). Modern commentaries propose other theories. The commentary to the *Nihon koten zensho* 日本古典全書 edition of the *Kojiki* asserts that this deity’s name suggests a thick fog pervading the space between Heaven and Earth,⁽³⁾ while Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司 argues in *Kojiki zenchūshaku* 古事記全註釈 that *kumono* refers to an untamed wilderness (*gen’ya* 原野) wreathed in clouds and that the deity named is related to both the land of habitation (*kokudo* 国土) and that wilderness or to the land of habitation alone.⁽⁴⁾ In *Kojiki chūshaku* 古事記注釈, Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 asserts that this compound suggests a scene in which something cloud-like is floating murkily above,⁽⁵⁾ whereas the compilers of the *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新日本古典文学全集 edition of the *Kojiki* hold that the term means a fertile field covered by clouds that embody vitality and that it implies a concrete site of generation.⁽⁶⁾ Nakamura Hirotochi 中村啓信 argues in the *Shinpan Kojiki* 新版古事記 edition that the element *kumo* is a symbolic expression for the void (*kokū* 虚空), while *no* represents the apotheosis of the consolidation of the land

into a foundation.⁽⁷⁾

Judging from its general usage in the *Kojiki*, the character *no* 野 is not borrowed for its sound value but rather its meaning of “field.” Just as adding the element “plain” (*hara* 原) provided a means to express such concepts as “heaven” (天) or “sea” (海) through the compounds *amanohara* 天原 and *unabara* 海原, *kumono* perhaps conveyed the idea of clouds spread out across the sky, likened here to a field. In regard to word structure, Komatsu Hideo 小松英雄 argues that since the character *kumo* is followed by the phonetic gloss 上 (which is generally held to indicate a high-flat tone), it should not be understood as constituting a separate element but as part of the combination *kumono*, which is praised as *toyo* (“luxuriant”).⁽⁸⁾ The *Nihon shoki* lists a large number of alternate names for this deity. The main text has Toyokumunu no mikoto 豊斟淳尊, while the first variant gives Toyokuninushi no mikoto 豊国主尊 followed by the alternate names Toyokumuno no mikoto 豊組野尊, Toyokabuno no mikoto 豊香節野尊, Ukabunonotoyokai no mikoto 浮経野豊買尊, Toyokunino no mikoto 豊国野尊, Toyokuuno no mikoto 豊齧野尊, Hakokunino no mikoto 葉木国野尊, and Mino no mikoto 見野尊. From this we can see that there was considerable fluctuation in the name of this deity.

3. Ujihini no kami and Suhichini no kami (宇比地迺上神・須比智迺去神):

Interpretations diverge regarding the meaning of the initial morpheme *u* of the first deity’s name. Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄 holds that it indicates “first” or “beginning” (*ui* 初),⁽⁹⁾ while the compilers of the *Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新日本古典文学全集 edition view its meaning as uncertain.⁽¹⁰⁾ As for the initial *su* of the second deity’s name, both of these commentaries interpret it as “sand,” but the meaning of this element also remains unclear.

Commentators are united in interpreting the *hiji* or *hichi* element common to

both names as “mud.” Such interpretations are possible if one follows the glosses in the *Nihon shoki*, which state, “The graph 壘土 [should] be read *uhijini*. . . . The graph 沙土 [should] be read *suhijini*.”⁽¹¹⁾ These glosses suggest that *uhiji* means “muddy soil” and *suhiji* “sandy soil.” However, as seen with the case of Toyokumono no kami above, it can be problematic to derive the meaning of a deity’s name directly from that of the graphs used in the *Nihon shoki*. At present, all that can be said reliably is that this is a pair of deities whose names share the element *hiji*.

As to the morpheme *ni* 迹, some think this also means “soil.” However, if *hiji* is interpreted as “soil” in line with the *Nihon shoki* graphic transcription, this would result in a duplication of elements meaning “soil.” In the case of the *Nihon shoki*, judging from the graphic transcription and the fact that alternate names for these two deities are given as Uhijine no mikoto 壘土根尊 and Suhijine no mikoto 沙土根尊, it would appear that the text takes *ni* to indicate familiarity or intimacy in the same manner as the suffix *ne*. The *Kojiki*, by contrast, glosses the *ni* of Uhijini with the graph 上 and the *ni* of Suhijini with 去 (宇比地迹_上神次妹須比智迹_去神), indicating that the first should have a high-flat tone and the second a low-flat tone. In their commentary *Kojiki chūkai* 古事記注解, Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 and Yamaguchi Yoshinori 山口佳紀 suggest that the *Kojiki* compilers may have intended these differences in tone to distinguish the first deity as male and the second as female.⁽¹²⁾

The graphs of the name 須比智迹 have usually been read *su-hi-ji-ni*. However, as Nishimiya Kazutami 西宮一民 and others have observed, the character 智 is usually read *chi*.⁽¹³⁾ Also, Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi point out in the above-mentioned *Kojiki chūkai* that in its entry for the graph 泥, the Imperial Household Library copy of the Heian dictionary *Ruiju myōgi shō* 類聚名義抄 provides the reading *hi-chi-ri-ko* 比知利古, with all four syllables to be pronounced in a flat

tone.⁽¹⁴⁾ Accordingly, we have chosen the reading *su-hi-chi-ni*.

From these two deities on, the deities of the seven generations appear as male-female pairs.

4. *Imo* (妹):

Opinion is divided as to whether the word *imo* should be taken at face value to mean “sister” or if it should be interpreted as “spouse.” Motoori Norinaga stated that this word is used simply to indicate the woman when referring to a man and a woman jointly, regardless of whether they are spouses, siblings, or unrelated to each other. Saigō Nobutsuna, on the other hand, holds that while in the poems of the *Man'yōshū imo* may indicate a spouse or lover, the headnotes to the poems use the term to mean “sister”; consequently, he argues, in prose usage *imo* should be understood as “sister” and this is true as well of these pairs of deities in the *Kojiki*.⁽¹⁵⁾ Nishimiya Kazutami rejects this interpretation, asserting in a review of Saigō’s book that the *Man'yōshū* usage cannot be applied to the *Kojiki* and seconding Norinaga’s position on this issue.⁽¹⁶⁾ The question whether to consider *imo* as meaning specifically the sister in an elder brother–younger sister pair or simply a “woman” in relation to a “man” bears on the issue of whether or not the Izanaki-Izanami myth is to be seen as a marital union of two siblings and, by extension, whether the myth of the creation of the land (*kuniumi* 国生み) by these two deities falls into the category of myths about siblings consolidating the land following a primordial flood.

Notes

- (1) *Kojiki-den* 古事記伝, ed. Ōno Susumu 大野晋 and Ōkubo Tadashi 大久保正, vols. 9–12 of *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* 本居宣長全集 (Chikuma Shobō 筑摩書房, 1968–1974), vol. 9, p. 144.

- (2) *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- (3) Kanda Hideo 神田秀夫 and Ōta Yoshimaro 太田善麿, eds., *Kojiki* 古事記, *Nihon koten zensho* 日本古典全書 (Asahi Shinbunsha 朝日新聞社, 1962), p. 174 n14.
- (4) Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司, *Kojiki zenchūshaku* 古事記全註釈, 7 vols. (Sanseidō 三省堂, 1973–1980), vol. 2, pp. 56–57.
- (5) Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱, *Kojiki chūshaku* 古事記注釈, 4 vols. (Heibonsha 平凡社, 1975–1989), vol. 1, p. 87.
- (6) Yamaguchi Yoshinori 山口佳紀 and Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光, eds., *Kojiki* 古事記, vol. 1 of *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 (Shōgakukan 小学館, 1997), p. 29.
- (7) Nakamura Hirotoishi 中村啓信, ed., *Shinpan Kojiki* 新版古事記 (Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan 角川学芸出版, 2009), p. 23.
- (8) Komatsu Hideo 小松英雄, *Kokugo shigaku kisoron* 国語史学基礎論 (Kasama Shoin, 1973), pp. 155–60. See also “Studies on the *Kojiki*,” *Kojiki-gaku* 古事記学, vol. 3 (2017), pp. 303–304.
- (9) Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄, ed., *Kojiki jōkan kōgi* 古事記上巻講義 (Shiogama-chō 塩竈町: Shibahiko Jinja Shiogama Jinja Kojiki Kenkyūkai 志波彦神社塩竈神社古事記研究会, 1940), p. 70.
- (10) Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光, Yamaguchi Yoshinori 山口佳紀, eds. *Kojiki* 古事記, *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 (Shōgakukan 小学館, 1994), vol. 1, p. 29 n16.
- (11) 泥土煮尊 [泥土、此をば干毘尼と云ふ。] 沙土煮尊。[沙土、此をば須毘尼と云ふ。]. Kojima Noriyuki 小島憲之 et al., eds. *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, vols. 2–4 of *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Shōgakukan 小学館, 1994–1998), vol. 2, p. 23.
- (12) Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 and Yamaguchi Yoshinori 山口佳紀, *Kojiki chūkai* 古事記注解 (Kasama Shoin 笠間書院, 1993), vol. 2, p. 47.
- (13) Nishimiya Kazutami 西宮一民, ed. *Kojiki shūteiban* 古事記修訂版 (Ōfu おうふう, 2000), pp. 15, 34 n1.
- (14) Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 47–48.
- (15) Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, p. 90.
- (16) Nishimiya Kazutami, “Saigō Nobutsuna cho ‘Kojiki chūshaku dai ikkan 西郷信綱著「古事記注釈第一巻」, *Bungaku* 文学, vol. 44-2 (1976), pp. 273–80.