The *Sandaikō* Debate

The Issue of Orthodoxy in Late Tokugawa Nativism

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This article singles out a turning point in the development of the Nativist School (kokugaku), which was initiated by the so-called Sandaikō debate. A detailed analysis of this debate indicates that the issue at stake was actually the methodological approach of "evidential learning" in the tradition of kokugaku's pre-eminent figure Motoori Norinaga. This quasi-scientific approach was challenged by Hirata Atsutane who spearheaded the reintroduction of a metaphysical, speculative exegesis of the Japanese classical texts. Combining ideas about the origin of the universe, the land of Japan, and the destiny of the individual soul, he opened the way for kokugaku to develop into a politico-religious ideology. Atsutane's religious form of kokugaku was to play a prominent role in subsequent Shinto developments.

THROUGHOUT THE FINAL DECADES of the eighteenth century, the Tokugawa nativist Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801) lectured on a host of ancient Japanese texts at his home in Matsusaka 松坂. He attracted a substantial following because of the methodological approach that he used—a careful and exact examination of the classical language of antiquity. In fact, his teachings became so popular that, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, leading *monjin* 門人 ("disciples") had established academies devoted to his scholarship in most of the major urban centers in Japan. These were in addition to Norinaga's own academy, the Suzunoya 鈴屋. The philological image associated with Tokugawa nativism or Kokugaku 国学 is the handiwork of Norinaga, as well as his predecessor Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769). The intimate relationship between Kokugaku and Shinto, however, should be associated with another nativist, Hirata Atsu-

tane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843). Due to his interests in spirits and the after-life, he generated tensions among the students of the academy founded by Norinaga. Nativists at the time could see that his interests in these areas threatened to undermine their "faith" in philology.

Atsutane attempted to justify philologically his emphasis on eschatology by resurrecting an older debate surrounding a text called the *Sandaikō* 三大考 (Reflections on the Cosmic Triad), which was attached to Norinaga's magnum opus, the *Kojiki-den* 古事記伝 (Transmissions of the *Kojiki*). The *Sandaikō* was a treatise on the *kamiyo* 神代 (Age of the Gods) chapters of the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Record of Ancient Matters), composed by one of Norinaga's disciples, Hattori Nakatsune 服部中庸 (1756–1824). Atsutane supported many of the central assertions of the *Sandaikō*, and after Motoori Ōhira 本居大平 (1756–1833), Norinaga's adopted son and legal successor, wrote a critique of it, he drafted a defense of Nakatsune. His support for Nakatsune instigated an even larger debate among students of the Suzunoya academy (OZAWA 1943, p. 468), prompting many scholars in Japan to call it the "*Sandaikō* debate." This debate drove a social and intellectual wedge into the ranks of Norinaga's disciples, which had grown in size with the addition of affiliated academies. The hostility and antagonism of the two opposing sides grew steadily and culminated around 1830. The energy that fueled these animosities was the result of an emerging struggle to define the intellectual foundations of the Norinaga school.[1] Thus, the debate over the merits of Nakatsune's interpretation of the creation myths of the *Kojiki* grew into a contestation over the clarification of the school's scholarly mission. It forced the school's leadership, for the first time, to clearly formulate its intellectual orthodoxy.

The Philological Analysis of Kamiyo: Norinaga and Nakatsune

To combat what he called Confucian intellectual artifice (*sakashira* 才智), Norinaga emphasized the completely objective analysis of classical texts. To accomplish this task, he relied on the precision of the *kōshōgaku* 考証学 (evidential learning[2]) (MIKI 1964, p. 138) developed

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[1] I use the term "Norinaga school" to refer to the whole of Norinaga's disciples following his death. Most of the these disciples were associated with nativist academies throughout Japan, and many of these had formal affiliations with one another.

[2] My translation comes from ELMAN 1984. Kōshōgaku was primarily a philological methodology during the Tokugawa period. Both Confucian and nativist scholars used it in their research on classical texts. By using textual evidence to support their conclusions, rather than abstract theories or secret teachings, practitioners of evidential learning believed that their interpretations were closer to the truth of antiquity than those of their more traditional-minded rivals.

by his Confucian predecessors Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705) and Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728), as well as his nativist mentor Mabuchi.[3] He believed that he could analyze the *Kojiki* in a completely transparent and unbiased way. As Nakatsune observed in 1823,

> According to the august words of Ushi-no-mikoto 大人命 [= Norinaga], one does not add artifice to the transmissions of antiquity, and exceed them by even one matter or one character.
>
> (*MSHNN*, p. 458)

Norinaga used *kōshōgaku* as an instrument to produce the kind of objectivity that had eluded Confucian interpreters of Japanese myth.

Due to his puristic methodological approach, Norinaga found himself incapable of commenting on issues that he felt defied documentation (MIKI 1964, p. 141), such as cosmology. He was, however, certain of at least one account described in the *kamiyo* chapters, that is, the depiction of the afterlife. In his view, the authors of the *Kojiki* used the word *yomi* 黄泉 to refer to the realm of the hereafter. Norinaga asserted that *yomi* was a foul and polluted place where the souls of the dead reside (*TK*, pp. 52–53). Although he offered no interpretation of its location with respect to the world of the living, he did argue that Yoru-no-osu-kuni 夜之食国 and Yomi-no-kuni 黄泉国 (realm of *yomi*) were identical (OMOTE 1993, p. 71). As we will see, this became an important issue in the subsequent debate.

Norinaga's apparent reluctance to comment any further about cosmological topics in the *kamiyo* chapters came out of a desire to avoid the sort of speculation that he associated with Confucian scholarship. This led many of his Suzunoya students to conclude that further research on the cosmology of the *Kojiki* was unnecessary. In addition, Norinaga was more interested in exploring the origins of the kami 神, rather than astronomy (NISHIKAWA 1972, p. 197). His disciple, Nakatsune, however, thought differently. While adhering to the same methodology that Norinaga had employed in the *Kojiki-den*, he attempted to create a more comprehensive vision of cosmic origins using the *Kojiki* (OMOTE 1993, p. 73). In 1791 he presented the results of his efforts in the *Sandaikō*; with Norinaga's approval, it was published as part of the *Kojiki-den* in 1792. Norinaga even drafted an epilogue to the *Sandaikō* in which he stated:

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[3] Methodologically speaking, Norinaga acknowledged the influence of Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701), arguing that Keichū discovered the fundamental methodology of Ancient Learning (Kogaku) before Jinsai. His adopted son, Ōhira, later gave Jinsai's son, Tōgai 東涯 (1670–1736), credit for his influence on Norinaga's scholarship. See MARUYAMA 1974, p. 144, n. 17.

> Hattori Nakatsune's thoughts on heaven and earth [have
> expressed] matters [that had] not yet been conceived of by
> the ancient peoples of the Western countries, who were [other-
> wise] enlightened and learned. [Nakatsune's thoughts] are
> novel and mysterious.   (*SDK*, p. 270)

Nakatsune himself explained in 1823 that Norinaga had adopted his
text so that, "later generations could connect their hearts to the Way
of antiquity" (*MSHNN*, p. 459). His interpretations of passages that
Norinaga had considered too opaque to understand became the ori-
gin of all of the controversy that followed. In fact, even Norinaga's epi-
logue may indicate a less than enthusiastic support for Nakatsune's
work on Norinaga's part:

> [Knowledge of] Takama-no-hara 高間原 and Yoru-no-osu-kuni
> is very uncertain. This is lamentable. However, the transmis-
> sions of antiquity are more and more dignified [by Nakatsune],
> as is Japan.   (*SDK*, p. 270)

Nakatsune enrolled as a student in Norinaga's Suzunoya in 1785. He
was particularly interested in the use of classical texts as sources of
native cosmological knowledge. He viewed the Confucian and Bud-
dhist cosmologies that circulated in Japan in his time as overly complex
and fatally flawed. Thus, Nakatsune insisted that the close analysis of
the *Kojiki* represented an opportunity to forge a new cosmological
scheme based on Japanese antiquity in response to these competing
foreign theories (OMOTE 1996, p. 8). As he says,

> [Japan has had] the correct and true interpretations of the ori-
> gins of heaven and earth. Without adding any artifice, [these
> interpretations] have been transmitted from the Age of the
> Gods [to the present] just as they are. These are not lies; they
> are the truth.   (*SDK*, p. 255)

Of all the interpretations put forward by Nakatsune in the *Sandaikō*,
those that received the most attention dealt with the nature of the sun
and of the moon. Nakatsune accepts Norinaga's assertion that Takama-
no-hara was synonymous with *ame* 天 (heaven), but he takes this for-
mulation a step further, arguing that both *ame* and Takama-no-hara
signified the sun itself (*SDK*, p. 262). Since the *Kojiki* states that the
sun goddess, Amaterasu 天照, lives in Takama-no-hara, he concludes
that Amaterasu must reside on or within the sun. Norinaga claimed
that *ame* was a "place" and not an ethical idea (OMOTE 1993, p. 72),
even though the classics commonly rendered it with the ideograph for
"heaven"; it was, therefore, a *kuni* 国 (realm). Nakatsune, however,
insists that because one cannot see such a *kuni* in the sky, it must have

a special, archaic meaning. Thus, if Takama-no-hara was the sun, and Amaterasu lives in the heavenly *kuni* of Takama-no-hara, then Amaterasu must reside on the *inside* of the sun.

In Nakatsune's view, the authors of the *Kojiki* indicated this special meaning with the concepts of *uwabe no kuni* 外表方国 and *uchibe no kuni* 内裏方国:

> Takama-no-hara is [the sun]. Just as it says in the *Kojiki-den*, even in heaven there is a realm, like our own land (*kunitsuchi* 国土). Thus, the realms on the earth are all [called] earthly *uwabe;* those in heaven are [called] *uchibe.*... The nature (*shitsu* 質) of heaven is not that of our land; it is pure and diffuse.
>
> (*SDK*, p. 263)

Nakatsune observes that the term *uwabe* was written with the ideograph for "surface," so that *uwabe no kuni* refers to the surface of the earth, that is, the various countries of the world. On the other hand, the phrase *uchibe no kuni* signifies an "interior realm," since it contains the ideograph for "inside." Thus, it must describe Amaterasu's relationship to the sun (OMOTE 1996, p. 10).

Another *uchibe no kuni* described in the *Kojiki* was Yoru-no-osu-kuni, and the god of the moon, Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto 月読命, was one of its denizens. Consequently, the moon god must also reside on the *inside* of the moon, which Nakatsune identifies with Yoru-no-osu-kuni, an interpretation that renders Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto's relationship to the moon analogous with Amaterasu's to the sun. Like Norinaga, he identifies Yoru-no-osu-kuni with Yomi-no-kuni, as well as with Ne-no-kuni 根国 (*SDK*, p. 263). In due consequence, he determines that Yomi-no-kuni was another name for the moon. In this way, he equates the moon with the hereafter; at the same time, he defines Yomi's precise location, something that his mentor Norinaga avoided (MIKI 1964, p. 140). In a philological move reminiscent of Norinaga, he supports his claim:

> Yomi-no-kuni is the Realm of the Night, so that Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto [i.e., the moon god] is its god. The name Yomi is the same as [the] *yomi* [of the moon god's name].   (*SDK*, p. 263)

Nakatsune further develops his argument: Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto, the moon god, is another name for Susano-o-no-mikoto 須佐之男命, who, in his view, is also the god of the seas. He observes that Susano-o-no-mikoto is linked to Yomi in the *Kojiki* through his mother, Izanami 伊奘冉, who is said to have journeyed there after her earthly demise.

> [I]zanami resides in Yomi-no-kuni... As for the reason that Ne-no-kuni is Yoru-no-osu-kuni, in the ninth fascicle of [our]

teacher's *Kojiki-den*, it says that there are numerous indications
that perhaps Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto and Susano-o-no-mikoto
are one.... The fact that the tides follow the movements of the
moon [indicates that] Susano-o-no-mikoto is the august name
of Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto, and that the two [*kami*] must be one.

(*SDK*, p. 264)

This conclusion serves as additional proof that Yomi and the moon are
the same. Not only does he answer a question that Norinaga deemed
inconclusive, but he also formulates what became the central concept
upon which Atsutane later based his *Tama no mihashira* 霊能真柱
(August Pillar of the Soul), but more on that later.

Continuing his discussion of the sun and moon, Nakatsune recon-
structs the creation of the solar system using evidence culled from the
Kojiki. Like Norinaga before him, he argues that *ōzora* 大空 (the "sky,"
i.e., the universe) and *ame* were two distinct phenomena. The latter
rose to its present position in the cosmos because of its light and airy
composition. The earth and Yomi (the moon) were formed from
much heavier matter, literally sinking to their present positions
beneath heaven. From these supposed facts, he deduces that heaven
(the sun), the earth, and the moon (the "cosmic triad" of the text's
title) formed from the same primordial body. In addition, he con-
cludes that the distinctions among these three spheres originated in
their respective material compositions.

In a series of schematic diagrams, Nakatsune describes how these
spheres formed through a process of division (*SDK*, pp. 258–59). As
the light material rose to form heaven, the heavier elements that com-
prised the moon sank, leaving the stuff that became the earth in the
middle. Heaven, as the sun, formed "above" the earth, while Yomi, as
the moon, formed "beneath" it. Before the separation of the sun and
moon from the earth, both spheres were connected to the earth by
threads of primordial material. For Nakatsune, the connection
between the earth and heaven was the Heavenly Floating Bridge (*ame
no ukihashi* 天浮橋) from which Izanagi 伊奘諾 and Izanami had formed
the islands of Japan. On the other side of the earth, there was a simi-
lar bridge to Yomi. After the imperial august grandchild (Sumemima
皇御孫, that is, Ninigi-no-mikoto 邇邇藝命) had descended to the earth,
the Heavenly Floating Bridge disappeared, and the link between the
earth and Yomi also disappeared. Knowing that the earth was to be
ruled by Amaterasu's descendant, Ōkuninushi-no-kami 大国主神 left
the earth and disappeared into Yomi. Staying within Norinaga's inter-
pretation of Yomi as the underworld, he describes how the soul finds
its way to it in the absence of this earthly link. While corpses remained

on the earthly plane, their souls traveled to Yomi because they were no longer confined to the body. This was the nature of the soul for both Norinaga and Nakatsune:

> Most people die and go to Yomi, [while] their bodies remain on the earth. It is the soul that journeys [to Yomi]; even though there is no longer a path that connects it to the earth, it [still manages to] journey [to Yomi]. However, the traveling of the corporeal form (*utsushimi* 現身), without a connecting path [to Yomi], is impossible.   (*SDK*, p. 266)

Nakatsune's Critics: Suzuki Akira and Motoori Ōhira

Despite Nakatsune's efforts to be faithful to his mentor's teachings, he was harshly criticized for his analysis of *kamiyo*, especially in the years following Norinaga's death. The first critiques came from two prominent students of the Suzunoya: Suzuki Akira 鈴木 朗 (1764–1837) and Motoori Ōhira. Their critiques focused on his theories concerning the sun and the moon, as well as on his ideas about the formation of heaven, Yomi, and the earth; the former they saw as a potential threat to Amaterasu's divinity, and the latter threatened to undermine the sacrality of Takama-no-hara. The most crucial aspect of their criticisms, however, was their insistence that Nakatsune's work was based on flawed philology. As a side effect, the critical examination of the *Sandaikō* by Akira and Ōhira produced the first authoritative statement of the scholarly mission of the Norinaga school.

After Norinaga's death in 1801, Akira and Ōhira were two of the senior members of the school, along with Nakatsune. Nakatsune's *Sandaikō* had long annoyed Akira, prompting him to author a refutation that he never published. This critique circulated among members of the Norinaga school under the title *Sandaikō Suzuki Akira setsu* 三大考鈴木朗説 (Suzuki Akira's Interpretation of the *Sandaikō*). In fact, Akira approached Ōhira at some point during the decade following Norinaga's death and asked him if he was interested in writing a critique of Nakatsune's work as well. Ōhira agreed, composing the *Sandaikō-ben* 三大考弁 (Discourse on the *Sandaikō*) in 1811 largely with Akira's help (UEMATSU 1982, p. 58).[4] Ōhira's *Sandaikō-ben* was the first important spark in what became a large conflagration against Nakatsune's cosmology. At this early stage in the debate, Ōhira, as Norinaga's

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[4] The extant version of the text dates most likely to 1813 or 1814, so that Ōhira's *Sandaikō-ben* predates it. The latter, however, acknowledges Akira's ideas in his work; thus, Akira formulated his ideas several years before penning his refutation.

adopted heir, spearheaded the assault, although his inspiration came mostly from Akira.

Two themes dominated the critical assessments of Nakatsune's work authored by Akira and Ōhira. First, they asserted that his use of Western knowledge, most notably in the form of Rangaku 蘭学 (Dutch learning), was inappropriate to the task of studying Japanese antiquity. Indeed, Nakatsune never disguised his admiration for the Europeans:

> Recently, the peoples of countries in the far west have mastered navigation and sailed around [the world]. They have surveyed the world and [learned that] it is round. They have been able to determine that the world floats in the sky, and [to determine] the movements of the sun and moon. [By contrast,] the ancient Chinese explanations are full of errors. These were determined with principle (*ri* 理), and are difficult to accept.... [Ancient Japanese explanations], when viewed with [the European ones] do not depart from [the latter] even a little. Thus, one can realize the truth of the ancient transmissions. (*SDK*, pp. 255–56)

Part of the reason for Norinaga's attacks on Buddhism and Confucianism, Akira and Ōhira argued, was that they were inadequate for the study of Japanese texts, precisely because they were foreign; replacing Buddhism and Confucianism with Rangaku contradicted this axiom of Norinaga's scholarship. Moreover, as precise as Nakatsune believed Rangaku to be, it was still a poor methodology. It was this latter comment about his methodology that provoked the major points made by Akira and Ōhira in their attempt to dismantle the philological basis for the *Sandaikō*.

Although Akira and Ōhira agreed in the refutation of the *Sandaikō*, their arguments actually differed in some ways. Akira's first priority in his critique is to refute Nakatsune's interpretation of *uchibe no kuni*. For Akira, these signified realms not of this earth. Thus, Takama-no-hara was a *kuni*, even if it was not visible to earth-bound observers. He argues that Nakatsune's formulation that equated Takama-no-hara with the sun (because Nakatsune could not observe it as a *kuni*) was also incorrect: "[T]here is not even one [reference] to the sun as *ame*" (*SSAS*, no pagination). Ōhira agreed with Akira that Takama-no-hara was a *kuni* and both scholars invoked Norinaga's *Kojiki-den* in support of their arguments. Ōhira, however, *agreed* with Nakatsune on the issue of the sun. Although he disagreed with Nakatsune's claim about Takama-no-hara's ontological status, he thought that the idea that Takama-no-hara was the sun was plausible: "In the *Sandaikō*, it says that the sun is *ame*. To say that Takama-no-hara is the sun truly hits the

mark" (*Sandaikō-ben*, no pagination). Ohira's measured support for Nakatsune on this issue may have disappointed Akira (Uematsu 1982, p. 59), since he later lobbied one of Ōhira's students, Uematsu Shigetake 植松茂岳 (1793–1876), to compose a commentary that was more consistent with his own.[5]

Ōhira and Akira agreed on one major point: Nakatsune's interpretation of Yomi was absurd. Following his own interpretation of Takama-no-hara, Akira asserts that Yoru-no-osu-kuni was the *kuni* within the moon, but that it was not the same *kuni* as Yomi-no-kuni (*SSAS*). Yomi-no-kuni, he claims, was not an *amatsukuni* 天国 (heavenly realm) like Takama-no-hara and Yoru-no-osu-kuni. Thus, this confusion led to Nakatsune's incorrect formulations; his problem was philological. As Akira states:

> [The interpretation that] Yoru-no-osu-kuni is Yomi-no-kuni [relies on] *evidence that does not exist.* Looking at these views, [I see] no beauty…. *These are all speculations and new theories.* Such is the case with [the interpretation of] Yomi-no-kuni.
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> (*SSAS*, italics added)

Instead, Yomi was *inside* the earth. As the destination of the soul, it had to be inside the earth, he reasons. Next, Akira attacks Nakatsune's views of the moon god:

> [T]suki-yomi-no-mikoto, like the great goddess of the sun, is a beautiful, great, and august god. [However, to associate him with] the foul Yomi-no-kuni, is this reverential? … *These explanations are all speculations and are not at all [consistent with] the ancient meanings.*   (*SSAS*, italics added)

If Yoru-no-osu-kuni and Yomi-no-kuni were separate realms, then Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto could *not* be the same *kami* as Susano-o (*SSAS*). Hence, the moon could not possibly be the same as Yomi. This final assertion undermined Nakatsune's philological methodology. Nakatsune never challenged Norinaga's view that Yomi was the destination of the soul; he merely made a pronouncement on its precise cosmological location. Ironically, Nakatsune and Akira agreed on *what* Yomi was, but they radically diverged over the issue of *where* it was. The difference between the two interpretations, therefore, is a methodological one. Akira, as well as Nakatsune's other detractors, relies on the use of philology to produce literal interpretations of the classics. Nakatsune, while claiming the mantle of that same philological

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[5] The result was Shigetake's *Tensetsu-ben* 天説弁, which he composed in 1816. It is reproduced in Uematsu 1982.

method, based his views more on logic in the production of metaphorical interpretations. Yomi presented him with a difficult problem. If he were to interpret the ancient creation myths from an astronomical perspective, Yomi would have to become a heavenly body. Since there were no substantive details about the moon in the myths, he deduced that Yomi and the moon must be related. He logically reached this conclusion before substantiating it with textual proof. Thus, for Akira, Nakatsune's interpretation of Yomi was based on a flawed interpretation and use of evidence.[6]

Although Ōhira wrote his *Sandaikō-ben* with Akira's support, he withholds a harsh attack on Nakatsune's philology. In Ōhira's view, the mission of the Norinaga school was to furnish Shinto with the kind of precise scholarship that both Buddhism and Confucianism possessed (*KGY*, p. 25). The kind of philological precision necessary to accomplish this goal is an extremely difficult task, he cautions. Classical texts lack the kind of detail, in many instances, to make interpretations with sufficient certainty. The nativist, therefore, must confine himself to those interpretations that he can support with textual evidence (*SDKB*, no pagination). For Ōhira, Nakatsune's error was in crossing the line into evidential uncertainty; Nakatsune employed speculation, using his *karagokoro* 漢意 (Chinese mind) (*KGY*, p. 2). Ōhira admires Nakatsune's enthusiasm in the *Sandaikō*, but it was that same zeal that ultimately led the latter's scholarship astray. Twelve years later, Nakatsune admitted that his interpretations were not founded on hard evidence, but he still maintained that they had validity:

> The *Sandaikō* interprets the sun as heaven, the moon as Yomi, Susano-o identical with Tsuku-yomi, and so on. Even though none of these are stated in the ancient transmissions, they are all taken from them.   (*MSHNN*, p. 460)

Ōhira, however, does not acknowledge this claim and sees Nakatsune's theories as being based on Rangaku:

> [S]uzuki Jōsuke Akira's view of the *Sandaikō* is that [Nakatsune] seems to have carefully studied knowledge of heaven and earth, the moon, the sun, and the stars from foreign countries [like] Holland. [Akira] despises this, and [Nakatsune's views] are not consistent with the ancient meanings. They are not consistent with the Japanese heart. These matters were argued

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[6] Nakatsune continued to revise his views after the publication of the *Sandaikō*. Shortly before his death, he wrote the *Shichidaikō* 七大考, in which he argued that Yomi was the planet Mars. See NISHIKAWA 1972, pp. 206–7.

by [Akira] and are exactly the same [views] as Ōhira's.

(*SDKB*)

Ōhira again accuses Nakatsune of borrowing ideas from Rangaku in the latter's attempt to analyze the *kamiyo* chapters of the *Kojiki*; in so doing, Nakatsune made false interpretations, contradicting the careful scholarship of Norinaga. Ōhira views the *Sandaikō*'s inclusion in the *Kojiki-den* as Norinaga's approval of Nakatsune's ingenuity—*not* his conclusions. As the custodian of Norinaga's intellectual legacy (UCHINO 1965, p. 13), he had to insist on the strict adherence to Norinaga's rigorous standards. Nakatsune's hybrid combination of Rangaku and *kōshōgaku* was not *kōshōgaku* at all for Ōhira.

Atsutane Joins the Debate

Following Ōhira's critique of Nakatsune in 1811, Atsutane composed the *Tama no mihashira*, publishing it the following year. His text functioned as both a defense of Nakatsune's scholarship, and as a platform from which to reorient the Norinaga school away from pure philology toward eschatology.[7] His strategy, however, was to avoid a direct attack on philology and textualism in abstract theoretical terms. Throughout the text, he claims to adhere to strict philological principles. Thus, he recognized the methodological significance of philology for the Norinaga school. In an effort, nevertheless, to emphasize knowledge of the afterlife, he attempted a silent coup, denying the kind of intellectual usurpation that he was, in fact, trying to accomplish. This strategy is certainly related to the fact that this was still an early stage in his career. Nakatsune's text and the controversy that it generated created the ideal conditions for him to make an intellectual impact in the Norinaga school for the first time (UCHINO 1966, p. 14).

Atsutane agrees with the general conclusions of the *Sandaikō*, erecting his own argument on Nakatsune's intellectual foundation (MIKI 1964, p. 154). Heaven (*ame*) was another name for the sun and it was the home of Amaterasu, the sun goddess (*TNM*, p. 72). As far as Nakatsune's opponents were concerned, this assertion was less controversial than others he makes in the text; Ōhira even agreed with it in

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[7] When Atsutane wrote his defense of Nakatsune in 1812, he had never met him. After reading Atsutane's work, Nakatsune was understandably grateful. Most of the participants in the debate over Nakatsune's work sided with Ōhira and Akira. During the early 1820s, Atsutane planned a trip to the Kansai. One of his goals was to meet Nakatsune, which he finally did in 1824. During Atsutane's stay in Kyoto, Nakatsune arranged for him to meet other nativists and sent word to Wakayama informing Ōhira of Atsutane's desire to meet with him as well. See MCNALLY 2001, pp. 24–27.

the *Sandaikō-ben*, despite Akira's opposition. Like Nakatsune before him, Atsutane claims that prior to the formation of heaven, Yomi, and the earth, the universe (*ōzora*) was filled with a massive sphere of undifferentiated matter (*TNM*, p. 18). Out of this sphere, the lighter elements rose and formed heaven (the sun), while the heavier elements congealed into the earth and Yomi (the moon). Akira and Ōhira already agreed that this view was untenable. For Ōhira, even if heaven was another term for the sun, it did *not* form from the same material as the earth and the polluted realm of Yomi. Nevertheless, Atsutane makes this assertion because it is necessary for his ultimate objective: a justification for the investigation of spirits and the afterlife.

Finally, Atsutane concurs with Nakatsune that Yoru-no-osu-kuni was the moon and that its god, Tsuku-yomi-no-mikoto, was also Susano-o (*TNM*, p. 63). Despite this agreement, the identification of Yomi with the moon held a special significance for Atsutane, and it ultimately distinguished his scholarship from Nakatsune's. Atsutane does not simply mimic the views of his senior colleague in the *Tama no mihashira*.

In addition to the text's substantial length, it diverges from Nakatsune's text in several respects. For example, Nakatsune contended that the essence of the sun was like fire, while that of the moon was like water. Atsutane reverses this: water was more like the elemental composition of the sun, and fire that of the moon. While Nakatsune argued that fire was linked to the sun because it was similar to sunlight, and the moon was like water because of its tidal influences, Atsutane argues that fire was ritually polluted so that it could not be associated with the sun. Water in its most elemental form, clear and clean, was a more appropriate representation of the solar element (*TNM*, p. 26). As another example, Nakatsune viewed the Heavenly Floating Bridge as the link between heaven and earth before their physical separation upon the descent from Takama-no-hara of the imperial august grandchild. Atsutane does not deny that it was the physical means by which the imperial august grandchild descended to the earth. However, through a convoluted series of semi-philological arguments, he proves that the word *hashi* 橋 did not mean "bridge" in antiquity; its meaning was actually closer to "boat." He observes that, "The floating bridge is like a present-day boat. After boarding, one [eventually] arrives at the desired place. So, it is also called the *iwafune* 磐船" (*TNM*, p. 86). Consequently, the imperial august grandchild descended to the earth in a boat-like vehicle, and not via a bridge; after all, he reasons, if the imperial august grandchild came to earth across a bridge, then why did other *kami* not follow him? "[I]f something like Nakatsune's interpretation [were true]," he argues, "then after the descent of the imperial

august grandchild from heaven, other *kami* would have ascended and descended" (*TNM*, p. 88).

Atsutane also parts company with Nakatsune in important ways that made his own interpretations distinctive. These differences inhered in his redefinition of Yomi. As stated earlier, Nakatsune claimed that the authors of the *Kojiki* left clues pertaining to the precise location of Yomi, which he argued was the moon, and Atsutane supports this formulation in the *Tama no mihashira*. Norinaga had viewed Yomi as the polluted realm of the dead; thus, Nakatsune saw the moon as the destination of the soul. Atsutane, however, claims that Norinaga's view of Yomi, and by extension Nakatsune's as well, were predicated on a fundamental misunderstanding of the *Kojiki* (*TNM*, p. 98). Norinaga assumed, he argues, that because Izanami journeyed to Yomi she must have died, so that the compilers of the *Kojiki* used the ideograph for "spring" 泉 to signify Yomi (rendered in ideographs as "yellow springs") as the hereafter. Consequently, he concludes that the ancients used a concept taken from Chinese mythology. As the dank, forbidding resting place of the soul, Norinaga derived his view of Yomi from the traditional Chinese view of the afterlife. Atsutane cites many reasons that negate Yomi as the Yellow Springs, but the general theme for him is that the idea of the Yellow Springs was not a native one. Hence, the idea itself *had to be* false; the ancients knew this, he reasons, but had no alternative other than to use it as a metaphor to describe the afterlife in the *Kojiki*. Yomi and the moon were the same for him, but neither of them was the resting place of the soul. Not even Norinaga, the author of the interpretation that Atsutane challenges, is doomed to an eternity of suffering in Yomi:

> [Concerning the idea that] all souls journey to that realm [Yomi], there are no transmissions or examples [of it]. Even the old man, [our] teacher [Norinaga], made this mistake and said that the destination of the soul (*tama no yukue* 魂の往方) was that place. However, not even the august soul of the venerable old man journeyed to Yomi-no-kuni.   (*TNM*, pp. 118–19)

Having disproved the interpretation of Yomi offered by Norinaga and Nakatsune, Atsutane was free to abandon the *Kojiki* and search the other Japanese classics for evidence to establish his own interpretations (Ozawa 1943, p. 469). He uses the *Sandaikō* as an occasion to introduce his ideas on the nature of the afterlife and its ties to the world of the living. The justifications for his views, however, are philologically flimsy. He claims, for example, that it is possible for the soul to ascend to heaven, citing a brief reference in the *Nihongi* 日本紀 (Chronicles of Japan) to the phrase *ame ni noboru* 上天 (*TNM*, p. 105).

He admits that this evidence is thin and he refrains from basing his entire view of the afterlife on it, but it is illustrative of the kind of interpretations that he advances.[8]

Nakatsune grounded his interpretation of Yomi in the formation of the universe; he explained the creation myths of the *Kojiki* in an astronomical way. In the *Sandaikō* he focused on the origins of the sun, the earth, and the moon. Shortly before his death, he penned a new manuscript called the *Shichidaikō,* which expanded his astronomical interpretation of *kamiyo* to include the major planets of the solar system as well. Without the same interests in astronomy, Atsutane is not a prisoner of Nakatsune's framework. His concept of the hereafter, which he called the *yūmei* 幽冥 or *kami no mikado* 幽府 (spirit realm), is his alternative to Yomi as the afterlife: "To say that the souls of people journey to Yomi is a mistake" (*TNM*, p. 97). In his view, the afterlife is not a particular place; it is, instead, a spiritual realm. Unlike the Yellow Springs, it is not a particularly inhospitable realm either, and is not brimming with pollution and filth. In addition, this spiritual realm coexists with that of the living:

> This spirit realm exists in this manifest realm and is not in a separate location. It is within the manifest realm simultaneously and is invisible; from the manifest world, it cannot be seen.
>
> (*TNM*, p. 109)

Attempts to precisely locate it are futile, he observes, because it is everywhere. Citing the story of Ōkuninushi-no-kami, he argues that the soul does not journey to the spiritual realm after death. Instead, it disappears into this realm, much like Ōkuninushi-no-kami did after the descent to earth of the imperial august grandchild. Gravesites serve as portals into the spirit world (*TNM*, p. 73). Once the soul enters this realm, it protects its living descendants on earth. In this way, he believes that his own recently deceased wife was guiding him through the composition of the *Tama no mihashira* (*TNM*, p. 121).

During the Age of the Gods, Ōkuninushi-no-kami passed into the spirit realm so as not to challenge the rule of "all under heaven" by

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[8] Richard Devine, echoing a view made by Muraoka Tsunetsugu 村岡典嗣 (see MURAOKA 1930–1939) decades earlier, claims that all of Atsutane's views of the afterlife were derived from Christianity. Citing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuit texts from China, Devine shows how Atsutane borrowed ideas from Christian texts that illegally circulated in Japan during Atsutane's lifetime (DEVINE 1981, p. 42). Although the Christian influence on his thought is unmistakable, the extent to which his thought is either derivative or original is debatable. Miki Shōtarō, for example, did not view the centrality of the kami, Ame-no-minaka-nushi 天御中主, in Atsutane's thought as evidence of Christian influence, since this deity had a relatively small role in Atsutane's cosmology (MIKI 1964, p. 161). In either case, his views of the afterlife would not have been possible without his reinterpretation of Yomi.

Amaterasu's descendants. In this world of the dead, Okuninushi-no-kami ruled over their souls in a manner similar to that of the emperor's reign in the world of the living:

> When pondering the differences between the manifest affairs (*arawanigoto* 顕明事) and the divine affairs (*kamigoto* 幽冥事), ordinary people live in the manifest world, and this is called the manifest affairs. The deaths of the august subjects of the emperor… [result in a] return to the so-called spirit realm [and is known as the divine affairs]. The great *kami* who presides over the spirit realm is Ōkuni-no-kami… [and the spirits of the deceased] receive his august decrees.   (*TNM*, p. 77)

In Norinaga's view, Susano-o was banished to Yomi because of his evil conduct on earth. As we have seen, Nakatsune, equating the moon with Yomi, concluded that Susano-o was the moon god who reigned over Yomi. For Atsutane, however, Yomi is not the afterlife, so its overlord cannot be Susano-o. On the contrary, the afterlife is administered by a more benign figure in Ōkuninushi-no-kami who presides over the deceased souls of loved ones. Moreover, the spatial coexistence of the spirit realm and that of the living binds the two together. Thus, his notion of the afterlife was fundamentally more optimistic than the views of previous nativists who were wedded to the view of Yomi as the destination of the soul.

Although Atsutane admits that any *direct* contact between the two realms is difficult and rare, it is possible to affect one realm from the other. He discusses the idea that deceased loved ones watch over their living descendants in the afterlife (*TNM*, p. 112). It is possible for activity in this lifetime to affect deceased loved ones in the hereafter; through profound religious devotion combined with pious *conduct*, one could potentially influence affairs in the hereafter. In this way, he emphasizes religious *practice* (like ancestor worship) in the observance of Shinto (*KSSR*, p. 45).[9] Unlike Ōhira, who saw the mission of the Suzunoya to introduce scholasticism into Shinto, he wants to generate a religious devotion among Shinto followers.

Atsutane's religious vision was his specific contribution to the discourse of the Norinaga school, and the occasion of the *Sandaikō* debate was the ideal opportunity for him to voice his ideas. He used Nakatsune's scholarship (UCHINO 1966, p. 16) and maneuvered it into a discussion on the nature of the soul, the afterlife, and religious faith itself. He completed a transition in his own scholarship from philology to

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[9] He made this link between faith and practice in the *Kishinshinron* 鬼神新論 of 1820, a revised version of *Shinkishinron* 新鬼神論, composed in 1805.

eschatology via Nakatsune's cosmological views. Nakatsune's influence on his ideas was actually quite minimal, even though Nakatsune himself asserted that he and Atsutane were in complete agreement (*MSHNN*, pp. 461–62). By demonstrating that Yomi and the moon were the same, Nakatsune opened the door for Atsutane to assert his views of the afterlife. None of these ideas regarding the afterlife, however, came from Nakatsune's thought. Atsutane's use of Nakatsune's ideas, and his invocation of Nakatsune's name, were part of a larger *sociopolitical* strategy geared toward the advancement of his position vis-à-vis his nativist contemporaries in the Norinaga school.[10]

Atsutane claimed that the raison d'être of nativism (which he called Kogaku 古学 or "ancient learning") was to understand the destination of the soul (*tama no yukue*):

> [T]he idea of supporting pillars is also the basis of the Japanese spirit for those who practice ancient learning.... By adhering to [the idea of] the destination of the soul, they establish these pillars.... Seeking to fortify and solidify their Japanese spirit, they begin with knowledge of the destination of the soul.
> (*TNM*, p. 12–13)[11]

To achieve this goal, he re-defined the concept of Yomi. Consequently, Nakatsune was the intermediary figure in the transition from Norinaga's philology to Atsutane's eschatology. Written prior to the publication of the *Tama no mihashira*, the critiques written by Ōhira and Akira guaranteed that his claims would not go unchallenged. Atsutane's opponents realized that he claimed a place for himself at the intellectual center of the Norinaga school, so they responded to these claims in an attempt to reassert their dominance. His text transformed the *Sandaikō* debate into a struggle for orthodoxy, and his opponents later energetically reclaimed the legitimacy of proper *kōshōgaku*.

Conclusion

The Suzunoya was a prominent nativist academy by 1801. Shortly

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[10] This strategy is social in the sense that Atsutane's practice, such as entering the debate with Ōhira and Akira, can only be understood in the context of a community of scholars. It is also political because of the inherently competitive nature of these social interactions. For this interpretation, I have relied on the sociological theories of BOURDIEU 1993 and COLLINS 1998. See also a more thorough explanation of my use of these theories in MCNALLY 2001.

[11] In the opening lines of the *Tama no mihashira*, Atsutane explains that all institutions, like buildings, need pillars to support them. His use of the term "pillar," therefore, is close to the common metaphor of "foundation" in English. The term for "pillar," *hashira*, is also a counter for souls, so that Atsutane was able to draw on the dual meanings of the term to support his contention that knowledge of the hereafter was central to nativism.

before his death, Norinaga had several hundred students and dozens of close disciples in his school. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Norinaga school expanded, adding academies in Waka-yama, Kyoto, and Osaka, in addition to Matsusaka and the Ibukiya 伊吹屋, the nativist academy established by Atsutane in Edo. As a distinct social space or field, these various academies were united in their commitment to the philological analysis of classical Japanese texts, especially histories and poetry. Norinaga had a great interest in both, and his work on the *Kojiki* and Japanese aesthetics are well documented. The principle that defines all of Norinaga's scholastic interests, however, lies in his scholarly methodology: the precise scholarship of *kōshōgaku*. Norinaga and his students used *kōshōgaku* in their approach to classical texts, and it was this combination of intellectual content with methodological form that defined the Suzunoya as a nativist academy.

After Norinaga's death, the various nativist academies of the Norinaga school emphasized poetry over other classical texts. Even within this emphasis on poetry, however, some scholars like Motoori Haruniwa 本居春庭 (1763–1828) preferred to study language rather than the aesthetics favored by his adopted brother Ōhira and others. In any case, they recognized one another as fellow disciples of Norinaga based not on the particular object of inquiry, but on the *methodology* that was used. For this reason, the attacks launched by Akira, Ōhira, and later others, focused on the quality of Nakatsune's and Atsutane's *kōshō-gaku*. They attempted to dismiss both scholars from the field because their interpretations undermined their purist philological agenda.

Atsutane, on the other hand, emphasized the philological validity of his scholarship in order to maintain his status as a scholar of the Norinaga school. Philology, however, was not the intellectual means by which he could propel himself to prominence; he did not have the scholastic background that many of his Norinaga school contemporaries did (UCHINO 1965, p. 5). Atsutane could not compete with his colleagues in the production of new interpretations of classical literature with a rigorous philological methodology. Faced with obscurity, he turned to eschatology; not from the perspective of institutional religion, but from the standpoint of evidential scholarship. His interests in spirits and the afterlife maintained the ties between Kokugaku and Shinto that were established by his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century forebears.

The debate surrounding the orthodox interpretation of *kamiyo* initiated a struggle within the Norinaga school over the essence of its scholarship. The critique of methodological lapses by Ōhira and others forced Atsutane into a defense of his own scholarship. His efforts to emphasize the evidential merits of his work failed to convince the

leading scholars of the Norinaga school. Eventually, Atsutane lost the debate, which forced him to maneuver onto more hospitable intellectual terrain. His inability to defend his scholarship as philological ultimately resulted in the claims of leadership and succession to nativism itself that he later asserted. The sociologist Randall Collins, in his work on global intellectual history, notes that all scholars must make a choice: either to be a "loyal follower of some successful position," or to "go all out, [and] try to be king of the mountain" (COLLINS 1998, p. 40). Atsutane's attempt to pursue philological research represents Collins's former observation; his only remaining recourse, therefore, was the latter. The only other potential option was for Atsutane to leave the Norinaga school entirely, which he seemed never to seriously consider. If he wanted to remain a nativist with a formal institutional identity, namely, as a member of the Norinaga school, such claims of leadership were his only option once the leading members of the school had impugned his philological credentials.

Over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, the dynamism of the *Sandaikō* debate gradually subsided. At the same time, the popularity of Atsutane's teachings grew, as did the number of his disciples. His notion of a world of spirits was fundamentally more optimistic than the orthodox Kokugaku view of Yomi (KOYASU 1995, pp. 59–61), and attracted followers to his academy, especially after his death. The debate highlighted the profound differences between Atsutane's scholarship and that of Norinaga, via the latter's nineteenth-century disciples; the gulf between the two sides remained well into the early years of the Meiji period. The origin of this rupture in nativist discourse was the controversy generated by Hattori Nakatsune's most important scholarly work. Ironically, the rivalry that developed between the "Motoori faction" and the "Hirata faction" during the *bakumatsu* and Meiji periods did not begin as a direct confrontation between the two. It was, instead, mediated by the work of a scholar who was not only a disciple of Norinaga, but also a personal friend of Atsutane.

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