Chapter 2
The Seven Generations of the Age of Deities

The next deity to come into existence was named Kuni no tokotachi no kami 国之常立神 (1). Next was Toyokumono no kami 豊雲野神 (2). These two deities also came into existence as solitary deities and hid their bodies. The next deity to come into existence was named Uhijini no kami 宇比地迩神 (3), and next his sister-spouse (4), Suhichini no kami 須比智迩神. Next was Tsunogui no kami 角杙神, and next his sister-spouse, Ikugui no kami 活杙神 (5). Next, Ōtonoji no kami 意冨斗能地神, and next his sister-spouse, Ōtonobe no kami 大斗乃弁神 (6). Next, Omodaru no kami 於母陀流神 (7), and next his sister-spouse, Ayakashikone no kami 阿夜訶古泥神 (8). Next, Izanaki no kami 伊耶那岐神, and next his sister-spouse, Izanami no kami 伊耶那美神 (9).

The deities named above, from Kuni no tokotachi no kami to Izanami no kami, are called altogether the seven generations of the Age of Deities (10).

[Gloss:]¹ *The first two solitary deities are each called "one generation" (ichidai 一代). Each pair of the next ten paired deities is called "one generation"* (11).

Text Notes

1. Kuni no tokotachi no kami 国之常立神

For the digraph *tokotachi* 常立 ("eternal foundation"), see text note 9 on Ame no tokotachi no kami 天之常立神 in chapter 1. The main text and first, fourth, and fifth variants of the corresponding passage in the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter list this deity (with the appellation *mikoto* 尊) as the first to appear, suggesting that this was also the case in some versions of the myths. The element *kuni no* 国之 ("the land's") indicates that originally this deity was associated with the foundation for the earthly world. Some would see the *Kojiki* narrative's reference to "set-apart heavenly deities" (*koto amatsu kami* 別天神) as drawing a contrast between deities associated with heaven and with the land (see chapter 1, text note 10), but in fact all the deities up to Izanaki and Izanami may be seen as having come into being in Takamanohara.

2. Toyokumono no kami 豊雲野神

Commentators largely agree that the element *toyo* 豊 ("luxuriant") is laudatory. Motoori Norinaga holds that the first graph of the digraph *kumono* 雲野 was borrowed for its

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¹ The *Kojiki* text incorporates various types of glosses (*warichū* 割り注). Present from the earliest manuscripts, these glosses are inserted into the text as double lines of smaller graphs and specify readings or add clarifications of content. The translation largely omits reading glosses and uses the italicized format adopted here to indicate those that clarify content. (TN)

sound value to convey the term *kumo*, which, he says, combines the sense of "consolidation" and "germination." He argues that the second graph, *no* 野, should be read *nu* and carries the meaning of *numa* 沼 ("marshland"). This deity's name thus portends the subsequent emergence of the land of habitation (*kunitsuchi* 国土).[2] Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro see the name as implying a thick mist filling the space between the heavens above and the land below,[3] while Kurano Kenji holds that *kumono* refers to an untamed wilderness (*gen'ya* 原野) overlain with clouds and that the deity named is related to such a wilderness or to wilderness and the land of habitation.[4] Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 takes the name to suggest a scene in which something cloud-like floats lazily,[5] whereas Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu hold that it means "a fertile field covered by clouds that symbolize vitality, a site of generation."[6] Nakamura Hirotoshi argues that *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 graph *no* 野 was not borrowed for its sound value but used for its meaning of "meadow." Just as the element "plain" (*hara* 原) was appended to terms for "heaven" and "sea" in compounds such as *amanohara* 天原 and *unabara* 海原, *kumono* was perhaps intended to convey the idea of clouds spread out across the sky, likened to a meadow. Komatsu Hideo argues that the inclusion of the phonetic gloss 上 (generally held to mark a high-flat tone) after the graph *kumo* indicates that it should not be taken as a separate element but as part of the combination *kumono*, which is praised as *toyo* ("luxuriant").[8]

The *Nihon shoki* lists many alternate names for this deity. The main text of the first section of the Age of Deities chapter has Toyokumunu no mikoto 豊斟渟尊, 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, Ukabuno no toyokai no mikoto 浮経野豊買尊, Toyokunino no mikoto 豊国野尊, Toyokūno no mikoto 豊齧野尊, Hakokunino no mikoto 葉木国野尊, and Mino no mikoto 見野尊.[9] The variety indicates that this deity name was not firmly established.

3. **Uhijini no kami** 宇比地迩神 / **Suhichini no kami** 須比智迩神

Various interpretations of the initial morpheme *u* of the first deity's name have been proposed, but the question remains open. Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄 holds that it

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[2] Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 144.
[3] Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 174n14.
[4] Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, pp. 56–58.
[5] Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, pp. 87–88.
[6] Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 29.
[7] Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 23.
[8] Komatsu, *Kokugo shigaku kisoron*, pp. 155–60. The gloss has been omitted from the transcription here. On the point of such glosses, see also chapter 1, text note 2.
[9] Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 18–21.

indicates "first" or "beginning" (*ui* 初); Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu see its meaning as uncertain. Both commentaries take the initial *su* of the second deity's name to mean "sand."[10] Commentators are united in interpreting *hiji/hichi* common to both names as "mud." Such interpretations are possible if one follows the graphs and glosses given in the main text of the equivalent passage in the *Nihon shoki*. This transcribes the names as 埿土煑尊 and 沙土煑尊 and glosses them respectively as *uhijini* and *suhijini*, indicating that *uhiji* means "muddy soil" and *suhiji* "sandy soil."[11] As seen with Toyokumono no kami, however, it can be problematic to derive the meaning of *Kojiki* deity names directly from that of the graphs used in the *Nihon shoki*. At present, all that can be said reliably is that this pair of deity names share the element *hiji*.

As for the morpheme *ni* 迩, some think this also means "soil." If, however, *hiji* is interpreted as "soil" in line with the *Nihon shoki* graphic transcription, this would result in a duplication of elements meaning "soil." As far as the *Nihon shoki* renderings are concerned, the main text gives the alternative names Uhijine no mikoto 埿土根尊 and Suhijine no mikoto 沙土根尊 for these two deities. This suggests that the *Nihon shoki* compilers understood *ni* 煑 to be a suffix indicating familiarity or intimacy in the same manner as the suffix *ne*. The *Kojiki* adds the phonetic gloss 上 to the *ni* of Uhijini and 去 to the *ni* of Suhichini (宇比地迩上神次妹須比智迩去神), indicating that the first should have a high-flat tone and the second a low-flat tone. Kōnoshi Takamitsu and Yamaguchi Yoshinori 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 second deity name 須比智迩 have usually been read *su-hi-ji-ni*. Nishimiya Kazutami, however, adopts the reading *chi* for the graph 智.[13] Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi likewise point out that the Imperial Household Library copy of the Heian dictionary *Ruiju myōgi shō* 類聚名義抄 gives the reading *hi-chi-ri-ko* 比知利古 for the graph 泥 ("mud"), with all four syllables to be pronounced in a flat tone.[14] We have accordingly adopted 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 divides 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 holds that in antiquity this word simply indicated the woman when referring in the same context to a man and woman, regardless of whether they were spouses, siblings, or unrelated to each other.[15] Saigō

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[10] Yamada, *Kojiki jōkan kōgi*, p. 70; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 29.
[11] Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 22–23.
[12] Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 45–47.
[13] Nishimiya, *Kojiki shūteiban*, p. 26.
[14] Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 47–48.
[15] Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 146–47.

Nobutsuna, on the other hand, argues that while in *Man'yōshū* poems *imo* indicates a spouse or lover, the headnotes to the poems use the term to mean "sister." He holds that *imo* thus should be understood as "sister" in prose usage and that this convention applies as well to these pairs of deities in the *Kojiki*.[16] Nishimiya Kazutami rejects this interpretation, asserting in a review of Saigō's commentary that the *Man'yōshū* usage is not applicable to the *Kojiki* and seconding Norinaga's position on this issue.[17] 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 the Izanaki-Izanami myth should be seen as relating the union of two siblings and, by extension, whether the myth of these two deities' giving birth to the land falls into the category of myths about siblings consolidating the land following a primordial flood.

Further comment: **Primordial flood myths and brother-sister pairs as original progenitors.** The following chapter relates that Izanaki and Izanami, the final pair of the seven generations of the Age of Deities, stand on the heavenly floating bridge (*ame no ukihashi* 天の浮橋), under which the ocean spreads broadly. They create Onogoroshima island, to which they descend and begin the process of procreating the different lands (*kuni*). In this scene they alone exist amid the ocean's broad expanse. Oka Masao 岡正雄 found in this account traces of a primordial flood myth and described it as follows:

> The Japanese myth of the tribal ancestral deities Izanagi and Izanami, brother-and-sister deities who marry and give birth to numerous deities, is a remnant of the flood myths seen often among the tribal peoples of southern China and Southeast Asia. In these myths humankind becomes extinct as the result of a flood that leaves only two survivors, a brother and a sister. Being siblings, they cannot wed, but by conducting a magic ritual, they remove the incest ban, marry as non-kin partners, and bear offspring. In the Japanese myths, the flood element has disappeared, but otherwise the details of the story's content are exactly the same.[18]

Ōbayashi Taryō describes Oka's analysis of the subject as "definitely reductive." Nevertheless, he accepts that there is a link between the Izanaki and Izanami myth and the "primordial-flood sibling-founder myths" found in southern China and Southeast Asia and develops a more detailed analysis of the connections.[19]

A representative example of the "primordial-flood sibling-founder myths" that attracted the interest of Oka and Ōbayashi are the myths of the Miao people of southern China. According to the Miao myth, a brother and sister are the only humans to survive a great flood caused by the wrath of the gods. The brother tries to wed his sister and produce

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[16] Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, p. 90.
[17] Nishimiya, "Saigō Nobutsuna cho 'Kojiki chūshaku dai ikkan.'"
[18] Oka, *Ijin sono ta*, p. 40.
[19] See Ōbayashi, *Shinwa no keifu*, pp. 245–56.

progeny, but she refuses on grounds that they are siblings. The brother persists, whereupon she says that she will marry him if he chases and manages to catch her. The brother pursues the sister around a tree. Initially he cannot catch her, but eventually he succeeds after reversing directions. The two are united and produce an offspring, but it is only a lump of flesh with no arms or legs, so they chop it up in small pieces. The pieces fall to the ground and become human beings.[20] This myth has several features in common with the Izanaki and Izanami story, as seen below, such as the act of circling an object or the first child being deformed.

Flood myths are found widely throughout the world. Perhaps the most famous is the story of Noah's Ark, described in the Old Testament. This story, which resembles closely the myth of Utnapishtim, included in the epic of Gilgamesh, and the Akkadian myth of Atra-Hasis, is one example of the flood-myth motif that spread from Western Asia. The Indian myth of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is another example of the ark motif. James G. Frazer took up the relationship between widespread flood myths and the Old Testament in his book *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, but expressed skepticism that all flood myths throughout the world share the same origin.[21]

Objections can also be raised to the hypothesis that the boundless sea with which the Japanese myths begin is a flood myth where the flood as such has dropped out. As a string of islands, the Japanese archipelago has been subject to various natural disasters, including tsunami. One might argue that it is such environmental conditions rather than a flood that underlie the account of the birth of the land.

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5. **Tsunogui no kami** 角杙神 **/ Ikugui no kami** 活杙神

These deity names seem to be apotheoses of stakes (*kui* 杙), but it is not clear what "stake" signifies in this context. Usually a stake marks a border, and stakes are often set up to indicate possession of a piece of land. Here the intent may be to convey a further stage of development from that represented by the preceding pair of deities Uhijini and Suhichini (see text note 3), but this cannot be said for sure. Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro take *tsuno* 角 ("horn") to suggest a hard, firm stake.[22] Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu see *tsuno* as representing the shape of a sprout and *iku* 活 ("live," "lively") as meaning "bursting with vitality."[23] There may be connotations here of a sprout brimming with life force, but these names should also be considered in relation to the implications of those of the preceding and following deities.

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[20] Kimishima, *Chūgoku no shinwa*, pp. 54–61.
[21] Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 338–60.
[22] Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 175n17.
[23] Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 30n1.

6. Ōtonoji no kami 意冨斗能地神 / Ōtonobe no kami 大斗乃弁神

The morpheme *to* (represented phonetically in these names by the graph 斗) is thought to mean "place." Opinions divide, however, as to what this "place" is. Tsugita Uruu 次田潤 interprets it as "the earth" (*daichi* 大地).[24] Shikida Toshiharu 敷田年治 sees it as "a hall" (*tono* 殿).[25] Kurano Kenji views it as "a residence" (*idokoro* 居所).[26] Ogiwara Asao 荻原浅男 takes it to be the male and female genitalia.[27] Some hold that the morpheme *ji* is the same as that in *hikoji* and indicates "male," and that *be* is a variation of *me* and indicates "female." Kōnoshi Takamitsu and Yamaguchi Yoshinori posit that *be* may be a variation of *ha* rather than *me*. They argue that *me* is usually paired with *o* ("male"), whereas *ji* is paired with *ha* (as seen in such pairs as *ōji* ["grandfather"] and *ōba* ["grandmother"], and *chichi* ["father"] and *haha* ["mother"]).[28] Ultimately, however, such issues are connected to one's interpretation of the names of the seven generations of the Age of Deities as a whole. There thus are limits as to how much can be said definitively about each deity's name on its own.

7. Omodaru no kami 於母陀流神

Motoori Norinaga interprets this deity name in light of the graphs 面足 ("face"; "fullness," "complete") used to transcribe it in the corresponding passage of the *Nihon shoki* and takes it to mean "fully formed."[29] Nakajima Etsuji 中島悦次 and Tsugita Uruu understand *omo* as referring to the earth, and *omodaru* as meaning the fullness or completion of the earth's surface.[30] Ozaki Nobuo 尾崎暢殃 agrees that although the name, as indicated by the *Nihon shoki* transcription, means a "fully formed face," it likely originally referred to the "completion" or "perfection" of the land.[31] Kurano Kenji and Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu, on the other hand, take *omodaru* to refer to the full formation of the human body.[32]

8. Ayakashikone no kami 阿夜訶志古泥神

Commentators agree that *aya* is an exclamation and *kashiko* the stem of an adjective meaning "august" or "awe-inspiring." They diverge regarding the reason for this emotive expression depending on how they understand the name Omodaru with which Ayakashikone is paired. Kurano Kenji argues that the name Ayakashikone indicates the

[24] Tsugita, *Kojiki shinkō*, pp. 25–26.
[25] Shikida, *Kojiki hyōchū*, p. 305.
[26] Kurano and Takeda, *Kojiki, Norito*, p. 51nn23, 24.
[27] Ogiwara, *Kojiki, Jōdai kayō*, p. 31n19.
[28] Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 48–49.
[29] Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 149–50; Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki,* SNKBZ 2, pp. 22–23.
[30] Nakajima, *Kojiki hyōshaku*, p. 29; Tsugita, *Kojiki shinkō*, p. 26.
[31] Ozaki Nobuo, *Kojiki zenkō*, p. 30.
[32] Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, p. 62; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 30n3.

emergence of human consciousness and that it should be understood as conveying the generation of consciousness following the full formation of the human body.[33]

9. Izanaki no kami 伊耶那岐神 / Izanami no kami 伊耶那美神

Some commentators see these names as deriving from the root *izana* of the verb *izanau* 誘ふ ("to invite"), while others hold that they come from a combination of the interjection *iza* ("now") and the auxiliary particle *na.* In either case, the names are taken to indicate a male and female deity who beckon one another.

10. "The seven generations of the Age of Deities" (*kamuyo nanayo* 神世七代)

Kamuyo 神世 ("age of deities") stands in contrast to the human age (*hito no yo* 人の世). *Kamuyo* appears to be conceived of in the *Kojiki* as a general age in distinction to the specific age or reign (*miyo* 御世) of each emperor. The digraph 御世 ("reigns") occurs in the first book of the *Kojiki* in the episode of the descent to earth of the Heavenly Grandson, Ninigi no mikoto 邇邇芸命.[34] There it appears to indicate the successive reigns of the emperors to come. The phrase "seventeen ages / reigns" (*tō amari nana yo* 十七世) occurs in the description of the lineage of the deity Ōkuninushi.[35] Coming as it does in the first book of the *Kojiki*, which deals with the Age of Deities rather than that of the emperors, the term "reign" seems incongruous and presents problems in interpretation.[36]

The graph *yo* 代 can be found throughout the *Kojiki* in the names of deities, persons, and places, or in terms such as *minashiro* 御名代 (a hereditary occupational group attached to the ruler's consort or a prince) and *tsukue shiro* 机代 (objects placed as offerings on a stand). This passage is the only instance where the graph is used in the sense of "generation."

Further comment: The reasoning behind the grouping of "the seven generations of the Age of Deities" is not clear. Combining the first two solitary deities with the following five sets of paired deities to add up to seven generations seems forced. The compilers may have divided the initial deities mentioned into a first group of five deities and a second group of seven generations to fit the so-called sacred numbers found in Chinese works such as the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易経). Yet it seems strange to combine the solitary Kuni no tokotachi and Toyokumono with the five sets of paired deities as seven generations. Perhaps the intent was to emphasize the distinction between the first five "set-apart heavenly deities" and those that follow. Because Izanaki and Izanami subsequently give birth to the land and other deities, the idea of "generation" is implicit

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33 Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, p. 62.
34 Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 120. In this passage it is commonly read *miyomiyo*. (TN)
35 Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 92–93.
36 See Taniguchi Masahiro, "'Kojiki' jōkan, Izumo kei keifu kisai no igi," pp. 198–203.

in the relationship between them and their offspring. The compilers perhaps adopted the term "seven generations" to convey that generations existed prior to Izanaki and Izanami as well and thereby demarcate the "set-apart heavenly deities" as a category that transcends the notion of generation.

The meaning of the names of the ten sets of paired deities needs to be considered in connection with the place these deities occupy within the *Kojiki* myth structure. The *Nihon shoki* assigns meaning to deity names through the graphs it adopts to transcribe them, but the two texts do not necessarily share the same perspective on this issue. Norinaga seems to see the *Kojiki* as taking a two-sided approach, first naming deities associated with the origin of the land and then ones linked to the origin of deities.[37] Among the interpretations introduced above, some commentators, such as Tsugita Uruu, view the deities named as all connected to the formation of the land. Kurano Kenji takes a more heterogeneous approach and interprets the names of the seven generations as relating a succession from the origin of the land to the formation of a primeval terrain to the generation of mud and sand to the planting of stakes to the construction of a dwelling to completion of the body and the emergence of consciousness to the establishment of conjugal relations.[38] Kanai Seiichi 金井精一, by contrast, sees the names as pertaining to the formation of the deities' bodies, moving step by step from mud and sand as the deities' original constitution to an emergent primeval form to the appearance of the sex of male and female deities to the completion of that form in both shape and function. Kanai sees this process as leading naturally to the next stage of the myth, in which the pair Izanaki and Izanami act making use of their bodies.[39] Kōnoshi Takamitsu and Yamaguchi Yoshinori also adopt Kanai's views.[40]

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11. "Paired" (*tagueru* 双)

The paired deities contrast with the solitary deities (*hitorigami*) who hid their bodies (*mi o kakusu*). Izanaki and Izanami represent the fully realized form of the paired deities with bodies, and in the following passage, they will use their bodies to carry out the command (*mikoto mochi* 命以) of the heavenly deities to consolidate the land.[41]

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[37] Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 151.
[38] Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, pp. 64–70.
[39] Kanai, "Kamuyo nanayo no keifu ni tsuite."
[40] Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 49–52.
[41] Regarding "solitary deity" and the implications of "hid their bodies," see chapter 1, text notes 6 and 7.

Bibliographic Data