

The Myth of the Descent of the Heavenly Grandson

By

TAKESHI MATSUMAE
Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan

INTRODUCTION*

My subject is the historical and folkloristic approaches possible to the analysis of the Japanese "Myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandson, Hononinigi." Different versions of this myth are included in sources such as *Kojiki* (A.D. 712), *Nihon shoki* (or *Nihongi*, 720), the *norito*, or prayers included in *Engi Shiki* ("Proceedings of the Engi era," 921-923), and various other old documents; the *Kojiki* tale, however, is the most developed and embellished of these.

This myth has been regarded, along with the story of the "Heavenly rock grotto" (see Matsumae 1980) as the most important kernel of Japanese mythology, a story which relates the origin of the Imperial family, the Yamato court and the Japanese state. The *Kojiki* version of the story contains such elements as the "three sacred regalia" (the mirror, sword and jewels which were the symbols of the court's authority), a five-division system which mirrored the structure of the ancient state, the divine decree of the heavenly deities, the attendance of many subordinate deities, and the like; all of these were of great importance to the Yamato court.

In brief, the story relates Prince Hononinigi's descent from Takamanohara ("the land of the heavenly plains") onto the top of a mountain in the manner of a powerful king. He is in possession of the three regalia, is accompanied by the five clan chieftains and other deities, and he is acting on the command of the two sovereigns of Takamanohara, Takami-musubi no Kami and Amaterasu no Ōmikami, who sit at the Heavenly rock throne.

Many approaches have been used in the analysis of this myth in

recent years. Some scholars have pointed out the similarity between this story and the descent myths of the ancient Korean kingdoms, and have held that the Japanese tale has been influenced by the Korean stories. Oka and Matsumura, in particular, have conjectured from Egami's "horserider" theory that Puyo invaders came to the Japanese archipelago bringing the worship of Takami-musubi, the descent myths, the sacred regalia and the like with them. According to this theory, then, Amaterasu was originally not the ancestral deity of the Imperial family, but was instead a solar and fertility goddess of the aboriginal people from the south. The Puyo invaders conquered these peoples and founded their own government, which later became the Yamato court. The two stocks became mixed after a long period of rule, and the coexistence of two sovereigns in the *Kojiki* myth was thus held to stem from the amalgamation of two different myths (see Oka 1958, and Matsumura 1954-58).

Other scholars, such as Orikuchi and Takeda, have held a considerably different interpretation of the story, however, maintaining that the myth is linked to the ancient rice harvest festival, the "Niiname Matsuri" 新嘗祭. I agree with this theory because there is a good deal of evidence that can be used to support it. I will summarize some of this evidence below, and deal with it in more detail in a later section.

Nihon shoki contains seven versions of this story. One of the versions says nothing of Amaterasu, the five clan chieftains, the three regalia, or the like, but instead refers to the descent of Hononinigi in the form of a baby wrapped in a coverlet. In this version, the infant hero is sent from heaven by the decree of Takami-musubi acting alone. It seems that Hononinigi was originally a rice spirit in the harvest festival and that Takami-musubi was a guardian deity of fertility and of agrarian products.

Takami-musubi was worshiped in the Imperial court from very old times, especially on the occasion of the harvest festival. Amaterasu, meanwhile, had no sanctuary in the court until the Heian Period. In the earliest stage of development, the ancestors of the Imperial family held their harvest festival and recited a simple form of the myth referring to their guardian god and to the rice spirit. This festival later developed into a grand national occasion, and at the same time grew more and more complicated. In my opinion the myth was greatly influenced and colored by Korean immigrants and not invaders. The appearance of Amaterasu in the story is due to the adoption of her worship as a new guardian deity in the Yamato court of the sixth or seventh century A.D.

Let us examine some of the theories of the origin and meaning of this myth in greater detail.

KOREAN INFLUENCE IN THE MYTH

According to *Kojiki*,¹ after Ōnamuchi and his relatives in Izumo surrendered the land to the heavenly deities, Amaterasu and Takami-musubi (the two sovereigns of Takamanohara) ordered Prince Ame-no-Oshihomimi (the son of Amaterasu) to descend from heaven to rule the earth. Oshihomimi then made various preparations for his departure. In the interim, however, the child Amatsu-hidaka Hiko Hononinigi was born to Oshihomimi and his wife Yorozuhata-toyoakitsuhime (a daughter of Takami-musubi). The two sovereigns thus sent this prince to the land instead of his father Oshihomimi.

After Amaterasu and Takami-musubi had bestowed the three regalia (the Yata-mirror, the sword Kusanagi and the five myriad Magatama beads) on Hononinigi, he descended to the earth, accompanied by the five clan heads.² These chieftains were Ame no Koyane (ancestor of the Nakatomi clan), Futodama (ancestor of the Imibe clan), Ame no Uzume (Sarume clan), Ishikoridome (ancestor of the mirror-making corporations), and Tamanoya (ancestor of the jewel-making corporations). Ame no Oshihi (ancestor of the Ōtomo clan) and Amatsukume (ancestor of the Kume clan) went ahead of the party to guard the Heavenly Grandson.³

According to one version in *Nihon shoki*, at the departure of the party Amaterasu commanded:

This country is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure for ever (*Nihon shoki* I: 148; Aston 1972: 77).

When Prince Hononinigi was about to descend, he found a god standing at the Heavenly crossroads. This god's face and buttocks shone brightly, his nose was long, and his mirror-like eyeballs had a glow like that of a ground cherry. All of the subordinate deities were afraid of him. Then Prince Hononinigi commanded the goddess Ame no Uzume to confront him and make inquiries. This goddess exposed her breasts and genitals and confronted him with a smile, much as she had done earlier in the Heavenly rock grotto myth. He answered her inquiry with the words, "My name is Sarudabiko. I am waiting for the coming of the Heavenly Grandson." The Prince commanded Sarudabiko to guide the party, and they descended from heaven to the summit of Kushifuru Peak on Mt. Takachiho in Himuka (Kyushu; see *Nihon shoki* I: 148).

This myth belongs to the "descent to the mountain" type which is common in Northern Asia. In an old Korean story in the *Samguk*

Yusa 三国遺事 (written by Kim Ilyon, 1206–1289), it is said that the Heavenly King once sent his son, Prince Hwan-ung, to Korea to govern it. He descended from heaven to the earth, bearing three Heavenly Seals and accompanied by three thousand followers. The Heavenly Prince arrived under the sacred sandalwood tree on the Tebeg Mountains, and from there ascended to the throne. He there established a sacred city. The son of this prince was the famous hero Tangun, the first human king of Korea (see Ha and Mintz 1972: 32).

The *Samguk Yusa* also tells the story that once in Kalla Kingdom a long purple rope with a large golden box covered with red cloth attached to its end was lowered from heaven onto the summit of Kuji Peak before the eyes of many people. When the people opened the box they found six golden eggs inside it. These were round and shone like the sun. The next morning, the people found that the six eggs had hatched and six boys of noble and handsome appearance had been born. These boys grew rapidly and in ten days their height reached nine feet. The first-born was enthroned as the first king of one of the kingdoms of Kalla and was called King Kim Suro; the other five were made rulers of five neighboring Kallas (Ha and Mintz 1972: 158–159).

In the Korean kingdom of Silla, also, there are similar stories about the founder of the dynasty. Pak Hyokkose, the first king of Silla, was said to have descended from heaven to a mountain in the form of an egg (Ha and Mintz 1972: 49–50).

These stories share the same basic motif of the son of a heavenly deity descending from heaven to a mountain top. Oka Masao conjectures that such myths were the product of North Asian races who believed that the heavenly deities descended through a tree or a mountain to participate in their festivals (Oka 1958: 46–47).

In ancient Japan, also, there is another myth similar to that of the descent of the Heavenly grandchild. According to *Nihon shoki*, Nigihayahi, the ancestral deity of the Monobe clan, descended from heaven to the earth in a Heavenly rock boat (see Aston 1972: 127–128 and 135). According to another document, *Kujihongi* 旧事本紀, he descended to the summit of Ikaruga Peak in Kawachi, accompanied by many heavenly deities. His vessel also included several crewmen, such as oarsmen, a captain and a helmsman. Nigihayahi was guarded by the five warrior chiefs of the Heavenly Monobe clan and their twenty-five army corps.⁴

Oka conjectures that this division into fives originated from the Korean kingdoms of Koguryo and Paekche.⁵ Mishina (1972: 353–354) has also held that the name “Kushifuru” in the Japanese story was derived from the Korean name “Kuji-muri” (Kuji Peak) in Kalla.

According to one version of *Nihon shoki*, this peak was also called "Sohori Peak," or "Sopori Peak." The word "Sopori" seems to have been derived from the Korean word "sopor," "sopuli" or "seoul," which means the capital of the country (Mishina 1972: 231-237; Oka 1958: 45-48).

From these elements it seems likely that the myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandson must have been made under the influence of North Asian cultures.

Oka has also accepted Egami's "horse riders" theory, which was presented in the 1948 symposium that the 1952 book is based on. Egami conjectured that the ancestors of the Yamato nobility belonged to a Tungus tribe. He further speculated that this people had a five-division system, professional corporations of artisans, royal institutions, and a patriarchal system. According to Oka's hypothesis, these people made an expedition or an invasion from South Korea to the Japanese islands in the third or fourth century A.D. There they conquered a matriarchal tribe of rice cultivators who originated in Southeast Asia. The myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild and the worship of the deity Takami-musubi were from the traditions of this northern race (Oka 1952: 44-48).

According to *Kojiki* and several versions in *Nihon shoki*, Amaterasu and Takami-musubi gave commands as the two sovereigns of Takamano-hara on the occasion of the descent of the Heavenly Grandson as well as at the time of Emperor Jinmu's expedition. In recent years many scholars have discussed the origin of this duality. Oka interpreted it as the result of the amalgamation of the worship of Takami-musubi (of northern origin) and that of Amaterasu (of southern origin).

My own research, however, indicates that the Korean elements in this story should be considered as coming from a later age, rather than as the original components of the story. According to the main version of the tale in *Nihon shoki*, Hononinigi descended alone, carrying no regalia and accompanied by no subordinates. Furthermore, he was still a new born baby at the time, covered with a *madoko ofusuma* 真床覆衾 (coverlet) on a "true couch" (Aston 1972: 70). In this story Takami-musubi is depicted as the sole commander, and Amaterasu does not appear. This would seem to be the most primitive form of the story.

Amaterasu, the regalia, a divine command and the chieftains of the five clans appear as important components of this myth only in *Kojiki* and a few versions of *Nihon shoki*. The appearance of these elements in the myth is the result of the development of the narrative at a later time. Furthermore, the five clan deities were not, as Oka

held, related to Takami-musubi, but rather to Amaterasu. Whenever Amaterasu appears these five deities also appear, as her attendants. The same can be said about the three regalia.

According to *Kojiki*, many other deities besides the five clan chieftains descended with the Heavenly Grandchild and his party. These include Ame no Tachikarao, Tokoyo no Omoikane, Toyouke, and others. These deities are absent from the more primitive versions of *Nihon shoki*. It is strange that these deities also appear in the Heavenly rock grotto myth, and are worshiped at the shrine for Amaterasu in Ise. The addition of these elements to the story must have been a later development.

THE MYTH AND THE *DAIJŌ-SAI*

The name "Hononinigi" means "abundant rice ears." Hononinigi seems to have originally been a rice spirit. According to a fragment of the *Hyūga fudoki*, when he descended to Futagami Peak in the Tachihō district in Hyūga, he found that the earth was very dark both night and day. Following the advice of two local residents, Okuwa and Wokuwa, he strewed unhulled rice in all directions, which caused the sky to clear and light to appear.⁶ Stories such as this make it evident that Hononinigi was associated with rice rituals, although he was also considered the child of the sun.

Prince Hononinigi's father was Prince Oshihomimi, whose name means "Big Rice Ears." He too was a rice spirit. According to one version of the story found in *Nihon shoki*, Amaterasu bestowed on him the ears of the sacred rice fields (Aston 1972: 83). This story represents the concept that the harvest festival originated in the world of the heavens. It was brought to earth when the young Prince Oshihomimi brought the rice ears.

In one *Nihon shoki* account, Hononinigi descends in the form of a baby wrapped in a coverlet. Coverlets such as that were used for the seclusion ritual in ancient Japan. On the occasion of the *Daijō-sai* 大嘗祭,⁷ the *Niiname-sai* 新嘗祭,⁸ and *Jinkon-jiki* 神今食⁹ in the Imperial court, a coverlet was spread on piled mats in the middle of the ceremonial hall. This coverlet was called an *ofusuma* 覆衾, and was believed to be the seat of the deity (Holtom 1972: 96-97; Ellwood 1973: 69-71; Matsumae 1970: 221-233). The medieval record *Kōshidai-shō* suggests that this coverlet was used by the Emperor himself (Kawade 1953: 84-89). Orikuchi Shinobu has speculated that this covering was used to represent the rebirth or resurrection of the Emperor (Orikuchi 1955: 195-196). The common people as well as the Emperor used such a coverlet during the ancient *Niiname-sai*. I would conjecture that this

ritual symbolized the death and resurrection of the deity of fertility, or perhaps his awakening after a long period of hibernation (Matsumae 1970: 226-228; Ellwood 1973: 70-71).

Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* record that the young deity Ame Wakahiko died of a "returning arrow" while lying on a couch during the Niiname-sai (Aston 1972: 67). This couch must have been used in the ceremony for a ritual of death and resurrection.¹⁰ According to this myth, Wakahiko's friend Ajisuki Takahikone visited the mortuary house where the body had been temporarily deposited. When Ame Wakahiko's family mistook Ajisuki for the resuscitated Wakahiko, Ajisuki was enraged and cut down the building with his sword. The original form of this story probably recounted how Ame Wakahiko died and was resuscitated in the mortuary house (Matsumae 1970: 277-282).

The myth of the descent of Prince Hononinigi, then, is basically the ritual myth used during the Daijō-sai. The name "Takachiho," where Hononinigi descended, means "mature, abundant rice ears." The word "takachiho" in this story originally did not refer to a place at all, but was a common noun. That is to say, the motif of the descent of the young prince represents the descent of the deity of rice to the ears of the sacred rice fields in the Niiname festival.

The figure of Prince Hononinigi in the form of a baby calls to mind a similar belief in Southeast Asia. Among the tribes of the Malay Peninsula, a *parwang* (priestess) goes with her female assistants to the rice field during the harvest festival. From the mother sheaf left there they reap seven ears of rice as the sacred emblem of the rice baby or rice spirit. The priestess then puts these ears into a bamboo "soul box" along with some chicken eggs and some pebbles. This rice baby is carried to a house in the rice fields. In the house it is received by the wife and placed on a seat, which is regarded as its bed. The wife must for three days observe the same taboos she observed in her own child birth. After these three days have passed, the harvest festival feast is celebrated (Skeat 1900: 244; Mishina 1973: 425, 431).

Many shrines in Japan still hold a dance drama called *Ta asobi* 田遊, or "Rice field play," on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. This is a dance which mimes the yearly processes involved in the production of rice. They often feature a man in a woman's costume and mask who mimes the birth of a child. After this it is fairly common for another woman to appear carrying a baby on her back. This baby is often represented as a phallic-shaped doll, as a big ladle, or as rice seeds in a sack or basket. The baby is called *yonabo* 米穂, or "Rice ears." It is clear that the festival depicts the birth of the rice baby.

In his newborn baby form Prince Hononinigi must have also been,

like his father Oshihomimi, the rice baby, which we have seen is depicted as a bundle of rice ears. Prince Hononinigi descended wrapped in a coverlet because he was represented as a newborn child. During the Niiname and Daijō festivals a similar coverlet, or *ofusuma*, was spread on piled mats as the deity's seat. This coverlet must have originally been understood as the seat of the deity.

There is yet another piece of evidence that the story of Hononinigi was related to the Niiname Festival. According to one *Nihon shoki* version, Kamu Atakaashitsu Hime, the wife of Prince Hononinigi:

by divination fixed upon a rice field to which she gave the name of Sanada, and from the rice grown there brewed Heavenly sweet *sake*, with which she entertained him. Moreover, with the rice from the Nunada rice field she made boiled rice and entertained him therewith (Aston 1972: 86).

This description represents an ancient custom of the Niiname-sai. On that occasion a maiden or housewife made a sacred meal of rice and *sake* to entertain the deity.

In this tale Prince Hononinigi is regarded as the deity of fertility who was entertained by the woman in the Niiname-sai. In the Daijō sai, which is the most developed form of the Niiname-sai, a maiden called "sake child" was chosen by divination as the priestess. She made sacred *sake* from the first fruits of the rice and offered this to the deities. This is a survival from the older forms of the Niiname-sai.

THE MYTH AS LOCAL TRADITION IN SOUTHERN KYUSHU

Prince Hononinigi descends to a place called "Himuka," which is identified in both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* accounts as being in Hyūga in southern Kyushu. Indeed, "Himuka" is the old name of "Hyūga." The word "Himuka," however, also means simply "to face the sun." In short, the word originally was not a proper noun at all, but rather a common noun referring to sunny places. There is evidence that from ancient times there were many places called "Himuka," and in several districts. The ancient Japanese believed that a sunny place was the most ideal location for the establishment of a solar cult, and they called such places "Himuka" (Matsumae 1970a: 21-24).

Gishikichō, an old record of the Ise Shrine compiled in 804 A.D., calls the Province of Ise, where the solar goddess Amaterasu was worshiped, "the district where the sun shines every morning and evening" (see *Kōtaijingū Gishikichō*: 3). In ancient times sunny places were apparently considered as the most suitable locations for the sacred rice fields for the Niiname-sai, and were called "himuka." In later days

this came to be considered as an actual place name in southern Kyushu (Matsumura 1955: 521-529).

Indeed, Himuka in southern Kyushu was regarded as the most suitable place for the descent of the child of the sun. According to the *Kojiki* account, Prince Hononinigi praised the place after his descent, saying, "This is a land where the morning sun shines directly, and a land where the rays of the evening sun are brilliant" (*Kojiki*: 129; Philippi 1969: 39). Then he established his palace and ruled here. In the *Nihon shoki* account we read that Emperor Keikō went to Himuka and observed the situation there. Then he said, "This district faces toward the rising sun" (Aston 1972: 196). Judging from these sources, it is evident that this district faced the sea and was considered a sunny place by the nobility of the Yamato court.

Ancient Himuka, however, also included three later districts, Hyūga, Satsuma, and Ōsumi. Accordingly, two places were assigned for the mythical place name Takachiho in Himuka. One is Takachiho in Usuki in Hyūga, and the other is Takachiho Peak of Mt. Kirishima in Ōsumi. As I noted above, however, the word "takachiho" originally meant the abundance of rice ears. In later days, these actual places came to be identified with the name in the myth.

According to both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, Hononinigi and his successors ruled this Himuka district for three generations, all dying there. Hononinigi's two sons were the famous brothers Umi-sachi and Yama-sachi, one of whom visited the dragon palace at the bottom of the sea. The son of the younger brother, Yama-sachi Hiko (also known as Prince Hiko Hohodemi) was Prince Ugayafukiaezu, the father of Emperor Jinmu, the first emperor of the Yamato court.

We must note that the stories of these princes in Himuka are more than simple products of the Yamato nobility, and contain a number of local elements from the folklore of southern Kyushu. It is well known that the story of Umi-sachi and Yama-sachi has a southern origin (Matsumoto 1971: 38-90; Matsumura 1955: 677-688). Even the myth of Prince Hononinigi seems also to have been a local legend of southern Kyushu. In the *Hyūga fudoki* entry cited above it is related that Prince Hononinigi sprinkled unhulled rice in all directions in the village of Chiho in Himuka (*Fudoki*: 523-524). Hononinigi's wife, Kamu Atakashitsu Hime, seems to have been a native of this district, because the words "Ata" and "Kashi" represent actual place names there (*Nihon shoki*: 569).

In this area there once lived the brave tribes called Hayahito. Their language, manners and customs seem to have been rather different from those of other peoples. According to *Nihon shoki* and *Engishiki*, the

three princes—Hononinigi, Hiko Hohodemi (Yama-sachi) and Ugaya-fukiaezu—were buried in three tombs in Himuka.¹¹ In the early Heian period, however, these three “divine tombs” were transferred to southern Yamashiro because they were too far away from the Imperial court. At any rate, it is noteworthy that until the Nara period it was believed that the tombs of the heroes were those of the Imperial family in southern Kyushu. Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* relate that these princes married daughters of the chieftains in the area. Hononinigi’s son, Hoori or Hosusori (Umi-sachi Hiko) is regarded as the ancestor of the Hayahito people.

I conjecture that the original forms of the stories of these princes were local legends of the Hayahito people, and that the princes’ tombs were actually those of the Hayahito chieftains. Perhaps there once lived in this area a powerful family of Hayahito which communicated with the Imperial court. Their ancestors were thus identified with those of the Imperial family and their legends absorbed into the system of the Imperial mythology.

At this point I would like to inquire into the true meaning of the duality of sovereigns—Amaterasu and Takami-musubi—in Takamano-hara. Is Oka’s opinion as noted above, that this represents a period of Korean invasions, to be followed?

THE DUALITY OF THE TWO SOVEREIGNS

The most primitive version of the myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild, as we have seen, is the main version of *Nihon shoki*. In this rendition of the tale Takami-musubi alone sends Hononinigi to the earth, and there is no appearance of Amaterasu.

This tale was the ritual myth of the Daijō-sai. In this festival, the Emperor offered the sacred *sake* and food which was made from the first rice harvest to the deities. He then performed a ceremony in two temporary buildings called the Yuki Hall and the Suki Hall. The identity of the deities worshiped at this festival, however, is not clear. Although by the end of the Heian period Amaterasu had come to be regarded as the main deity of the festival, there is no evidence that she held that position earlier.

According to *Engishiki* and the 782 work *Jōgan gishiki* 貞觀儀式, three months before the Daijō-sai the temporary buildings for eight deities were erected in the sacred compound by the sacred rice field in a way that had been determined by divination. All of these structures were made of unpeeled wood and thatched with grass, and their walls were also made of grass (Bock 1972: 34–35; *Gishiki*, *Kojitsu-sōsho*: 87). They were simple and primitive buildings by structure. All of them

were used for preparations for the Daijō-sai.

Within the compound, however, there were also eight small shrines which were dedicated to the eight deities. Inside each shrine was a bamboo shelf with a bough from a *sakaki* tree as the sacred emblem of each deity. These eight deities were Takami-musubi, Midoshi, Niwatakatsumi, Ōmike, Ōmiya no me, Kotoshiro Nushi, Asuha and Hahiki. Takami-musubi was regarded as the principal deity of fertility. Ōmike, the deity of the sacred food, was the second most important. The other deities were all secondary, being the deifications of the sacred fire, the priestesses or the sacred compound. Amaterasu was not worshiped there.

It is likely that only the two deities Takami-musubi and Ōmike were worshiped in the primitive form of this festival, and that the other deities are later additions. These two deities must have originally been worshiped by the Imperial family.

In *Kojiki* Takami-musubi is also called "Takagi," or "high tree." He was probably originally a deity of the rice field believed to descend through the branches set up next to the fields during the fertility ritual. Similar rituals are conducted in modern Japan. For example, in the sowing ritual conducted at the entrance to the field, a branch of a chestnut tree is erected as a *yorishiro* 依代, or object on which the deity will rest. Baked rice is then offered to this branch as though it were the deity itself.

One can speculate that Takami-musubi was originally a rice field deity, believed to descend through a branch by the side of the Imperial family's sacred rice field.

The sacred compound for these temporary shrines for the eight deities was located next to the sacred rice field in a place determined by divination. The *sakatsuko* 造酒兒, or "sake maiden," a young virgin chosen by divination, plucked the sacred rice ears in this field accompanied by attendants. They made *sake* and food from this rice, which was later used in the communion between the Emperor and the deity. After the ritual plucking of the rice ears had been finished, the *sakatsuko* offered them to the eight deities, then put them in the sacred storehouse.

It is evident that Takami-musubi was originally a rice field deity who was worshiped by the Imperial family in their harvest ritual. According to the *Shinsen shōjiroku* 新撰姓氏錄 (814 A.D.), many clans regarded this deity as their ancestor. Perhaps these clans first worshiped him as a fertility deity, then later came to regard him as their ancestor. In other words, this deity was served not only by the Imperial family, but by many other powerful clans as well.

The sacred compound where the eight deities were enshrined was

located in the sacred rice field in a district determined by divination. In Kyoto, however, where the Imperial palace was located, there was another sacred compound. In this compound there were similar temporary buildings, including the same shrines, dedicated to the same eight deities. The first rice harvest picked from the sacred field were taken by procession of Imperial messengers to Kyoto, and kept in the storehouse within this compound. Then many people prepared for the grand celebration. It is noteworthy that there was a shrine for Takami-musubi long with the other deities in this compound.

The most critical ceremony of the Daijō-sai was performed in the two temporary buildings called the Yuki-den and the Suki-den. On the first day of the festival (the Rabbit day of the eleventh month), the Emperor performed many mysterious rituals in these two halls, including a sacred communion, and reposed on a divine couch. The identity of the deity with whom the Emperor held this communion is, however, unknown. I conjecture that this deity was Takami-musubi himself.

It is also noteworthy that there were eight other shrines in the Imperial court. These were located in the Ministry of Shinto Affairs, the Jingi-kan. The deities honored here were Takami-musubi, Kami-musubi, Ikumusubi, Tarumusubi, Tamatsumemusubi, Ōmiketsu-kami, Ōmiyanome, and Kotoshiru Nushi. These deities had been known from ancient times as the tutelary deities of the Imperial family. They were worshiped for the sake of the Emperor's health during the Chinkon-sai, or "Soul restoration ceremony."

It is strange that these two sets of eight deities contain some overlaps. For example, Takami-musubi and Ōmiketsu-kami are included on both lists as principal deities, as are Ōmiyanome and Kotoshiru Nushi.

I would conjecture that some of the temporary shrines for the Daijō-sai were themselves the most primitive form of the Halls of the Eight Deities of the Ministry of Shinto Affairs. That is to say, the latter were the permanent buildings of the former. According to documents from the Heian period, the sacred emblems of the latter were also the branches of the *sakaki* 榊 tree (Uramatsu 1955: 42-43).

We must also remember that these eight deities, including Takami-musubi, were worshiped at the annual Niiname-sai as well as at the Daijōsai. As time passed, the function and contents of the Daijō-sai became much different from those of the Niiname-sai. The rituals of the Daijō-sai were held in the two temporary buildings (the Yuki-den and the Suki-den). In the Niiname-sai, however, the same rituals were performed in a permanent ceremonial hall, the Shinka-den. The rice used for the Niiname-sai was not grown in a special field chosen by divination. Until the end of the Nara period, however, there were no

remarkable differences in the two ceremonies.

In *Nihon shoki*, for example, we often read that the two temporary buildings, the Yuki-den and the Suki-den, were constructed and special rice fields were determined by divination for the annual Niiname-sai. The divine couch mentioned above was placed as the seat of the deity in each ceremonial hall.

It is likely that the nobility of the Imperial court celebrated the harvest festival annually in the two temporary halls, and worshiped Takami-musubi as their fertility god. Judging from these sources, it would seem that Takami-musubi was once regarded as the most important deity in the Imperial court. Around the sixth or seventh century, however, the worship of the solar goddess Amaterasu was imported from Ise to the Yamato court. She took the place of the former principal deity Takami-musubi.

Amaterasu was not enshrined in the Imperial court until the Heian period. According to *Kogoshūi*, the sacred mirror of Amaterasu was transferred from Yamato to Ise and served by Princess Yamato during the reign of Emperor Suinin. The Emperor also ordered smiths to make a new divine mirror and placed this in the Imperial court, where it became one of the three regalia (Katō and Hoshino 1924: 35). The new mirror was kept in the Unmei-den, and was served by court ladies called *naishi* 内侍. The actual rituals and offerings, however, were not performed until the middle of the Heian period.

Both *Nihon shoki* and *Kogoshūi* tell the story that the worship of Amaterasu was once transferred from the Imperial court to Ise (Aston 1972: 176–177; Katō and Hoshino 1924: 35). This is not a historical fact, however, but only an explanatory legend of the origin of the Ise shrine. The worship of Amaterasu originated among the Ama people of Ise (Matsumae 1978: 1–11).

The nobility of the Imperial court seems to have taken the idea of government by the children of the sun from the kingdoms of Korea.¹² The Imperial court thus adopted the worship of Amaterasu by degrees, and finally came to regard her as the ancestor of the Imperial family. They then identified one of the three regalia with the sacred mirror of Amaterasu in the Ise Shrine.

The myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild was evidently the ritual myth of the Daijō/Niiname-sai, as described above. Thus, in the primitive form of the story it must have been recorded that Takami-musubi sent his son, Hononinigi, the rice spirit, to the earth to bring fertility. This was the beginning of the Niiname-sai. The main *Nihon shoki* version depicts this event. According to the “Izumo Kuni no Miyatsuko Kamuyogoto,” in *Engishiki*, Takami-musubi and Kami-

musubi, the male and female deities, sent Prince Hononinigi to earth to rule there (Bock 1972: 103). Amaterasu does not appear in this story.

The *Kojiki* version, which describes the goddess Amaterasu, the chieftains of the five clans, and the three regalia, was perhaps the product of the influence of the Ise Shrine and its deities during the sixth or seventh century. That is to say, the duality of the worship of Amaterasu and Takami-musubi was based on contact between the Imperial court and the local worship around the Ise Shrine rather than on the amalgamation of the worship of the northern invaders' heavenly deity and the solar goddess of the southern tribes as Oka would have it.

The *Kojiki* version of this myth evidently has a close relationship with the deities of the Ise Shrine. In this version Amaterasu's sacred mirror is worshiped at the Isuzu Shrine, which plainly refers to the shrine next to the Isuzu River in Ise (Philippi 1969: 140). Another attendant deity, Toyouke, is described as the goddess of the Gekū, the Outer Shrine, in Ise. And Ame no Tachikarao, who also was an attendant of Hononinigi, is depicted as the local deity in the Sanagata district in Ise. Ame no Uzume and her mate Sarudabiko were also local deities from this area, as I have shown in an earlier paper (Matsumae 1978: 4-5). It is strange, however, that the deities who descended to the summit of the mountain in Himuka in southern Kyushu should have a close connection with a district as remote as Ise.

I therefore have concluded that the version of this myth in *Kojiki* consists of two different tales. One of these is Prince Hononinigi's descent in Himuka, and the original one is of Prince Oshihomimi's descent in Ise. In this myth Amaterasu first decided to send her own son, Oshihomimi, to earth. But when her grandson Hononinigi was born, she decided to send him instead. The plot of this story is unnatural and complicated, and the reason that the newborn child Hononinigi is sent to rule the country instead of the adult Oshihomimi is not clear. According to one of the *Nihon shoki* versions, Oshihomimi actually started to descend to the earth, and looked over the country from the Floating Bridge of Heaven. He turned back at the halfway point, however, when he was informed of his son's birth (Aston 1972: 76).

These elements are due to the combination of the two different stories, the Takami-musubi/Hononinigi cycle on the one hand, and the Amaterasu/Oshihomimi cycle on the other. I would conjecture that the story of Amaterasu sending her son Oshihomimi to the earth was told in Ise from ancient times. Oshihomimi was the personification of the rice ears, the spirit of rice. According to one version of the tale in *Nihon shoki*, Amaterasu bestowed the rice ears and the mirror on him (Aston 1972: 83). This myth depicts the close connection between

Amaterasu and Oshihomimi.

According to *Engishiki*,¹³ Oshihomimi was enshrined in Buzen and Tosa, and according to *Yamashiro fudoki*, he was worshiped in the Kohata shrine in Yamashiro near Kyoto (*Fudoki*: 417). He must have been revered as the deity of rice. We can find no shrine for him in Ise. There is, however, a sacred well named Oshihoi in the grounds of the Gekū, or Outer Shrine, at Ise.¹⁴ The name of this well means, I believe, "the well of Oshihomimi."

According to *Kōtaijōgū Gishikichō* (The old records of the Naikū Shrine), Oshihomimi's wife Takuhata-chiji Hime (also known as Yorozuhata Toyoakitsu Hime) was worshiped as an attendant deity of Amaterasu in the main hall of the Naikū, or Inner, Shrine at Ise (*Kōtaijōgū Gishikichō*: 1). It is evident that Oshihomimi was connected to Ise.

THE FORMATION OF THE DESCENT MYTH

Kurano (1952: 161–164) and Mishina (1971: 182–195) have held that the Heavenly rock grotto myth and the myth of the descent of the Heavenly Grandson in *Kojiki* originally belonged to one continuous, coherent story, even though the current text of *Kojiki* places the Izumo myth sequence between them.¹⁵ I agree with this opinion. In both of the myths, the five clan chieftains (including Ame no Koyana, Futodama and Ame no Uzume) appear as attendant deities. Tokoyono Omoikane and Ame no Tachikarao also appear in both stories.

There is also clear evidence that the three regalia were once referred to in the myth of the heavenly rock grotto. In the original version of that myth, the sacred sword and the two other treasures (the Yata mirror and the Magatama beads) must have been manufactured and hung from the branches of a *sakaki* tree. In the middle of the seventh century, however, when the nobility of the Imperial court adopted these versions, the description of the sword was purposely deleted. The reason for that deletion was the necessity to insert the Izumo cycle into the tale and the fact that the sword Kusanagi appears in that cycle.

This close connection between the two myths can, however, only be found in *Kojiki*. In the *Nihon shoki* versions we cannot find such clear links between the two. The main *Nihon shoki* version, which tells the simplest story of the descent of Prince Hononinigi, in which he has the form of a newborn baby, has no connection with the Heavenly rock grotto myth. As I have noted earlier (Matsumae 1980: 10–12), the Heavenly rock grotto myth was originally a local myth from Ise. Thus it is natural that this tale was related to one element of the descent myth—the Amaterasu/Oshihomimi cycle discussed above.

The monstrous deity Sarudabiko also belonged to that cycle. I

have shown that he was a primitive solar deity in Ise (Matsumae 1978: 4-5). He must also have been a local crossroad deity, for *Nihon shoki* depicts him as a *chimata no kami* 衢の神, or "god of the cross-ways" (Aston 1972: 77).

The Sarume clan was perhaps the family of priestesses serving the deity. They served in the Imperial court and performed their sacred rituals and dances at festivals such as the Chinkon-sai and the Daijō-sai. Hieda no Are, who took part in the compilation of *Kojiki*, was a member of this clan. As Matsumura has conjectured, the comical goddess Uzume's obscene behavior in front of Sarudabiko represents the sacred *kagura* 神楽 dance performed by the priestesses of the Sarume clan (Matsumura 1955: 548-559). Similar obscene performances are now made at the New Year's Festival or the spring festivals at various old shrines in Japan.

Sarudabiko's long nose may represent a phallic symbol. In modern times this deity has come to be identified with various roadside deities, including Dōso-jin, Sai no Kami, Funado no Kami, Konsei-sama, etc. He has further been identified with monkey deities at Kōshin feasts and at the Sannō Shrine. Thus he has come to be regarded as a guardian deity of childbirth, fertility, marriage and medicine.

The story in *Kojiki* of Sarudabiko's drowning by getting his hand caught in a shell may have been of southern origin. In an Indonesian folktale told in Celebes, Halmahera and Seram, a monkey once found a large shellfish taking a nap and tried to put his hand into the open shell. The shell closed, however, and his hand was caught (see Dixon 194-195). In Amami Ōshima Island in southern Kyushu, a folktale is told that a monkey-like monster, the *Kenmon*, (which has a red face) was almost drowned in the sea after having his hand caught by a shell (Kanehisa 1962: 245-246).

At any rate, it is evident that the worship of Sarudabiko as a local solar deity as well as a *dōsojin* 道祖神 by the crossroads was popular among the villagers in Ise and Shima. His various humorous tales must have thus been told or performed during festivals. This tradition was brought to the Imperial court by the Sarume maidens in later days. The existence of such tradition in the descent myth represents the influence of the worship of Amaterasu in the Imperial court.

CONCLUSION

I have come to the following conclusion concerning the historical development of the descent myth from the various sources described above. During the earliest stage of development, in the fourth or fifth century A.D. the nobility of the Yamato Imperial court celebrated

their harvest festival annually to honor their fertility deity, Musubi, the spirit of production, and his son, the rice spirit.

Deities at that time had no proper names. During the harvest a sacred maiden called *sakatsuko* was chosen by divination to serve the deities. A *sakaki* bough placed next to the rice field served as the deity's emblem. The maiden offered the first harvest of the rice crop to the deity Musubi. Next, a couch with a coverlet was prepared for the rice baby in a temporary building. Later the emperors came to play the leading role instead of the *sakatsuko* maidens.

In the second stage of development of the myth, toward the end of the fifth century, the harvest festival (Niiname-sai) developed into a kingship festival on a larger scale than the personal harvest ritual of the Imperial family. The names of the two deities became fixed as Takami-musubi and Hononinigi. The adoption of the latter must have been due to the influence of the Hayahito tradition after the submission of this people. The two deities were regarded as the name of their ancestors.

In the third developmental stage, lasting from the middle of the sixth century to the beginning of the seventh century, the worship and mythical traditions of the solar goddess Amaterasu were brought into the Imperial court. She had been only a local deity in Ise until this time. The nobility of the Yamato court, however, regarded her as their new ancestral deity in addition to Takami-musubi. This is because they adopted the concept of the sovereigns being the "children of the sun," which came from the Korean kingdoms.

The heavenly rock grotto myth and the obscene *kagura* dance were imported from Ise to the Imperial court by the Sarume maidens toward the end of this period. During the fourth stage of development, from the middle of the seventh century, when the compilation of the chronicles by the nobility of the Imperial court began, the myths of the Takami-musubi/Hononinigi cycle and the Amaterasu/Oshihomimi cycle were united into one coherent story and recorded in the documents. At that time, the worship of the old deity Takami-musubi and of the new and powerful Amaterasu were syncretized, and the special theogony of the Imperial court was formed. In the most developed form of the descent myths, such as is found in *Kojiki*, the deities Takami-musubi, Amaterasu, Oshihomimi and Hononinigi were depicted as members of the same family genealogically.

The Korean elements such as the "five division system" noted above and the word "Sopori" in the Japanese descent myth may be due to the cultural influence of the Paekche Kingdom. According to the chronicles, the capital of Paekche was transferred from Hansong to

Sabi and named "Sopuri." It was here that the five division system was practiced from 538 A.D. At that time messengers were often sent between Japan and Paekche.

The Korean princes and nobles who were sent to Japan as messengers or as hostages must have brought such concepts to the Yamato court. There were also many immigrants from Paekche to Japan at that time. It is thus not improbable to hold that the existence of such Korean elements was not due to the influence of the invading horse riders of the fourth century A.D., but was rather the product of peaceful messengers or immigrants from Paekche in the sixth or seventh century A.D.

NOTES

* The information in this article was first introduced to the English speaking public in 1977, when I served as a visiting lecturer at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

1. For my main text of *Kojiki* see *Kojiki*. I have also used Aoki 1982. For an English translation see Philippi 1969.

2. These five clan chieftains are called *Itsu tomono-o* 五伴緒. In ancient Japan they served the Imperial guardian deities such as Takami-musubi and others in the Jingi-kan, or the Ministry of Shinto Affairs, as ritualists. Under these chieftains were clan members and subordinate artisan corporations known as "Be" or "Tomobe."

3. The Ōtomo and Kume clans were known for their skill in military affairs.

4. *Sendai kuji hongii* was written in the early Heian period. The name "Kuji hongii," or "Kujiki" is its abbreviated form. The version listed here can be found in Part III. See *Sendai kuji hongii*: 209-216.

5. See Oka 1958. Matsumura adopted Oka's hypothesis in this matter. See Matsumura I: 60-70; III: 532-540; IV: 37-38.

6. *Fudoki*: 523-524. In 713 the Empress Genmei ordered that all the provinces should prepare reports describing the conditions of their village, rivers, mountains, production, traditions and customs. These reports were called the *fudoki* 風土記. Only four records still exist, those of Hitachi, Harima, Izumo and Bungo. Fragments of these old reports, however, can be found in a variety of medieval documents, as is the case with the story cited here.

7. The Daijō-sai, or the "Grand Food Tasting Festival," is the harvest festival that was celebrated by the Emperor on his accession to the throne.

8. The Niiname-sai, or "New Food Tasting Festival," is a rice harvest festival held annually. During the Heian period the date was fixed on the Rabbit Day of the eleventh lunar month.

9. The Jinkon-jiki, or the "Divine Food Tasting Festival," was celebrated by the Emperor as a harvest festival in the middle of the sixth and ninth lunar months.

10. In *Kojiki*, the violent death is said only to have taken place while he was asleep, and his bed is not said to have been a divine one.

11. The *Nihon shoki* and the *Engishiki* report that after his death Prince Hononinigi was buried in a tomb on Eno-yama in Himuka; Prince Hikohohodemi was buried in a tomb on Takaya-yama no ue in Himuka, and Prince Ugaya Fukiaezu was

buried in a tomb on Ahira-yama, also in Himuka. See Matsumae 1970b: 47-57.

12. It is well known that in ancient Korea the concept of the sacred sovereign as a descendant of the solar deity had some popularity. For example, the *Samguk Yusa* tells the mysterious story of the birth of King Chumong, the founder of the kingdom of Koguryo, who was born of a virgin mother made pregnant by the sunshine. King Onjo, the legendary founder of Paekche, was also believed to be one of Chumong's sons. See Ha and Mintz 1972: 47-48.

13. In the Register of Deities in *Engishiki* we can find Ameno Oshihowake Shrine in Tosa Province and Oshihowake Shrine in Buzen, both of which have been held since the medieval period to be shrines dedicated to the worship of Oshihomimi. See Bock 1972: 168-169.

14. This is *Jingū Zōreishū* 1, written between 1202-1210. See *Jingū Zōreishū*: 110.

15. Kurano held that the original text of *Kojiki* deleted the description of the sword making. Mishina maintained that the heavenly rock grotto myth and the descent myth were combined in the last stage of development, in the late seventh or early eighth century.

REFERENCES CITED

AOKI Kazuo 青木和夫, et al., eds.

1982 *Kojiki* 古事記 *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系 [Compendium of Japanese thought], 1. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

ASTON, W. G.

1972 *Nihongi, Chronicles of Japan from the earliest times to A.D. 697*. Tokyo: Tuttle.

BOCK, Felicia

1972 *Engishiki, Procedures of the Engi Era, Books VI-X*. Tokyo: Sophia University Press.

DIXON, R. B.

1964 *Oceanic mythology. Mythology of all races*, Vol. 9. New York: Cooper Square.

ELLWOOD, R. S.

1973 *The feast of kingship*. Tokyo: Sophia University Press.

Fudoki 風土記.

1960 Akimoto Kichirō 秋本吉郎, ed. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系 [Compendium of classical Japanese literature], Vol. 2. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

Gishiki 儀式, *Kojitsu sōsho* 故実叢書, Vol. 31

1952 Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

HA Tae-Hung, and Grafton K. MINTZ, transls.

1972 *Samguk yusa: legends and history of the Three Kingdoms of ancient Korea*. Seoul: Yonsei University Press.

HOLTOM, D. C.

1972 *The Japanese enthronement ceremonies*. Tokyo: Sophia University.

Jingū Zōreishū 1 神宮雜例集 I

1938 Shinkō Gunsho Ruijū 新校 群書類從 [New Compendium of related writings], Vol. I. Tokyo: Naigai Shoseki.

KANEHISA Tadashi 金久正

1962 *Amami ni ikiru Nihon kodai bunka* 奄美に生きる日本古代文化 [Traditional

- Japanese culture alive in Amami]. Tokyo: Tōe Shoin.
- KATO Genchi, and HOSHINO Hikoshiro, transl. and annotaters.
1924 *The Kogoshū or the Gleanings from Ancient Stories*. Tokyo.
- KAWADE Kiyohiko 川出清彦
1953 Niiname-sai shinzen no koto ni tsuite 新嘗祭神膳のことについて [About the food-offering and sacred communion at the Niiname festival]. In Niiname Kenkyūkai, ed., *Niiname no kenkyū* 新嘗の研究 [Studies on the Niiname festival], Vol. 1. Tokyo: Sōgensha.
- Kojiki* 古事記
1958 Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司 and Takeda Yukichi 武田祐吉, eds., *Kojiki Norito* 古事記 祝詞. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系 [Compendium of classical Japanese literature], Vol. 1. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Kōtaijingu Gishikichō* 皇太神宮儀式帳
1939 Shinkō Gunsho Ruijū 新校 群書類従, Vol. I. Tokyo: Naigai shoseki.
- KURANO Kenji 倉野憲司
1952 *Nihon shinwa* 日本神話 [Japanese myths]. Tokyo: Kawade Shobō.
- MATSUMAE Takeshi 松前健
1960 *Nihon shinwa no shinkenkyū* 日本神話の新研究 [New research on Japanese myths]. Tokyo: Ofūsha.
1970a *Nihon shinwa no keisei* 日本神話の形成 [The formulation of Japanese myths]. Tokyo: Haniwa Shobō.
1970b *Nihon shinwa to kodai seikatsu* 日本神話と古代生活 [Japanese myths and ancient life]. Tokyo:
1978 Origin and growth of the worship of Amaterasu. *Asian folklore studies* 37/1.
1980 The heavenly rock-grotto myth and the Chinkon ceremony. *Asian folklore studies* 39/2.
- MATSUMOTO Nobuhiro 松本信廣
1971 *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū* 日本神話の研究 [Research on Japanese myths]. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
- MATSUMURA Takeo 松村武雄
1954- *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū* 日本神話の研究 [Research on Japanese myths], Vols. 1958 1-4. Tokyo: Baifūkan.
- MISHINA Shōei 三品彰英
1971 *Kenkoku shinwa no shomondai* 建国神話の諸問題 [Topics in national founding myths]. In *Mishina Shōei ronbunshū* 三品彰英論文集 [Collected essays of Mishina Shōei], Vol. 2. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
1972 *Zōho Nissen shinwa-densetsu no kenkyū* 増補 日鮮神話伝説の研究 [Updated research on Japanese and Korean myths and legends]. *Mishina Shōei ronbunshū*, Vol. 4. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
1973 *Kodai saisei to kokurei shinkō* 古代祭政と穀霊信仰 [Ancient religious and political administration and belief concerning grain spirits]. In *Mishina Shōei ronbunshū*, Vol. 5. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
- Nihon shoki* 日本書紀
1967 Sakamoto Tarō 坂本太郎, et al., eds., *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系 [Compendium of classical Japanese literature], Vol. 67. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- OKA Masao 岡正雄, et al., eds.
1958 *Nihon minzoku no kigen* 日本民族の起源 [Origins of the Japanese people]. Tokyo: Heibonsha.

ORIKUCHI Shinobu 折口信夫

- 1955 *Kodai kenkyū* 古代研究 [Studies of the ancient period]. In *Orikuchi Shinobu Zenshū* 折口信夫全集 [The collected works of Orikuchi Shinobu], Vol. 3. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha.

PHILIPPI, Donald, transl.

- 1969 *Kojiki*. Princeton, N.J., and Tokyo: Princeton University Press and Tokyo University Press.

Sendai kuji hongī 先代旧事本紀

- 1898 *Kokushi taikēi* 國史大系 [Compendium of Japanese history], Vol. 7. Tokyo: Keizai Zasshi-sha.

SKEAT, W. W.

- 1900 *Malay magic*. London.

URAMATSU Mitsuyo 裏松光世, ed.

- 1955 *Daidairi-zu Kōshō* 大内裏図考証, Part 19, 1790. *Shintei zoho kojitsu sōsho* 新訂増補故実叢書, Vol. 28. Tokyo: Toshikawa Kōbunkan.