

Chapter 8 The Slaying of the Fire Deity

Thereupon, Izanaki no mikoto drew the ten-hands-long (1) sword he carried at his waist (2) and cut off the head of that child, Kagutsuchi no kami (3). The blood adhering to the point of his sword (4) cascaded onto a wondrous rock outcropping (5). The deity that thereupon came into existence was named Iwasaku no kami 石析神. Next [appeared] Nesaku no kami 根析神. Next Iwatsutsunoo no kami 石箇之男神 (6).

[Gloss:] *Three deities.*

Then, the blood adhering to his sword's handguard also cascaded onto the wondrous rock outcropping. The deity that thereupon came into existence was named Mikahayahi no kami 甕速日神. Next [appeared] Hihayahi no kami 樋速日神. Next Takemikazuchinoo no kami 建御雷之男神. This deity's other name is Takefutsu no kami 建布都神. Another name is Toyofutsu no kami 豊布都神 (7).

[Gloss:] *Three deities.*

Then, the blood pooling on the hilt of Izanaki's sword oozed from between his fingers. The deity that thereupon came into existence was named Kura okami no kami 闇淤加美神. Next [appeared] Kura mitsuha no kami 闇御津羽神 (8).

The deities from Iwasaku no kami to Kura mitsuha no kami, eight deities altogether, were all born from the sword.

The deity that came into existence from the head of the slain Kagutsuchi no kami was named Masaka yamatsumi no kami 正鹿山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his breast was named Odo yamatsumi no kami 淤滕山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his belly was named Oku yamatsumi no kami 奥山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his genitals was named Kura yamatsumi no kami 闇山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his left hand was named Shigi yamatsumi no kami 志芸山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his right hand was named Ha yamatsumi no kami 羽山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his left foot was named Hara yamatsumi no kami 原山津見神. The deity that next came into existence from his right foot was named To yamatsumi no kami 戸山津見神 (9).

[Gloss:] *From Masaka yamatsumi no kami to To yamatsumi no kami is eight deities altogether.*

The sword with which [Izanaki] slayed [Kagutsuchi] is named Ame no ohahari 天之尾羽張. Its other name is Itsu no ohahari 伊都之尾羽張 (10).

Text Notes

1. “Ten-hands-long sword” (*totsuka no tsurugi* 十拳劔)

This description of the sword that Izanaki carried at his waist is applied to swords worn by other deities as well. The term is also written with the graphs 十掬劔. From Motoori Norinaga on, *tsuka* 拳 (literally “fist,” translated here as “hand”) has been considered a measure of length equivalent to the span of four fingers.¹ The graph appears nine times in the *Kojiki* as a quantifier. In five instances it is in the same term as here, *totsuka tsurugi* 十拳劔. In two other cases it is used in reference to an “eight-*tsuka*-long beard” (*yatsuka hige* 八拳須), once in regard to Susanoo in the episode where Izanaki designates realms for each of his three noble children (Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo), and once in the chronicle of Emperor Suinin (in the description of his son Homuchiwake 本牟智和氣).² In the section on Ōkuninushi’s cession of the land, the term indicates the force of a fire that will create “eight-*tsuka*-long strands of soot.”³ The remaining instance occurs in the chronicle of Emperor Keikō as part of the name of a cook, Nanatsukahagi 七拳脛 (“seven-*tsuka*-long shanks”) who served Yamatotakeru no mikoto.⁴ Probably this last instance should be distinguished from the others. Overall the graph 拳 seems to be used as a quantifier primarily in mythical contexts. Most occurrences are in the Age of Deities section of the *Kojiki*; of the two later instances, it is perhaps pertinent that Homuchiwake is a character similar to Susanoo, while Nanatsukahagi served Yamatotakeru, who subdued the wild deities.

Further comment: Images and Genealogies of Sacred Swords. Sacred swords play a major role in many *Kojiki* episodes. Its compilers presumably had a concrete image of such swords, but what might that have been? The iron swords preserved in the Isonokami Shrine 石上神宮 (situated in Tenri 天理 city in Nara Prefecture) offer a clue.

Book 2 of the *Kojiki* notes that the sword Sajifutsu no kami 佐士布都神 (also called Mikafutsu no kami 甕布都神 and Futsu no mitama 布都御魂) that assisted Emperor Jinmu in conquering the land of Yamato is enshrined in the Isonokami Shrine.⁵ The *Kogo shūi* states that the sword Ame no totsuka tsurugi 天十握劔 (also called Ame no hahagiri 天羽斬) with which Susanoo slayed the multi-headed and many-tailed Yamata serpent (*Yamata no orochi* 八岐大蛇) is likewise enshrined in the Isonokami Shrine.⁶ This suggests that people of the eighth and ninth centuries regarded Isonokami Shrine as a central repository for preserving sacred swords.

¹ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 227–28.

² See chapter 14 and Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 204–205.

³ See chapter 42.

⁴ Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 236–37.

⁵ Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 146–47.

⁶ Okimori, *Kodai ujibumi shū*, pp. 148, 179. In his edition of *Kogo shūi*, Nishimiya Kazutami transcribes the name Ame no hahagiri as 天羽々斬. See Nishimiya, *Kogo shūi*, pp. 23–24, 125. For the Yamata serpent, see chapters 21 and 22.

In 1874, an ancient sword was unearthed in the most sacred area of Isonokami Shrine, an area that people are ordinarily forbidden to enter. Although the sword itself cannot be viewed, in a survey of the shrine's treasures published by the shrine in 1930, the archaeologist Ōba Iwao 大場磐雄 utilized the available information about it and the circumstances of its discovery to document its characteristics. This information includes drawings of the sword attached to the report of the discovery submitted in the early Meiji period to the Ministry of Doctrine (Kyōbushō 教部省) and another attached to a compilation titled *Koki isan* 古器彙纂 (Compendium of Ancient Objects). Wooden and metallic replicas of it exist as well. Despite slight differences in length and other aspects, these drawings and replicas indicate that the original sword is around two *shaku* 尺 and nine *sun* 寸 (about eighty-seven centimeters) long. The single-edged blade is flat and curves inward. The ring pommel forms a continuous piece with the core (the part that fits into the hilt).⁷ Archaeologists regard swords of this sort, known as “inward-curved, ring-pommeled long swords” (*sokantō uchizori daitō* 素環頭内反大刀), as typical of the ancient period, in contrast to the double-edged swords common later. These characteristics and the fact that it was unearthed in a tabooed area suggest that it was enshrined and transmitted as a sacred sword at the Isonokami Shrine since antiquity.

Iron swords similar to the Isonokami *sokantō uchizori daitō* have also been excavated at the Number 1 tomb site of the Hirabaru 平原 historical park in the village of Itoshima 糸島 (Fukuoka Prefecture), and also at the Tōdaijiyama 東大寺山 tumulus in Tenri city (Nara Prefecture), among others. The Hirabaru tumulus can be dated to the end of the Yayoi period (latter half of the second century), and Tōdaijiyama's to the first half of the Kofun period (fourth century). The inward-curved long sword unearthed in Tōdaijiyama includes an inlaid inscription with the graphs 中平, an era name (184–189 CE) of the Chinese Latter Han dynasty (25–220 CE). Such evidence suggests that the history of *sokantō uchizori daitō* may be traced back to the end of the Yayoi period and that these swords likely are of continental origin.⁸ The sacred swords enshrined and preserved at the Isonokami Shrine include several sharp-edged iron swords made with advanced continental technology and brought to the archipelago between the late Yayoi and the early Kofun periods. Presumably such sharp swords of superior quality informed the image that people of the time had of sacred swords.

What kind of fittings did these swords have? Fragments of more than ten wooden hilts matching the shape of the ring-pommels of long swords have been excavated from tumuli of the fourth century. Similar vestiges have been identified for swords from the Tōdaijiyama tumulus, which are of the same type as the Isonokami Shrine sword. These hilts were made so that the core of a ring-pommeled blade would slip into an inner groove, a characteristic of the fittings found in native Yamato-style swords of the time. A feature of these hilts is that they allow for the end of the pommel to extend beyond the hilt. As

⁷ *Isonokami Jingū hōmotsu shi*, pp. 113–24.

⁸ Ege, “Yayoi jidai no tekken, tettō ni tsuite.”

scholars such as Fukaya Atsushi 深谷淳 have pointed out, this feature can be linked to the “twisted-ring pommel” (*nejiri kantō* 捩り環頭) Yamato-style swords of the late fifth and sixth centuries and to ceremonial swords of the same period whose hilts and scabbards are decorated with metal or leather bands (*magarikane* 勾金, *magarikawa* 勾革) and *miwadama* 三輪玉 beads.⁹

Twisted-ring-pommeled swords have been found as burial items in major tumuli throughout the archipelago, along with clay haniwa representations that once were arrayed around such tumuli. A large sword with an iron core and a twisted-ring pommel covered with silver leaf and decorated with crystal *miwadama* beads has been found as an offering at the Number 7 excavation site (latter half of the sixth century) on Munakata Okinoshima 宗像沖ノ島 (Fukuoka Prefecture). A typical example of swords of the latter half of the sixth century is the large sword with gilt-bronze fittings found in a stone coffin in the Fujinoki 藤ノ木 tumulus in Ikaruga 斑鳩 (Nara Prefecture). The gold-plated twisted pommel of its iron core extends from the hilt, the sides of which are adorned with metal and leather bands decorated with gilt-bronze *miwadama* beads and twin-fish-shaped plate ornaments, also in gilt-bronze. As Shiraishi Taichirō 白石太一郎 has pointed out, these gilt-bronze-ornamented swords can be linked to the Tamamaki no tachi 玉纏太刀 (“gem-covered sword”) and such listed as shrine sacred treasures in the ninth-century *Kōtai jingū gishikichō* 皇太神宮儀式帳 (Register of Ceremonies at the Ise Shrines).¹⁰

The *Kojiki* compilers’ image of sacred swords must have been rooted in the high-quality iron blades brought from the continent to the Japanese islands by the early Kofun period. Combined with the Yamato-style sword fittings that took shape in the fourth century, this sort of sword was likely passed down until the eighth century, when the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were compiled. In other words, the image of sacred swords was a composite, combining swords originating in China of the Latter Han Dynasty with a style of accouterment that took shape in the archipelago by the fourth century. Is it not likely that the sword enshrined at the Isonokami Shrine was also adorned as a Yamato-style sword in the same manner as the swords kept as shrine treasures at the Ise Shrines?

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2. “He carried at his waist” (*mihakashi seru* 所御佩)

Debate continues over how to read the graphs 所御佩, and discussions whether the honorific *mi* 御 can be attached to a verb or not often refer to this passage. The present commentary takes the position that *mi* cannot be attached to an ordinary verb and reads the graphs as the nominal verb *mihakashi seru* (literally, “to do [the act of] carrying at the waist”).

⁹ Fukaya, “Kinginsō wakei daitō no henshen,” pp. 86–87.

¹⁰ Shiraishi, “Tamamaki no tachi kō.”

Further comment: On the reading of the graphs 所御佩. From the Urabe Kanenaga-bon 卜部兼永本 manuscript (1522) on, virtually all extant manuscript and woodblock-print versions of the *Kojiki* interpret the honorific particle *mi* 御 as a prefix to the verb *haku* (“to carry on oneself,” “to wear”) and read the three graphs 所御佩 as *mihakaseru*. Motoori Norinaga states that “examples of attaching [the honorific] *mi* to this kind of verbal form can be found widely in antiquity, as in the word *minemasu* 御寝坐 (“sleep”) in the *Kojiki* and *mitatasu* 御立す (“stand”) in the *Man'yōshū*.”¹¹ Contesting this long-standing view, in 1925 Mitsuya Shigematsu posed the question: “Where in fact do we find examples of the particle *mi* attached as a prefix to a verb?” Rather, he argued, the graph 御 should be understood to represent the auxiliary honorific verb *su*, resulting here in the reading *hakaseru*.¹² The stances adopted by commentators after Mitsuya fall into five categories:

1. Those who continue to adhere to Norinaga’s reading of *mihakaseru* (Tsugita Uruu, Kurano Kenji in *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, Onoda Mitsuo, Nakamura Hirotohi, Nishimiya Kazutami).¹³
2. Those who consider the graph 御 to represent the honorific verb suffix *masu* and read the graphs as *hakimaseru* (Nakajima Etsuji).¹⁴
3. Those who agree with Mitsuya’s thesis and incorporate the graph 御 through the reading *hakaseru* (Kurano Kenji in *Kojiki taisei*, Kurano Kenji and Takeda Yūkichi in the *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* edition, Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro, Ozaki Satoakira, Ogiwara Asao, Saigō Nobutsuna).¹⁵ The editors of the NST edition also fall in this category but interpret 御 as a silent honorific marker that is not reflected in a distinctive reading.¹⁶
4. Those who hold that the honorific 御 cannot be attached to a verb and thus read the combination of graphs as a noun, *mihakashi* (Ozaki Nobuo).¹⁷
5. Those who argue that what follows the honorific 御 is a phrase equivalent to a substantive (*taigen sōtō ku* 体言相当句) and read the combination of graphs as *mihakashi seru* (Kōnoshi Takamitsu and Yamaguchi Yoshinori).¹⁸

¹¹ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 227.

¹² Mitsuya, *Kojiki ni okeru tokushu naru kumpō no kenkyū*, pp. 19–22.

¹³ Tsugita, *Kojiki shinkō*, pp. 51–52; Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, p. 216; Onoda, *Kojiki*, p. 77; Nishimiya, *Kojiki*, p. 35; Nishimiya, *Kojiki shūteiban*, p. 33; Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 31.

¹⁴ Nakajima, *Kojiki hyōshaku*, p. 52.

¹⁵ Kurano, *Kojiki taisei*, p. 65; Kurano and Takeda, *Kojiki, Norito*, p. 61n24; Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 188; Ozaki Satoakira, *Zenchū Kojiki*, p. 31; Ogiwara, *Kojiki, Jōdai kayō*, p. 61; Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, p. 162.

¹⁶ Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, pp. 30–31, 495–96.

¹⁷ Ozaki Nobuo, *Kojiki zenkō*, p. 58.

¹⁸ Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, p. 155; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 43. *Taigen* indicates an indeclinable part of speech. (TN)

These five stances illustrate the substantial influence Mitsuya's theory has had on subsequent interpretations. The differences among them arise from the question of how to interpret a transcription where 御 appears to be followed by a verbal phrase. Examples of similar graph combinations can be found here and there in other early texts apart from the *Kojiki*. Mōri Masamori has identified thirty-three occurrences, twenty of which are in the *Kojiki*.¹⁹ Whether the honorific 御 can function as a prefix for a verb is thus fundamental to determining readings in the *Kojiki*.

Based on an examination of early reading glosses for the *Nihon shoki*, Mōri argues that the honorific 御 can precede a verb. As regards modes of reading of early texts, however, perhaps the most relevant example from Mōri's list is *Man'yōshū* poem 869:

Empress Jingū sought to catch a fish; who could have seen the stone on which she stood?

Tarashihime / kami no mikoto no / na tsurasu to / mitatashi serishi / ishi o tare miki
多良志比売 可尾能美許等能 奈都良須等 美多々志世利斯 伊志遠多礼美吉
足日女 神の尊の 魚釣らすと 美多々志世利斯 石を誰見き²⁰

The morphology of the phonetically written phrase *mitatashi serishi* 美多々志世利斯 can be deconstructed as the honorific *mi* 御 + a phrase equivalent to a substantive consisting of *tata* 立 (the imperfective form [*mizenkei*] of the verb “to stand”) + *shi* (the continuative form [*ren'yōkei*] of the auxiliary honorific verb *su*).²¹ This is followed by a verbal form consisting of *se* (the imperfective form of a *sa*-row irregular verb) and finally the particles *ri* and *shi*. The phonetic transcription here that documents an instance of the honorific *mi* followed by a phrase equivalent to a substantive is a useful point of reference for deciding how to read a logographic combination of graphs where 御 precedes a verbal graph.

Yamaguchi Yoshinori adduces an example of similar word morphology appearing in the early text on poetics *Kakyō hyōshiki* 歌經標式 (772):

The hill where [I] reside has no shade; let me plant this pear and raise it so as to take pleasure in its shade.

Mimashi suru / oka ni kage nashi / kono nashi o / uete ōshite / kage ni yokemumo
美麻旨須留 呼可爾可氣那旨 己能那旨呼 宇恵弓於保旨弓 可氣爾与計牟母
御座する 岡に陰なし この梨を 植ゑて生して 陰に好けむも²²

¹⁹ Mōri, “Dōshi ni tsuku ‘mi’ ni tsuite.”

²⁰ Kojima et al., *Man'yōshū*, SNKBZ 7, p. 60.

²¹ The *ren'yōkei* verb form indicates that the sentence is not finished and that yet more needs to be said. Such forms often act as substantives. (TN)

²² Yamaguchi, *Kojiki no hyōki to kundoku*, p. 436; Okimori et al., *Kakyō hyōshiki: Eiin to chūshaku*, pp. 218–19.

Yamaguchi also points to examples from *norito* liturgies and *senmyō* 宣命 (imperial edicts) of the pattern “*mi* + verb in continuative form (=phrase equivalent to a substantive) + *masu*.”²³ On the basis of the examples adduced, Yamaguchi’s position seems valid. That is, the “*mi* 御 + verbal graph” cases in the *Kojiki* can be interpreted as following the pattern “*mi* + verb in continuative form + *su*” or “*mi* + verb in imperfective form + auxiliary honorific verb *su* in continuative form + *su*.” In these cases, what follows the particle *mi* is a phrase equivalent to a substantive, not a verb as such.

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3. Kagutsuchi no kami 迦具土神

Kagutsuchi is a fire deity. Bearing him scorched Izanami no mikoto’s genitals, and she fell ill and eventually left this world (see above, chapters six and seven).

Further comment: Fire origin myths. Fire is ubiquitous in every human civilization. Scholars hypothesize that humans began to use fire for cooking as early as 1,500,000 years ago, about the same time that they acquired command of language. The benefits gained from the mastery of fire are innumerable. Using fire to cook made meat and fish as well as grains such as rice edible, leading to a great expansion in the human diet. Researchers believe that this development stimulated an enlargement in the size of the human brain compared to other animals, something that presumably was also related to the acquisition of language. The change in diet likely led to a rise in life expectancy as well. Aside from cooking, fire brought about other major developments in human life. By enabling people to keep warm and work in the dark, it made it possible to use caves as places to live. In the beginning fire was not a resource that could be manipulated at will. Before humans learned how to kindle fire, they must have had to obtain it through natural occurrences, such as forest fires or volcanic eruptions. They had to find ways (and the necessary combustible resources) to maintain the precious fire.

In that fire was such an invaluable asset, it is not surprising that myths describing its origin are found in numerous areas throughout the world. The *Kojiki* tells us that fire was an offspring of Izanaki and Izanami, produced by the female deity Izanami from within her body and causing her to be severely burned and die. The narrative portrays fire as something obtained in exchange for the life of the great female deity who had given birth to the land. This is the *Kojiki*’s first depiction of the phenomenon of death. Izanaki subsequently goes to the Land of Yomi in search of Izanami but fails to bring her back with him. This leads to the separation of the Land of Yomi from the world of the living.

²³ Yamaguchi, *Kojiki no hyōki to kundoku*, pp. 434–35. *Senmyō* are a set of sixty-two imperial edicts included within the late eighth-century national history *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀. (TN) Yamaguchi criticizes the position of Kadosaki Shin’ichi 門前真一, who in a number of articles asserts that the particle *mi* cannot be attached to a verb and who, on that ground, also denies the existence of the pattern “*mi* + verb in continuative form + *masu*.” See Kadosaki, “Jōdai ni okeru mi no ichi yōhō.”

The scene that depicts the two deities' eternal estrangement further proclaims the inevitability of human death. The story of the birth of fire thus plays a pivotal role in the myth's progression.

"The theft of fire" is a well-known prototype among myths describing the origin of fire. The most famous example is probably the Greek myth of Prometheus. In his poetic text "Works and Days," the ancient Greek poet Hesiod (circa 700 BCE) relates that the god Zeus decided to hide fire from mortals, but Prometheus stole it, concealing it in the hollow of a large stalk of fennel, and gave it out to humanity. Enraged, Zeus decided to inflict a calamity upon humans as a punishment. He mixed earth and water, molded it to resemble a female god, and gave it a human voice, thus creating the first woman. This woman was endowed with weaving skills by the goddess Athena, powers of seduction and the torments of love by Aphrodite, and a deceitful mind by Hermes. The other gods dressed her beautifully. Along with gifts from every god of Olympus, she received the name Pandora ("all-gifted"), but Zeus also gave her a box containing all the human diseases, hardships, and pains. She then was presented to Epimetheus, Prometheus' brother, and in his presence, she opened the box. All the evils contained in it were let loose, bringing human beings countless sufferings, although one element—hope—did not escape and remained within the box. The myth relates that the mastery of fire brought humans many advantages, but also many unwanted calamities and misfortunes.

Similar "theft of fire" myths are found throughout the world. The mythology of the Guarani of South America relates that fire was a possession unique to vultures. To steal the fire, Nhanderú, child of the gods, pretended to be dead and let his body rot. The smell of rotten flesh attracted a vulture, which roasted the god's flesh using fire. Then, just as the bird was about to eat the flesh, Nhanderú suddenly revived and began to struggle wildly. Startled, the vulture hastily escaped, leaving the fire burning. Nhanderú then hid the fire inside a tree so that anyone could take it and use it.

In the Andaman Islands, the owner of fire was the creator god Pūluga. One day, a kingfisher came near the fire and stole it by seizing an ignited sprig with its beak. This infuriated Pūluga, who threw a burning tree at the bird, injuring it severely. Despite its wounds, the bird managed to bring the fire safely to humans. The mythology of the Buryat people of Siberia tells that a swallow stole fire from the gods to give it to humans. As in the Andaman legend, a god shot an arrow at the swallow, splitting its tail. As swallows bestowed such a blessing on humans, people continue to take great care of the nests that swallows build at their houses.

"Theft of fire" myths are thus found widely rather than distinctive to a particular region. This circumstance perhaps reflects a universal image of fire as an asset difficult for humans to obtain under ordinary conditions, or a recollection of a mythical age when a hero triumphed over dangers to obtain fire.

Several mythologies describe fire as coming from a deity's body, as with the Izanami myth. The mythology of the Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia, in the South Pacific Ocean,

relates that at the beginning of time, two sisters lived eating wild yams (*dioscorea villosa*). Whereas the elder sister always cooked the yams before eating them, and was thus in good health, the younger ate them raw, which made her ill. One day, the younger pretended to go out, but instead spied on her elder sister and saw that she cooked the yams having drawn fire from between her legs. Knowing she had been observed, the elder sister tried to keep the secret to the two sisters alone, but the younger insisted on sharing it with other people, and so set fire to many trees.

According to Papua New Guinea mythology, people used to eat wild yams and taro (*colocasia esculenta*) after having dried them in the sun. An old crone and ten youngsters lived on this diet, but whenever the youngsters went out, the crone took fire from her body to cook her own portion of the yams and taro. One day some of the cooked food got mixed into the youngsters' meal. Wondering about the taste, which was different from anything they had eaten up to then, they decided to search out the secret. Having feigned going out as usual, they hid and saw the old woman draw fire from between her legs to cook the plants. Having decided to take the fire for themselves, the youngsters crept up behind the old woman when she drew fire from her body the next day, snatched it, and fled.

Tales of fire being produced from a woman's body can also be found in New Guinea, Polynesia, and South America. The concentration of such myths in the Pacific Rim region contrasts with the wider distribution of the "theft of fire" prototype and suggests that they might be seen as something particular to this cultural region rather than as reflecting a universal human perception of fire. The myth of Izanami giving birth to fire thus also deserves attention for the questions it poses about the origins of Japanese culture.

Hirafuji Kikuko, Comparative Mythology

4. "His sword" (*mihakashi* 御刀)

Norinaga notes that a reading gloss in the *Nihon shoki* chronicle of Emperor Keikō indicates that the graphs 御刀 ("august sword") are to be read *mihakashi* and that the same reading should be adopted here.²⁴ Later commentators have generally followed suit. Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro read the digraph as *mitachi* but do not explain their reasons.²⁵ Perhaps they hesitated to use *mihakashi* because the *Nihon shoki* gloss is given to specify the reading of a personal name, that of a beautiful woman called Mihakashibime 御刀媛 from the vanquished land of the Kumaso. The Heian-period dictionary *Wamyō ruijushō* appears to indicate that the graph 刀 designates a single-edged sword.²⁶ Kurano Kenji mentions other utensils to which the honorific prefix *mi* 御 is attached, such as bows or mirrors.²⁷

²⁴ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 228. See Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 356–57.

²⁵ Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 188.

²⁶ Mabuchi, ed. *Koshahon Wamyō ruijushō shūsei*, vol. 2, p. 126.

²⁷ Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, p. 218.

5. “Wondrous rock outcropping” (*yutsu iwamura* 湯津石村)

The parallel accounts of this episode in the sixth and seventh variants of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter speak of *iotsu iwamura* 五百箇磐石 (“numerous [lit. ‘five hundred’] rock outcropping”).²⁸ Citing these examples, Norinaga notes that “the master [Kamo no Mabuchi] held that [*Kojiki*’s *yu*] is a contraction of [*Nihon shoki*’s] *io* 五百.”²⁹ Many later commentators have likewise taken the phrase *yutsu iwamura* 湯津石村 to mean an “outcropping of numerous rocks.” The contraction hypothesis is open to question, however, and Matsuoka Shizuo and Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro postulate that the morpheme *yu* here means something endowed with a sacred or awing quality.³⁰ The consensus today is that *Kojiki*’s *yu* and *Nihon shoki*’s *io* are two different words. An exception is Kurano Kenji, who points to the correspondence between the phrase *yutsu matsubaki* 由都麻都婆岐 (“the *yutsu* camellia”) in *Kojiki* poem 57, in the chronicle of Emperor Nintoku, and the phrase “manifold-leaf tree” (*momotarazu yasoba no ki* 毛毛多羅儒 擲素麼能紀 [百足らず八十葉の木]) in poem 53 of the *Nihon shoki* chronicle of the same emperor. In speaking of a katsura tree as *yutsu katsura* 湯津杜樹, the *Nihon shoki*, Kurano notes, similarly describes it as a “a tree whose branches grow thickly in all directions.”³¹ Probably, however, it is best to consider *yu* and *io* as two different words.

That said, the Kagutsuchi passages do not convey a clear difference between the implications of *yu* and *io*. Both *yutsu iwamura* in the *Kojiki* and *iotsu iwamura* in the *Nihon shoki* seventh variant serve as mediums for the transformation into deities of the blood that drips from Izanaki’s sword. (In the sixth variant, the blood is transformed into rocks rather than deities, but these rocks are described as the ancestor of the deity Futsunushi no kami 経津主神.) Elsewhere the *Kojiki* uses the morpheme *yu* to describe a comb (*yutsu tsumakushi* 湯津津間櫛) and a katsura tree (*yutsu katsura* 湯津楓).³²

6. *Iwasaku no kami* 石析神 / *Nesaku no kami* 根析神 / *Iwatsutsunoo no kami* 石筒之男神

Norinaga treats *Iwasaku no kami* and *Nesaku no kami* separately from *Iwatsutsunoo no kami*. Drawing from interpretations of the term *iwanesaku* 石根拆 as meaning to traverse an uneven rocky surface, he proposes that the names *Iwasaku no kami* and

²⁸ Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 42–43, 52.

²⁹ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 228.

³⁰ Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, p. 188.

³¹ Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, pp. 218–21. For the poems, see Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 292–93; Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 3, pp. 46–47. For the *yutsu katsura* passage, see Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 113n12, 156–57. Whereas Kurano interprets *yutsu* in these instances to mean “leafy,” Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi take it to mean “sacred,” as does Kojima. (TN)

³² See chapter 22, text note 2 ; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 102–103, 126–27. Opinion divides as to whether the “katsura” figuring in the *Kojiki* is the same as the deciduous tree known by that name today or a fragrant evergreen species such as *mokusei* 木犀 (*Osmanthus fragrans*). (TN)

Nesaku no kami “have been given the two deities by dividing in two the word *iwanesak*,” and that “the element *ne* 根 [in Nesaku] carries the meaning *iwane* 石根,” in other words, the base of a rock or a large boulder rooted in the ground.³³ These two deity names have subsequently become broadly understood as having to do with “rocks.” Even among those who take this position, however, opinions differ as to what the two epitomize as deifications. Some posit them to be deifications of swords, others, deifications of thunder. Yet others hold that the name Nesaku no kami refers to the root (*ne*) of a tree rather than rocks. The debates point to the challenges posed by trying to deduce a deity’s nature from its name.

Norinaga’s hypothesis that *ne* is equivalent to *iwane* depends on instances of the term *iwane* in the Kinensai liturgy and *Man’yōshū* poems 210, 213, and 4465.³⁴ No example can be found of the suffix *ne* conveying the meaning of “rock” by itself. Further, both the Shinpukuji-bon and Kanenaga-bon *Kojiki* manuscripts include a gloss specifying that the deities named are a triad of “three deities” (*sanjin* 三神). It thus seems questionable to set Iwasaku no kami and Nesaku no kami apart as a discrete unit.

To be sure, comparison with the corresponding passages of the *Nihon shoki* suggests that the status of Iwatsutsunoo was somewhat unstable compared to that of Iwasaku and Nesaku:

1. Then, the blood that dripped from the point of his sword spouted forth and formed a deity, who was given the name Iwasaku no kami 磐裂神. Next appeared Nesaku no kami 根裂神. Next appeared Iwatsutsunoo no kami 磐箇男神. According to one account, it was [two deities,] Iwatsutsunoo no mikoto and Iwatsutsunome no mikoto 磐箇女命. (Sixth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter)³⁵
2. Another version states: When [Izanaki no mikoto] slayed Kagutsuchi, blood spouted forth and stained an outcropping of numerous rocks in the Ama no yasonokawara 天八十河中 river bed. From that a deity took shape, which was given the name Iwasaku no kami. Next [appeared] Nesaku no kami and this deity’s child Iwatsutsunoo no kami. Next [appeared] Iwatsutsunome no mikoto and this deity’s child Futsunushi no kami. (Seventh variant of the fifth section)³⁶

Passage 1, although similar to the *Kojiki* account, also includes a subvariant where the deity Iwatsutsunoo no kami is paired with a second deity, Iwatsutsunome no mikoto. Passage 2 identifies Iwatsutsunoo no mikoto as the child of Nesaku no kami. In contrast

³³ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 228–29.

³⁴ See Kurano and Takeda, *Kojiki, Norito*, pp. 388–89; Kojima et al., *Man’yōshū*, SNKBZ 6, pp. 142, 144; SNKBZ 9, p. 439.

³⁵ Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 44–45.

³⁶ Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 50–52.

to the *Kojiki*, the three deities cannot be said to form a triad, and Iwatsutsunoo no kami's position is described variously.

These circumstances might be considered grounds for distinguishing Iwasaku and Nesaku from Iwatsutsunoo. On the other hand, the instability of Iwatsutsunoo's status might also explain why the *Kojiki* compilers wanted to emphasize that he formed a triad together with Iwasaku and Nesaku. Of the eight deities born from the slaying of Kagutsuchi, the next three mentioned are also described as forming a triad, but this formulation is not applied to the final two deities of the eight, Kura okami no kami and Kura mitsuha no kami. Presumably this is because these last two were not produced through the medium of the "wondrous rock outcroppings," unlike the two sets of "three deities."

7. Mikahayahi no kami 甕速日神 / Hihayahi no kami 樋速日神 / Takemikazuchinoo no kami 建御雷之男神

The name Mikahayahi no kami 甕速日神 can be thought of as a composite of *mi* ("august"), *ika* ("mighty"), *haya* ("impetuous"), and *hi* ("spirit"). The name Hihayahi no kami 樋速日神 consists of similar elements. Norinaga holds that the first graph *hi* 樋 ("drainpipe") stands phonetically for *hi* 乾 ("dry").³⁷ The name Takemikazuchinoo no kami 建御雷之男神 is a composite of *take* ("brave," "stalwart"), *mi* ("august"), *ika* ("mighty"), *zu* (a connective particle), and *chi* ("spirit"). This deity is presumably a thunder deity.³⁸

The corresponding passage in the sixth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter describes these deities as follows:

Then, the blood that dripped from the handguard of his sword spouted forth and formed a deity. The deity was given the name Mikahayahi no kami 甕速日神. Next appeared Hinohayahi no kami 燐速日神. This Mikahayahi no kami was the progenitor of Takemikazuchi no kami 武甕槌神. According to another version, [the first deity was] Mikahayahi no mikoto 甕速日命; next was Hinohayahi no mikoto 燐速日命; next was Takemikazuchi no mikoto 武甕槌命.³⁹

The first part of this variant does not include Takemikazuchi no kami among the deities born directly from Izanaki's slaying of Kagutsuchi. Unlike the *Kojiki*, some *Nihon shoki* variants thus do not present the two groups of deities as Izanaki's immediate progeny. Plausibly it was this fluidity in status that led the *Kojiki* compilers to try to stabilize the

³⁷ Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 229.

³⁸ The *Kojiki* here includes the element "male" (*o* 男) at the end of this deity's name but later refers to him simply as Takemikazuchi no kami 建御雷神. See chapters 40 (text note 3) and 42; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 146–47. (TN)

³⁹ Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 42–44.

deities' relationship by specifying in each instance that the three deities named were part of a triad. This possibility should be considered in conjunction with these six deities' distinctive character as alike produced through the medium of the "wondrous rock outcroppings."

8. Kura okami no kami 閼淤加美神 / **Kura mitsuha no kami** 閼御津羽神

The morpheme *kura* means a valley or a ravine; *okami* is a deity who governs the waters. The corresponding passage in the sixth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter states, "This deity was given the name Kura okami 閼竈龍. Next appeared Kura yamatsumi 閼山祇. Next appeared Kura mitsuha 閼罔象."⁴⁰

9. Masaka yamatsumi no kami 正鹿山津見神 / **Odo yamatsumi no kami** 淤滕山津見神 / **Oku yamatsumi no kami** 奥山津見神 / **Kura yamatsumi no kami** 閼山津見神 / **Shigi yamatsumi no kami** 志芸山津見神 / **Ha yamatsumi no kami** 羽山津見神 / **Hara yamatsumi no kami** 原山津見神 / **To yamatsumi no kami** 戸山津見神

These deities, all of whose names contain the element *yama* 山 ("mountain"), emerged from the body parts of the slain Kagutsuchi no kami. The generation of mountain deities from a fire deity may be related to volcanoes. The specific meaning of these deity names is not always clear, but each appears to be connected to the body part from which the deity was generated. The mountain deity with the prefix *masaka* appears from the head, *odo* from the breast, *oku* from the belly, *kura* from the genitals, *shigi* from the left hand, *ha* from the right hand, *hara* from the left foot, and *to* from the right foot.

Nakanishi Susumu 中西進 holds that these deities epitomize a mountain whose shape resembles a reclining giant. The breast, belly, and genitals represent the mountain's inner recesses, the arms and legs, its flanks. *Shigi*, which also means "snipe," a long-beaked bird, may symbolize the flanks, *ha* its edge (端), and *to* 戸 ("door") its entrance.⁴¹

Other *Kojiki* passages relating the transformation of a corpse also describe the body as constituted of eight parts, as in the account of Izanami in the Land of Yomi (see chapter 9), or the account of Susanoo's slaying of the deity Ōgetsuhime (see chapter 20). On the other hand, the corresponding account in the eighth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of the Deities chapter describes the emergence of five rather than eight deities from the body of the slain Kagutsuchi:

The first, the head (*kashira* 首), transformed into the deity Ō yamatsumi 大山紙.
The second, the trunk (*mukuro* 身中), transformed into the deity Naka yamatsumi

⁴⁰ Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, p. 45.

⁴¹ Nakanishi, *Kojiki o yomu*, vol. 1, pp. 91–94.

中山紙. The third, the hands (*te* 手), transformed into the deity Ha yamatsumi 麓山紙. The fourth, the hips (*koshi* 腰), transformed into the deity Masaka yamatsumi 正勝山紙. The fifth, the feet (*ashi* 足), transformed into the deity Shigi yamatsumi 雒山紙.⁴²

The Kagutsuchi myth of corpse transformation somewhat resembles the Chinese myth of Pangu as recounted in the compilation *Shuyiji* (fifth-sixth century). According to that account, “[Pangu’s] head became the eastern mountain, his belly became the middle mountain, his left buttock became the southern mountain, his right buttock became the northern mountain, his legs became the western mountain, and so forth.”⁴³ Opinions divide regarding the possible influence of this Chinese myth on the Kagutsuchi transformation story. Some posit a direct influence; others see the resemblances between the two myths as stemming from similar ways of thinking rather than a direct influence. Comparing the various versions, the *Nihon shoki* account would appear to be closer to the Pangu narrative. In considering one myth’s potential influence on another, however, it is important to examine them comprehensively, including their syntax and vocabulary, rather than focus on individual points of resemblance. From this perspective, it is difficult to determine whether the Kagutsuchi myth shows a direct influence from *Shuyiji*.

10. Ame no ohahari 天之尾羽張 / Itsu no ohahari 伊都之尾羽張

The episode concludes by naming the sword Izanaki used to slay Kagutsuchi, described earlier as a “ten-hands-long sword” (*totsuka no tsurugi*). The announcing of its name here is further evidence that *totsuka no tsurugi* is not a proper name but a noun meaning “a long sword.” The prefix *ame no* 天之 (“heavenly”) in the *Kojiki* usually indicates an entity associated with Takamanohara. In this case, too, the sword is subsequently identified as a deity residing in Takamanohara.⁴⁴ The alternative prefix *itsu no* 伊都之 conveys might and forcefulness. The *Nihon shoki* transcribes this prefix with the logographs 稜威,⁴⁵ but the *Kojiki* consistently writes it phonetically, with one graph for each syllable, as in the phrases *itsu no o to takebu* 伊都之男建 (“shouting as a mighty man [Amaterasu confronted Susanoo]”),⁴⁶ or *itsu no chiwaki chiwakite* 伊都能知和岐知和岐弓 (“mightily and decisively, [Ninigi descended to earth]”).⁴⁷ In each instance the *Kojiki* further specifies the pronunciation by a reading gloss.

Ame no ohahari reappears in the pacification of the land episode, where he is identified as the parent of Takemikazuchi no kami, one of the deities generated from the blood adhering to the handguard of Izanaki’s sword. The narrative intent is presumably

⁴² Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 52–53.

⁴³ *Shuyiji*, p. 150.

⁴⁴ See Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 106–107.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 62–63.

⁴⁶ See chapter 15.

⁴⁷ Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 116–17.

to confirm Takemikazuchi's status as a deity "born from the sword," but it is unquestionably a singular parent-child relationship.

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