

KOJIKI
(RECORD OF ANCIENT MATTERS, 712)

According to its preface, the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) was commissioned by Emperor Tenmu (r. 672–686) and was completed and presented to Empress Genmei (r. 707–715) in 712 by a scribe named Ō no Yasumaro. It is a mythology and history in three volumes, starting with the creation of Japan in the age of the gods and the descent to earth of the ancestor of the imperial family through the reign of the legendary first sovereign, Emperor Jimmu, and successive rulers up to the reign of the thirty-third sovereign, Empress Suiko (r. 592–618).

The key concept of the creation myth, which describes the origin of Japan but not of the universe, is *musuhi*, or “creating force,” a spontaneous power through which the gods come into existence. After seven generations of gods

are created by this force, the last generation, a male and a female god called Izanagi¹ and Izanami, create the islands of Japan. This creation begins with the present-day Shikoku (Tosa, Iyo, Sanuki, Awa), then moves west to Kyushu (Tsukushi), and finally to Honshū. Izanagi and Izanami also give birth to the gods of various natural phenomena, including the gods of the sea and rivers, of the mountains and plains, of the wind, and finally of fire, who causes the death of the female deity Izanami. The male deity Izanagi then gives birth by himself to the central figure in the *Kojiki* mythology, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. It is Amaterasu's descendant, the god Ninigi, who comes down from heaven to earth and becomes the ancestor of the Yamato emperors.

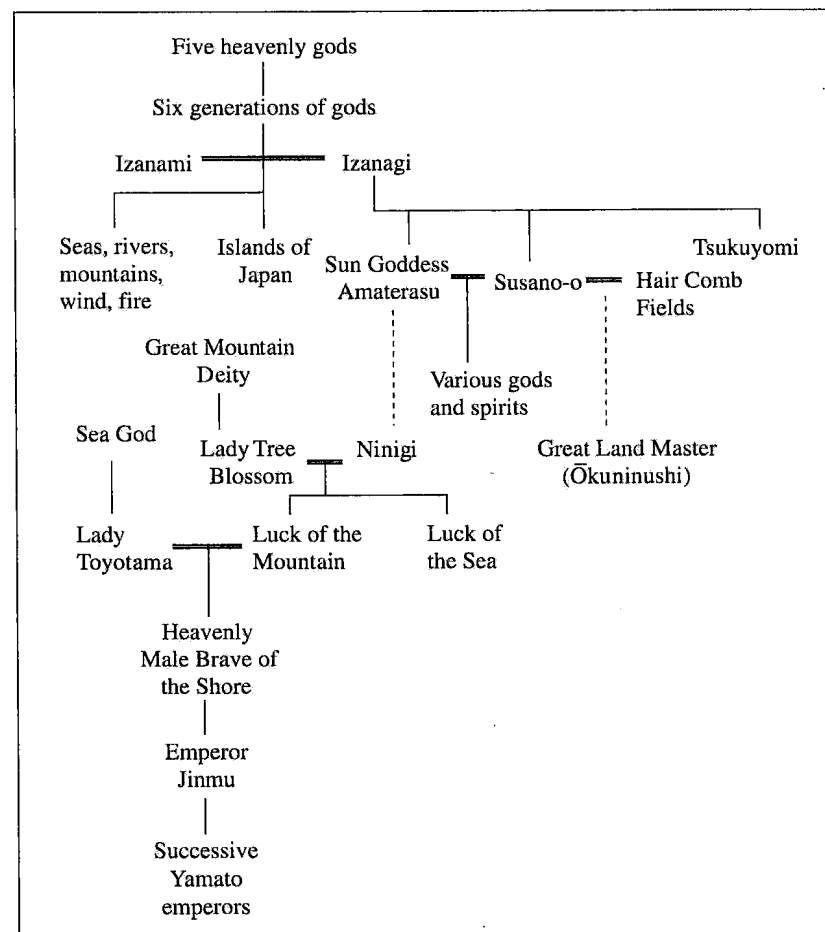
The *Kojiki* is a bricolage of various myths woven together into a story of the divine ancestry of the Yamato emperors. According to the *Kojiki* cosmology, the earth is dependent on heaven, and the Yamato emperors, as the descendants of the heavenly gods, are entitled to rule the earth. Although some of the myths contained in the *Kojiki* may date from long before the eighth century, their primary function in the narrative was to legitimate the world order of the early-eighth-century Japanese state. Within the various mythical accounts are explanations of the origin of place-names, of the hierarchical relationships between different clans, and of ritual ceremonies.

One key feature of the *Kojiki* is the importance it places on the power of speech. For example, conquests are often described in terms of a verbal pledging of subjection. In the *Kojiki* the word for "subdue" (*kotomuku*) means literally "to make (someone) speak his subjection." The magical power of words is also emphasized in the story of Luck of the Mountain and Luck of the Sea, as well as in the tragic end of Prince Yamato Takeru.

Key Japanese Names and Places

Takama-no-hara	Plain of High Heaven
Ashihara no kuni	Central Land of the Reed Plains
Izanagi	He Who Invites God
Izanami	She Who Invites God
Amaterasu	Great Heaven-Shining Goddess
Tsukuyomi	Moon God (Moon-Counting God)
Susano-o	Ferocious Virulent Male God
Ho-deri	Fire-Shine, Luck of the Sea
Ho-ori	Fire-Fade, Luck of the Mountain
Ōkuni-nushi	Great Land Master
Ninigi	(descendant of Amaterasu)

1. In the ancient period, the correct pronunciation of the male god's name was "Izanaki," but in modern times the customary reading is "Izanagi."



Genealogy of the Gods

Book 1

THE BEGINNING

When heaven and earth first appeared, there came into existence in the Plain of High Heaven a deity named Lord Midst-of-Heaven God; then High Creative Force God; and then Divine Creative Force God. All these three deities came into existence as single deities, and their forms were not visible. Next, when the land was young, resembling floating oil and drifting like jellyfish, a thing sprouted forth like reed shoots, and from this there came into existence a deity named Splendid Reed Shoot God and then Eternally Standing Heaven God. These two deities also came into existence as single deities, and their forms were not visible. The five deities in the preceding section are the Separate Heavenly Deities.

Next there came into existence Eternally Standing Land God and then Abundant Clouds Field God. These two deities also came into existence as single deities, and their forms were not visible. Next there came into existence Clay Male God and then his spouse, Silt Female God. Next, Emergent Form God and then his spouse, Living Form God. Next, Great Male Organ God and then his spouse, Great Female Organ God. Next, Ample Face God and then his spouse, Awe-Inspiring God. Next, Izanagi, He Who Invites God, and then his spouse, Izanami, She Who Invites God. The deities in the preceding section, from Eternally Standing Land God through Izanami, are known collectively as the Seven Generations of the Age of the Gods. . . .

SOLIDIFYING THE LAND

At this time the heavenly deities, acting jointly, commanded the two deities Izanagi and Izanami: "Complete and solidify this drifting land." Giving them the Heavenly Jeweled Spear, they entrusted the mission to them. Thereupon, the two deities stood on the Heavenly Floating Bridge and, lowering the jeweled spear, stirred, churning the brine with a resonating sound, and when they lifted it up, the brine dripping down from the tip of the spear piled up and became an island. This was Onogoro, Self-Congeaing Island.

Descending from the heavens to this island, they erected a heavenly pillar and a spacious palace. At this time Izanagi asked his spouse Izanami, "How is your body formed?" She replied, "My body, formed though it be formed, has one place that is formed insufficiently." Then Izanagi said, "My body, formed though it be formed, has one place that is formed to excess. Therefore I would like to take that place in my body that is formed to excess and insert it into that place in your body that is formed insufficiently and give birth to the land. How would this be?" Izanami replied, "This would be good." Then Izanagi said, "Then let us, you and me, walk in a circle around this heavenly pillar and meet and have conjugal intercourse."

Having thus agreed, Izanagi then said, "You walk around from the right, and I will walk around from the left and meet you." After having agreed to this, they circled around. Then Izanami said first, "O, how good a lad!" after which Izanagi said, "O, how good a maiden!" After each had finished speaking, Izanagi said to his spouse, "It is not proper that the woman speak first."

Nevertheless, they commenced procreation and gave birth to a leech-child. They placed this child into a boat made of reeds and floated it away. Next, they gave birth to an island of foam. This also is not reckoned as one of their children. Then the two deities consulted together and said, "The children that we have just borne are not good. It is best to report this matter to the heavenly deities." Then they ascended together and sought the will of the heavenly deities. The heavenly deities thereupon performed a grand divination and said, "Because the woman spoke first, the outcome was not good. Descend once more and say

it again." Then they descended again and walked once more in a circle around the heavenly pillar as before.

Then Izanagi said first, "O, how good a maiden!" Afterward, his spouse Izanami said, "O, how good a lad!" After they had finished saying this, they were united and bore, as a child, Awaji Island.

Next they bore the double island of Iyo. This island has one body and four countenances, each with a separate name. Thus, the land of Iyo is named Darling Woman; the land of Sanuki is named Grain Spirit Possessed Man; the land of Awa is called Great Food Woman; and the land of Tosa is called Fierce Spirit Possessed Man. Next they bore the triple island of Oki. . . .

When they finished giving birth to countries, they began giving birth to deities anew. . . . Then they gave birth to the Swift Burning Fire Deity. As a result of giving birth to this child, Izanami's genitals were burned, and she lay down sick. In her vomit there came into existence the Metal Mountain God. Next, in her feces, there came into existence the Clay Earth God and the Clay Earth Goddess. Next, in her urine, there came into existence the Goddess of Irrigation and the God of Agricultural Creation. The child of this deity was the Goddess of Food. Thus, at last, Izanami, because she had given birth to the fire deity, divinely passed away.

A grieving Izanagi buries his spouse and kills the fire deity, whose birth caused Izanami's death. Still grieving, Izanagi decides to visit Izanami in the land of Yomi.

VISIT TO THE LAND OF YOMI

At this time, Izanagi, wishing to meet again his spouse Izanami, went after her to the land of Yomi. When she came out of the door of the hall to greet him, Izanagi said, "O, my beloved spouse, the lands that you and I were making have not yet been completed. You must come back."

Then Izanami replied, saying, "How I regret that you did not come sooner. I have eaten at the hearth of Yomi. But, O, my beloved husband, how honored I am that you have come here! Therefore I will go and discuss for a while with the deities of Yomi my desire to return. Pray do not look at me." Thus saying, she went back into the hall, but she was gone so long that Izanagi could no longer wait. So he broke off one of the large end-teeth of the comb he was wearing in his left hair bunch, lit a fire, and entered the hall to look. Maggots squirmed and rolled; on her head sat Great Thunder; on her breast sat Fire Thunder; on her belly sat Black Thunder; on her genitals sat Crack Thunder; on her left hand sat Young Thunder; on her right hand sat Earth Thunder; on her left foot sat Sounding Thunder; and on her right foot sat Reclining Thunder. All together, eight thunder deities were there.

Upon seeing this, Izanagi became afraid and turned and fled. Then his spouse Izanami said, "He has shamed me." Right away she dispatched the hags

of Yomi to pursue him. Then Izanagi undid the black vine securing his hair and flung it down. Immediately it bore grapes. While the hags were picking the grapes and eating them, he fled. Still they pursued him. Next Izanagi pulled out the comb he was wearing in his right hair bunch and flung it down. Immediately bamboo shoots sprouted forth. While the hags were pulling the bamboo shoots and eating them, he fled. Later, Izanami dispatched the eight thunder deities and a horde of warriors of Yomi to pursue him. Then Izanagi unsheathed the ten-hands-long sword that he wore at his side and waved it behind him as he fled. The pursuit continued. When Izanagi reached the foot of the Steep Pass of Yomi, he took three peaches that were at the foot of the pass and ambushed his pursuers. They all turned and fled. Then Izanagi said to the peaches, "Just as you have saved me, if in the Central Land of the Reed Plains, any of the race of mortal men should fall into painful straits and suffer in anguish, please save them also." Saying this, he bestowed on the peaches the name Oho-kamu-zu-mi, Great Divine Spirit God.

Finally, his spouse Izanami herself came in pursuit of him. Then Izanagi picked up an enormous boulder, requiring the strength of a thousand men to move, and blocked the Steep Pass of Yomi. They stood facing each other, one on each side of the boulder, and broke their troth. At this time, Izanami said, "O, my beloved husband, if you do thus, I will each day strangle to death one thousand of the populace of your land." To this Izanagi said, "O, my beloved spouse, if you do thus, I will each day build fifteen hundred birthing huts." This is the reason why one thousand people inevitably die and fifteen hundred people inevitably are born every day. Therefore, the deity Izanami is also called the Great Deity of Yomi. Also, because she joined in the pursuit, she is called the Great Deity Who Lays the Road. The boulder that closed the Steep Pass of Yomi is called the Great Deity Who Repels Enemies on the Road. It is also called the Great Deity Who Blocks the Door of Yomi. This Steep Pass of Yomi is said to be now the Ifuya Pass in the land of Izumo.

At this point Izanagi said, "I have been to a most unpleasant land, a horrible, unclean land. Therefore I shall purify myself." Arriving at the plain of Awaki by the river mouth of Tachibana in Himuka in Tsukushi, he purified and exorcised himself.

When he flung down his stick, there came into existence a deity named Cane in the Road Bend.

As Izanagi cleanses himself, many deities are born.

Then when he washed his left eye, there came into existence a deity named Amaterasu, the Great Heaven Shining Goddess. Next, when he washed his right eye, there came into existence a deity named Tsukuyomi, the Moon-Counting God. Next, when he washed his nose, there came into existence a deity named Susano-o, Ferocious Virulent Male God.

The fourteen deities in the preceding section, from the Many Afflictions Spirit through Susano-o, are deities born from bathing his body.

At this time Izanagi, rejoicing greatly, said, "I have borne child after child, and finally in the last bearing I have obtained three noble children." Then he removed his necklace, shaking the beads on the string so that they jingled, and, giving it to the deity Amaterasu, he entrusted her with a mission, saying: "You shall rule the Plain of High Heaven." . . .

Next he said to the deity Tsukuyomi, entrusting him with this mission: "You shall rule the realms of night."

Next he said to the deity Susano-o, entrusting him with this mission: "You shall rule the ocean."

Although Susano-o is given the rule of the ocean, he weeps and howls for his mother and neglects the realm entrusted to him. Angered by Susano-o's disobedience, Izanagi expels Susano-o.

SUSANO-O AND AMATERASU

At the time, Susano-o said, "In that case, before I go I will take my leave of the Great Deity Amaterasu." When he ascended to the heavens, all the mountains and rivers roared, and all the land trembled. Amaterasu heard this, was startled, and said, "It is certainly not with any good intentions that my brother is coming up. He must wish to usurp my lands." So, undoing her hair, she wrapped it in hair bunches. She wrapped long strings of myriad *magatama* beads² in the hair bunches on the left and right of her head, on the vine securing her hair, as well as on her left and right arms. On her back she bore a thousand-arrow quiver; at her side she strapped a five-hundred-arrow quiver and also put on a magnificent bamboo arm-cover. Shaking the upper tip of her bow, stamping her legs up to her very thighs into the hard earth, and kicking the earth about as if it were light snow, she let out a tremendous war cry and stamped her feet with fury. Thus waiting for him, she asked, "Why have you come?"

Then Susano-o replied, "I have no evil intentions. It is merely that the Great Deity Izanagi divinely inquired about my weeping and howling, so I said that I was weeping because I wished to go to the land of my mother. Then the Great Deity said, 'You may not live in this land' and expelled me with a divine expulsion. Whereupon I came up intending to take leave upon my departure. I have no other intentions." Then Amaterasu said, "If that is so, how am I to know that your intentions are pure and clear?" Then Susano-o replied, "Let us swear oaths and bear children."

2. *Magatama* are curved beads, usually with a hole bored through them in order to use in a necklace, made of semiprecious stones.

Then they each stood on opposite sides of the Serene River of Heaven and swore their oaths. At this time, Amaterasu first asked for the ten-hands-long sword that Susano-o wore at his side. Breaking the sword in three pieces, she rinsed them in the heavenly well, the jewel-like ringing resonating clearly, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Lady Mist, also named Lady of Oki Island. Next, Lady of Ichiki Island, also named Lady Sayori. Next, Lady Gushing Water.

Susano-o, asking for the long strand of myriad magatama beads wrapped on Amaterasu's left hair bunch, rinsed them in the heavenly well, the jewels' ringing resonating clearly, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Truly-I-Have-Won Victorious-Virulent-Spirit-Heavenly-Majestic-Grain-Force. Again, he asked for the beads wrapped on her right hair bunch, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Heavenly Grain Spirit. Again, he asked for the beads wrapped on the vine securing her hair, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Heavenly Male Child. Again, he asked for the beads wrapped on her left arm, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Vibrant Male Child. Again, he asked for the beads wrapped on her right arm, chewed them to pieces, and spat them out. In the misty spray there came into existence a deity named Wondrous Spirit of Kumano. All together there were five deities.

At this time, Amaterasu said to Susano-o, "The latter-born five male children came into existence from my possessions and are therefore naturally my children. The firstborn three female children came into existence from your possessions and are therefore your children." Thus, she determined the allotment of the offspring. . . .

Then Susano-o said to Amaterasu, "It was because my intentions were pure and clear that in the children I begot I obtained graceful maidens. By this it is obvious that I have won." Thus saying, he raged with victory, breaking down the ridges of Amaterasu's rice paddies and filling up the ditches. Also he defecated and strewed his feces about in the hall where the first fruits were tasted. Even though he did this, Amaterasu did not reprove him but said, "What appears to be feces must be what my brother has vomited and strewn about while drunk. Also, as to his breaking down the ridges of the rice paddies and filling up the ditches, my brother must have done so because he felt land was being wasted." Even though she spoke thus in remedy, his misdeeds did not cease but became even more flagrant. When Amaterasu was inside the sacred weaving hall, seeing to the weaving of the divine garments, he opened a hole in the roof of the weaving hall and dropped into it the heavenly dappled horse, which he had skinned backward. The heavenly weaving maiden, shocked at the sight, struck her genitals against the shuttle and died.

Now Amaterasu, seeing this, became afraid, and opening the door of the Heavenly Rock-Cave, went in and shut herself inside. Then the Plain of High

Heaven 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 filled the air like flies in the summer, and all manners of calamities arose.

Then the eight hundred myriad deities assembled in a divine assembly on the banks of the Serene River of Heaven. They called upon the deity Profound Thinker, child of the deity High Creative Force, to think. They gathered together the long-crying birds of Tokoyo, the Everlasting Realm, and caused them to cry. They took the heavenly hard rock from the upper streams of the Serene River of Heaven, took iron from the Fragrant Mountain of Heaven, sought the smith Heavenly Mara, and commissioned Stone-Cutting Woman to make a mirror. They commissioned Forefather of Jewel Workers to make long strings of myriad magatama beads. They summoned Heavenly Koyane and Futo-tama, the Magnificent Jewel God, to remove whole the shoulder bone of a male deer of the Fragrant Mountain of Heaven and take heavenly *hahaka* wood from the Fragrant Mountain of Heaven and perform divination. They uprooted by the very roots the flourishing *masakaki* tree of the Fragrant Mountain of Heaven. To the upper branches they affixed long strings of myriad magatama beads; in the middle branches they hung a mirror many spans wide; and in the lower branches they suspended white strips of *nikite* cloth and blue strips of *nikite* cloth. Magnificent Jewel carried these various objects as solemn offerings; Heavenly Koyane intoned a solemn liturgy; the deity Heavenly Powerful-Handed Male stood concealed beside the door; and Uzume, the Heavenly Woman-with-Hair-Piece Goddess, bound up her sleeves with a cord of the heavenly *hikage* vine, tied around her head a head band of the heavenly *masaki* vine, and bound together bundles of *sasa* leaves to hold in her hands. Overturning a bucket before the door of the Heavenly Rock-Cave, she stamped thunderously and, becoming divinely possessed, exposed her breasts and pushed her skirt band down to her genitals. Then the Plain of High Heaven shook as the eight hundred myriad deities laughed at once.

At this time, Amaterasu, thinking this strange, opened a crack in the door of the Heavenly Rock-Cave and said from within, "Because I have shut myself in, I thought that the Plain of High Heaven would be dark and the Central Land of the Reed Plains would be completely dark. Why is it that Uzume, Heavenly Woman-with-Hair-Piece, sings and dances and all the eight hundred myriad deities laugh?"

Then Uzume, Heavenly Woman-with-Hair-Piece, said, "We rejoice and dance because there is here a deity superior to you." While she was saying this, Heavenly Koyane and Magnificent Jewel brought out the mirror and showed it to Amaterasu. Then Amaterasu, thinking this more and more strange, gradually came out of the door and approached the mirror. Then the deity Heavenly Powerful-Handed Male, who had hidden himself, grasped her hand and pulled her out. Immediately Magnificent Jewel extended a sacred rope behind her, and said, "You may not go back behind this." When Amaterasu came forth, the

Plain of High Heaven and the Central Land of the Reed Plains naturally became light. At this time the eight hundred myriad deities deliberated together and imposed on Susano-o a fine of a thousand platters of restitutive goods. In addition, they cut off his beard and the nails of his hands and feet, had him exorcised, and expelled him with a divine expulsion.

SUSANO-O SLAYS THE EIGHT-TAILED SERPENT

Therefore Susano-o was expelled and descended to the upper reaches of the Hi River in the land of Izumo, to a place called Torikami. At that time a chopstick came flowing down the river. Thinking that there were people upstream, Susano-o set out in search of them. He came upon an old man and an old woman, with a maiden between them, crying. He asked them, "Who are you?" The old man replied, "I am a child of an earthly deity, the Great Deity of the Mountains. My name is Rubbing Feet; my wife's name is Rubbing Hands; and our daughter's name is Hair Comb Fields."

Susano-o asked further, "Why are you crying?"

Rubbing Feet replied, "We originally had eight daughters, but the eight-tailed serpent of Koshi has come every year and eaten them. We are crying because it is now time for him to come again." Susano-o asked, "What is his appearance?" Rubbing Feet replied, "His eyes are like red ground cherries, and his body has eight heads and eight tails. On his body grow moss and cypress and cryptomeria trees. His length is such that he spans eight valleys and eight mountain peaks. If you look at his belly, you see that blood is oozing out all over it."

Then Susano-o said to the old man, "Will you give me your daughter?" Rubbing Feet answered, "Awed as I am, I do not know your name." Susano-o replied, "I am the brother of the great deity Amaterasu and have just descended from heaven." Then Rubbing Feet and Rubbing Hand said, "If that is so, we reverently present her to you."

Then Susano-o transformed the maiden into a hair comb, which he put in his hair. He said to Rubbing Feet and Rubbing Hand, "Distill thick wine of eightfold brewings, build a fence, and make eight doors in the fence. At each door, set up eight woven platforms, and on each of these platforms place a wine barrel. Fill each barrel with the thick wine of eightfold brewings, and wait."

They made the preparations as he had instructed, and as they waited, the eight-tailed serpent came indeed, as the old man had said. Putting one head into each of the barrels, the serpent drank the wine, then becoming drunk, he lay down and slept. Then Susano-o unsheathed the ten-hands-long sword that he was wearing at his side and hacked the serpent to pieces. The Hi River ran with blood. When he cut the serpent's middle tail, the blade of his sword chipped. Thinking this strange, he thrust deeper with the stump of his sword, until a great sharp sword appeared. He took out this sword and, thinking it an

extraordinary thing, presented it to the great deity Amaterasu. This is the sword Kusanagi, Grass Feller.

Thereupon Susano-o sought a place in the land of Izumo to build his palace. Arriving at Suga he said, "Coming here, my heart is refreshed [*sugashi*]," and in that place he built his palace and dwelled. Therefore that place is still called Suga. When this great deity first built the palace of Suga, clouds rose from that place. He composed a song, which said:

<i>yakumo tatsu</i>	In eight-cloud-rising
<i>Izumo yaegaki</i>	Izumo an eightfold fence
<i>tsumagomi ni</i>	to enclose my wife
<i>yaegaki tsukuru</i>	an eightfold fence I build,
<i>sono yaegaki o</i>	and, oh, that eightfold fence!

Then he summoned Rubbing Feet and said, "Be the headman of my palace." He also bestowed upon him the name Palace-Master of Inada, Deity of Suga with Manifold Spiritual Powers. Then he commenced procreation with Hair Comb Fields. . . .

THE HEAVENLY DESCENT

Then Amaterasu and the High Creative Force Deity commanded the heir apparent Heavenly Grain, saying: "Now it is reported that the pacification of the Central Land of the Reed Plains has been finished. Therefore descend and rule it, as you have been entrusted with it." Then the heir apparent Heavenly Grain replied, saying: "As I was preparing to descend, a child was born; his name is Ninigi. This child should descend." This child was born of his union with the daughter of the High Creative Force Deity. . . . Thereupon, in accordance with his words, they imposed the command on Ninigi: "The Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains has been entrusted to you as the land you are to rule. In accordance with the command, descend from the heavens!"

Then, as Ninigi was about to descend from the heavens, there appeared in the myriad heavenly crossroads a deity whose radiance shone above through the Plain of High Heaven and below through the Central Land of the Reed Plains. Amaterasu and the High Creative Force Deity commanded Heavenly Woman-with-Hair-Piece, saying: "Although you are a graceful maiden, you are the type of deity who can face and overwhelm others. Therefore go alone and inquire: 'Who is here on the path of my offspring descending from the heavens?'"

When she inquired, the reply was: "I am an earthly deity named Sarutabiko. I have come out because I have heard that the offspring of the heavenly deities is to descend from the heavens, and I have come forth to wait so that I might serve as his guide."

Then assigning roles to Heavenly Koyane, Magnificent Jewel, Heavenly Woman-with-Hair-Piece, Stone-Cutting Woman, and Forefather of Jewel-Workers, all together five clan heads, they had them descend from the heavens. Amaterasu gave to Ninigi the myriad magatama curved beads, the mirror that had been used to lure her, as well as the sword Kusanagi, Grass Feller; and also sent along the Profound Thinker Deity, the Heavenly Powerful-Handed Male Deity, and the Heavenly Rock Door Youth Deity. . . .

Then Ninigi was commanded to leave the Heavenly Rock Seat. Pushing through the myriad layers of the heavens' trailing clouds, pushing his way with an awesome might, he stood on a flat floating island by the Heavenly Floating Bridge and descended from the heavens to the peak Kujifurutake of Mount Takachiho of Hinuka in Tsukushi. . . .

Ninigi said: "This place is opposite the land of Kara; it is a land where the morning sun shines directly, a land where the rays of the evening sun are brilliant. This is a most excellent place."

Thus saying, he rooted his palace posts firmly in the bedrock below, raised high the crossbeams unto the Plain of High Heaven itself, and dwelled there. . . .

Ninigi met a lovely maiden at the Cape of Kasasa. He asked: "Whose daughter are you?" She replied: "I am the daughter of the Great Mountain God, and my name is Lady Divine Ata. I am also called Lady Tree Blossom." Again Ninigi asked: "Do you have any brothers and sisters?" She replied: "I have an elder sister, Lady Rock-Eternal." Then he said: "I wish to marry you. What is your wish?" She replied: "I cannot say. My father the Great Mountain Deity will say."

When he sent for permission to her father the Great Mountain Deity, her father rejoiced greatly and gave in addition the elder sister Rock-Eternal Princess and had hundreds of tables laden with gifts and presented to Ninigi.

But when Ninigi saw the elder sister, he was afraid because of her exceeding ugliness and sent her back; he kept only the younger sister Tree Blossom Princess and had conjugal intercourse with her for one night.

Then the Great Mountain Deity, shamed because Rock-Eternal Princess had been sent back, sent word: "The reason I offered both my daughters together was this: I presented them swearing an oath that if he should take Rock-Eternal Princess, the life of the child of the heavenly deities, even though the snow should fall and the wind should blow, would be ever like a rock and would continue eternally, firmly, without being moved; and also that if he should take Tree Blossom Princess, the child would flourish, just as the blossoms of the trees flourish. However, now that he has returned Rock-Eternal Princess and kept only Tree Blossom Princess, the life of the child of the heavenly deities shall continue only for the interval of the blossoming of the trees."

For this reason, until this day, the emperors have not been long-lived.

Later, Tree Blossom Princess came forth and said: "I am with child, and now the time of my delivery is near. I say this because it would not be fitting for the child of the heavenly deities to be born in secret."

Then Ninigi said: "Can Tree Blossom have become pregnant after only one night? This is not my child; surely it must be the child of an earthly deity." Then Tree Blossom replied: "If the child I bear be the child of an earthly deity, then it shall not be born safely; if it be the child of the heavenly deities, then it shall be safe."

Then she built a palace many yards long without a door; entering this palace, she spread clay to close it up; and when she was about to deliver the child, she set fire to the palace and gave birth.

The child born as the flames were burning furiously was named Ho-deri, Fire-Shine Lord. The child born next was named Ho-suseri, Fire-Raging Lord. The child born next was named Ho-ori, Fire-Fade Lord.

YAMATO THE BRAVE

Emperor Keikō (traditional dates 71–130 C.E.) ruled from the Hishiro Palace at Makimuku (today Nara Prefecture). By his various consorts and concubines, he had eighty children; second and third among them were Prince Ō-usu (Big Mortar) and his younger brother Prince O-usu (Little Mortar). Prince O-usu became Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, or Prince Yamato the Brave. His story is unique in the *Kojiki* because even though he is only a prince (the emperor's son), the text treats him as if he were an emperor (his wife is styled as "empress"). His exploits against the "braves" of other lands (Kumaso, Izumo) appear to be an allegory for the Yamato clan's military expansion. Although Prince Yamato's almost supernatural might leads him to conquer and kill the gods of various lands, he meets a tragic end when he misspeaks a charm against a wild boar, who turns out to be the god of Mount Ibuki, and loses his power.

The emperor said to Prince Little Mortar: "Why does your elder brother not come to the morning and evening meals? Take it upon yourself to teach and admonish him." After this had been said, five days passed, but he still did not come. The emperor then asked Prince Little Mortar: "Why has your elder brother not come for such a long time? Is it perhaps that you have not yet admonished him?" He replied: "I have already entreated him." "In what manner did you entreat him?" He replied: "Early in the morning when he went into the privy, I waited and captured him, grasped him and crushed him, then pulled off his limbs and, wrapping them in a straw mat, threw them away."

At this, the emperor was terrified at the fearless, wild disposition of this prince and said: "Toward the west, there are two mighty men called the Kumaso Braves. They are unsubmissive, disrespectful people. Therefore go and kill them." Thus saying, he dispatched him. At this time, he was still a youth wearing his hair up on his forehead. Then Prince Little Mortar received from his aunt Princess Yamato an upper garment and a skirt and, with a small sword in his bosom, set out.

When he arrived at the house of the Kumaso Braves, he found that the home was surrounded by three rows of warriors and that they were building a pit dwelling and were inside it. At the time there was a great deal of noise about the coming feast to celebrate the new pit dwelling, and food was being prepared. Walking around the vicinity, he waited for the day of the feast. When that day arrived, he combed his hair down in the manner of a young girl's and put on the upper garment and the skirt of his aunt. Completely taking on a young girl's appearance, he mingled with the women and went into the dwelling.

Then the two Kumaso Braves, the elder and the younger, looked with admiration at this maiden and had her sit between them as the festivities continued. Then, when the feast was at its height, Prince Little Mortar took his sword from his bosom and, seizing the older Kumaso's collar, stabbed him clear through the chest. Then the younger Kumaso, seeing this, was afraid and ran out.

Pursuing him to the foot of the stairs leading out of the pit dwelling, he seized him by the back, took the sword, and stabbed him clear through from the rear.

Then, the Kumaso Brave said: "Do not move the sword. I have something to say." The prince gave him a respite while holding him down. When asked, "Who are you, my lord?" the prince replied "I am the son of Emperor Oho-tarashi-hiko-o-shiro-wake, who dwells in the palace of Hishiro and rules the Land of the Eight Islands; and my name is Prince Yamato-oguna. Hearing that you Kumaso Braves were unsubmissive and disrespectful, he dispatched me to kill you."

Then the Kumaso Brave said: "Indeed this must be true. For in the west there are no brave, mighty men besides us. But in the great land of Yamato there is a man exceeding the two of us in bravery! Because of this I will present you with a name. May you be known from now on as Prince Yamato the Brave." After he had finished saying this, the prince killed him, slicing him up like a ripe melon.

From that time, he was called Yamato Takeru, Yamato the Brave, to praise his name. Then as he returned, he subdued and pacified all the mountain deities, river deities, and deities of the sea straits.

At that time Yamato Takeru entered the land of Izumo. Intending to kill the Izumo Brave, he pledged friendship with him on his arrival. Then he secretly made an imitation sword of *itii* wood, which he wore at his side. They bathed together in the Hi River. At this time, Yamato Takeru came out of the river first and put on the sword that the Izumo Brave had worn, saying: "Let us exchange swords!" Then the Izumo Brave came out of the river and put on the imitation sword that Yamato Takeru had worn. Whereupon Yamato Takeru invited him, saying: "Come, let us cross swords!" As they were unsheathing their swords, the Izumo Brave was unable to unsheathe the imitation sword. Then Yamato Takeru, unsheathing his sword, struck and killed the Izumo Brave. Then he made a song, saying:

<i>yatsumesas</i>	The many-clouds-rising
<i>Izumo-take ga</i>	Izumo Brave
<i>hakeru tachi</i>	wears a sword
<i>tsuzura sawamaki</i>	with many vines wrapped around it,
<i>sami nashi ni aware</i>	but no blade inside, alas!

Thus, having swept away and pacified his foes, he went up and reported on his mission.

Then the emperor once again commanded Yamato Takeru: "Subdue and pacify the unruly deities and the unsubmissive people of the twelve regions to the east!" He dispatched together with him the ancestor of the Omi of Kibi, whose name was Mi-suki-tomo-mimi-take-hiko, and bestowed on him a giant spear of *hihiragi* wood. Thus, when he received the command and set out, he went to the shrine of the Great Deity of Ise and worshiped at the court of the deity.

Then he said to his aunt Princess Yamato: "Is it because the emperor wishes me to die soon? Why did he dispatch me to attack the evil people of the west? Then when I came back up, why did he dispatch me once more after only a short while, without giving me troops, to subdue the evil people of the twelve regions to the east? In view of all this, he must cause me to die soon." He lamented and wept.

On his departure, Princess Yamato gave him the sword Kusanagi, Grass Feller. She also gave him a bag and said: "Should there be an emergency, open this bag." Afterward, he arrived in the land of Owari and went into the house of Princess Miyazu, the ancestress of the governor of Owari. Although he wanted to marry her, he decided to marry her on his return. Thus promising, he proceeded to the eastern lands and subdued and pacified all the unruly deities and unsubmissive people of the mountains and rivers.

At that time, when he arrived in the land of Sagamu, the governor of that land deceived him, saying: "In this plain there is a great pond. In the pond there lives a deity who is an extremely unruly deity." Then when he went into the plain in order to see that deity, the governor set fire to the plain. Realizing that he had been deceived, he opened the bag given him by his aunt Princess Yamato, looked inside and found a fire-striking implement.

Then, first he mowed away the grass with his sword; then he lit a fire with the fire-striking implement and set a counterfire to keep the fire away. Then he went back out and killed the governor and all of his clan. Then he set fire to them and burned them. Today the place is therefore called Yakizu, Burning Ford.

From there he proceeded to cross the sea of Hashiri-mizu, Running Water. Just then the deity of the crossing stirred up the waves so that the boat went adrift and could not move forward. Then his empress, whose name was Princess Oto-tachibana, said: "I will go into the sea in your stead, O prince. You, O prince, must complete the mission entrusted to you and return to report on it." When she was about to go into the sea, they took many layers of sedge mats, many layers of skin carpets, and many layers of silk carpets and spread them out on top of the waves, and she went down onto them. At this time the rough waves of themselves became calm, and the boat was able to move forward. Then the empress sang this song:

<i>saneshashi</i>	O you, my lord, alas—
<i>Sagamu no ono ni</i>	you who once, standing among the flames
<i>moyuru hi no</i>	of the burning fire, spoke my name
<i>honaka ni tachite</i>	on the mountain-surrounded
<i>toishi kimi wamo</i>	Plain of Sagamu!

Seven days later, the empress's comb was washed ashore. Taking this comb, they made her tomb and placed it inside.

From there he proceeded and subdued all of the unruly Emishi and pacified the unruly deities of the mountains and rivers. Then on his way back to the capital, he arrived at the foot of the pass of Ashi-gara, and just as he was eating his travel rations, the deity of the pass, assuming the form of a white deer, came and stood there. Then he took a piece of *hiru* plant left over from his meal and struck the deer. It hit the deer's eye and killed him.

Then he climbed up the pass and, grieving, sighed three times: "My wife, alas!" Therefore the name of the land is Azuma. Then he proceeded overland from that land to Kai. While he was there at the palace of Sakaori, he sang this song:

<i>Niibari</i>	How many nights have we slept
<i>Tsukuba o sugite</i>	since passing Niibari
<i>ikuyo ka netsuru</i>	and Tsukuba?

Then the old man tending the fire sang this song to continue his song:

<i>kaga nabete</i>	The number of days is, all together,
<i>yo ni wa kokonoyo</i>	of nights, nine,
<i>hi ni wa tooka o</i>	and of days, ten.

Then he rewarded the old man and made him the governor of the land of Azuma.

From that land he crossed over to the land of Shinano. There he subdued the deity of the Shinano pass and returned to the land of Owari. He entered the dwelling of Princess Miyazu with whom he had previously made a promise of marriage. At that time, when presenting his food, Princess Miyazu brought the great wine cup and presented it to him. But Princess Miyazu had menstrual blood staining the hem of her cloak. Noticing the menstrual blood, he sang this song:

Across the heavenly Kagu Mountain
the long-necked swan flies like a sharp sickle.
Your arm slender and delicate like the bird's neck—
although I wish to clasp it in my embrace,
although I desire to sleep with you,
on the hem of the cloak you are wearing
the moon has risen.

Then Princess Miyazu sang this song in reply:

O high-shining Sun Prince,
O my great lord ruling in peace!

as the years one by one pass by,
the moons also one by one elapse.
It is no wonder that while waiting in vain for you,
on the cloak I am wearing the moon should rise.

Then they were conjugally united, and he, leaving his sword Kusanagi at Princess Miyazu's dwelling, went to take the deity of Mount Ibuki.

At this time he said, "I will take the deity of this mountain with my bare hands," and went up the mountain. Then on the mountain he met a white boar the size of a cow. Thereupon he spoke a charm, saying: "This is the deity's messenger, which is here transformed into a white boar. I will not kill it now but will kill it when I come back," and went up.

At this time the deity of the mountain caused a violent hailstorm and dazed Yamato Takeru. It was not the deity's messenger that had been transformed into the white boar but the deity itself. He was dazed because he had spoken a charm to it.³

Then he came back down the mountain; his mind awoke somewhat as he rested at the spring of Tama-kura-be. For that reason it is called Isame, Spring of Coming to the Senses. From there he set out, and arriving on the plain of Tagi, he said: "I had always thought in my heart of flying through the skies, but now my legs cannot walk; they have become wobbly." For this reason that place is called Tagi, Totter.

From there he proceeded a little farther and, because of his extreme fatigue, walked along slowly, using a staff. For this reason that place is called Walking-Stick Pass. When he arrived at the foot of the single pine on the Cape of Otsu, he found that a sword that he had left behind when he had eaten there had not disappeared but was still there. Then he sang this song:

Directly across from Owari,
on the Cape Otsu you stand,
O lone pine—O my brother!—
O lone pine, were you a man,
I would give you a sword to wear,
I would dress you with clothes,
O lone pine—O my brother!—

Proceeding from there, when he arrived at the village of Mie, he again said: "My legs are like a threefold curve, and I am extremely tired." For this reason that place is called Mie, Threefold.

3. The charm was supposed to make Prince Yamato Takeru's words come true (that is, that he would indeed return and kill the boar). But it goes awry because the words spoken in the charm are mistaken: the boar is not the messenger but the god himself. It is the misspeaking of the charm that causes Prince Yamato to lose his power.

From there he proceeded to the plain of Nobo, where he sang this song recalling his homeland:

Yamato is the highest part of the land;
the mountains are green partitions, lying layer upon layer.
Nestled among the mountains,
how beautiful is Yamato!

Again he sang:

Let those whose life is secure
take from Mount Heguri of the rush matting
leaves of great oak and wear them in their hair
—O my lads!—

These are "songs of yearning for the homeland." Again he sang:

From the direction
of my beloved home
the clouds are rising.

This is a "half song." By this time his illness had become critical. Then he sang this song:

Next to the maiden's
sleeping place
I left the saber, the sword—
alas, that sword!

Immediately after he had sung the songs, he died. Then couriers were sent to the emperor.

At this time his empresses and children who were in Yamato came down to the plain of Nobo and constructed his tomb. Then, crawling around the neighboring rice paddies, they sang while weeping:

The vines of the *tokoro*
crawl around
among the rice stems,
the rice stems in the rice paddies
bordering on the tomb.

At this time he was transformed into a giant white bird and, soaring through the skies, flew away toward the beach. Then the wives and children, although

their feet had been cut by the stumps of the bamboo reeds, forgot the pain and ran after the bird, weeping. At this time they sang this song:

Moving with difficulty, up to our waists
in the field of low bamboo stalks,
we cannot go through the skies—
but alas, must go by foot!

Again, when they waded into the sea and moved through the waves with difficulty, they sang:

Going by sea, waist deep in the water,
we move forward with difficulty;
like plants growing by a large river,
we drift aimlessly in the ocean currents.

Again, when the bird had flown to the rocky shores, they sang:

The plover of the beach
does not go by the beaches,
but follows along the rocky shores.

These four songs were sung at his funeral. For this reason, even today these songs are sung at the funeral of an emperor. From that land the bird flew away and stopped at Shiki in the land of Kōchi. For this reason they built his tomb at that place and enshrined him there. This tomb is called the White Bird Tomb. But from that place the bird again soared through the heavens and flew away. During the entire time that Yamato Takeru went about subduing the country, the ancestor of the Atae of the Kume, whose name was Nana-tsukahagi, served in his company as his food server.

[Adapted from a translation by Donald Philippi]