

The Raging Deity in Japanese Mythology

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Introduction

The Japanese *kami*,¹ an enigmatic creature if ever there was one, is not always a benevolent force living in harmony with human beings. Indeed, Japanese mythology is filled with accounts of deities who kill travelers through mountain passes; who rape, kill and eat women; or who bring epidemics on the people when dissatisfied with the upkeep of their shrines.² Deities engaging in acts of violence were termed *araburu kami* 荒ぶる神, or raging deities, and their pacification posed a real problem for the ancient Japanese. As we shall see in the following pages, these deities often assumed the form of a reptile when engaged in their anti-social behavior, and although they cannot be called inherently evil, they were nonetheless a threat to human beings which needed to be dealt with.

In this essay I have attempted to bring together all, or at least a significant percentage of the tales from mythological sources which deal with violence and *kami*, and to examine these tales from a variety of points of view. Studying myth is comparable to looking at the surface of a pond after a stone has been thrown into the water. One is confronted with an ever-increasing set of ripples, each of which has its own peculiar existence but which, taken as a whole, will alter the pattern of the water to create a new totality. It is nearly impossible to determine which of the several stones on the floor of the pond might have caused the initial disturbance, and one sometimes suspects that the real cause was a handful of such stones, cast into the water indiscriminately.

Even if one manages to find the "center," or primary cause of any given myth, the further one progresses from it the more distorted be-

come the ripples and the more confused become the boundaries between them, and any attempt at reconstruction is bound to be somewhat artificial. Whatever the initial impetus of any given myth might have been, it is often transmitted by subsequent generations for entirely different reasons, and these reasons in turn often work to change the details of the story.

These various reasons are the sundry rings of my metaphorical pond, but it is not the purpose of this essay to examine any particular ring in great detail. Rather, I would like to suggest some explanations for the initial disturbance and then to try to reconstruct the pond as a whole, proceeding from the "core" to the "bank," in an attempt to see what various types of meaning we might be able to assign to this body of myth. I consider this approach to be one of width rather than depth, and while I fully acknowledge the necessity of detailed analysis of each of the possibilities I shall present in the following pages, I also believe that such an analysis must proceed from a broad overview of the topic as a whole, for it is clear that no one explanation of a myth is sufficient to "explain" it fully.

Hence, although Japanese scholars have produced a great amount of fascinating and instructive research, I have generally avoided making too much use of this and have attempted to hold my discussion to the stories themselves, rather than to examine the theories they have spawned. This does not represent any lack of regard for this scholarship, but rather is an acknowledgement that it is impossible to do two things at the same time. I hope in a later forum to have the opportunity to discuss one or more of the elements to be found in Japanese myth in greater depth.

Classification of the Stories

Generally speaking, tales of deities and violence in Japanese myth can be divided into five categories. These are as follows:

1. Stories of *araburu kami proper*,
2. Stories of *deities' revenge*,
3. Stories of *mortals' revenge*,
4. Stories of *sexual violence*,
5. Stories of *competition between deities*.

Few of these tales are available in English translation, and so I have summarized in Appendix 1 the stories belonging to each of these categories; subsequent references to the tales will be based on the numbers found in this appendix.

It is clear that these tales are interrelated, but the exact extent of

their relationship is vague. It is simply impossible to point to any given tale and identify it with confidence as being the "oldest," the mother tale from which all others were born. It is, however, possible to show that the groups have enough in common with each other to permit speculation as to some early form of *tale complex* concerning raging deities. Whatever its origin, however, this tale complex was comprehended on a variety of different levels which, depending on the emphasis placed on the story by any individual narrator, gave rise to the different groups of stories we are confronted with today. This tale complex has proven to have a tenacious hold on the Japanese imagination, and one encounters raging deities even in contemporary literature.

The stories in groups 1 and 5 relate the most impersonal of the violent deity tales and seem to be the most distant from the narrators, both in terms of time and of concern. In other words, raging deities who killed people in the mountains are already, by the time of the *fudoki* (風土記, recorded by and large in the early eighth century), a thing of the past, having been pacified and rendered harmless. The same cannot be said, however, of deities who attack human women, for stories of sexual violence can be found in later Buddhist *setsuwa* 説話 (short tale) collections such as *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 or *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集,³ among others, while stories of the *araburu kami proper* type or the *competition between deities* type seem to end with the *fudoki* accounts. This does not necessarily suggest that the stories in groups 1 and 5 are therefore older than those in the other groups, but it does indicate that the topics treated in groups 1 and 5 gradually became matters of less and less concern, while the problems of sexual violence continued to be perceived of as real.⁴

It might also indicate that these stories grew in a manner consistent with the development of the relationships between the ancient Japanese and their deities: at first the deities were vague entities posing mostly vague threats, but as mortals grew more familiar with them the threats became more specific. This, however, is a hypothesis which cannot be tested, and must remain in the realm of speculation.

It should also be noted, incidentally, that the mountains have not suddenly become safehavens simply because they no longer harbor *araburu kami* who arbitrarily kill half of the travelers passing through their territory; on the contrary, the mountains continue to be dangerous, but the nature of the danger is perceived differently.⁵

Land Disputes and Violent Deities

In any event, it is worth noting how frequently the motif of disputes over land or water appears in the tales in groups 1 and 5. The

raging deities generally occupied mountain passes, and seemingly controlled the boundaries between separate areas. This is well expressed in stories 1 and 2, which are thought to be essentially the same tale, told from different perspectives (*Fudoki*: 294, note 6); because these tales will advance our understanding of the nature of raging deity stories I shall translate them in full, with no omissions from the text:

Oshikawa 意此川: During the reign of Emperor Ōjin, the Great Deity of Izumo⁶ resided in Mt. Kamio 神尾, the village of Hirakata 枚方, where he would constantly interrupt travelers, killing half and allowing half to pass through. At that time Kohote of Hahaki 伯耆人小保弓, Fukuro of Inaba 因幡布久漏 and Tsukiya of Izumo 出雲都伎也 petitioned the Emperor in their anguish. At this Emperor dispatched Nukadabe no Muraji Kutoto 額田部連久等々 to make prayers. He thus constructed a shrine and a *sakaya* 酒屋,⁷ and worshiped the deity. A feast was held which was very enjoyable, and people took branches of the mountain oak trees, hung them from their waists and their belts and went downstream where they held contests. Thus, this is called “Contest River.”⁸

Hirakata Village: This is called Hirakata because it is a village first settled by a Chinese [*ayahito* 漢人] from the village of Hirakata, Mamuta Kōri, Kōchi Province. Therefore, it is called Hirakata Village.

Sahi Hill 佐比岡: This is called Sahi Hill because the Great Deity of Izumo⁹ was in Kamio Mountain. If ten people from Izumo would come through the area, this deity would stop five of them; if five would come through, he would stop three. Thus, the people of Izumo built a Sahi,¹⁰ and worshiped the deity at this hill, but they could not pacify him. The reason for this was that the deity Hiko-gami 比古神¹¹ came first, and then the deity Hime-gami 比賣神.¹² Now, Hiko-gami could not be calmed, and left. For this reason, Hime-gami was resentful, and angry. Afterwards, a Chinese from Hirakata Village, Mamuta Kōri, Kōchi Province, came here, settled in these mountains, worshiped, and was finally able to pacify this deity. Because this deity was here, the place is now called Mt. Kamio. Also, because the Sahi was built, it is called Sahi Hill.

These stories are somewhat confusing, partly because it is unclear exactly how many deities are involved—is it two or three?—and what the relationships between (or among) them are. One possible interpretation is that the deities “Hiko-gami” and “Hime-gami” are meant to represent conflicting tribes of people originally from Izumo, who

fought over land in the area with the winning side being that which was represented by the female "Hime-gami" (*Fudoki*: 295, note 13).

If this position is taken, then the "Great Deity of Izumo" is fairly obviously identical to "Hime-gami," which would explain why, in the second tale, it was only the travelers from Izumo who were attacked by the deity. However, it is true that the deity Ōmono-nushi 大物主 is also identified as the "Great Deity of Izumo,"¹³ and is also generally considered to be male. It also seems entirely possible that the female "Hime-gami" was not the cause of Hiko-gami's departure—as one would suspect if the story is based on a land dispute which she won—but rather was angry *because* of his departure.

On balance, however, the fact that nearly all of the stories in group 5 feature competitions between male and female deities with the female side usually victorious suggests that this story should be thought of in terms of a land dispute.¹⁴ We might also note that the deity who is raging in story 6 is determined through divination to be female, and it is possible that the deity of story 7 is also female. It is interesting to note that the winner of the dispute, and not the loser, rages; having once established dominance in an area the victorious group apparently felt it important to demonstrate hostility to outsiders, especially if they were representatives of the central government.

Story 1, translated above, relates a *contest*, which links it to the tales in group 5, *competition between deities*. If we further examine the tales in this group, we find that two of them—stories 29 and 30—are about male and female deities who are in conflict over water (story 30) or land (story 29). In both of these cases, incidentally, the victor is the female.

Such disputes must have been all too common in ancient Japan. Story 31, as well, could easily be based on a land dispute, as the male deity diverts the water in the river. Story 28 is also likely similar, though there is no direct evidence in the tale itself here.

Story 32 presents a somewhat different problem because both Ōnamuchi 大汝命 and Sukuna-hikona no Mikoto 小比古尼命 are generally thought to be male deities. However, the two are said in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* accounts of their association to have worked together in the creation of the land, so there is some reason to believe they might have had a sexual relationship.¹⁵

Moving back to the tales in group 1, the element of competition over land or water seems to be an unstated part of the following: story 3, in which the deity is pacified by water; story 4, which takes place between two provinces; story 5, in which another, innocent, deity is the primary victim of the violence of the raging deity; and stories 6 and 7,

in which both water and relationships between male and female deities are involved. Stories 8, 9, and 10 are too vague to make any comfortable speculations about, though one must admit that the possibility of the land dispute element is at least present in all three cases.

Thus ten of the fifteen tales in these two groups are fairly clearly bound up in disputes over land or water, and none of the remaining five tales can be said to be clearly uninvolved with this element. This is certainly an indication of the importance of disputes over land or water in the formulation of Japanese myth.

When considering these tales as stories having originated in land or water disputes, it is important to remember that they are all from the *fudoki*, which are local accounts of the settlement of various areas and hence present the raging deity as a problem inherent in settling the area in the first place. In works such as *Kojiki*, which were produced by the central government, we find a considerably different perspective and a different description of the “araburu kami.” *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* both focus not on the specific dangers of the raging deities to the populace, but rather on the efforts of the heroes who strove to pacify them. Hence in *Kojiki*, for example, we find no reference to raging deities who kill travelers through the mountains, but rather we encounter the term “araburu kami” in conjunction with “unsubjugated peoples.”¹⁶ This underscores the idea that the araburu kami was initially the ancestral deity of groups hostile to governmental authority, and that pacification of such people meant pacification of their deities as well; this in turn meant safe travel through once hostile areas. It is further worth noting that—particularly in the *Kojiki* accounts—the araburu kami are mentioned specifically in accounts of great cultural heroes, most notably Yamato Takeru no Mikoto 倭建命, one of the most important “civilizers” and pacifiers of the world.

Women in Politics and Religion

However, if these were simply tales reflecting one aspect of the history of ancient Japan, they would soon have been forgotten, as that period of history faded into the unrecallable past. That this does not happen, that the raging deity continues to be a factor in Japanese myth and legends, indicates that there is more to the tales than some now-forgotten historical reality. In this connection we must note that many of the tales deal in one way or another with relationships between the sexes. In some of the stories—primarily those in groups 1 and 5—the sexual element is combined with the land dispute factor, but in others—primarily those in groups 3 and 4—it is the major theme of the story. In these tales, land disputes are either not mentioned at all, or they are

present only obscurely in the background.

Sex is, of course, intimately connected with disputes over land or water. Many such disputes must have been resolved through intermarriage, and the role of women would have been critical in compromises between conflicting groups. In such instances there are necessarily two groups involved, and hence room for at least two different interpretations of what has taken place. A woman who has gone to an alien tribe as a wife might be seen as a sacrifice by members of her immediate family, for example, and as a source of alien power by members of her husband's tribe; this could easily account for differing perspectives of the acts depicted in any given tale.

This political role of women can be restated in religious terms, and this moves us from the center of the pond to a ring which is still very close to that center. It was common for women to be the intermediaries between mortals and their deities in ancient Japan, and there are many tales that depict marriages between mortal women and deities. These are referred to as *shinkon shinwa* 神婚神話, or myths of marriage to deities, and those stories in which the supernatural partner is a male are classified as *Miwasan-kei setsuwa* 三輪山型説話, or stories of the Mt. Miwa pattern. I have summarized the three best known of these tales in Appendix 2.

Many scholars believe that the *shinkon* tales have their origins in family histories. A good case in point is story 34, the tale of the red painted arrow, which is linked to the origin of a clan of metal workers.¹⁷ The *shinkon* tales, are indeed, centered on the offspring of the deity, and those stories which are placed in this category depict marriages which are "successful" from the woman's standpoint—she has given birth to the child of a deity with no disastrous consequences.

That the woman was not always so fortunate can be seen in tales 24, 25 and 26 (all from group 4, tales of *sexual violence*) or further in stories 18 and 20. Judging solely on the basis of statistics, one would have to conclude that marriage to a deity had more dangers than benefits, because in the majority of tales on this topic the woman is killed by her immortal husband when he has finished with her.

It is thought by some scholars that stories in which a woman is killed, raped or eaten by a deity represent a gradual decline in the beliefs associated with particular deities (See Matsumura 1955: 206, or Moriya 1978: 159–160). In Moriya's words, this is a movement from "marriage to murder" (1978: 159), and corresponds to the deity's loss of status in the belief structure of the area. Whatever the merits of this argument, though, we cannot discount the possibility that multiple transmissions of tales as noted above might also account for the dif-

ference in focus between, for example, stories 25 and 35. It should be remembered, furthermore, that the Mt. Miwa story itself (story 33), the most famous of the *shinkon* tales, is accompanied by violence, although the violence here is directed not against the woman but against the populace at large. Although the violence in this tale is not associated directly with the marriage—chronologically, the two come at different times—it is important to note that the two elements were linked in the mind of the *Kojiki* narrator.

The account of events which leads up to the tale of the Mt. Miwa marriage is, in many respects, similar to story 6. In both tales there is a deity which rages against the populace and when the reason is divined it is discovered that the deity is dissatisfied with the manner in which it is being worshiped and specifies the person it wants to tend its shrine.

It is also of some importance that the same deity in the Mt. Miwa story—*Ōmono-nushi*—shows a similar dissatisfaction with the state of his shrine in story 11, in which he causes the child of an Emperor to be dumb. While in story 11 we have no actual physical violence, it is undeniable that in both story 11 and the Mt. Miwa story there is a geographical conflict depicted between the Yamato and Izumo forces, and in both cases an Izumo deity takes action against the Yamato court.

However these tales might be linked to actual compromise politics of ancient Japan, and however they might reflect the loss of favor of certain deities from local belief structures, the role of women here must also be understood in terms of religious rituals. In story 7, for example, we see that women were used to help ascertain the will of the deity and in story 4 we have a reference to a woman being employed in the worship of a raging deity in order to pacify it. Both these tales must be seen as having close connections to the marriage stories, no matter what the outcome of the marriage stories might be. I shall examine the attitudes towards women that can be seen in these tales below, but would first like to make a few observations concerning the nature of the rituals themselves.

Sex and Rituals

All indications are that these were remarkably sexual rituals, for the most common relationship between woman and deity was that of lovers. One remarkable motif recurring in tales about women who marry deities is that of death through a wound to the genitals.¹⁸ In story 24, for example, the mortal woman loses her deity lover and stabs herself in the genitals with a chopstick, which causes her death. This act could well be interpreted as a ritualistic calling of the deity. In order to induce

her immortal lover, the woman would engage in a ritual aimed at causing sexual excitement.

Another tale which has clear ritualistic overtones is story 26, which is about a woman visited by a deity who has assumed the identity of her husband and who subsequently kills her. The story does not reveal the name of the deity or why he has selected this particular woman as his victim, but an examination of the details of the story is revealing.

Otohi-himeko 弟日姫子, the heroine of this tale, is young, and her "appearance was beautiful, far more so than the ordinary mortal" (*Fudoki*: 395); furthermore, when her husband, Ōtomo no Sadehiko 大伴挟手彦, goes to the Korean kingdoms for a military campaign his wife "ascended this peak¹⁹ and waved and beckoned with her scarf" (*Fudoki*: 397). Leaving aside for the moment the fact that the story itself says she was sad at her husband's departure and had gone to try and beckon him to return, the ritualistic aspects of this scene are striking: a young woman goes to a high place where she waves a object that is associated with magical power²⁰ and is subsequently visited within five days by a deity. I do not wish to become embroiled in the controversy over whether there was a widespread practice in Japan of offering human sacrifices to field deities,²¹ and will here only note that the scene depicted actually seems more likely to be that of a shamaness calling her immortal lover.

It is clear in this tale that Otohi-himeko is not deceived by the deity's disguise. She is quite aware that her husband has left, and out of suspicion she follows the deity to his lair, where he kills her. One might perhaps ask why she has permitted the deity's advances, but it is obvious that she accepts her dual role of mate to both deity and mortal, and the appearance of the deity in the shape of her husband allows her to fill both of these roles simultaneously.

Dual Citizenship

Two tales in *Kojiki* are particularly interesting in this regard, for they lead us towards the outer edge of the ripples, away from the purely concrete towards the more symbolic. These are the stories of the lost fishhook (*Kojiki*: 137-148; Philippi 1969: 148-158) and the death of Emperor Chuai and subsequent activities of Empress Jingu (*Kojiki*: 235-237; Philippi 1969: 257-261). For the sake of the progression of argument I shall ignore chronology and discuss these stories in reverse order, beginning with the latter.

In this tale the Emperor is in his palace with his Empress and a governmental official/priest called Takeshiuchi no Sukune 建内宿弥. The Emperor is playing the *koto* in an attempt to receive an oracle con-

cerning a planned military campaign. The Empress—who, we have been told, often became divinely possessed—transmits the oracle, which is rather unexpected, for the deity instructs the Emperor to invade the Korean kingdoms. The Emperor does not believe this land exists because he cannot see it with his naked eye, and accuses the deity of being a liar. For this he is killed immediately.

This tale throws considerable light on the relationship between mortals, woman and deities. After a series of purifications the deity is once again communicated with, and it is revealed that it is none other than the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu no Ōmikami 天照大御神;²² she informs the Empress that the country is to be ruled by the child now in the Empress' womb.

The parentage of this child is not clear and it is possible that the father is actually the deity rather than the mortal emperor.²³ If this is the case, Empress Jingu is simultaneously the wife of the mortal emperor and of the deity; whatever the case, she stands very close to this deity. She herself is regarded as both a deity²⁴ and as the sovereign of the nation until her child has been born. She obviously has dual citizenship, existing both as deity and as mortal.

Moving to the story of the lost fishhook, we find a similar situation. This story, one of the best known in Japanese mythology, relates a trip to the palace of the sea deity made by Hoori no Mikoto 火遠理命 to recover his brother's fishhook, which he has lost in an ill-fated exchange of "gifts."²⁵ He does not deal directly with this sea deity, but goes through his daughter, Toyotama-hime 豊玉毘売命, whom he weds. Through his marriage with this woman he is able to recover his brother's hook. He also receives two jewels to control the tide, which permit him to dominate his brother. He later loses his wife when he violates a taboo she has made and looks at her while she is giving birth. She has returned to her "true" shape—that of a reptile-like creature²⁶—to do this, and is angry that he has seen her.

In both these tales the female is the conduit between the mortal and the other worlds. Empress Jingu is "essentially" mortal, but is seen as being part deity: she is most likely married to a deity. Toyotama-hime, on the other hand, is exactly the opposite, being "essentially" a deity, and married to a mortal man. Both, however, must ultimately follow that part of their existence controlled by their deity natures, which means that neither is fully a creature of this world.

The role of lover to a deity was not always embraced with open arms by mortal women. We can see this quite clearly in story 27, which relates how a *wani* 和爾 deity climbs a mountain after a woman named Tama-hime 玉日女命,²⁷ who in turn blocks the river with a boul-

der in order to escape his advances. Indeed, this role must have been somewhat of a nuisance, for deities had the distressing habit of destroying their mortal lovers.

Death, Deities and Water

Why, one might ask, does death, either actual or symbolic, so often await the woman who has consorted with deities? This question can, of course, be answered in terms of the compromise politics of ancient Japan, if we assume the stories featuring death are primarily the products of the woman's family. It can also be answered in terms of religious rituals, for although there is no reliable evidence to suggest that human sacrifices were offered to deities it is also true that many ancient Japanese assumed that this had once been a widespread practice (see Matsumae 1970: 172-173).

On a more symbolic level we see that when women entered relationships with deities they were forced to give up a part of their former existence, that there was a rite of passage involved amounting to a symbolic death and rebirth, much as is the case of the contemporary shaman (cf. Blacker 1975: 136).

Still another answer moves us to a new ripple in our pond, and a consideration of the nature of the deities themselves. One striking fact can be gleaned from a survey of the tales in which a mortal female is killed by her otherworldly lover: nearly all of them involve a water deity of some sort. This deity might be described as a snake, a *wani*, or a more generalized "thunder deity,"²⁸ but the fact that it is nearly inevitably present must be seen as evidence that this complex of stories is tied closely to water deities. It might be noted parenthetically that several of the tales of raging deities presented in the first appendix can be linked to water deities, though this is not necessarily true of all of them.²⁹

These water deities, in turn, are linked by the ancient Japanese to the world of the dead. This world has been variously described as being located beneath the sea, under the ground and in the mountains, and the changing conceptions of its location are doubtlessly responsible for a good part of the confusion about it that can be noted in Japanese myth.³⁰ It is significant that the serpent, or reptilian deity in general, is a perfect representative of this world, because he is associated with all these regions and also has the power to visit the mortal (dry land) world as well.

For example, when Otoi-himeko, the heroine of story 26, follows her mysterious lover to his lair the morning after he has shared her bed, her pursuit takes her to a pond, where she discovers a crea-

ture which is described as follows: "There was a snake asleep; its body was that of a human and was sunk into the swamp, and its head was that of a snake, floating on the top of the water" (*Fudoki*: 397). This creature then changes into a human male and recites a poem to the effect that having spent a night with Otohi-himeko he will now take her "home." Then he pulls her into the water and she is killed. "Home" has a rather sinister sound here, and is obviously located in the world of the dead.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that death occurs only in certain cases, namely, only when the deity has been seen by a mortal in its reptilian form. In the Mt. Miwa story (story 33), for example, the woman who has been selected as the bride of the deity sees him as a handsome young man, but when she follows the thread she has fixed to his garment she finds that it goes through the keyhole, thus indicating that the deity also used the form of a snake. There are other instances of this deity (*Ōmono-nushi*) manifesting himself as a snake, and when he is actually seen in that form the consequences are dire. In story 24, for example, he is seen in his snake form by one of his wives, who then dies of a wound to the genitals.

Another example of the snake/death motif can be had through comparing stories 25 and 35. In both of these tales a woman becomes miraculously pregnant with the child of a thunder/snake deity, but the child born in story 35 is human in form and ascends to heaven without incident while his counterpart in story 25 is reptilian in form and fails in his attempt to ascend to heaven after murdering a human being. It is perhaps not clear why one child should have been born a snake and another a human, but it is important to note that the snake's actions are violent while the human's are not.

Yet another example is available in the early chapters of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, in the story of the trip to the underworld taken by Izanagi no Mikoto 伊耶那岐命, the "father" of the land. When Izanagi's wife, Izanami no Mikoto 伊耶那美命, dies giving birth to the fire deity, he goes to the underworld to visit her and bring her back to the world of the living. There he violates a taboo and looks at her corpse. What he sees is not the body with which he was familiar, but a body which has been taken over by several reptiles. His wife becomes angry at having been seen and pursues him in order to kill him. However one wishes to understand the ideas of pollution or taboo here, it is noteworthy that the "dead" body of Izanami is closely associated with reptiles and with attempts to harm the living.

One could list story after story in which reptilian deities are linked strongly to the dead. These are essentially chthonic deities, and their

association with fertility on the one hand, and the world of the dead on the other is worldwide (cf. James 1959: 129–132). In Japan such deities tended to be associated with the Izumo area in particular (see, for example, Matsumura 1958: 72–119), although there is no reason to suppose that they were limited to that area.

Precisely because they have such conflicting personality traits, these deities had no fixed form. They manifested themselves as human or as reptiles, or in other forms, but when seen in their reptilian form, there is inevitably violence. Judging from the stories alone, one might well conclude that encountering a deity in its reptilian form was to be avoided when possible not because of any particular taboo, but simply because the reptilian form was the one assumed by the deity when it was up to no good. This form of the deity was a sort of signal to humans to be on their guard, and as such was rather helpful to mortals.³¹

Encounters with the Dead

The violence associated with raging snake deities is not limited to the death of mortal women, and in examining tales in which this type of violence figures we find ourselves in yet another ripple of our pond. I would like to enter this new realm through a consideration of the *Kojiki* account of the visit of the deity Ōkuni-nushi to the underworld home (*ne no katasu kuni* 根堅州国) of Susa-no-wo no Mikoto 須佐能男命. Susa-no-wo is the younger and impetuous brother of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu; he has incurred the wrath of his father, Izanagi no Mikoto, and been sent to the underworld to rule there. His original task was to be the ruler of the seas.³²

This visit of Ōkuni-nushi to the underworld has been prompted by his desire to gain power in order to resist his brothers, who are determined to kill him. When he arrives he meets first with the deity's daughter, Suseri-hime 須勢理毘女. These two are immediately attracted to one another, and when Susa-no-wo devises a series of tests for Ōkuni-nushi, Suseri-hime assists him in succeeding.³³ His success in these tasks wins Ōkuni-nushi the confidence of his father-in-law, from whom he is then able to steal three items, fleeing back to the upper world with his new wife. These three items are the sword of life (*iku-tachi* 生大刀), the bow and arrow of life (*iku-yumiya* 生弓矢), and the "heavenly-speaking lute" (*ame no nu-goto* 天沼琴).³⁴ With these he is able to dominate his brothers and become the most powerful of the earthly deities.

What has happened in this episode is that the ruler of the world of the dead has bequeathed, albeit grudgingly, the power of *life* to a mortal. Whatever other interpretation one might wish to make of this

story, the fact remains that the underworld is seen here as a source of life, and it is deemed possible for a "mortal" (Ōkuni-nushi, though a deity himself, is treated as a mortal in his relationship with Susa-no-wo) to seize these powers from the world of the dead.

Keeping this tale in mind, let us return to the stories of the raging deities. It is clear that several of these tales can be linked to this "visit to the land of the dead" motif, and it is significant that when mortals in these stories do finally take matters in their own hands and directly confront violent deities those deities are generally remarkably meek about the whole thing. In story 20, for example, a man threatens a thunder deity after it has killed his sister (or, alternatively, his wife) and the deity meekly promises to cease his violent behavior for at least one hundred years. The mortal in this case is not rewarded with powerful objects which will enable him to control his environment, but he does win a concession from the deity and gain some measure of control over nature.

In stories 21 and 22 we also have farmers who are able to make their lives easier by threatening the deities which have been pestering them. The same is true of story 19, in which a man first threatens a deity, then offers to worship it if it will remain in its own territory and leave the fields safe for agriculture. All of these stories seem to be involved with a rite of passage involving a symbolic death and subsequent rebirth as a more powerful person.

Story 19 has, incidentally, been interpreted by Mitani Eiichi as symbolizing man's conflict with and domination over the forces of nature (Mitani 1974: 29-30). However one is to accept this theory, it is obvious that the ancient Japanese lived in only very uneasy harmony with natural forces and saw themselves as being in a constant struggle. As the cultural hero Yamato Takeru discovered, to misinterpret these forces or to underestimate them could be a deadly mistake.³⁵

Ambiguity of Form and Personality

Ultimately, then, these raging deities are rather ambiguous creatures. Although they were capable of raging out of control and killing mortals for no apparent reason, they were also—if dealt with properly—the source of life for both humans and their crops. The question of their functioning as vegetation deities is a perplexing and problematic one, and I have avoided bringing it up in this essay, but it must be kept in mind that fertility deities are quite often associated with death throughout the world. What seems to make the Japanese deities different in this respect is their penchant for assuming a shape which was appropriate to the personality that happened to be dominating them at the moment.

We have already noted that the reptilian shape best expressed the violent personality and that when mortals encounter deities in this shape there normally follows violence or death.

This fluidity is reflected in many of the descriptions of the deities we find in the tales. The deity that killed Otohi-himeko in story 25, for example, was said to have a body half human and half snake, and the deity Yatsu no Kami in story 19 is also a hybrid, with the body of a snake and the head of a cow. In story 23 an imperial retainer encounters and kills several creatures who have cow heads. Since the deities did not represent any fixed concept, it is only natural that they should have been pictured as being of indeterminant shape.

This, of course, is an attitude which persists to the present day and is not limited to chthonic deities. In Mie Prefecture, for example, at the Shinto shrine Takihara no Miya, there are two buildings standing side by side. Both of these are dedicated to Amaterasu no Ōmikami, the Sun Goddess, but one is for her peaceful nature (*nigimitama* 和御魂) and the other for her violent nature (*aramitama* 荒御魂). These two aspects of her personality exist simultaneously, and both must be worshiped.

This violent side of the deity could be suppressed, but never entirely defeated. As James notes in his discussion of the Ugaritic text's account of the myth of Anat, Baal and Mot, "the theme was the perennial struggle between life and death in nature," and so "neither of the contending forces could be ultimately destroyed" (James 1959: 73). The Japanese seem to have solved this difficulty by showing that there were ways of pacifying raging deities, but that, since violence was but one aspect of any deity's character, the deity itself would continue to live on and the possibility for violence was ever present, needing only the proper trigger to set it off once more. The fact that it had no fixed form indicates that it was ethically neutral as well, which suggests that good and evil were thus not dependent on an all-encompassing deity but were instead defined by human beings themselves, in the way they treated their deities.

Conclusion

It is, perhaps, a long way from a deity who out of pique establishes itself in a mountain stronghold and arbitrarily kills half of the travelers who have the bad fortune to pass through the area to a deity who is a source of life for members of the mortal world. There is little doubt, however, that the same deity was capable of both acts, and often performed them nearly simultaneously.

These deities were forces which enabled mortals to rise to the full

limit of their capabilities. Their violence, far from being uncalled for, was actually a necessary part of the human condition for the ancient Japanese.

In the first place, raging deities were a convenient and readily understandable symbol of evil. This was an evil that needed to be dealt with by humans, but it was by no means a simplistic black and white vision of the nature of the universe. When one begins to probe into the nature of the araburu kami one quickly discovers that an "evil" serpent deity is not an independent being at all, but is merely one manifestation of some larger deity. Why, one might ask, has the deity assumed a reptilian form and begun to engage in such anti-social behavior? The answer very often seems to be that it has allowed its energy (and a kami is nothing if not energy) to run unchecked, most probably because mortals have not conducted the proper rites to keep it under control. The implication of this is that such behavior is in reality the result of unchecked passions, and that performing the proper rituals for the deity is tantamount to keeping our own emotions under control.

The evil represented by the raging deity is not one that will simply go away, for emotions themselves are necessary to our lives. If they were to disappear our potential for good would also disappear, but they are always potentially dangerous. Hence recognition of the araburu kami enables mortals to acknowledge their own potential problems and to keep them under the proper restraints.

If we deal with these forces properly they can even become the source of life, wealth or happiness, and it seems to me that when Ōkuni-nushi steals the secrets of life from Susa-no-wo (who himself must have stolen them, although that is an entirely different matter) he has symbolically undergone a process of self-discipline which has resulted in a mastery over his own emotions and, by extension, over his environment. At the same time, the fact that he is helped by a woman in this validates certain human emotions, such as sexual love.

I make two assumptions which are necessary to any interpretation such as this. The first is that Japanese myth grows initially out of very concrete historical reality; the second is that as those realities change myth is reinterpreted, and is eventually understood on a more symbolic level.

Thus Japanese tales of raging deities encompass several stages, none of which represents the "ultimate" meaning of the stories. We can recognize at least the following levels of understanding in these tales, as I have shown in this article:

1. Land or water disputes between two tribes, with one tribe

- coming to dominate the other.
2. Nature mythology, centering around natural death and re-birth.
 3. Religious practices, centering around the sexual relationships between the shamaness and her immortal lover.
 4. Rites of passage, focusing on symbolic death and rebirth of the initiate.
 5. Probing into the nature of good and evil, with a recognition that these two forces come from within the self, and from a single source.

Doubtless there are other levels on which the tales can be understood in addition to these. In any case it must always be remembered that no meaning is ultimate and that contradictions will always exist in any interpretation of any given tale. Myths have much to say to us about both the past and the present, which is what makes them such a fascinating object of study.

Appendix 1. Stories dealing with Violent Deities

I. *Araburu Kami Proper*

1. *Harima* 播磨 *Fudoki* (293).⁸⁶ A violent deity from Izumo kills half the travelers in the Mt. Kamio region. When people complain to the Emperor, he has a shrine built and *sake* offered to the deity at a festival; this successfully pacifies the deity.
2. *Harima Fudoki* (295). Essentially the same incident as above (1), with a few changes in details. There is no *sake* or festival, and a male and female deity are added. Pacification is achieved by a Chinese immigrant.
3. *Tsu* 摂津 *Fudoki itsubun* 逸女⁸⁷ (428). A deity called Amatsuwani 天津鰐 becomes an eagle, killing half the travelers through an area. He is finally pacified by water.
4. *Chikugo* 筑後 *Fudoki itsubun* (509). A deity on a mountain between Chikugo and Chikuzen 筑前 kills half the travelers through the region. It is pacified by a *miko* 巫女 (shamaness).
5. *Ise* 伊勢 *Fudoki itsubun* (437). A deity kills half the travelers through Mt. Asaka, keeping another deity from her shrine. It is pacified through the efforts of the Emperor.
6. *Hizen* 肥前 *Fudoki* (383-385). A deity kills half the travelers through a mountainous area. It is said to be "upstream," and is probably a water deity. The deity says it wants a certain Kazeko 珂是古 as a shrine attendant. When the shrine is constructed in the appropriate place—following instructions from the deity, who has revealed herself as a female—the violent activity ceases.
7. *Hizen Fudoki* (393). A deity kills half the travelers through an area and instructs two women (apparently shamanesses) to have clay horses and clay people presented to it. Immediately following this account is a tale from the same area (indicated as having taken place "upstream") of another deity, Yota-hime 世田姫, the wife of a sea deity who swims to her against the tide every year in order to mate. If

people catch and eat the fish which accompany this *wani* on his amorous quest, they are said to die. It is likely that these two stories concern the same deity—that is, that the *wani*, or even Yota-hime, is the raging deity who demands clay horses and clay people—but this is by no means clear in the text.

8. *Harima Fudoki* (327). A deity kills half the travelers through an area, which is thus named *shinino* 死野 (death field); the Emperor decides this is an unlucky name and has it changed to *ikuno* 生野 (life field). There is no account of the pacification process, but the name change ordered by the Emperor suggests that he had a hand in pacifying this deity.

9. *Harima Fudoki* (263). A deity stops half the boats through an area and in order to avoid this people pull their boats around the place, which is hence named *Funahiki hara* 舟引原 (boat pulling plain).

10. *Hizen Fudoki* (389). A deity kills “many” (the number is not specified) travelers and is pacified by the Emperor. The method is not specified.

II. Deities' Revenge

11. *Kojiki* (201–204; Philippi: 219–223). The son of Emperor Suinin is unable to speak even after growing old. Several ways are tried to coax words from him to no avail, then the deity Ōmono-nushi reveals that this is his work, and that he will withdraw the curse if his shrine is improved. The child is able to speak after he has worshiped the deity; he makes a brief liaison with a woman named Hinaga-hime 肥長比売, but flees when he finds she is really a large snake.

12. *Hitachi 常陸 Fudoki* (84–86). A heavenly deity, Tachihayawo no mikoto 立速男命, resides in a pine tree. Someone defecates while facing him and he sends curses on the people. He is finally moved to a higher place, both to remove him from the pollution of the people and to keep him somewhere where he will be harmless.

13. *Harima Fudoki* (303). The statue of a deity is said to have tears in its eyes because one of them was stolen by a Korean. The deity caused a wind to blow up and sank the Korean's boat, killing all aboard. Now people must refrain from mentioning Koreans or blindness at that particular bay.

14. *Owari 尾張 Fudoki itsubun* (442). The child of an emperor has reached the age of seven and is unable to speak. His mother learns in a dream that this is because of a curse by a deity angry at not being worshiped. A shrine is constructed and the child is able to speak.

15. *Harima Fudoki* (272–273). The deity Ōnamuchi has a son who does nothing but cry and perform evil deeds. Ōnamuchi takes him out in a boat and attempts to abandon him. The son grows angry and sinks the boat with a wind.

16. *Izumo 出雲 Fudoki* (223). The son of Ōnamochi (probably the same deity as in story 15), even though he is old enough to have long whiskers, will not stop crying and acting like a baby, and is also unable to speak. His father puts him in a boat and takes him from place to place until he finally speaks, naming a certain place.

17. *Izumo Fudoki* (239). The son of a deity becomes angry at his father and attempts to drown him with the tide.

III. Mortals' Revenge

18. *Izumo Fudoki* (104). The daughter of Katari no omi Imaro 語臣猪麻呂 is killed by a *wani*. He is angry and vows revenge; more than one hundred *wani* then come forward to present him with one of their number whom they have taken prisoner. He kills it and finds part of his daughter's leg inside.

19. *Hitachi Fudoki* (54). A man named Yawazu no Matachi 箭括麻多智 is

bothered by a deity called Yatsu no kami 夜刀神, a snake deity, when he tries to clear fields. He is angry and dons war gear, then goes to the foot of the mountain, where he draws a line with his staff, proclaiming that the land below the line is for agriculture and that above it for the deity. He pledges to become a priest and tend to the deity's needs if he is left alone, and if not he says he will kill the deity. His descendants, we are told, continue to maintain the shrine.

20. *Hitachi Fudoki itsubun* (455-456). A man and his wife (or sister) are making fields and she is killed by a thunder deity. The man vows revenge and is taken to the deity by a pheasant. He frightens the deity and extracts from him a promise to cease all such activities for the next hundred years.

21. *Harima Fudoki* (347). A farmer is angered when the grass he has cut to cover his seedlings is used by the followers of the Sumiyoshi deity (a water deity) to make the deity a seat. The farmer complains and the deity proclaims that henceforth in that village such grass covers will not be necessary.

22. *Bungo 豊後 Fudoki* (373). A farmer's seedlings are eaten by a deer. He captures the deer and is about to kill it but the deer begs for mercy and promises to never again do such a thing or to allow its descendants to.

23. *Owari Fudoki itsubun* (444). Emperor Keikō hears a lot of strange laughter and dispatches a retainer to investigate. The retainer sees a group of monsters with cow faces, and fearlessly kills them all.

IV. *Sexual Violence*

24. *Nihon shoki* (246-247). Aston 158-159; also cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* XXXI. 34). The daughter of an Emperor is courted by a handsome young man and finally lets him seduce her because her father determines that he must be a deity. When she asks to see his true form he says to look in her comb box the next day. She sees a small snake and is afraid. The deity is angered and she dies from a wound in the genitals made by a chopstick (in *Nihon shoki* this is self-inflicted, but in *Konjaku* it is the work of the deity).

25. *Hitachi Fudoki* (78-80). A woman named Nuka-bime and her brother Nuka-biko live together and she is visited by a strange man each night. After yielding once she gives birth to a snake which grows quickly, filling a progressively larger set of bowls each day. When the containers have been exhausted she tells him she cannot keep him and he should go to his father; he weeps and finally kills Nuka-biko, his uncle. His mother hits him with a bowl as he is in the process of ascending to heaven. This destroys his power to ascend, so he stays in the mountains, where he is worshiped by Nuka-bime's descendants.

26. *Hizen Fudoki* (396). A woman named Otohi-himeko is visited by someone who resembles her husband five days after her husband's departure for a military campaign. She is suspicious and follows her lover, whom she finds near a swamp in the form of a creature with a snake head and a human body. This creature recites a poem about his one night with Otohi-himeko and pulls her into the swamp and kills her.

27. *Izumo Fudoki* (231). A *wani* is in love with a woman named Tama-hime. He climbs up a mountain after her, but she blocks the river with a boulder and escapes. This explains the place name, Shitahi-yama 恋山 (yearning mountain).

V. *Competition between Deities*

28. *Harima Fudoki* (335). A male deity, Sanuki-hiko 讚伎日子, courts a female deity, Hikamitome 冰上刀売, who seems to represent the area of Tanba. She refuses

but he continues to press his suit. This angers her, and she raises an army and defeats him.

29. *Harima Fudoki* (309). A brother and sister (or husband and wife) pair of deities fight over land. She captures a deer and sprinkles its blood over her rice plants which grow overnight. He recognizes the powers of her magic and concedes the area to her.

30. *Harima Fudoki* (307). A brother and sister fight over water. The sister is the victor, blocking the water once with her comb, then diverting it when he restores the flow.

31. *Harima Fudoki* (321). The shamaness Asahi-hime 安師比売 refuses the deity Iwa no Ōkami's 伊和大神 advances. He is angry and diverts the water of the river.

32. *Harima Fudoki* (325–327). The deities Ōnamuchi and Sukuna-hikona no Mikoto have a competition in which Ōnamuchi resolves to go without defecating and Sukuna-hikona to see how far he can carry a heavy load of clay on his back. There is no clear victor, each breaking down at about the same distance.

Appendix 2 Stories of *shinkon*

33. The Mt. Miwa story. This takes place in the reign of Emperor Sujin (*Kojiki*: 184–187; Philippi: 201–204). A series of epidemics which have been troubling the people are discovered to be the work of the deity Ōmono-nushi, who says he will put an end to them if a certain Ohotataneko 意富多多泥古 is appointed chief priest of his shrine. This Ohotataneko is the son of the deity and the story of his birth is the Mt. Miwa story. The deity had visited a woman at night in the form of a handsome young man, and when she became pregnant and wished to know the identity of her lover she stuck a needle to the hem of his garment and followed the thread to the shrine of the deity. The thread went through the keyhole, thus indicating that the deity used the form of a snake.

34. The red-painted arrow tale (*Kojiki*: 162–163; Philippi: 178–179). This story recounts the birth of the chief empress of Emperor Jinmu, Hototataraisusuki-hime-no Mikoto 富登多多良伊須須岐比売命, also known as Hime Tataraisukeyori-hime 比売多多良伊須氣余理比売. Her mother was Seyadatara-hime 勢夜陀多良比売, a woman well known for her beauty. The deity Ōmono-nushi transformed himself into a red arrow and floated down the ditch where she was defecating. He struck her in the genitals and she was surprised, and took the arrow home with her. It promptly became a handsome young man, and they became husband and wife. The child born of this union was Hototataraisusuki-hime.

35. The Kamo Shrine origin tale. *Yamashiro* 山城 *Fudoki itsubun* (414–415). A maiden—the daughter of an attendant of Emperor Jinmu—is playing alongside a river when a red arrow floats by. She takes it home and keeps it in her bedroom, soon becoming pregnant and giving birth to a boy. Her father gathers all the deities together and asks the boy to present *sake* to his father. He promptly ascends to heaven, where he becomes a thunder deity.

NOTES

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search and to write the above study. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Professor Matsumae Takeshi of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, who went to the trouble of reading a draft of this essay and gave me many valuable suggestions. Any errors of fact or interpretation contained in the essay are, of course, my own responsibility. All translations are my own work.

1. The arguments concerning the origin and ultimate meaning of the word *kami* are complex and conflicting. In this paper I will translate it as "deity," with the following observations: a *kami* has no absolute power and it was not the only supernatural being recognized and worshiped by the ancient Japanese. A *kami* is "superior" to human beings but not necessarily "better" than them. There are male, female and bisexual *kami*, and I have settled on the unspecified pronoun "it" except when the sex of the *kami* is made clear. For further discussion of the meaning of the word see Blacker 1975: 34-50 and Matsumura 1958: 287-308.

2. I use the word "myth" with some trepidation here. By and large I intend it to mean accounts of Japanese history which are basically before Buddhism, that is, those which are contained in *Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki* and the various *fudoki* (local historical accounts), all of which were probably written from oral tradition in the early eighth century. *Kami* always figure in the accounts I label as "myth," but are not necessarily the only actors. There are also myths (or stories about deities) extant which can be traced no further than the medieval period (generally to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), but I have avoided these because it is not possible to attest to their antiquity. The term "raging deity" (*araburu kami*) is, as we shall see, primarily a specific name applied to one type of violent deity, that which killed travelers in the mountains (see Appendix 1, group 1), but it is also used as a generic term for violent or unruly deities and it is in this usage that I employ it here.

3. *Nihon Ryōki* was compiled about 823 and is the first extant Buddhist *setsuwa* collection. For stories of sexual violence see in particular II. 8, III. 2, II. 33 and II. 41. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* was compiled about 1100 and is the largest *setsuwa* collection extant. See in particular XXXI. 34, XXIV. 9 and XXIX. 39.

4. The stories of sexual violence were particularly favored by the Buddhist preachers of the Heian period. I have dealt more extensively with this problem in Kelsey 1981.

5. The mountains are, of course, the homes of the dead, and there are many tales concerning the dangers of traveling in them. These tales are doubtless related to stories of *araburu kami*, though the exact nature of any such relationship remains to be clarified.

6. Izumo no Mikage no Ōkami 出雲御蔭大神, who is otherwise unidentified, although in the second version of this tale it would appear to be the same deity as "Hime-gami." As it stands, the name could either be a proper noun or could simply indicate "one of the powerful deities of Izumo." The addition of the word *mikage* in this version and not below leads me to believe that here it is intended as a proper noun and below as a general term.

7. A place where sacred wine for worshiping the deity could be brewed. It is worth noting that the deity Susa-no-wo no Mikoto, in his conflict with the eight-headed serpent (*yamata no orochi* 八岐大蛇) also used sacred wine to win over the deity.

8. What I have rendered as "contest" is an *oshi-ai* 押し合い, or a sort of pushing match; these were performed at festivals to divine the success or failure of the year's crop.

9. Probably the same deity as in the previous version (see note 6), but here the

name is simply Izumo no Ōkami 出雲大神.

10. Probably a plow. It is unclear as to how it was used in worship, though the plow is common throughout the world in similar circumstances, and usually has a phallic significance. One is tempted to speculate that the deity is female, and that the *sahi* was intended for ritual intercourse. The word *sahi* can also mean "sword."

11. Probably without meaning, referring only to a "male deity."

12. As above, probably referring only to a "female deity."

13. See, for example, *Kojiki*: 202; this tale is summarized in Appendix 1 as story 11.

14. Professor Matsumae was kind enough to point out to me that there are many festivals still conducted in Japan today in which a "male" and a "female" side are pitted against one another in some kind of contest, and that in these contests it is usually expected that the female side will be victorious.

15. Sukuna-hikona no Mikoto is depicted in both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* accounts of his exploits as being very small. Small size is consistently equated with great strength in Japanese folktales, and it is hence interesting that he chooses the task in this story which requires great strength.

16. See, for example, *Kojiki*: 217, 160 or 210. In the latter we learn that Yamato Takeru no Mikoto "pacified the raging deities 荒ぶる神 and the unsubjected peoples 伏はぬ人 in the West."

17. See *Kojiki*: 163, note 7. This argument is at least in part philological: the name of the child contains the element *tatara* 多多良, which in modern Japanese means the same as *fuigo* 鞴 (bellows or forge), and hence the association is made between this story and iron workers. Many of the stories having to do with thunder deities and mortal women are linked by modern scholars to metal working, which was undoubtedly a critical occupation in ancient Japan. In *Harima Fudoki*, incidentally, there is a sword which coils like a snake to let people know it is holy (*Fudoki*: 313-315); there are several other tales in which swords and snakes are linked.

18. This motif is present in story 14 and also in story 34, although the woman does not die in this case, but becomes pregnant instead. It is also a factor in the death of Izanami no Mikoto (who dies while giving birth to the fire deity, who burns her genitals), and in the story of the contest between Susa-no-wo no Mikoto and his sister Amaterasu no Ōmikami. In this tale, Amaterasu's weaving maiden is killed when a violent act of Susa-no-wo causes her to strike her genitals against her loom.

19. The peak in question is Hirefuri no Mine 褶振峯, or "scarf-waving peak." Part of the point of the tale is to explain how it happened to get this particular name.

20. See Philippi 1969: 407-408 for a discussion of scarves and their magical powers. Interestingly, in at least one account of the use of a scarf in *Kojiki* (97) it is used as a charm to ward off snakes, rather than to call them.

21. There is a stimulating discussion of this point in Matsumae 1970; he concludes that the practice probably did not exist (cf. Matsumae 1970: 170). Matsumura, on the other hand, seems to think that it did exist (cf. Matsumura 1955: 213-215).

22. In the *Nihon shoki* account of this incident this deity is identified as the great deity of Sumiyoshi.

23. There is no previous mention that the empress is pregnant, and the deity supplies all the information about the child. Although Amaterasu is normally regarded as female, she "fathers" children in a procreation contest with her brother, Susa-no-wo no Mikoto, and it does not seem outrageous to suspect that the child is her doing. It is thought by many historians that there was a break in the imperial

line at this juncture, and that the child (Emperor Ōjin) was indeed not the son of Emperor Chuai, and that this fact was glossed over by making it appear as though the child was fathered by a deity.

24. Takeshiuchi inquires, for example, "My exalted deity, is the child in this deity's womb a male or a female?" (*Kojiki*: 236), and is clearly referring to the Empress as a "deity."

25. Hoori no Mikoto is said to have had the "luck of the mountains" (*yama sachi* 山幸), while his brother Hoderi no Mikoto 火照命 had the "luck of the seas" (*umi sachi* 海幸). The two decide to try exchanging their "luck's" but Hoori loses his brother's fishhook in the venture, and Hoderi will not accept a substitute, thus making it necessary for Hoori to travel to the palace of the sea deity.

26. A *wani* 和瀼. The debate over the meaning of this word continues to rage, but it is clear that it was a sea creature of some type. It has been interpreted as a crocodile, a shark and a dragon. See Philippi 1969: 406-407.

27. Although identified as a deity herself, it seems probable that she was a shamaness (*Fudoki*: 231, note 11).

28. While there is some inconsistency in descriptions of thunder deities, they frequently assume the form of serpents. It must be said, incidentally, that the *wani*'s ties with the world of the dead are not so consistent as those of the serpent.

29. The following stories listed in Appendix 1 have some association with water: 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, and 31.

30. For a good discussion of the concepts of the other world in Japanese cosmology see Blacker 1975: 69-85. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my debt to Blacker's work, which is considerable.

31. There are, it should be pointed out, contemporary festivals in which the snake is worshiped in its snake form and considered to be a benevolent deity. However, it is impossible to trace these very far back in history, and we have no idea if such festivals were current in, say, the seventh century or earlier. For descriptions of some of these festivals, see Daniels 1959.

32. In *Nihon shoki*, however, one account of his birth says he has been assigned from the beginning to rule the nether world.

33. The first of these tasks, incidentally, is that Ōkuni-nushi spend the night in a snake pit. Suseri-hime gives him a scarf to protect him from the snakes. It will be remembered that Susa-no-wo himself had earlier to overcome a giant snake, and in one version of the story of Yamato Takeru no Mikoto, that hero is killed by a snake. This conflict with the serpent is a substantial part of Japanese myth and needs more comparative research.

34. The last of these was used to summon deities, and seems to have been a part of the imperial regalia.

35. He mistakes a white boar (in *Nihon shoki* a giant serpent) for the deity's messenger, when the boar is in point of fact the deity himself. He is then killed by this deity (*Kojiki*: 223-224; Philippi 1969: 246).

36. All references to stories taken from the *fudoki* use *Fudoki* (see References). Any translations in this essay are my own work and all errors or misunderstandings of the texts are my own responsibility.

37. *Itsubun* refers to tales which do not appear in any text directly labelled *fudoki*, but which have been taken from later works, where they were represented as having come from some now-lost *fudoki* text. Their sources are listed in *Fudoki*, in the notes to the individual stories.

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