

The Dawn of Japanese History

In 1947, an unknown amateur archaeologist, Aizawa Tadahiro, stumbled onto some tools of flaked stone in Iwajuku, Gumma prefecture. It was one of those unusual breakthroughs in our understanding of prehistoric Japan. The implements belonged to the third interglacial period, which meant that *homo sapiens* existed in Japan at that time. This was contrary to the accepted theories of the day, but soon afterwards other discoveries across the country—including hand axes, blades, points and microblades—confirmed that pre-modern hominids indeed lived in Japan between 150,000 and 200,000 years ago. Other discoveries, notably those at Niu, Kyushu in 1959, showed the trace of *homo sapiens* even earlier than the second interglacial period, or the period inhabited by the Neanderthal man in paleolithic Europe. In 1969 the complete skeletal remains of an elephant were found in Hokkaido, and in 1986, traces of elephant fat were detected in stone implements found in Miyagi prefecture. It meant the Japanese islands were once contiguous to the continent, fueling speculation about where the Japanese people originated.

These discoveries provided an unusual impetus for the study of Japan's past and its mythological accounts. These myths at certain periods in Japan's history were utilized by the ruling imperial clan to justify its claim to supremacy, by the Shintō revivalists as an article of faith, and yet at another time by the militarists to provide a doctrinal basis for Japan's imperial expansion.

The archaeological discoveries made it virtually impossible for any of the above claims to resurface. However, even if these myths were rejected as historical facts, they must still be reassigned a significant place in our understanding of the ancient Japanese people. From their sun worship, the coming of age ceremonies to marriage after servitude, these myths relate to us the life-style of an ancient people, and support the archaeological discoveries in verifying the existence of agriculture in their ancient past.

These myths are found in the *Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters)* and the

Nihon Shoki (also rendered as the *Nihongi*, Chronicles of Japan) which are the oldest extant records of Japan compiled in 712 and 720 respectively. Even though the dates of compilation are relatively recent, compared to the records existing in other ancient civilizations, these two works refer back to much earlier ages. (As to how their oral tradition was preserved, how the *Kojiki* was written, and the philological explanation for the work, see Chapter II, Document 4.)

Documents 1, 2, 3, and 5 are taken from either the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon Shoki* which show the Japanese people's early attempt to explain the conflicts between the Sun line (the Yamato people) and the Izumo clans, the creation of the Izumo clans, and the supremacy of the heirs of the Sun Goddess.

While the Japanese people still lacked their own writing systems, scattered reports of Japan appeared in some Chinese historical works. The earliest contemporary account of Japan is found in the *Han shu* (History of the Earlier Han) compiled during the first century A.D. in China. It consisted of a 20-word sentence saying that "The Japanese people live beyond the Sea of Lolang [the present-day Korea], and are divided into more than one hundred counties, and from time to time send their tributes." Other accounts also appeared from time to time, but by far the most important one is found in the *Wei zhi* (History of Wei), compiled around 297 A.D., which contains a section on Japan in its tales of peripheral peoples. Document 4 is a translation of this tale of the Japanese people, which is unrivaled in its description of Japanese customs and beliefs. The Wei history account also gives directions on how to reach the ancient kingdom of Yamatai, which poses an intriguing historiographical question.¹

The final document comes from the *Engishiki*, an early tenth century compilation of laws and regulations which also contains Shintō rituals. Note Shintō's emphasis on the ritual cleanliness and its categories of major and minor offenses. Most major offenses one could commit against the community were those related to the disruption of its agricultural endeavors.

POWER CONTEST BETWEEN SUN GODDESS AND SUSANO-O

The following selection, taken from the Kojiki, describes a power contest between Amaterasu, progenitor of the Yamato line, and Susano-o, progenitor of the

¹Was Yamatai located in Kyushu or Yamato? The Wei history discusses a civil war which took place in the third century A.D. If Yamatai were located in Kyushu, it would mean that the civil war so described and the resulting unification were of mere regional significance. On the other hand, if Yamatai were located in Yamato, it would mean that the civil war referred to was a "nationwide" uprising, and the emergence of Yamatai meant that a court strong enough to unify central and western Japan was in existence in the third century A.D. For this and other questions consult John Young, *The Location of Yamatai: A Case Study of Japanese Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958).

Izumo line. The culturally advanced Izumo was the strongest rival force to the Yamato line, and thus the myth takes special note of its subjugation.²

Sun worship was one of the key motifs in this myth. The central figure, Amaterasu, could be the Sun itself, or possibly a shaman who officiated in sun worship rituals.

Amaterasu's act of shutting herself inside a heavenly rock-cave and her eventual rescue have been variously interpreted as (1) an observance of the eclipse of the sun, (2) a rite of winter solstice, or (3) a requiem for the departed. The elaborate ritual that the deities performed to have Amaterasu reappear was intended to renew the waning power of the Sun. Since the Sun and the imperial line were inseparable, rejuvenation of the Sun would also have a propitious effect on the person of the reigning emperor. This rite of winter solstice combined with a requiem became one of the major court observances in the late seventh century.

Susano-o's offenses were the types of offense which were described in the Engishiki (Document 6b).

1 **Amaterasu and Susano-o³** [Susano-o-no-Mikoto came to the heavenly abode of Amaterasu Ōmikami, his sister, to take leave of her, which was interpreted as a move to usurp her land. To prove his sincerity Susano-o engaged Amaterasu in a contest of bearing offspring, and Susano-o won.]

... Susano-o-no-Mikoto, drunk with victory, broke down the ridges between the rice paddies of Amaterasu Ōmikami and covered up the ditches. Also he defecated and strewed the feces about in the hall where the first fruits were tasted. Even though he did this, Amaterasu Ōmikami did not reprove him, but said: "That which appears to be feces must be what my brother has vomited and strewn about while drunk. Also his breaking down the ridges of the paddies and covering up their ditches—my brother must have done this because he thought it was wasteful to use the land thus."

Even though she thus spoke with good intention, his misdeeds did not cease,

²According to the myth, Ōkuninushi, son-in-law and heir to Susano-o, would later commend his land to the Yamato court, thus ending the rivalry. During the Nara period, each successive governor of Izumo, at the time of his installation, travelled to the imperial court to perform a special ceremony of obeisance, repeating the pledge Ōkuninushi presumably made at the time of commendation of Izumo. Thus there is a special link between myth and historical fact, attesting to the existence of their former rivalry. This ceremony was unique, and governors of other provinces were not required to perform it. Dōtaku (large bronze bells with geometric designs) and large tombs, distinct in pattern from those of Yamato, are found in Izumo, attesting to the distinct cultural attainment of the region. Izumo is located in the present-day Shimane Prefecture, on the Japan-Sea side of Southern Honshu; Yamato is located in the present-day Nara Prefecture.

³Adapted from Donald L. Philippi, tr., *Kojiki* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1969), pp. 79–86.

but became even more flagrant. When Amaterasu Ōmikami was inside the sacred weaving hall seeing to the weaving of the divine garments, he opened a hole in the roof of the sacred weaving hall and dropped down into it the heavenly dappled pony which he had skinned with a backwards skinning. The heavenly weaving maiden, seeing this, was alarmed and struck her genitals against the shuttle and died.

At this time, Amaterasu Ōmikami, seeing this, was afraid, and opening the heavenly rock-cave door, went in and shut herself inside. Then Takamano-hara (the abode of the heavenly deities) was completely dark, and the Central Land of the Reed Plains was entirely dark. Because of this, constant night reigned, and the cries of the myriad deities were everywhere abundant, like summer flies; and all manner of calamities arose.

Then the eight hundred myriad deities assembled in a divine assembly. . . . They gathered together the long-crying birds of the eternal world and caused them to cry. They took the heavenly hard rock from the upper stream of the river Amenoyasunokawa; they took iron from [the mountain] Amenokanayama. They sought the smith Amatumara and commissioned Ishikori-dome-no-Mikoto to make a mirror. They commissioned Tamanoya-no-Mikoto to make long strings of myriad *magatama* beads.

They summoned Amenokoyane-no-Mikoto and Futotama-no-Mikoto to remove the whole shoulder-bone of a male deer of the mountain Amenokaguyama, and take *hahaka* wood from the mountain Amenokaguyama, and [with these] perform a divination. They uprooted by the very roots the flourishing *masakaki* trees of the mountain Amenokaguyama; to the upper branches they affixed long strings of myriad *magatama* beads; in the middle branches they hung a large-dimensioned mirror; in the lower branches they suspended white *nikite* cloth and blue *nikite* cloth. These various objects were held in his hands by Futotama-no-Mikoto as solemn offerings, and Amenokoyane-no-Mikoto intoned a solemn liturgy.

Amenotajikarao-no-Kami stood concealed beside the door, while Amenouzume-no-Mikoto bound up her sleeves with a cord of heavenly *hikage* vine, tied around her head a head-band of the heavenly *masaki* vine, bound together bundles of *sasa* leaves to hold in her hands, and overturning a bucket before the heavenly rock-cave door, stamped resoundingly upon it. Then she became divinely possessed, exposed her breasts, and pushed her shirt-band down to her genitals. The Takamanohara shook as the eight-hundred myriad deities laughed at once.

Then Amaterasu Ōmikami, thinking this strange, opened a crack in the heavenly rock-cave door, and said from within: "Because I have shut myself in, I thought that Takamanohara would be dark, and that the Central Land of the Reed Plains would be completely dark. But why is it that Amenouzume sings and dances, and all the eight-hundred myriad deities laugh?" Then Amenouzume said: "We rejoice and dance because there is here a deity superior to you." While she was saying this, Amenokoyane-no-Mikoto and Futotama-no-Mikoto brought

out the mirror and showed it to Amaterasu Ōmikami. Then Amaterasu Ōmikami, thinking this more and more strange, gradually came out of the door and approached [the mirror].

Then the hidden Amenotajikarao-no-Kami took her hand and pulled her out. Immediately Futotama-no-Mikoto extended a *sirikume* rope behind her, and said, "You may go back no further than this!" When Amaterasu Ōmikami came forth, Takamanohara and the Central Land of the Reed Plains of themselves became light.

At this time the eight-hundred myriad deities deliberated together, imposed upon Susano-o-no-Mikoto a fine of a thousand tables of restitutive gifts, and also, cutting off his beard and the nails of his hands and feet, had him exorcised and expelled with a divine expulsion.

COMING OF AGE IN ANCIENT JAPAN

Aside from Susano-o, his father-in-law, Ōkuninushi was the most colorful hero of the Izumo myths. Unlike the deities of the imperial line, the gods of the Izumo clans were more man-like and partook of the joys and travails of mankind. Ōkuninushi's trials had traces of the practice of marriage after servitude and of the coming-of-age ceremony. According to the myth, Ōkuninushi died many deaths but at each turn he miraculously revived. This was akin to the ritualistic deaths performed at some coming-of-age ceremonies in the South Pacific. A young man had to prove his manhood through a ritualistic death, and in Ōkuninushi's case, the deaths were visited on him to prove his worthiness to become the future ruler of Izumo.

2 Ōkuninushi-no-Mikoto and Izumo⁴ On Ōkuninushi's arrival in Izumo, Suseribime, daughter of Susano-o, came forth and saw him; they looked at each other lovingly and became man and wife. She went back inside and told her father: "A most beautiful deity has come." Then the great deity went out . . . and invited him in and made him sleep in a chamber of snakes. Then his spouse Suseribime-no-Mikoto gave her husband a snake-repelling scarf, saying: "When the snakes are about to bite, drive them away by waving this scarf three times." He did as he was told, and the snakes became calm of their own accord. Thus, he slept peacefully and came forth unharmed.

Once more the next night, Susano-no-Mikoto put him in a chamber of centipedes and bees. Again Suseribime gave him a scarf to repel the centipedes and bees, and told him to do as before. Then he came forth unharmed.

Again, Susano-no-Mikoto shot a humming arrow into a large plain and made

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 98-103.

him go and fetch the arrow. When Ōkuninushi-no-Mikoto had gone into the plain, Susano-no-Mikoto set fire all around the edges of the plain. When Ōkuninushi-no-Mikoto could not find a way out, a mouse came and said: "The inside is hollow-hollow: the outside is narrow-narrow." Because the mouse had said this, he stamped his feet at that place and fell into a hole in the ground; while he was hidden there, the fire passed over. Then the mouse came out bearing the humming arrow in its mouth and presented it to him. . . .

At this time, his spouse Suseribime came along in tears, carrying funeral implements. Her father, the great deity, thinking that Ōkuninushi-no-Mikoto had died, went out on the plain. Then when Ōkuninushi brought the arrow and presented it to him, he led him inside the house, summoned him into a spacious hall, and had him pick the lice from his head. At this time his spouse gave to her husband nuts of the *muku* tree and red clay. He bit open the nuts, and put the red clay in his mouth, and spat out the mixture. Then the great deity, thinking that Ōkuninushi was biting open and spitting out the centipedes, thought lovingly in his heart of him and went to sleep.

Thereupon, Ōkuninushi took the hair of the great deity and tied strands of it to each of the rafters of the chamber. He took a huge boulder and blocked the door of the chamber. Carrying his spouse Suseribime on his back, he took away the great deity's sword of life and bow-and-arrow of life, as well as his heavenly speaking cither.

As he fled, the heavenly speaking cither brushed against a tree, and its sound reverberated along the ground. Then the sleeping deity, hearing this, was alarmed and pulled down the hall. However, while he was disentangling his hair which had been tied to the rafters, they had escaped far away. Then Susano-o pursued them as far as the pass Yomotsuhirasaka and looking far into the distance, called after Ōkuninushi, saying: "Using the sword of life and the bow-and-arrow of life which you are holding, pursue and subdue your half-brothers on the side of the hill; and pursue and sweep them down at the rapids of the river. Then, becoming Ōkuninushi-no-Kami and becoming Utsusikunitama-no-Kami⁵ make my daughter Suseribime your chief wife. Dwell at the foot of Mount Uka,⁶ root the posts of your palace firmly in the bedrock below, and raise high the crossbeam unto Takamanohara itself, you scoundrel!"

When he pursued the eighty deities using the sword and bow, he pursued and subdued them on the side of each hill, and pursued and swept them down at the rapids of each river.

Then he began the creation of the land.

⁵I.e., becoming the ruler of the land, the divine spirit of the land of mortals.

⁶This is where the Great Shrine of Izumo is located today. It was evidently an early social and political center of the Izumo region.

EMPEROR JIMMU'S CONQUEST OF THE EAST

Again, a conspicuous effort is made by the myth-tellers to link the imperial line with the Sun Goddess in this story of Emperor Jimmu. There is also assertion of the superiority of the imperial line, and the emperor was presumed to rule all "under heaven under one roof (Hakkō Ichiū)," which gave later nationalists justification for Japan's imperialistic expansion.

In reading this selection, pay special attention to the year "kanototori." The yin-yang and five element doctrines and the art of calendar-making were probably introduced to Japan from China between the sixth and seventh centuries. According to these theories, the year kanototori is supposed to bring forth great changes, and the most significant change is to occur every twenty-first time kanototori takes place (each calendar operated on a sixty-year cycle, thus the twenty-first time makes it every 1,260 years). The year 601 A.D. was a kanototori, and was a year of great innovation and reform under Empress Suiko and Prince Shōtoku (see Chapter II). Having this in mind the writers of the Nihon Shoki probably decided to push back the legendary beginning of Japan 1,260 years, or to 660 B.C.

Even though the founding of the empire in 660 B.C. had no historical foundation, it was so accepted officially until 1945. The Founding Day of the Nation was celebrated on February 11 every year. (The first day of the lunar calendar in the year 660 B.C. would have fallen on February 11 in the Gregorian calendar.) In 1967, February 11 again became a national holiday in spite of strong protests by many noted historians.

3 The Eastern Expedition of Emperor Jimmu⁷ Emperor Jimmu was forty-five years of age when he addressed the assemblage of his brothers and children: "Long ago, this central land of the Reed Plains was bequeathed to our imperial ancestors by the heavenly deities, Takamimusubi-no-Kami and Amaterasu Ōmikami. . . . However, the remote regions still do not enjoy the benefit of our imperial rule, with each town having its own master and each village its own chief. Each of them sets up his own boundaries and contends for supremacy against other masters and chiefs."

"I have heard from an old deity knowledgeable in the affairs of the land and sea that in the east there is a beautiful land encircled by blue mountains. . . . This

⁷From *Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan)*, vol. 1, in *Kokushi Taikei (Major Compilation of National History)*, new and enlarged ed., vol. 1, no. 1 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kō bunkan, pp. 111-115, 117, 126. A full English translation of the *Nihon Shoki* can be found in William G. Aston, *Nihongi, Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956).

must be the land from which our great task of spreading our benevolent rule can begin, for it is indeed the center of the universe⁸. . . . Let us go there, and make it our capital. . . .”

In the winter of that year, on the day of *kanototori*, the Emperor personally led imperial princes and a naval force to embark on his eastern expedition. . . .

When Nagasunehiko heard of the expedition, he said: “The children of the heavenly deities are coming to rob me of my country.” He immediately mobilized his troops and intercepted Jimmu’s troops at the hill of Kusaka and engaged in a battle. . . . The imperial forces were unable to advance. Concerned with the reversal, the Emperor formulated a new divine plan and said to himself: “I am the descendant of the Sun Goddess, and it is against the way of heaven to face the sun in attacking my enemy. Therefore our forces must retreat to make a show of weakness. After making sacrifice to the deities of heaven and earth, we shall march with the sun on our backs. We shall trample down our enemies with the might of the sun. In this way, without staining our swords with blood, our enemies can be conquered.” . . . So, he ordered the troops to retreat to the port of Kusaka and regroup there. . . .

[After withdrawing to Kusaka, the imperial forces sailed southward, landed at a port in the present-day Kii peninsula, and again advanced north toward Yamato.]

The precipitous mountains provided such effective barriers that the imperial forces were not able to advance into the interior, and there was no path they could tread. Then one night Amaterasu Ōmikami appeared to the Emperor in a dream: “I will send you the Yatagarasu,⁹ let it guide you through the land.” The following day, indeed the Yatagarasu appeared flying down from the great expanse of the sky. The Emperor said: “The coming of this bird signifies the fulfillment of my auspicious dream. How wonderful it is! Our imperial ancestor, Amaterasu Ōmikami, desires to help us in the founding of our empire. . . .”

At long last, the imperial forces caught up with Nagasunehiko and fought with him repeatedly, but could not gain victory. Then suddenly, the sky became darkened and hail fell. There appeared a mysterious hawk of a golden color which flew toward the Emperor and perched on the end of his bow. The brilliant luster of this hawk was almost like that of lightning. Bedazzled and confused the soldiers of Nagasunehiko were unable to fight with all their might. . . .

[Subsequently Nagasunehiko was killed by his overlord, and the Emperor continued to make his successful conquest.]

On new year’s day, in the year of *kanototori*, the Emperor formally proclaimed his ascension to the position of the ruler of the universe by virtue of

⁸The universe was divided into six quarters: Heaven, earth, east, west, north and south.

⁹Yatagarasu was reported to be an incarnation of a deity. The term also referred to a bird in the Chinese mythology with three claws and of red color, residing in the sun.

being a descendant of Amaterasu Ōmikami.¹⁰ This took place in the palace of Kashihabara, and the year was counted as the first year of his reign. . . .

JAPAN IN THE WEI DYNASTIC HISTORY

Japan was recorded in Chinese dynastic histories on a number of occasions. The first contact Japan had with China occurred in 57 A.D. when a mission was sent to the court of the Later Han dynasty. A tribute mission was again sent in 107 A.D. Dynastic histories give 13 entries for “five Japanese kings” between 413 and 502 A.D.

Of all the Chinese records, the description appearing in the Wei zhi (History of Wei) is most thorough, giving a contemporary account of history, geography, and the beliefs and customs of the Japanese people. The Kingdom of Wei existed between 220 and 265 A.D. and its history was compiled about 297 A.D. The existence of wet-rice cultivation and of sericulture is clearly indicated in the excerpts reproduced below. The use of iron as described—important both for cultivation and for warfare—is consistent with archaeological evidence available for the later Yayoi period.

As to the political structure of the country of Wa, rejection of men rulers in favor of a female seems to indicate a widespread practice of shamanism. The queen, Pimiko, obviously served as a medium as did her successor Iyo. Only through a form of witchcraft was the country able to maintain a semblance of unity. Note also that there was an attempt to gain assistance from Wei officials. The use of animal bones for divination is supported by archaeological evidence. The purification rites described in the Wei history are probably not confined to the period after funeral services. Misogi, or water purification, is one of the important Shintō rituals which survives today in a different form—the Japanese love for bathing, especially in hot springs.

4 From the History of Wei¹¹ The people of Wa make their abode in the mountainous islands located in the middle of the ocean to the southeast of the Taifang prefecture.¹² Formerly there were more than one hundred communities. During the Han dynasty their envoys appeared in the court. Today, thirty of their communities maintain communication with us through their envoys. . . .

¹⁰The Japanese term for this cumbersome description is *amatsuhitsuki shiroshimesu*.

¹¹From the *Wei zhi*, as reproduced in the original Chinese in Inoue Mitsutada, *Shinwa kara Rekishi e (From Myths to History)*: Chūō Kōrōnsha, *Nihon no Rekishi (A History of Japan)*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōrōnsha, 1965), pp. 214–220.

¹²Established near the end of the Later Han dynasty. Its administrative center was located near the present-day Seoul.

All men, old or young, are covered by tattoos. Japanese fishers revel in diving to catch fish and shell-fish. Tattoos are said to drive away large fish and water predators. They are considered an ornament. Tattoos differ from community to community. Some place tattoos on the left, and others on the right, some place large ones and others small ones. Tattoos also differ in accordance with the social positions. . . . Men allow their hair to cover both of their ears and wear head-bands. They wear a loin cloth wrapped around their bodies and seldom use stitches. Women gather their hair at the ends and tie in a knot and then pin it to the top of their heads. They make their clothes in one piece, and cut an opening in the center for their heads. They plant wet-field rice, China-grass (*ramie*), and mulberry trees. They raise cocoons and reel the silk off the cocoons. They produce clothing made of China-grass, of coarse silk, and of cotton. In their land, there are no cows, horses, tigers, leopards, sheep or swan. They fight with halberds, shields and wooden bows. The lower inflection of their bows is shorter, and the upper inflection longer. Their arrows are made of bamboo and iron and bone points make up the arrowhead. . . .

The land of Wa is warm and mild. The people eat raw vegetables and go about barefoot in winter as in summer. They live in houses. Father and mother, older and younger sleep separately. They paint their bodies with vermilion and scarlet, just as the Chinese apply powder. They serve food on bowl-shaped stemware (*takatsuki*), and eat with their fingers. When a person dies, he is placed in a coffin (which is buried directly in the grave) without an outer protective layer. The grave is then covered with earth to make a mound. When death occurs, the family observes mourning for more than ten days, during which period no meat is eaten. The head mourner wails and cries, while others sing, dance and drink liquor (probably *sake*, the Japanese rice wine). When the funeral is over, the entire family goes into the water to cleanse themselves in a manner similar to Chinese in their rites of purification.

When they travel across the sea to come to China, they always select a man who does not comb his hair, does not rid himself of fleas, keeps his clothes soiled with dirt, does not eat meat, and does not lie with women. He behaves like a mourner, and is called a "keeper of taboos."¹³ If the voyage is concluded with good fortune, every one lavishes on him slaves and treasures. If someone gets ill, or if there is a mishap, they kill him immediately, saying that he was not conscientious in observing the taboos. . . .

When they undertake an activity or a journey and cannot reach a consensus, they bake animal bones to divine and tell good or bad fortunes. They first announce the object of their divination, and in their manner or speech, they are similar to Chinese tortoise shell divination. They examine the cracks on the bone made by the fire to tell the fortune.

In their meetings and daily living, there is no distinction between father and

¹³Literally, man with mourning death.

son, or between men and women. People enjoy liquor. In their worship, the high-echelon men simply clap their hands instead of bowing in the kneeled position. They live long, some reaching one hundred years of age, and others to eighty or ninety years. Normally, men of high echelon have four or five wives, and the plebians may have two or three. Women are chaste and not given to jealousy. They do not engage in thievery, and there is very little litigation. When the law is violated, the light offender loses his wife and children by confiscation, and the grave offender has his household and kinsmen exterminated. There are class distinctions within the nobility and the base, and some are vassals of others. There are mansions and granaries erected for the purpose of collecting taxes. Each community has a market place where commodities are exchanged under the supervision of an official of Wa. . . .

When plebians meet the high-echelon men on the road, they withdraw to the grassy area (side of the road) hesitantly. When they speak or are spoken to, they either crouch or kneel with both hands on the ground to show their respect. When responding they say "aye," which corresponds to our affirmative "yes."

Formerly the country had men as rulers. However, for seventy or eighty years after that, the country had disturbances and warfare. Finally people agreed to make a woman their ruler, and called her Pimiko (Himiko). She was adept in the ways of shamanism, and could bewitch people. In her mature years, she was yet unmarried and had her younger brother help her rule the country. After she became the ruler, there were only a few who ever saw her. She had one thousand maidservants, but there was only one manservant attending her. His functions were to serve her food and drinks, to communicate messages, and to enter and leave her quarters. The queen resided in a palace surrounded by towers and barricades, with guards maintaining a constant watch. . . .

In the sixth month of the third year of Zhengzhi (239 A.D.)¹⁴ the queen of Wa sent her grand steward Nashomi to the prefecture [of Taifang], requesting that he be allowed to have audience with the Emperor to pay tribute. To governor, Liu Xia, assigned an official as a guide to escort the party to the capital. . . . An edict of the [Wei] Emperor said as follows: ". . . You reside in a distant place, but have sent an embassy to pay tribute. This is manifestation of your loyalty and filial piety which we appreciate exceedingly. We therefore confer upon you the title 'Ruler of Wa, Friendly to Wei.' . . . We beseech you to rule your people in peace and compassion, and continue to show your filial piety and devotion. . . ."

In the sixth year [of Zhengzhi, 242 A.D.], the Emperor sent his edict and a yellow banner bearing the imperial insignia to Wa . . . in care of the prefecture. In the eighth year [244 A.D.], a new governor, Wang Qi, arrived at his post. At

¹⁴The original gives the date of the second year of Zhengzhi, which from internal and historical evidence was in error.

that time the Queen of Wa had difficulties with Himikoko, king of Kuna [located to the south of Wa], and sent her envoys to the prefecture to explain the conditions of their warfare. The governor sent an official by the name of Zhang Zheng as his envoy to transmit the imperial edict and yellow banner, and to give instructions to Wa through the latter's official Nashomi. But at that time Pimiko died, and a great mound—more than one hundred paces in diameter—was erected. More than a hundred men and maidservants followed her to the grave. A king ascended the throne, but the country would not obey him. Murders and assassinations were practiced on one another, and more than one thousand were killed in this fashion.

Finally a relative of Pimiko, named Iyo, a girl aged thirteen, was made queen and order was restored to the country. Zhang and others representing Wei gave instructions to Iyo [thus showing Wei's support of her]. Iyo sent her delegation consisting of twenty members under her grand steward Isako, to accompany Zhang Zheng and others [returning to Wei]. On the occasion of their visit to the capital, the Japanese envoys presented thirty men and maidservants, and also offered the court five thousand white gems and two pieces of curved jade and twenty pieces of brocade with different designs.

THE LEGEND OF PRINCE YAMATOTAKERU

In a memorial submitted to the Emperor of Southern Song in 467, a Japanese king boasted of his might in the following terms. "My ancestors donned armor themselves, traversed the mountains and rivers, and spared no time for rest. They conquered fifty-five communities of the hairy people in the east, subdued sixty-six communities after crossing the sea to the north. . . ." The last phrase probably refers to Japan's engagement in Korea which took place in the latter part of the fourth century. The term "hairy people" was often used synonymously with the Emishi (later called Ezo) people who inhabited the northeastern region of Japan. Thus the memorial gives collaborative evidence to the continued effort on the part of the Yamato court to conquer Japan's eastern regions, the subject also of Yamatotakeru's conquest. Subjugation of the Emishi was completed in the seventh century. As to the legend itself, it was probably composed sometime between the middle of the fourth century and the middle of the sixth century, giving a composite picture of many heroes who perished in this endeavor. However, the story was cast in the form of an individual who incurred the displeasure of his father, the Emperor, and as an alienated youth, set out on his conquest virtually alone. Incidentally, the Kumaso, referred to in the earlier part of this legend, may be the name of a tribe, or of the two regions, Kuma and So. The two regions are in the southern part of Kyushu. The exact dates of the Yamato court's conquest of these regions are not established.

5 Conquest of the Eastern Frontier by Prince Yamatotakeru¹⁵ In the summer of the 40th year of Emperor Keikō's reign [12th emperor], there was a rebellion by eastern barbarians, and the frontier was in a state of siege. . . . The Emperor addressed his ministers. "The eastern country is not secure, and numerous rebellious chieftains have sprung up. In the case of the Emishi, the revolt is total, and they frequently steal from our loyal subjects. Whom can I send to suppress this rebellion?" To this inquiry, none of the ministers knew how to answer.

[After another prince had refused to bear arms, concealing himself in the thicket,] Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto manly proclaimed. "It has not been many years since I subdued the Kumaso. Now the Emishi in the east are rebelling against us. If we allow it to continue, there can be no universal peace. Your subject is aware of the difficulties and begs of you to be sent to quell the rebellion." The Emperor gave a battleaxe to Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto and gave him the following charge: "We hear that the eastern barbarians are men of violent disposition, making crime as their credo. Their villages have no chiefs, and towns have no masters. Each one of them covets a territory and plunders one another. Their mountains and fields are inhabited by malicious deities and demented demons, who stop traffic and bar the roads to cause difficulties. Amongst those eastern barbarians, the Emishi are the most powerful. Their men and women live together in promiscuity, and they make no differentiation between father and son. In winter they dwell in holes, and in summer they live in nests. They use furs as their clothing, and drink blood. Brothers are suspicious of one another. . . . When they receive a favor, they forget it, but if an injury is done them, they repay it with vengeance. . . . They plunder our frontier, and steal from our people the hard-earned products in agriculture and sericulture. When attacked, they hide in the grasses and if pursued, they enter into the mountains. From the olden days, they have not been able to receive the influence of our benevolent civilization. . . . Heaven has taken pity on my want of intelligence and on the unmanageable conditions of the country, and has sent you to execute the work of heaven so as to perpetuate the existence of our imperial institution. My empire is your empire, and this position I hold is your position. Use your profound judgment and wisdom to guard against iniquity and rebellious movement. Exercise your authority with majesty and pacify people with virtue. Whenever possible subjugate people without recourse to arms. Use carefully chosen words to teach moderation to rebellious chiefs. If it fails, eradicate those malicious demons by displaying your armed might. . . ."¹⁶

When Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto first reached Suruga, the brigands falsely

¹⁵*Nihon Shoki*, op. cit., pp. 212–215, 218–220.

¹⁶These moralizing passages are clearly an imitation of Confucian precepts as found in Chinese historical writings.

pledged allegiance. They urged the prince to hunt, claiming that their field was rich in large deer, whose breath was like the morning mist and legs like dense woods. Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto believed their words, and went into the middle of the field to hunt. The brigands, intending to kill the prince, set the field ablaze. Realizing that he had been deceived, the prince brought out his flint and steel (*hiuchi*) and kindled a counter-fire. [One version of the *Nihon Shoki* says: "The prince wore the sword Murakumo which wielded itself and mowed away the grasses near him, enabling him to escape. Hereafter, his sword became known as Kusanagi.¹⁷] The prince cried out: "I am almost betrayed," and burnt all the brigands and exterminated them . . .

[Having completed his conquest of the eastern frontier,] Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto turned to Owari, and married a daughter of the lord of Owari by the name of Miyazuhime, and remained there for a month. While there he heard that there was a ferocious deity on Mount Ibuki in Ōmi. He took off his sword and left it in the house of Miyazuhime, and then set out on foot to investigate. When he reached Mount Ibuki, his way was blocked by a great serpent which was the incarnation of the mountain god. Without knowing that the main deity took the shape of a serpent, Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto reasoned: "This great serpent must be a messenger of that ferocious deity. Unless I can kill the main deity, there is no use being bothered by its messenger." So he strode over and went on. The mountain god raised up clouds and made freezing rain to fall. The hills were covered with mist, and the valleys were darkened. The prince could no longer find his way. . . . All he could do was to brave the mist and force his way onward. Finally when he succeeded in escaping from the mountain, he was not quite himself, looking like a drunken man. . . .

It was at that time Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto first became ill. With great difficulty, he made his way to Owari and entered the house of Miyazuhime, and then moved on to Ise and to Ōtsu. . . . When he reached the field of Nobo, the pain became almost insufferable. He made arrangements to have the prisoners he obtained in wars against the Emishi sent to the Ise Shrine as part of his thanks offering, and dispatched Kibi-no Takehiko to the Emperor to report [on his impending death]. . . . The prince died on the field of Nobo at the age of thirty. . . . The Emperor ordered his ministers and functionaries to bury the body of the prince in a *misasagi* (tomb) of the Nobo field in the land of Ise.

Now Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto, taking the shape of a white bird, left his *misasagi* and flew towards the direction of Yamato. The ministers opened the coffin, only to discover the empty clothing remaining, and there was no corpse. Messengers were sent to follow the trace of the white bird. It stopped on the plain of Kotohiki¹⁸ in Yamato, so another *misasagi* was erected. The white bird

¹⁷The term *kusanagi* means to mow away grasses. The sword became one of the three imperial regalia held to symbolize succession to the imperial throne.

¹⁸Here the place name conveys some poetic imagination. It means the plain of *koto* (a Japanese music instrument) playing.

flew on again until it reached Kawachi, and remained in the village of Furuichi. Accordingly a third *misasagi* was erected. Men of those days called these three *misasagi*, "the white bird *misasagi*." Finally, the white bird soared high above in heaven, and nothing is buried in the *misasagi* except his clothing and official cap. . . .

EARLY SHINTŌ RITUALS FROM THE *ENGISHIKI*

The Engishiki was compiled between 905 and 927 under the command of Emperor Daigo. It is one of the greatest compilations of laws and precedents (kyaku and shiki) and invaluable in the study of the court system in the Heian period.

Volume eight of the Engishiki contains Shintō rituals called Norito. These rituals are obviously of much earlier origin than the date of its compilation in the tenth century, and show Shintō practices in their pristine form. The Norito calls upon the spirits of gods or of things to answer men's supplications. It is simplistic and practically devoid of metaphysical speculation. The first selection, the grain-petitioning festival, is self-explanatory. The second selection, the purification ritual, is of special significance in that it gives a list of heavenly offenses and earthly offenses. The heavenly offenses were essentially those interfering with agriculture and mischievous acts against community functions (compare Document 1). Earthly offenses included suffering from leprosy, a blight, and calamities by thunderstorms. These were considered offenses, because they could be caused by a curse cast upon the people suffering from them. That curse could hover over the entire community, and thus the rite of purification became an important part of the community functions. The ritual was performed regularly in the imperial court in the sixth month of the year to purge the country of all offenses and curses.

6 From the *Engishiki*¹⁹

(a) The Grain-petitioning Festival

I humbly speak before you,

The Sovereign Deities whose praises are fulfilled as
Heavenly Shrines and Earthly Shrines

By the command of the Sovereign Ancestral Gods and Goddesses

Who divinely remain in the High Heavenly Plain:

This year, in the second month,

Just as grain cultivation is about to begin

¹⁹Adapted from Donald L. Philippi, tr., *Norito: A New Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers* (Tokyo: Kokugakuin, 1959), pp. 17–18.

I present the noble offerings of the Sovereign Grandchild²⁰
 And, as the morning sun rises in effulgent glory.
 Fulfill your praises. Thus I speak.

I humbly speak before you,
 The Sovereign Deities of the Grain:
 The latter grain²¹ to be vouchsafed by you [to the Sovereign Grandchild],
 The latter grain to be harvested
 With foam dripping from the elbows,
 To be pulled hither
 With mud adhering to both thighs—
 If this grain be vouchsafed by you
 In ears many hands long,
 In luxuriant ears;
 Then the first fruits will be presented
 In a thousand stalks, eight hundred stalks:
 Raising high the soaring necks
 Of the countless wine vessels, filled to the brim;

Both of liquor and in stalks I will fulfill praises.
 From that which grows in the vast fields and plains—

 The sweet herbs and the bitter herbs—
 To that which lives in the blue ocean—
 The wide-finned and the narrow-finned fishes,
 The sea-weeds of the deep and the sea-weeds of the shore—
 As well as garments
 Of colored cloth, radiant cloth,
 Plain cloth, and coarse cloth—
 In these I will fulfill your praises.
 Before the Sovereign Deities of the Grain
 I will provide a white horse, a white boar, a white cock,
 And various types of offerings.
 And will present the noble offerings of the Sovereign Grandchild
 And fulfill your praises. Thus I speak.

(b) The Purification Ritual

[The ritual opens by calling upon all the assembled princes of the Emperor's family, the Ministers of State, and all other officials, to listen. The nature of the

²⁰Sovereign Grandchild is a common title for each Emperor as being a descendant of the Sun Goddess.

²¹Rice is the favorite cereal of the Japanese, and the strange phraseology employed to depict the labor of the peasant represents rather forcibly the process of churning the muddy soil of the swampy fields in which it is grown.

Emperor's title to rule over the land is then stated, after which we have a list of the offenses of which the nation is to be purged.]

The various offenses perpetrated and committed

By the heavenly ever-increasing people to come into existence
 In this land which he is to rule tranquilly as a peaceful land:

First, the heavenly offenses:

Breaking down the ridges,
 Covering up the ditches,
 Releasing the irrigation sluices,
 Double planting,
 Setting up stakes,
 Skinning alive, skinning backwards,
 Defecation—
 Many offenses [such as these] are distinguished and called the heavenly offenses.

The earthly offenses:

Cutting living flesh, cutting dead flesh,
 White leprosy, skin excrescences,
 The offense of violating one's own mother,
 The offense of violating one's own child,
 The offense of violating a mother and her child,
 The offense of violating a child and her mother,
 The offense of transgression with animals,
 Woes from creeping insects,
 Woes from the deities on high,
 Woes from the birds on high,
 Killing animals, the offense of witchcraft,
 Many offenses [such as these] shall appear.

When they thus appear,

By the heavenly shrine usage,

Let the Great Nakatomi²² cut off the bottom and off the top
 Of heavenly narrow pieces of wood,
 And place them in abundance on a thousand tables;
 Let him cut off the bottom and cut off the top
 Of heavenly sedge reeds

And cut them up into myriad strips;

And let him pronounce the heavenly ritual, the solemn ritual words.

When he thus pronounces them,

The heavenly deities will push open the heavenly rock door,

And pushing with an awesome pushing

Through the myriad layers of heavenly clouds,

²²An ancient family which served the Yamato Court in a priestly capacity.

Will hear and receive [these words].
 Then the earthly deities will climb up
 To the summits of the high mountains and to the summits of the low
 mountains,
 And pushing aside the mists of the high mountains and the mists of the low
 mountains,
 Will hear and receive [these words].

When they thus hear and receive,
 Then, beginning with the court of the Sovereign Grandchild,
 In the lands of the four quarters under the heavens,
 Each and every offense will be gone.
 As the gusty wind blows apart the myriad layers of heavenly clouds;
 As the morning mist, the evening mist is blown away by the morning wind,
 the evening wind;
 As the large ship anchored in the spacious port is untied at the prow and untied
 at the stern
 And pushed out into the great ocean;
 As the luxuriant clump of trees on yonder [hill]
 Is cut away at the base with a tempered sickle, a sharp sickle—
 As a result of the exorcism and the purification,
 There will be no offenses left. . . .
 Hear me, all of you:

Know that [all the offenses] have been exorcised and purified
 In the great exorcism performed in the waning of the evening sun
 On the last day of the sixth month of this year. Thus I speak.
 Oh diviners²³ of the four lands,
 Carry them out to the great river
 And cast them away. Thus I speak.

²³In the purification ritual, it is the diviners (*urabe*) who carry away the offense-bearing articles and cast them into the river.

The Impact of Chinese Civilization

Japan's cultural borrowing from China began in earnest with the introduction of Buddhism in 552 A.D. (or 538 A.D.) and continued uninterrupted until the end of the Nara period in 784.

If any single term can characterize these two and a half centuries, they may be called a period of "Chinese fixation."¹ When Prince Shōtoku wanted to curtail the powers of the great clans and enhance the prestige of the imperial institution, it was to China that he looked for inspiration. When the Taika reforms were initiated, the systems of land tenure and taxation then in force in Tang provided the necessary models. So was the case with the enactment of the Taihō-Yōrō codes which set the administrative and criminal codes to be used for generations to come (Documents 1–3). The Chinese language was employed in early historical writings, along with an attempt to write history in the indigenous tongue which used Chinese characters phonetically. Just as the Chinese people utilized history to create a new self-image, "the holistic ideal, the belief in moral dynamics and a pronounced Sino-centrism,"² so did the Japanese people create an image of a "divine land." History was also used to claim legitimacy for the reigning imperial line (Document 4). In the imperial court, news from China brought by returned students was eagerly received. Men and women consulted the *yin-yang* philosophy, the five elements and the twelve horary signs to look

¹Compare the term "American fixation," used by Professor E. O. Reischauer in his *Japan, Past and Present* (New York, Knopf, 1964), p. 256.

²Arthur F. Wright, "On the Uses of Generalization in the Study of Chinese History," in Louis Gottschalk, ed., *Generalization in the Writing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 43.