

## Chapter 9 The Land of Yomi (1)

Thereupon, [Izanaki no mikoto], longing to see his sister-spouse, followed her to the Land of Yomi (1). When [he arrived, Izanami no mikoto] emerged from the closed door of the hall (2) to greet [him].

“Oh, my beloved sister-spouse (3)!” Izanaki proclaimed. “The land you and I were making is not yet finished (4). You must come back!”

“What a pity you did not come earlier!” Izanami no mikoto responded. “I have already eaten [food cooked] in the hearths of the Land of Yomi (5). But I am honored by your coming here, my beloved brother-spouse, and I would like to go back. I will go and discuss [this] with the deity of the Land of Yomi (6). Do not look at me while [I am inside the hall] (7).”

Having said this, she went back into the hall.

[Izanaki no mikoto] waited for an extremely long time, and then, unable to wait any longer, he broke off one of the end teeth of the wondrous long comb (8) he wore in his left hair bun, lit it to make a light, entered the hall, and looked around. Maggots swarmed [all over Izanami no mikoto], growling (9). On her head was Big-thunder. On her breast was Fire-thunder. On her belly was Black-thunder. On her genitals was Split-thunder. On her left hand was Young-thunder. On her right hand was Earth-thunder. On her left foot was Crying-thunder. On her right foot was Reclining-thunder. All together, eight thunder deities (10) had come into existence (11) [from the body of Izanami no mikoto].

### Text Notes

#### 1. The Land of Yomi (Yomotsukuni 黄泉国)

This is the first “otherworld” encountered in the *Kojiki* myths. Two readings have been proposed—Yomi no kuni and Yomotsukuni—and there is no definitive evidence in favor of either. The *Kojiki* offers an example of the phonetic transcription *yomotsu* in the term *yomotsushikome* 予母都志許売 (“*yomotsu* hags”),<sup>1</sup> but no comparable explicit examples of the reading *yomi*. It might be argued that the term takes the form *yomi* when it stands alone and changes to *yomo* when joined to a subsequent element in a compound term. Overall, however, the lack of instances in the *Kojiki* of the word *yomi* standing alone

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 10. *Tsu* is a possessive particle (“of”) that links the preceding and following elements as a compound term. (TN)

and the example of the phonetic transcription *yomotsu* suggest that the reading Yomotsukuni is probably appropriate.<sup>2</sup>

Various theories have been advanced about the etymology of the word Yomo/Yomi, including “seen at night” (*yomi* 夜見, as in the term for “moon,” *tsukuyomi* 月夜見), “darkness” (*yami* 闇), “to mark [the phases of the moon]” (*yomi* 数み), “all directions” (*yomo* 四方), “the world of spirits” (*yomi* 世霊), and “mountain” (*yama* 山). None can be seen as definitive, however. Among these, *yomi* 夜見 and *yami* 闇 have been rejected as incompatible with representations of pronunciation specific to the ancient period. Motoori Norinaga and his disciple Hattori Nakatsune 服部中庸 (1757–1824) take the Land of Yomi to be the realm of the moon deity Tsukuyomi and represent Yomi as 夜見, but this approach is not plausible.<sup>3</sup> The most widely accepted thesis takes Yomi to derive from *yama*, in line with the hypothesis that the otherworld was seen as located in the mountains. The question remains, however, how to explain a phonetic variant meaning mountain in the sense of “otherworld” splitting off from the standard term *yama*, which has continued down to the present to mean “mountain” in the ordinary sense.

The use of the graphs 黄泉 (“yellow springs”) to transcribe the term Yomi further complicates investigation of the word’s etymology. In its original Chinese context this digraph undeniably refers to an underground land of the dead. Its adoption by the *Kojiki*’s compilers could be held to signal an intent to present Yomi as an underground realm. On the other hand, the digraph 黄泉 also implies a place where one can meet the dead. Those favoring the hypotheses that the otherworld was seen as located in the mountains and that Yomi/Yomo derives from *yama* could argue that it was the association of 黄泉 with a place to meet the dead that led to its adoption. The description of Izanami being buried on Hibanoyama mountain also suggests a link between the digraph 黄泉 and mountains.

Viewed from another angle, Hibanoyama’s stated location on the border between the lands of Izumo and Hōki can be taken to support the interpretation of Yomi as *yomo* 四方, that is, an outlying and remote land. Just as with *tokoyo* (“eternal realm”) in the tale of Urashima-ko 浦島子 from the *Tango no kuni fudoki*, the Land of Yomi may be a composite notion combining various elements of the idea of an otherworld.

Other considerations bear on the location and semantics of the Land of Yomi as well. To which realm does “the Yomi border slope” (Yomotsuhirasaka 黄泉比良坂) mentioned below belong? How should “the foot of the Yomi border slope” (*Yomotsuhirasaka no sakamoto* 黄泉比良坂之坂本) be understood? Which among the varying graphs used by different manuscripts and editions of the *Kojiki* to describe

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned in chapter 7, footnote 51, the reading Yomi is long established in English. The translation thus keeps to this convention and renders Yomotsukuni as the Land of Yomi and Yomotsuhirasaka (see below) as “Yomi border slope.” (TN)

<sup>3</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 237–39; Hattori Nakatsune, *Sandaikō*, pp. 261–64. See also chapter 14, text note 5.

Izanaki's interaction with the thunder deities is the most plausible? (See the discussion of these points in chapter 10.)

**Further comment: The Land of Yomi and tumuli with side-entrance stone chambers (*yokoanashiki sekishitsu* 横穴式石室).** Many archaeological studies have drawn connections between the *Kojiki* myth of the Land of Yomi and tumuli incorporating stone chambers with a passage leading from a side entrance, a tumulus style found widely from the late Kofun era. Kobayashi Yukio 小林行雄 sees a relationship between the pottery unearthed from such stone chambers and the phrase “eaten [food cooked] in the hearths of the Land of Yomi” (*yomotsuhegui* 黄泉戸喰) that appears subsequently in this passage.<sup>4</sup> Shiraishi Taichirō likens the passage in the *Kojiki* where Izanaki and Izanami declare their eternal estrangement (*kotodo watashi* 度事戸) to a ritual of sealing the entrance to the stone chamber.<sup>5</sup> Habuta Yoshiyuki 土生田純之 postulates a connection between the use of this type of stone chamber for burials and the development of the idea of the Land of Yomi.<sup>6</sup> Hirose Kazuo 広瀬和雄 and Wada Seigo 和田晴吾 link the adoption of such chambers to the introduction from the continent of new ideas about the souls of the dead.<sup>7</sup>

Many researchers thus continue even today to presume a link between the myth of the Land of Yomi and tumuli stone chambers. Evidence found in these tumuli of the handling of bodily remains and burial rituals, however, raises questions about this assumption. Below let us take a closer look at some of the issues involved.

In elite burials throughout the entire Kofun period it was customary to seal the corpse in a wooden or stone coffin or a stone chamber and to make food offerings. The introduction of stone chambers with side entrance passages, which occurred from the second half of the fifth into the sixth century, brought no fundamental change in these practices. Corpses left as is will rot. The anthropologist Pascal Boyer holds that the feeling of danger and repulsion that dead bodies arouse in humans is an instinctive reaction triggered by awareness of this fact.<sup>8</sup> This mental mechanism underlies the practice of covering or enclosing corpses. In Japan, it became customary in the third century to enclose the remains of people of special status in long wooden coffins and to bury the coffins, together with grave goods such as mirrors, weapons, and various types of jewels, in tumuli with a stone chamber that was closed from the top (*tateanashiki sekishitsu* 竪穴式石室). In this way the remains were separated and shut off from the outside world. But evidence of offering food and drink to the dead and at graves can be traced back earlier to the late Yayoi period, and there is continuity between this custom and those of the Kofun period. The mortuary rituals typical of the Kofun period combined the two

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<sup>4</sup> Kobayashi Yukio, “Yomotsuhegui.”

<sup>5</sup> Shiraishi, “Kotodo watashi kō.” For the passage, see chapter 11.

<sup>6</sup> Habuta, *Yomi no kuni no seiritsu*.

<sup>7</sup> Hirose, “Sōshoku kofun no hensen to igi”; Wada, *Kofun jidai no sōsei to takaikan*.

<sup>8</sup> Boyer, *Religion Explained*, pp. 213–14.

elements of enclosing coffins in stone chambers and making food offerings at those sites. These practices took shape together with the adoption of keyhole-shape large tumuli in the third century and continued until the sixth century, despite some changes in burial items between the second half of the fourth century and the fifth and the introduction of *haniwa* figurines and stone chambers with a passage leading to a side entrance.

The major changes in the handling of the remains within the tumuli occurred in fact in the seventh century rather than with the adoption of stone chambers with a side entrance in the fifth century. From the middle of the seventh century, narrow stone enclosures with a side opening (*yokoguchishiki sekkaku* 横口式石槨), which had space for only the coffin, became prevalent. As a result, the custom of placing burial goods and food offerings within tumuli became obsolete, and the mortuary rituals associated with large tumuli soon died out.<sup>9</sup>

We should keep in mind that the *Kojiki* was compiled after these changes in the style of tumuli burials had occurred. In other words, the period when stone chambers with side entrances were common did not coincide with that of the *Kojiki*'s compilation. By that time such chambers were already a thing of the past. Further, the remains of the dead enclosed in those chambers were the object of a tradition of mortuary rituals that had become established from the third century. More telling is the text's depiction of the Land of Yomi as a place of pollution and the dead Izanami as a putrefying, polluted, and horrendous entity. One cannot detect in that depiction any sense of the Land of Yomi as a setting for mortuary rituals or of Izanami as the object of such ceremonies.

The narrative significance of the *Kojiki*'s emphasis on the Land of Yomi as a place of pollution and Izanami as a putrefying, horrendous entity is also pertinent. These characterizations serve as pivotal links to the subsequent episode of the "three noble children" wherein Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo are produced through Izanaki's removing the pollution of Yomi by ritually cleansing his body in a river.<sup>10</sup> The *Kojiki* myth of the Land of Yomi takes on meaning not as an isolated episode but through its links to the preceding and subsequent episodes.

A similar situation obtains in regard to the *Kojiki*'s identification of the Yomi border slope—the site where Izanaki and Izanami declare their eternal estrangement—as the "Ifuya border in the land of Izumo" (Izumo no kuni no Ifuyazaka 出雲国之伊賦夜坂). This description picks up on the previous statement that Izanami is buried on Hibanoyama mountain, situated on the border between the lands of Izumo and Hōki. It likely is intended to recall the geographical connection between the Yomi border slope, Izumo, and Hibanoyama.<sup>11</sup> These factors counter an easy correlation of the Yomi border slope with the passage leading from a tumulus side entrance to its stone chamber, or the formula

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<sup>9</sup> Sasō, "Kofun no girei to shisha, shigo kan."

<sup>10</sup> See chapter 12.

<sup>11</sup> See chapters 7 and 11.

of estrangement uttered by Izanaki and Izanami with mortuary rituals for sealing off the passage.

The *Kojiki* took shape through a compilation process that endowed it with a distinctive narrative form, and it is not appropriate to build hypotheses concerning it on isolated evidence extracted from the surrounding context. This is true of the Land of Yomi episode as well, and one should be cautious in connecting this episode directly to the phenomenon of tumuli with side entrances leading to a stone chamber.

Sasō Mamoru, Archaeology / Ancient Japanese History

## 2. “From the closed door of the hall” (*tono no sashito yori* 自殿滕戸)

The various Urabe-lineage manuscripts, beginning with the Kanenaga-bon of 1522, substitute the graph 騰 (“to raise,” “to go up”) for 滕 (“to close,” “to bind”). Readings for both combinations of graphs vary. Among commentators who accept the substitution, Motoori Norinaga reserves judgment on how to read the graph 騰 and reads the four-graph phrase simply as *tonodo yori* (“from the door to the hall”).<sup>12</sup> Tsugita Uruu and Nakajima Etsuji, basing their views on the meaning of the graph 騰, read the phrase as *tono no agedo yori* (“from the hatch door to the hall”).<sup>13</sup> Ozaki Satoakira reads it as *tono yori to o agete* (“raised the door from within the hall”).<sup>14</sup>

Those who adopt the graph 滕 have proposed a variety of readings generally linked to the verbs *sasu* and *tozasu* (both meaning “to close”). Kurano Kenji, Ozaki Nobuo, and Ogiwara Asao read the phrase as *tono no tozashido yori* (“from the closed door of the hall”).<sup>15</sup> Kanda Hideo and Ōta Yoshimaro adopt the reading *shiritsuto yori* (“from the back door”).<sup>16</sup> While preserving the meaning “from the closed door of the hall,” Kurano subsequently shifted to the reading *tono no sashido yori*.<sup>17</sup> Nishimiya Kazutami likewise opts for *tono no sashito yori* as does Onoda Mitsuo.<sup>18</sup> Nakamura Hirotoishi chooses *tono no tojito yori* (also meaning “from the closed door of the hall”).<sup>19</sup> Kōnoshi Takamitsu and Yamaguchi Yoshinori parse the phrase differently and opt for *tono yori to o tojite* (“[came out] from the hall and closed the door [behind her]”).<sup>20</sup>

After Kurano Kenji and Kojima Noriyuki pointed out that the early Chinese dictionaries *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (100 CE) and *Yupian* 玉篇 (543 CE) indicate that

<sup>12</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 239–40.

<sup>13</sup> Tsugita, *Kojiki shinkō*, pp. 56–57; Nakajima, *Kojiki hyōshaku*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>14</sup> Ozaki Satoakira, *Zenchū Kojiki*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>15</sup> Kurano, *Kojiki taisei*, vol. 6, pp. 68–69; Kurano and Takeda, *Kojiki, Norito*, p. 63; Ozaki Nobuo, *Kojiki zenkō*, pp. 62–64; Ogiwara, *Kojiki, Jōdai kayō*, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Kanda and Ōta, *Kojiki*, vol. 1, pp. 190–91; Kanda, *Shinchū Kojiki*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, pp. 235–37, 240.

<sup>18</sup> Nishimiya, *Kojiki*, p. 37; Nishimiya, *Kojiki shūteiban*, p. 34; Onoda, *Kojiki*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Kōnoshi and Yamaguchi, *Kojiki chūkai*, vol. 2, pp. 175, 182–85; Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 44–45.

膝 means 緘 (“to close” or “to bind”), subsequent commentators have largely taken the digraph 膝戸 to mean “the closed door” or “to close the door.”<sup>21</sup> The editors of the *Nihon shisō taikēi* edition of *Kojiki*, by contrast, hypothesize that the graph 膝 may be a mistranscription of 膝 (chikiri), and they read the digraph as *chikirito*. (*Chikiri* is a tubular rod used in a loom for winding the warp threads. The editors suggest that here it might refer to a clamp used to fasten together the two leaves of a door.)<sup>22</sup> If the graph 膝 can be interpreted as meaning “to close,” however, there is no need to resort to the hypothesis of a mistranscription.

Some commentators focus on the door’s structure, linking it to the question of how to conceive of the Land of Yomi. Tsugita Uruu, who opts for the graphs 膝戸, holds that it refers to the hatch door that can be raised or lowered at the entrance to the stone enclosure within a tomb. Others (regardless of whether they opt for 膝戸 or 膝戸) hypothesize that the *Kojiki* compilers imagined the door as the slab that closed the entrance to the passage leading to the stone chamber in tumuli, or as the entrance to a mourning hut (*mogari* 殯) erected for conducting elite funerary rites prior to interment. It is important to consider the background in which the Land of Yomi myth took shape, but overly literal attempts to link it to actual historical phenomena may impede understanding of its content as a myth.

### 3. “[My] sister-spouse / [my] brother-spouse” (*nanimo* 那迺妹 / *nase* 那勢)

On these terms, see text note 12 in chapter 7. The word *nanimo* (also written with the graphs 汝妹) is an affectionate form of address from a man to a woman. The word *nase* (also written with the graphs 汝夫) is the corresponding affectionate form of address from a woman. Some consider the morpheme *na* 汝 to be the remnant of an ancient first-person pronoun. That hypothesis raises the problem, however, of a possible overlapping with the first-person possessive pronoun *a ga* 我 in the expression *a ga nase no mikoto* 我那勢命 used by Izanami in this passage.

### 4. “The land you and I were making is not yet finished” (*a to na to tsukureru kuni, imada tsukurioezu* 吾与汝所作之国未作竟)

Up to this point the narrative has described Izanaki and Izanami as “giving birth” (*umu* 生) to different lands and deities. Some, such as Kurano Kenji, hold that the use here of the verb “to make” (*tsukureru* 作) is thus contradictory.<sup>23</sup> However, Izanaki and Izanami have been carrying out the heavenly deities’ command to “put in order, solidify, and complete (*tsukuroi katame nase* 修理固成) this drifting land” (see chapter 3). The act of

<sup>21</sup> Kurano and Takeda, *Kojiki, Norito*, pp. 62–63; Kojima, *Kokuhō Shinpukuji-bon Kojiki*, “Kaisetsu,” p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, pp. 32–33, 496.

<sup>23</sup> Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, pp. 163–65, 243.

giving birth can be considered a means to fulfill that command. Does not Izanaki speak here of the land he and Izanami were “making” because the intent in giving birth was in fact “to make” the land? At times the two verbs can convey the same meaning, as in the expression “to make [procreate] a child” (*kodomo o tsukuru* 子どもを作る), and in the case of the *Kojiki*, the notion of “to make” (*tsukuru*) would seem to encompass the act of giving birth.

Some hold that Izanaki’s statement that the land he and Izanami were making “is not yet finished” means that they did not completely fulfill the heavenly deities’ command to “put in order, solidify, and complete this drifting land,” and that this unfinished task would be taken up and carried through by the deity Ōkuninushi, who subsequently is also described as undertaking to “make the land.”<sup>24</sup> By that rationale, though, the final consolidation and formation of the land would fall outside the scope of the heavenly deities’ original command to Izanaki and Izanami. Even if Ōkuninushi eventually carried through the task they left uncompleted, that would not be an outcome envisioned by the original command. In that the heavenly deities addressed the command to Izanaki and Izanami, we should see its fulfillment as playing out within the sections of the myths devoted to their activities. If “giving birth” is the means by which they carried out the command, was it not fulfilled in the section following the Land of Yomi episode? There, having produced multiple deities through the process of purifying himself, Izanaki declares, “I have borne child after child, and at the end of giving birth (*ko o umi umite umi no hate ni* 生々子而於生終), I have obtained three noble children” (see chapter 14). Is it not the birth of the three noble children that constitutes fulfillment of the heavenly deities’ command?<sup>25</sup>

##### 5. “Eaten [food cooked] in the hearths of the land of Yomi” (*yomotsuhegui* 黄泉戸喫)

The word *yomotsu* means “of (or from) the Land of Yomi,” and *he* 戸 means “hearth” (*hettsui* 竈 in modern Japanese). The phrase *yomotsuhegui* 黄泉戸喫 is taken to mean “eat [food cooked] in the hearths of the Land of Yomi.” The notion has been linked to the idea that by sharing the food of a particular realm one becomes a creature of it. The crucial point, though, is probably the use of that realm’s “fire” to cook what is consumed. It might be argued that the consequences of eating food cooked “in the hearths of the Land of Yomi” were not absolute, as Izanami says that she will nevertheless discuss with the deity of that land whether she could leave and go back with Izanaki. Nevertheless, it is because she ate food cooked in its hearths that Izanami takes on the subsequently described features of a creature from the Land of Yomi.

This passage uses the graph 戸 (which commonly carries the meaning “door” or “dwelling”) to transcribe “hearth” (*he*). The same is true in the later genealogy of the deity

<sup>24</sup> See Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, pp. 94–95.

<sup>25</sup> See Taniguchi Masahiro, *Kojiki no hyōgen to bunmyaku*, pp. 27–43.

Ōtoshi no kami, which lists among this deity's descendants Ōhehime no kami 大戸日売神. The text adds that “this is the hearth deity worshiped by the multitudes.”<sup>26</sup> The sixth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter transcribes “hearth” as 竈; the seventh variant provides the gloss *yomotsuheguhi* [*hegui*] 譽母都俳遇比 for the four graphs 飡泉之竈 (“eat [food cooked] in the hearths of the Land of Yomi”).<sup>27</sup>

**Further comment: Readings and interpretations of the phrase 黄泉戸喫 [*yomotsuhikui* / *yomotsuhekui*].** The 1644 printed edition of the *Kojiki* adds the phonetic gloss (*furigana*) *hikuhi* ヒクヒ to the graphs 戸喫, and in the copy of this edition in which he inserted his own corrections and glosses, Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1669–1736) does not modify that reading.<sup>28</sup> Watarai Nobuyoshi adopts the same reading in his *Gōtō Kojiki* of 1687.<sup>29</sup> Azumamaro expands upon the implications of this reading in his observations on the corresponding phrase 飡泉之竈 found in the sixth and seventh variants of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter. He writes:

The phrase *yomotsuhikuhi* means that [Izanami] had eaten the *hi* 𠩺 of Yomi. [As for forms of *hi*,] the sun (*hi* 日) in the heavens is pure and bright. In regard to human beings, [*hi*] has two dimensions. As the shining brightness of the spirit (*hi* 靈), it is a force that leads to goodness. The fire (*hi* 火) of thoughts of passion and greed is the fire of the land. The *hi* of which Izanami speaks means the fire within the earth. There is indeed good reason that in this country people observe taboos regarding fire.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, Azumamaro argues that *hi* (𠩺) in this passage means the fire of Yomi and the fire of evil passions and greed.

Kamo no Mabuchi also reads 𠩺 as *hi*. In support of this reading and the association with “fire,” he notes in his *Kojiki tōsho* 古事記頭書 that “In Shikoku [people say] that if one eats [food cooked with] polluted fire, wolves are sure to appear at the front gate.”<sup>31</sup> *Kanagaki Kojiki* 仮名書古事記, his *kana* transcription of the text, likewise gives the reading *hi*.<sup>32</sup> In the headnotes to his own annotation of the 1644 printed edition of the *Kojiki* he argues against the view of Azumamaro's nephew Kada no Arimaro 荷田在満 (1706–1751) that the *ritsuryō* codes and other early records provide no evidence of the observation of fire taboos in antiquity. To the contrary, Mabuchi writes, “There are many works indicating the need to observe taboos concerning fire.”<sup>33</sup>

Norinaga breaks with the tradition of reading 𠩺 as *hi*. In his *Kojiki den* 古事記伝 he reads 𠩺 as *he*, interprets it as “hearth,” and argues against the reading of it as *hi*. At

<sup>26</sup> See chapter 35.

<sup>27</sup> Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 44–45, 52–53.

<sup>28</sup> Kada no Azumamaro, *Kakiirebon* “*Kojiki*,” p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Watarai Nobuyoshi, *Gōtō Kojiki*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Kada no Azumamaro, *Nihon shoki jindaikan sakki* (Azumamaro Jinja zō, Kada no Nobuna hitsu).

<sup>31</sup> Kamo no Mabuchi, *Kojiki tōsho*, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Kamo no Mabuchi, *Kanagaki Kojiki*, p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> Kamo no Mabuchi, *Kojiki (kakiire)*, p. 22.



the same time, he takes the phrase *yomotsuhegui* to encompass “fire” and continues to hold firmly to the idea of a fire taboo.<sup>34</sup>

In this way, Azumamaro, Mabuchi, and Norinaga share a common view of this passage as recording the origin of the custom of observing fire taboos.

Matsumoto Hisashi 松本久史, Early Modern Kokugaku and Shinto Studies

## 6. The deity of Yomi (*yomotsukami* 黄泉神)

This phrase appears to refer to a main deity of the Land of Yomi. Subsequently, however, the text notes that Izanami herself is called “the great Yomi deity” (*Yomotsuōkami* 黄泉津大神).<sup>35</sup> It thus is generally held that the reference here to the “deity of Yomi” is simply a narrative device and does not carry substantive implications. It is not impossible, however, that the deity in question is the eight thunder deities (*yakusa no ikazuchi kami* 八雷神) who figure in the last part of this passage.

## 7. “Do not look at me” (*wa o na mitamai so* 莫視我)

This is an example of the so-called “looking taboo,” a motif found widely in myths, legends, and folk tales. In this instance, Izanaki defies the prohibition and sees Izanami’s true form as a creature of the otherworld, which leads to the couple’s permanent estrangement. The inevitability of an ultimate separation is a common theme in “looking taboo” myths. Unlike in many such myths, the Land of Yomi may not have been Izanami’s “native abode”; rather, her innate nature changed as a result of her becoming a creature of the Land of Yomi after eating food cooked in its hearths. The consequent definitive realization of the disparity between the realms to which each deity belongs leads in turn to their eternal separation (or parting by death).

## 8. “One of the end teeth of the wondrous *tsumakushi* comb” (*yutsu tsumakushi no obashira hitotsu* 湯津々間櫛之男柱一箇)

The adjective *yutsu* indicates something endowed with divine properties, and *tsumakushi* is a “fine-toothed comb” or a “fingernail-shaped comb.” The “end teeth” (*obashira* 男柱) are the two large teeth at each end. The editors of the *Nihon shisō taikei* edition hold that since Kofun-era combs had an elongated shape (*tatekushi* 堅櫛) and were made of bamboo, their end teeth were also long.<sup>36</sup> The sixth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter describes the comb as *yutsu tsumakushi* 湯津爪櫛, or a “wondrous fingernail-shaped comb.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, pp. 240–41.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>36</sup> Aoki Kazuo et al., *Kojiki*, pp. 34–35, 340.

<sup>37</sup> Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 44–45.

9. “Maggots swarmed, growling” (*uji takare kororokite* 宇士多加礼許呂々岐弓)

The phrase describes maggots swarming and making a strange sound. Commentators note that the continuative form *takare* 多加礼 indicates that *takaru* (“to swarm”), which today has a quadrigate (*yodan* 四段) conjugation, may originally have had a lower bigrade (*shimo nidan*) one. In his printed edition of 1687 Watarai Nobuyoshi amends the phonetic transcription *kororokite* 許呂々岐弓 to *todorogite* 斗斗呂岐弓,<sup>38</sup> and Motoori Norinaga adopts the transcription *tororokite* 斗呂呂岐弓.<sup>39</sup> However, as the Heian-period dictionary *Wamyō ruijushō* ascribes the phonetic reading *kororoku* 古路々久 to the entry for the graphs 嘶咽 (“growl”), the standard reading today for the phrase at hand has become *kororokite*, the continuative form of the verb *kororoku*.<sup>40</sup> The graph 嘶 conveys a rasping or neighing sound and 咽 a choking sound. Kurano Kenji holds that this expression should be interpreted as “maggots swarmed over [the body of the female deity], and her voice was hoarse and thick.”<sup>41</sup> The subject of the verb *kororoku*, however, is more plausibly the maggots. Saigō Nobutsuna sees the phrase as describing the maggots as making a growling noise.<sup>42</sup> Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Kōnoshi Takamitsu, on the other hand, hold that *kororoku* does not indicate that the maggots are emitting a sound but rather that they were squirming and tumbling about.<sup>43</sup>

Some see this phrase as a literal description of the putrefying state of Izanami’s corpse, but this interpretation misses the point. The phrase functions, rather, to convey Izanami’s true nature within the context of the Land of Yomi. Considered as an example of “the looking taboo” myth typos, this episode can be seen as relating the estrangement that inevitably results from Izanaki’s observing Izanami’s true nature within the Land of Yomi.

10. “The eight thunder deities” (*yakusa no ikazuchi kami* 八雷神)

*Ikazuchi* is generally understood to mean “awesome spirit” (*itsumitama* 威ツ霊). How to interpret it in this instance, however, poses several problems. Should *ikazuchi* be taken as indicating a terrifying and powerful spiritual entity, or as a demon-like creature? Or should these deities be understood as related to thunder, in line with the meaning of the graph 雷, also read *ikazuchi* and used to transcribe their names? Fukushima Akiho 福島秋穂 points out that the Chinese gazetteer *Huayang guo zhi* 華陽国志 (355 CE) relates that “thunder emerges from the earth in the second month . . . it enters the earth in the eighth month.” From this she concludes that thunder was perceived as lying underground.<sup>44</sup> Nakamura Hirotochi holds that Japanese mythology similarly relates that

<sup>38</sup> Watarai Nobuyoshi, *Gōtō Kojiki*, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki den*, MNZ 9, p. 245.

<sup>40</sup> Mabuchi, *Koshahon wamyō ruijushō shūsei*, vol. 2, p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> Kurano, *Kojiki zenchūshaku*, vol. 2, p. 250.

<sup>42</sup> Saigō, *Kojiki chūshaku*, vol. 1, pp. 179–80.

<sup>43</sup> Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi, *Kojiki*, p. 45n11.

<sup>44</sup> Fukushima, *Kiki shinwa densetsu no kenkyū*, pp. 108–23. *Huayang guo zhi* is the oldest extant gazetteer of a region of China. (TN)

eight types of thunder originated from the Land of Yomi.<sup>45</sup> If so, however, how should we think of the relationship between the eight types of thunder mentioned here and Takemikazuchi no kami, who is also associated with thunder and was produced when Izanaki slayed the fire deity Kagutsuchi (see chapter 8)?

The use of the graph for thunder in the names of the eight *ikazuchi* suggests that they are not merely demon-like creatures. Yet should they be considered deities, in that the suffix “deity” (*kami* 神) is not attached to any of their names individually, but appears only in the encompassing descriptive term “eight thunder deities” (*yakusa no ikazuchi kami* 八雷神)? The ninth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter refers simply to “the eight thunder lords” (*yakusa no ikazuchi* 八色雷公) and the “eight thunders” (read likewise as *yakusa no ikazuchi* 八雷).<sup>46</sup>

#### 11. “Had come into existence” (*narioriki* 成居)

This passage initially relates that each of the thunders seen on the different parts of Izanami’s body “was” (*oru* 居) there. Summing up that there were eight thunders in total, however, it states that they “had come into existence” (*narioriki* 成居). The term “was” leaves the relationship between the thunders and Izanami indeterminate, but the statement that they “had come into existence” suggests that the eight types of thunder must have originated from Izanami’s body. The information given in summations of this sort seems generally intended to guide understanding of the preceding narrative. Along with comments about what has just been said and glosses for a preceding phrase, summations are a characteristic feature of the *Kojiki* text. The corresponding passage in the ninth variant of the fifth section of the *Nihon shoki* Age of Deities chapter has simply the graph 在 (*aru*, “to be”).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nakamura, *Shinpan Kojiki*, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 54–55.

<sup>47</sup> Kojima et al., *Nihon shoki*, SNKBZ 2, pp. 54–55.