

*A Chronicle of Gods  
and Sovereigns*

*Jinnō Shōtōki*

of Kitabatake Chikafusa

*(Chronicle of the Main Line & Descent  
of the Divine Emperors)*  
translated by H. Paul Varley

New York Columbia University Press 1980

## Part I

Great Japan is the divine land.<sup>1</sup> The heavenly progenitor<sup>2</sup> founded it, and the sun goddess bequeathed it to her descendants to rule eternally. Only in our country is this true; there are no similar examples in other countries.<sup>3</sup> This is why our country is called the divine land.

During the age of the gods, Japan was known as Toyoshihara-no-Chihho-no-Aki-no-Mizuhono-kuni.<sup>4</sup> This name was used from the time when heaven and earth were separated, and can be found in the directive that the heavenly progenitor, Kuni-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto, presented to the male and female deities Izanagi and Izanami.<sup>5</sup> The name also appears in the mandate that the sun goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami, gave to her heavenly grandson, Ninigi. It may therefore be regarded as the original designation for our country.

Another name for Japan is the Land of Eight Great Islands (Yashima),<sup>6</sup> which derives from the fact that Izanagi and Izanami created the country in the form of eight islands.

Still another name for Japan is Yamato, taken from a province in the middle of the Land of Eight Great Islands. The eighth

<sup>1</sup> *Yamato*; see discussion in the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Izanami-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto* (Lord Who Permanently Established the Coun-

<sup>3</sup> The term for "other countries" is *ichō*. Often this term is used simply to mean *China*, but here Chikafusa probably implies India, China, and Korea, the countries most commonly cited in *jinna Shōshiki* to draw comparisons with Japan.

<sup>4</sup> Originally, the "Land of Abundant Reed Plains, 1500 Autumns, Fresh Rice

<sup>5</sup> *Izanagi* and *Izanami* are identified here and elsewhere as the male (*yang*) and female (*yin*) deities.

<sup>6</sup> *Eight* was a sacred number and could also mean a great many or myriad.

golden wheel. This king was succeeded by kings of the silver, copper, and iron wheels. But because of differences in the powers of the last-named kings, fortune gradually declined. The life spans of the people were reduced one year with the passage of each century, while the average height dropped one *shaku*<sup>34</sup> per century of time. When life spans reached 120 years, Shakyā Buddha appeared in the world. (Or, according to another version, Shakyā came when the average age of man was one hundred. He was preceded by three other buddhas.)<sup>35</sup>

It is said that, when life spans diminish to a bare ten years, the three lesser disasters will occur.<sup>36</sup> Mankind will almost die out and only some 10,000 people will remain alive. By performing good deeds, these people will increase life spans again, and fortune will once more rise. When life spans reach 20,000 years, a king of the iron wheel will come to rule the southern continent; when they reach 40,000 years, a king of the copper wheel will appear to rule both the eastern and southern continents; when they reach 60,000 years, a king of the silver wheel will appear to rule the eastern, western, and southern continents; and when the age of men gets to 84,000 years, a king of the golden wheel will again come to rule over all four great continents. Fortune will flourish as mentioned above.

At this time another decline will set in, and Maitreya Buddha<sup>37</sup> will appear in the world (or Maitreya may come when life spans reach 80,000 years). After eighteen more rises and declines, a great conflagration will occur. All will be consumed by flames, up to the realm of the first *dhyāna* (*shōzen*) of the world of pure form (*shikikai*),<sup>38</sup> and the three thousand great-thousand worlds

34. One *shaku* equals .994 feet, but Chikafusa seems to have mistakenly written *shaku* for *sun* (1.2 inches).

35. When the average age of men was 50,000, Krakuchanda Buddha appeared on earth; when it was reduced to 40,000, Kanakamuni Buddha appeared; and when it became 20,000, Kāśyapa Buddha arrived.

36. The three lesser disasters are famine, pestilence, and warfare.

37. Maitreya (in Japanese, Miroku) is the buddha of the future. It is believed that he will appear to save mankind 5,670,000,000 years after Shakyā.

38. There are three worlds inhabited by people who are enmeshed in the transitory existence of life and death: the world of desire (in Japanese, *yōkai*),

will be destroyed. This is the stage of the decline of the *kalpa*, which in turn will be followed by the stage of extinction, when the world becomes empty and void, like a black hole. After seven disasters by fire there will be a great disaster of water, which will reach to the second *dhyāna* realm. And after forty-nine disasters by fire and forty-nine by water there will occur the catastrophe of a typhoon that will cause destruction as far as the third *dhyāna* realm. Altogether, these destructions by fire, water, and wind constitute the three great disasters. In the fourth *dhyāna* realm and above there are no passions, either within people or externally. This realm contains five additional heavens: four are inhabited by the ignorant and the fifth is the heaven of purity, the home of sages who have attained enlightenment. Beyond the heaven of purity is the palace of King Mahesvara (who is also known as Daijizaiten). Residing at the summit of the world of pure form, Mahesvara is the ruler of the great-thousand worlds, and the breadth of his heaven spreads over the entire universe. (The breadths of the lower heavens are unequal; thus, the first *dhyāna* realm is only as broad as the four continents.) Above all this is the heaven of the spiritual world (*mushikikai*), which is divided into four parts. Neither the lesser nor the greater disasters intrude on these heavens. But it is believed that, because of the bounds set by karma, people will be driven from these heavens to the world below if fortune is exhausted.

Although China is a country that especially esteems the written word and books, there are no positive Chinese records about creation of the world. The writings of the Confucian school say nothing about the time before a king called Fu Hsi.<sup>39</sup> But in heterodox Taoist sources we find tales about the original, undifferentiated state of chaos and the beginnings of heaven, earth, and man—tales that resemble the origins of the world during our

people are ruled by passions of the flesh; the world of pure form (*shikikai*), where people retain their physical forms but are no longer subject to sensual desires; and the spiritual world (*mushikikai*), where people have transcended their physical existence. The second world, *shikikai*, is subdivided into four realms, each of which leads to a higher state of consciousness.

Fu Hsi and his two successors, Shên Nung and Huang Ti, are known as the "sovereigns" and are credited with having been the inventors of many of the arts and crafts.

age of the gods. There is also the legend of a king called P'an Ku,<sup>40</sup> "whose eyes became the sun and the moon and whose hair became the grasses and trees." After P'an Ku, there appeared the sovereigns of heaven, earth, and man, the "five dragons,"<sup>41</sup> and many kings, who collectively ruled for tens of thousands of years.

The origin of things in our country, whereby the world was produced by the descendants of the gods on high, bears some resemblance to the creation story of India. A significant difference is that, from the time of the heavenly founder, Kuni-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto, there has been no disruption in dynastic succession (*keiai*) in Japan. Rather, our country has been uninterruptedly ruled by the sovereigns of a single dynastic line. In India the first sovereign, the people's lord, was selected by the people and was succeeded by his descendants. But in later generations many members of the lord's line perished and even a man of mean origins, if he possessed the military power, could become king—or rise to be ruler of all India.

China is also a country that tends strongly toward disorder. In early times, when life in China was simple and the right way prevailed, men of wisdom were selected to occupy the imperial office. But no single, immutable dynastic line was founded, and whenever the country lapsed into disorder, people mustered their forces and contended for hegemony. Men arose from among the common people to become emperors, and there were also cases of barbarians who emerged and seized control of the country. In still other cases, hereditary vassals surpassed their lords and ultimately succeeded to the emperors held by the latter. Since the time of the first ruler, Fu Hsi, there have been thirty-six dynastic changes in China. The resulting disorder has been unspeakable.

In our country alone, the imperial succession has followed in an unbroken line from the time when heaven and earth were

40. The mythical creator of the world.

41. There were twelve sovereigns of heaven, who each ruled for 18,000 years; eleven sovereigns of the earth, who also each ruled for 18,000 years; and nine human sovereigns, who ruled for a total of 45,600 years. Then came five rulers known as the "five dragons" because they rode on dragons.

divided until the present age. Although, as is inevitable within a single family, the succession has at times been transmitted collaterally (*katawara yori*), the principle has prevailed that it will invariably return to the direct (*sei*) line. This is entirely the result of the immutable mandate of Amaterasu,<sup>42</sup> and is the reason why Japan differs from all other countries.

The way of the gods (*shinō*) is not readily revealed. Yet if the divine basis of things is not understood, such ignorance will surely give rise to disorder. To rectify the ignorance that is the cause of disorder, I have been motivated to take up my brush. Since my chief aim is to discuss the principles of direct succession (*shōri*) to the throne from the age of the gods, I shall omit discussion of matters that are commonly known. I have decided to name what I write "The Chronicle of the Direct Descent of Gods and Sovereigns."<sup>43</sup>

In the time before the world was divided into heaven and earth, there existed nothing but a nebulous mass, round in shape, like the egg of a chicken. All was dim and there were only the stirrings of creation. The world was a single state of undifferentiated matter possessing the potential for separating into *yin* and *yang*—dark and light, female and male. When the particles of this matter began to separate, those that were light and clear rose to form heaven and those that were heavy and turbid settled to become earth. From this process emerged an object shaped like a seed shoot which, changing its form, became the deity Kuni-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto, who is also known as Ame-no-Ahikanushi-no-kami. This deity possessed the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.<sup>44</sup> First, the water element was transformed into the deity Kuni-no-Satsuchi-no-mikoto, then he became Toyokumunu-no-mikoto. These deities were produced spontaneously by heaven alone and were therefore pure *heavenly*. (Although they are called pure males, it is difficult to deter-

See below.

See the Introduction for a discussion about the translation of this title.

According to early Chinese thought, all nature is composed of these five elements (*wu-hsing*) or combinations of them. See the discussion of Ise Shinto in the Introduction.

mine whether in fact they actually had male characteristics.) Next, the wood element became the deities Ujijini-no-mikoto and Suh-jini-no-mikoto; and the metal element became Ōtonoji-no-mikoto and Ōtomabe-no-mikoto. Finally, earth produced the deities Omotaru-no-mikoto and Kashikone-no-mikoto. This last group was created by the interaction of heaven and earth and possessed both male and female characteristics. However, they still did not mate in the manner of husband and wife.

All the above deities—from Kuni-no-Satsuchi-no-mikoto to Kashikone-no-mikoto—were part of the single god, Kuni-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto, and each was a manifestation of one of the five elements. People speak of the appearance of deities from Kuni-no-Tokotachi through those of the five elements as the six generations of the gods. But this is obviously not strictly correct, since the gods did not follow in the order of first generation, second generation, third generation, and so forth.<sup>45</sup>

The deities who next came into being were Izanagi and Izanami. They were truly distinguishable as male and female and became the source for the creation of all else. The five earlier generations of deities had each represented different elements, whereas Izanagi and Izanami combined all five elements and became the font for the production of the remainder of the myriad things of the world.

At this time the heavenly progenitor, Kuni-no-Tokotachi-no-mikoto, issued a directive to Izanagi and Izanami, stating: "There is a land called Toyoashihara-no-Chiho-no-Aki-no-Mizuhō. Go there and govern it." So saying, the heavenly progenitor bestowed a heavenly jeweled spear upon the pair. This spear was also known as *ama no sakahoko* (written with either of two sets of characters).<sup>46</sup> Receiving the spear, the two deities stood atop the floating bridge of heaven, thrust it downward, and stirred. There was only blue sea, but brine dripping from the tip of the spear hardened to form an island, which was called Onokoro. There is an arcane tradition concerning the name of this island that

45. *Nihon Shoki* speaks of seven generations of the gods, including Izanagi and Izanami as members of the seventh generation.

46. Literally, "heavenly reverse spear."

suggests it derives from Sanskrit, a language apparently known during the age of the gods.<sup>47</sup> But no one knows with certainty the location of Onokoro, even though one oral tradition maintains it is at Hōsen in Yamato Province.<sup>48</sup> The two deities, Izanagi and Izanami, descended to Onokoro and erected a central pillar of the country (*kuni no naka no mihashira*). They also constructed a great and magnificent palace and took up residence there together, mating as male and female or in the manner of husband and wife.

It is said that the spear used by Izanagi and Izanami was passed on to Ninigi and was brought by him to earth upon his descent from heaven. During the reign of Emperor Sunin, the princess Yamato-hime, acting under instructions from Amaterasu, traveled about the provinces in quest of a location for a great imperial shrine. When she requested such a location in Ise Province, the deity Ōta-no-mikoto came forth and informed her of a place at the headwaters of the Isuzu River where sacred treasures were kept, among them the *ama no sakahoko* spear, fifty golden bells,<sup>49</sup> and a plan of Amaterasu's heavenly palace. Much delighted, Yamato-hime decided upon this location and built the imperial shrine there.<sup>50</sup>

The sacred treasures were stored in the *sakadono*<sup>51</sup> of the shrine at Isuzu, although it is also said they were given into the *7*. The tradition holds that the name Onokoro derives from a word or words in a Buddhist mantra.

48. *Nihon Shoki* states that Onokoro is located to the southwest of Awaji Island in the Inland Sea. Hōsen is the present-day Mount Katsuragi on the border between Nara Prefecture and the city of Osaka. An Ise Shinto work entitled *Jinnō Keizu* identifies Onokoro with Hōsen (*Jinnō Keizu*, in *Jingū Shichō, Watarai Shinjō Taisei*, p. 153), but we have no other knowledge about how these two places, one an island and the other a mountain, came to be linked in legend.

49. "Fifty golden bells" (*isuzu*) is evidently supposed to have had something to do with the naming of the Isuzu River, but there is no clear indication elsewhere in mythology of what this may have been. See Yamada, *Jinnō Shōtōki Jussai*, pp. 47.

50. This legend comes from the Ise Shinto tradition. See *Yamato-Hime-no-Mikoto*, in *Jingū Shichō, Watarai Shinjō Taisei*, p. 71.

51. *Sakadono*: a building attached to a shrine for the purpose of brewing sake to drink to the gods. It is not known why the spear, bells, and plan of Amaterasu's palace should have been kept there instead of in a regular treasure house (*hōden*).

care of Takimatsuri-no-kami, a dragon deity, who kept them in the ground.<sup>52</sup> Still another story has it that the treasures were entrusted to Tatsuta-no-kami of Yamato, who was in fact Takimatsuri-no-kami by another name,<sup>53</sup> and that it was from this association that Tatsuta received the two alternate designations of Ame-no-Mihashira and Kuni-no-Mihashira.<sup>54</sup>

We know that Izanagi and Izanami took the spear with them to Onokoro, but we are not certain how it was thereafter transmitted through the ages. If Ninigi had been in charge of it, the spear would presumably have been passed on from the age of the gods in a way similar to the three imperial regalia. In any event, Ninigi is not likely to have parted with the spear so that it could be placed at the headwaters of the Isuzu River. We do find in the records (*Kogo Shui*) that Ninigi personally transmitted a jewel and a spear.<sup>55</sup> But since we know that he was also given the spear with which Ō-Namuchi-no-kami pacified the country,<sup>56</sup> we cannot be certain which spear the records describe. I believe the correct explanation is that the *ami no sakahoko* spear was left at Hōsen as unassailable proof of the founding of our country. Since Tatsuta is near Hōsen, no doubt the gods intended that the dragon deity should also be called Ame-no-Mihashira and Kuni-no-Mihashira. (There are a number of variant legends about this in Shinto writings.) Scholars of this later age should not trust legends that do

52. The residence of this deity is on the bank of the Isuzu River, and in other writings he is identified as a water deity. Chikafusa may have called him a dragon deity because in Indian mythology the dragon is a god of water.

53. Tatsuta-no-kami is the deity of the Tatsuta Shrine in Ikoma District of Yamato Province. He seems clearly to be a deity of the wind, but may have been identified with Takimatsuri-no-kami because the first character of both names has the *tsu* or "dragon" element.

54. These alternate designations mean "pillar of heaven" and "pillar of the country." There may have been some association with wind (that is, the wind god Tatsuta-no-kami) as forming a pillar and the *shin no hashira* or sacred pillar of the Imperial Shrine at Ise.

55. Katō Genchi and Hoshino Hikoshirō, tr., *Kogoshui*, p. 27.

56. This is also stated in *Kogo Shui*, ibid., p. 26.

not appear in such works as *Nihongi*, *Kuji Hongi*, and *Kogo Shui*.<sup>57</sup> Even in these works there are stories that cannot be substantiated, so how much more doubtful is the authenticity of the tales found in other writings.

Izanagi and Izanami conferred together and decided to produce eight islands. First they gave birth to Awaji Island, known as Awaji-no-Honosawa-Wake. Next they produced Iyo-no-Furana Island (Shikoku), which—although one geographical unit—consisted of four parts. One part was E-Hime, or Iyo; the second was Ihiyori-Hime, or Sanuki; the third was Ōgetsu-Hime, or Awa; and the fourth was Hayayori-Wake, or Tosa. The deities then produced the island of Tsukushi (Kyushu). This island, although one geographical unit, also consisted of four parts: Shirahi-no-Wake, or Tsukushi (later called Chikuzen and Chikugo); Toyohi-Wake, or Toyo-Kuni (later called Buzen and Bugeo); Hiruhi-Wake, or Hi-no-Kuni (later called Hizun and Higo); and Toyokuni-Hime-Wake, or Himuka (later divided into Hyuga, Ōsumi and Satsuma). (Tsukushi, Toyo-Kuni, Hi-no-Kuni, and Hyuga do not appear to be the original names from the time of Izanagi and Izanami.) Next, the deities produced Iki-no-Kami, known as Ame-Hirotsu-Hashira; Tsushima Island, known as Ama-no-Sateyori-Hime; the Ōki Islands, known as Ame-no-Shikoro-Wake; Sado Island, known as Takehi-Wake; and Yamato-Toyoakizu Island, known as Ame-no-Misora-yokizune-Wake. Altogether, the above constituted the Land Eight Great Islands (Ō-Yashima).

Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to many more islands, and they produced the gods of the seas and mountains and of all other things, even to the forebears of trees and grass. Because things created by Izanagi and Izanami were themselves *kami*, they in their turn produced islands and mountains; and in the production of these islands and mountains still more *kami* made appearances. But since all this was a labor of the age of the *tsu*, it is difficult to give the precise details.

*Kojiki* is conspicuously missing from this listing. It was generally neglected as a source of "ancient history" during Chikafusa's time, and Chikafusa himself refers to it in his writings.

Izanagi and Izanami again conferred and said: "We have already given birth to the Land of Eight Great Islands and have produced mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees. We must now create someone to be ruler of all under heaven (*ame no shita*)."

Thereupon they gave birth to the deity of the sun, whose light shone wondrously, illuminating everything within the country. Izanagi and Izanami were delighted and sent this deity up to heaven, where she was given charge of the affairs of heaven itself. Since at this time the distance between heaven and earth was not great, the deity of the sun was able to ascend by means of the heavenly pillar. This deity was called Ō-Hirume-no-mikoto. (The character pronounced *hime* in Ō-Hirume is the same as that for *rei*, a character which also suggests the female sex. Thus it is entirely natural that this character should have been used in the name for a female deity.) Another name for the deity of the sun, a female god, was Amaterasu Ō-mikami.

Next, Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to the moon deity, whose brilliance was second only to Amaterasu's. This deity was also sent up to heaven, where he was given charge of the administration of the night. Izanagi and Izanami then produced a leech child, but even after the passage of three years it had not grown legs. The two deities therefore placed it into a boat called Ame-no-Iwakusu and set it adrift before the wind. Finally, Izanagi and Izanami created Susano-no-mikoto. But he had a fierce, brutal disposition and did not please his parents, who ordered him to "Go down to the underworld (*the no kuni*). " These three deities—the moon god, the leech child, and Susano-no-mikoto—were all males. Accordingly, the deities produced by Izanagi and Izanami around this time are referred to as "the one female and three males." Although all the gods of our country were created by Izanagi and Izanami, I have commented on these four because they were intended to be rulers.

Later, at the time of the creation of the fire god, Kugutsuchi, the female deity (Izanami) was burned and died. The male deity (Izanagi) became enraged and cut the fire god into three parts, each of which then became a distinct *kami* in itself, even as blood dripped down from the parts, it too was transformed into a *kami*.

This was Futsumushi-no-kami (also called Iwamushi-no-kami, the present-day Katori-no-kami), the parent of Takemikazuchi-no-kami. (The name Take-Mikazuchi-no-kami may be written with different characters; he is the present-day Kashima-no-kami.) Still yearning for his mate, Izanagi went down to the underworld to see her. But while there he broke many pledges, causing Izanami to become angry and vow that she would "kill a thousand people of this land in a single day." Izanagi retorted that he would "create one thousand and five hundred new people." This is why the myriad folk (*hyakusho*) are known as "heaven's additional people," for they represent the surplus of those who were born over those who died.

Upon returning from the underworld, Izanagi went to the Odo River at Awagigahara in Himuka, where he cleansed and purified himself. Many *kami* were created at this time, and in fact there is even the legend that the sun and moon deities came into being during this purification process. His labors by this time completed, Izanagi went up to heaven, reported to the heavenly progenitor, and once again took up residence there. One tradition says that the names Izanagi and Izanami come from the Sanskrit *Ishanaten* and *Ishanaku*.<sup>58</sup>

In the first generation of the deities of the earth was Ō-Hirume-no-mikoto or Amaterasu Ō-mikami, also known as the deity of the sun and the imperial ancestress. There are three legends about Amaterasu's birth. According to the first, Izanagi and Izanami, having conferred together about producing a ruler for the world, gave birth to the sun deity, followed by the moon deity, the leech child, and Susanoo-no-mikoto. The second legend asserts that Izanagi created Ō-Hirume-no-mikoto upon taking a white copper (*masumi*)<sup>59</sup> mirror in his left hand. With the mirror in his right hand, he produced Tsukiyumi-no-mikoto; and finally, turning around and looking backward, Izanagi created Susanoo-no-mikoto. The third legend holds that creation of these deities occurred when Izanagi purified himself at the Odo River in Hi-

28. This is found in *Jinwō Keizū*, in *Jingū Shichō*, *Watarai Shinjō Taisei*, p. 153.



muka. Amaterasu came forth when he cleaned his left eye, Tsukiyomi-no-mikoto<sup>60</sup> when he cleaned his right eye, and Susano-no-mikoto when he cleaned his nose.

The sun and moon deities each have three names and are each alleged to have been created in three different places. These are conflicting facts that the ordinary mortal finds difficult to comprehend. To confuse the situation further, Amaterasu is said to have three residences: Takamano-hara, Hi-no-Wakamiya,<sup>61</sup> and our land of Yamao. When Amaterasu gave her mandate to Ninigi, she took the Yata mirror<sup>62</sup> and said: "Look upon this as though you were looking upon me." This statement had especially deep significance as a pledge that revealed Amaterasu's intent to manifest herself in various forms and places. One therefore cannot presume to say which of the three places of residence is her real home.

Susano-no-mikoto was banished to the underworld by his parents, Izanagi and Izanami. But he implored them to be allowed to visit his older sister Amaterasu in heaven one last time, saying he would then "leave the world forever." Upon receiving their consent, Susanoo proceeded up to heaven, in the course of which he caused the seas to roar and the mountains to rumble. This was only a natural consequence of the god's fierce nature, but Amaterasu became alarmed and prepared herself militarily. Susanoo professed that he did not come with evil intentions, to which Amaterasu replied: "Then take this test before the gods to determine whether your intentions are pure or not. You shall produce a child: if it is a female, that will prove your intentions are evil; but if the child is a male, that will prove they are pure." Taking the necklace of jewels<sup>63</sup> that Susanoo had given her, Amaterasu

60. This is an alternate spelling from the one given above, Tsukiyumi-no-mikoto.

61. A Palace of the Sun situated in Takamano-hara (Plain of High Heaven). Chikafusa thus seems to count Takamano-hara and the palace as separate places of residence.

62. Yata means "eight hand spans."

63. This necklace is described as *yasakani*, a word that indicates its considerable length (that is, 8 *shaku* or 26.48 yards). The Yasakani jewels that became part of

held them and a male *kami* was produced. Delighted, Susanoo declared, "I have truly won the test," and accordingly bestowed upon the child the name of Masaya-Akatsukatsu-no-Hayahime-no-Oshihomimi-no-mikoto. (This version of the story is taken from *Kogo Shui*.)<sup>64</sup>

Another version of the story has it that Susanoo borrowed the long string of jewels that Amaterasu had hanging around her neck and, after washing them at the Well of True Names in heaven,<sup>65</sup> chewed them and in this way brought forth Akatsu-no-mikoto as his first child. Susanoo then produced four more male *kami*. At this point, Amaterasu (so it is claimed) said: "Since they were created from a possession of mine, they are my children," and proceeded indeed to make the newborn *kami* her own offspring. (This version of the legend is in *Nihongi*.)<sup>66</sup> Akatsu-no-mikoto became Amaterasu's favorite. Since he seemed always to be at her side, he came to be called *wakiko*. People today call young children *wakiko*, but this is a mistake in pronunciation.<sup>67</sup>

Susanoo stayed on in heaven and committed numerous transgressions. Much angered, Amaterasu hid herself in the rock cave of heaven and plunged the country into a state of perpetual darkness, a state undifferentiated by either day or night. This greatly distressed the myriad other *kami*, whose leader at the time was Takamimusubi-no-mikoto. In an earlier age, Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-mikoto had had three children, the oldest of whom was this Takamimusubi. Ame-no-Minakanushi's second son was Kamimusubi, and the third was Tshayamusubi. But since the birth of these children supposedly occurred at the time when the male and female deities, Izanagi and Izanami, were first creating *kami*, it is doubtful that they actually belonged to Ame-

64. imperial regalia were made, as we shall see, after Amaterasu entered the rock cave of heaven.

65. Kato and Hoshino, *Kogoshui*, p. 18.

66. A sacred well in Takamano-hara (Plain of High Heaven).

67. Aston, *Nihongi*, pp. 35-36.

68. *Wakiko* means "child by one's side" and *wakiko* is "young child."



delightful! Ah, the sound of bamboo leaves (*sayake*)! Ah, the sound of *oke* leaves falling (*oke* is the name of a tree; the reference is to the leaves of the *oke* tree held by Ame-no-Uzume!)<sup>77</sup> Blaming Susano for what had happened, the *kami* fined him a thousand offering tables<sup>77</sup> and punished him by extracting the hair from his head and the nails from his hands and feet. Having done this, they banished him from heaven forever.

Susano descended from heaven and went to the headwaters of the Hi River in Izumo, where he came across an old man and old woman who, in tears, were seeking to comfort a young maiden seated before them. Inquiring who they were, Susano received the reply: "We are earth deities, named Ashinatsuchi and Tanatsuchi, and this maiden is our child, Kushi-Inada-hime. At one time we had eight daughters, but each year an eight-forked snake (*yamata no orochi*) has consumed one; this year he will surely come for this, our last child." Whereupon Susano said: "Why, then, don't you give her to me?" And when the old couple said "We shall do as you request," Susano transformed the maiden into a many-toothed comb and placed her in his hair. Pouring a carefully brewed brand of *sake* into eight tubs, Susano then awaited the arrival of the snake.

Finally the snake came, put each of his heads into one of the eight tubs, drank all the *sake*, got drunk, and went to sleep. Susano unsheathed the ten-span sword he was wearing and hacked the snake to bits; but when he cut into the reptile's tail, a small piece of the blade of his sword broke off. Ripping the tail open, Susano discovered another sword inside. Because clouds constantly clustered over this weapon, it was called the Ame-no-Murakumo or Heavenly Cloud-Clustering sword. (In the time of Yamato-Take-no-mikoto it was renamed the Kusanagi sword. It has since then been at the Atsuta Shrine.) Thinking, "This is a marvelous sword—too marvelous for me," Susano presented the weapon to his sister, Amaterasu.

Susano next went to Suga in Izumo, where he built a palace and lived with Inada-hime, who gave birth to Ō-Anamuchi-no-kami (also known as Ō-Namuchi). Then, at length, Susano went to the underworld.

77. Tables of offerings to the gods to atone for a crime.

Ō-Namuchi-no-kami (the present great god of Izumo) remained in the province of Izumo, from which he administered all under heaven and ruled over the land of Ashihara. This is why he is called both Ō-Kuninushi-no-kami (God Who is the Great Lord of the Country)<sup>78</sup> and Ō-Mononushi (literally, Great Lord of Things). The guardian and wondrous spirits of this god reside at Miwa-no-Kami in Yamato.<sup>79</sup>

*Second reign of the earth deity rulers:*

*Masaya-Akatsukatsu-no-Haya-  
hime-no-Ōshihomimi-no-mikoto.*<sup>80</sup>  
*He married Takamimusubi-no-mikoto's  
daughter, Takuhatachi-hime-no-mikoto,  
who gave birth to Nigihayahi-no-mikoto  
and Ninigi-no-mikoto.*

Akatsu-no-mikoto was supposed to go down to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, but with the birth of his first son, Nigihayahi, he decided to remain in heaven and to send this son down in his place. At the time of his departure for Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, Nigihayahi received from his maternal grandfather, Takamimusubi-no-mikoto, ten felicitous treasures (*mizutakara*): a mirror of the offering, a mirror of the shore, an eight-span sword, a jewel of long life, a jewel of resurrection, a jewel of flawless perfection, a jewel for driving evil spirits from one's path, a charm for warding snakes, a charm for warding off bees, and a many-purpose charm.<sup>81</sup> But Nigihayahi died at a young age and does not actu-

Chikafusa identifies Ō-Anamuchi and Ō-Kuninushi as the same deity, but versions of the legend say the latter was a descendant in the fifth generation of Ō-Anamuchi.

See R. A. B. Ponsonby-Fane, *Studies in Shintō and Shrines*, pp. 185-87.

This pronunciation differs from that given below.

These treasures are mentioned in *Kuji Hongi*, but not in *Kojiki* or *Nihon Shoki*. They are cited here and there in the writings of Ise Shintō, but their significance is not clear.

ally appear to have departed from heaven to become lord of Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni.

Originally, when Akatsu-no-mikoto was designated to go down to rule the earth below, Amaterasu gave him the three imperial regalia. Later they were also bestowed upon Ninigi. But Nihayahi was never a formal recipient of the regalia, and therefore should not be regarded as a deity in the imperial line of descent from Amaterasu. (This theory is in *Kuji Hongi*. It does not appear in *Nihongi*.) Although Amaterasu and Akatsu-no-mikoto remained in heaven, they should be counted as the first and second earth deities (*chijin*). From the outset they were ordained to be lords of all under heaven (*tenka*).

*Third reign of the earth deity rulers:*

*Amatsu-Hikohikoho-Ninigi-no-mikoto,  
also known as the heavenly grandson or  
the imperial grandson. Ninigi was greatly  
favored by his imperial forebears,  
Amaterasu and Takamimusubi,  
and was for this reason chosen to go  
down from heaven to become lord of  
Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni.*

Because of the presence of evil *kami*, however, it was not easy to go to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni. The god Ame-Wakahiko was first dispatched to reconnoiter, but he married Shitateru-hime, the daughter of Ō-Namuchi-no-kami, and failed to report back to heaven. After the passage of three years, the pheasant known as *nanashi* (literally, "no name")<sup>82</sup> was sent to see what had happened, but Ame-Wakahiko shot and killed it. Going through the pheasant, Ame-Wakahiko's arrow sailed up to heaven and came to rest before Amaterasu. The goddess's fears were aroused by the sight of this bloody object, and she cast the arrow back down to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, where it pierced Ame-Wakahiko's

82. In *Kojiki* this pheasant is called *nakime*, or "weeping woman."

breast and killed him as he was resting during the feast of the first fruits (*niiname-sai*).<sup>83</sup> This is why people dislike a "returning arrow."

The time had come to select other *kami* to proceed down to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, and a decree was accordingly issued assigning this responsibility to Futsunushi-no-mikoto, the deity of Kaori, and Takemikazuchi-no-kami, the deity of Kashima. Proceeding to Izumo, these two heavenly deities removed the swords they were bearing, thrust them into the ground, sat on them,<sup>84</sup> and presented Amaterasu's decree to Ō-Namuchi-no-kami. Ō-Namuchi and his son Tsumihayate-Kotoshiro-Nushi-no-kami (who is presently worshipped at Katsuragi-no-Kamo) both submitted directly; but Ō-Namuchi's second son, Takeminakata-Tomi-no-kami (at present, the deity of Suwa) fled. The heavenly deities pursued Takeminakata to Lake Suwa and there fought him into submission. Then, after meting out punishment to the evil *kami* and rewarding those who had submitted, Futsunushi and Takemikazuchi returned to heaven to report on their mission.

Ō-Mononushi-no-kami (Ō-Namuchi-no-kami appears to have left the country and shortly thereafter to have died. This Ō-Mononushi was the previously mentioned Miwa-no-kami.)<sup>85</sup> And Kotoshiro-Nushi-no-kami, together leading 800,000 *kami*, also went up to heaven, where they were praised by Amaterasu. Proclaiming "You shall assume command of this host of deities and provide protection for the imperial grandson," the goddess dispatched the two deities back down to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni. Then she and Takamimusubi, in conference, decided also to send the imperial grandson, Ninigi, to earth. Of the eight million deities directed to accompany Ninigi on his journey, thirty-two were leaders and, among these leaders, five were especially prominent: Ame-no-Koyane-no-mikoto (ancestor of the Nakatomi), Ame-no-Futodama-no-mikoto (ancestor of the Imbe), Ame-no-Uzume-

Offering by the emperor to the gods of the first fruits of the new rice.

The *Nihon Shoki* account says the deities thrust their swords handle-first into ground and sat on the tips.

This note seems to contradict the earlier passage where both Ō-Kuninushi and Mononushi are said to be alternate names for Ō-Namuchi.

no-mikoto (ancestress of the Sarume), Ishikoridome-no-mikoto (ancestor of the mirror makers), and Tamano-ya-no-mikoto (ancestor of the jewel makers). Two of the five prominent *kami*, Nakatomi and Imbe, were given specific instructions about assisting and protecting Ninigi.

Before bestowing the imperial regalia upon Ninigi, Amaterasu addressed him with these words: "Ashihara-no-Chiho-no-Aki-no-Mizuhono-kuni is a land that shall be ruled by my descendants. Go there and rule. Go, and may your line prosper eternally, like heaven and earth." Taking the sacred mirror in her hand, Amaterasu intoned the prayer: "Whenever you look upon this mirror, may it be as though you are looking upon me. Keep it with you as your sacred mirror, in your bed and under your roof."

Thus the Yata mirror, the Yasakani jewels, and the Ame-no-Murakumo sword came to comprise the imperial regalia. Amaterasu further enjoined Ninigi: "As the mirror is bright, illuminate the world; as the jewels spread broadly, rule with their wonderful sway; and, with the sword, subdue all those who do not submit to your rule."<sup>86</sup> We can clearly see in these decrees that the divine spirit of our country lies in the legitimate passage of the emperorship to the descendants of a single family. Transmission of the regalia through the generations is as fixed as the sun, moon, and stars in heaven. The mirror is the body of the sun; the jewels possess the essence of the moon; and the sword has the substance of the stars. These are surely facts of profound significance.

The sacred mirror, as I have said, is the Yata mirror made by Ishikoridome-no-mikoto. (There is a secret transmission of knowledge concerning the meaning of the word *yata*.)<sup>87</sup> An *uragaki* states:

86. An injunction similar to this appears in *Nihon Shoki*, but in the words of a local chieftain of Kyushu addressed to Emperor Chūai when the emperor went to that island to pacify the Kumaso tribesmen. See Aston, *Nihongi*, p. 221. The injunction was subsequently incorporated into the writings of Ise Shinto as the words of Amaterasu. For example, *Jimmō Keizū* in Jingū Shichō, *Watarai Shinjō Taisei*, pp. 154-155.

87. The transmission from person to person of arcane interpretations of words, lines of poetry, and so on was a common practice during the medieval period. The

According to *Shuo-wen*, the *ta* unit of measure is equal to the hand span of a medium-sized woman or eight *sun*. This is the same as the *shaku* unit of the Chou period in China. But there are also other secret traditions about the facts concerning the Yata mirror of the imperial regalia.

The jewels are the Yasakani jewels made by Tamano-ya-no-mikoto, who is also called Ame-no-Akarutama (there is a secret tradition about Yasakani too); and the sword is the Murakumo sword, found by Susano-no-mikoto and presented to Amaterasu. Amaterasu's mandate on the imperial regalia informs us of the proper way for governing the country.

The mirror possesses nothing of its own, but with an unselfish spirit illuminates all things. There is nothing, good or bad, that is not reflected in it, and its virtue is to reveal all forms with perfect fidelity. The mirror is the source of honesty (*shōjitei*). The virtue of the jewels is gentleness and yielding, and they are the source of compassion. The sword, which is the font of wisdom, is as its virtue strength and resolution. Unless a ruler possesses the virtues of all three of the regalia, he will find it difficult indeed to govern the country. Amaterasu's mandate is clear: its words are concise, but their import is far-reaching. Should we not feel the greatest gratitude that the spirit of the mandate is embodied in the imperial regalia?

Among the regalia, the mirror is of central importance, and is to be revered as the god-body (*shōtai*) of the Imperial Shrine at Ise. The mirror takes the form of brightness. If one's nature is bright, then one will also possess compassion and resolution. Since the mirror is a true reflection of Amaterasu herself, she must have indicated it with her most profound feelings. There is nothing brighter in heaven than the sun and the moon: when written characters were devised, "the word 'bright' was represented by joining the characters for sun and moon." Because Amaterasu is the divine spirit of the great sun, she governs the world with a brilliant virtue. This is something not readily explainable by the laws of *yin* and *yang*, but which demands faith in both the revealed and unrevealed realms.

famous of such arcana was the *Kokinshū* transmission (*Kokin denju*) based on interpretations of the famous tenth-century anthology of poetry.

Sovereigns and ministers alike have received the bright light of divine descent, or they are the descendants of deities who received Amaterasu's mandate. Who does not look with awe upon this fact? The highest purpose of all learning, both Buddhist and Confucian, is to make people aware of this and to prevent them from going against the way upon which it is based. Dissemination of Buddhist and Confucian learning has been the force in propagating this way.<sup>88</sup> We may liken it to catching a fish in a net: although only one mesh is needed, it is difficult to catch a fish without the aid of an entire net made of meshes. Confucian texts have been propagated since the time of Emperor Ōjin and the teachings of Buddhism have flourished since the age of Prince Shōtoku. Both Ōjin and Shōtoku were avatars of divine *kami* spirits and seem to have intended, in accordance with the wishes of Amaterasu, to spread and make people fully aware of the way of our country.

When Ninigi-no-mikoto went down from heaven, Sarada-biko (a deity of the crossroads between heaven and earth) came forth to greet him. Because this deity shone so brightly, none of the other gods dared to look upon him. But Ame-no-Uzume-no-kami went directly up to Sarada-biko and inquired: "Where should the imperial grandson make his descent?" Sarada-biko replied: "Have him come down to the peak of Kushifuru at Takachiho in Hyūga, Tsukushi. In the meanwhile, I will go to the headwaters of the Isuzu River in Ise."<sup>89</sup> Accepting Sarada-biko's suggestion, Ninigi descended from heaven to Kushifuru peak, where he requested a tranquil place in which to settle. The deity Kotokatsu-Kunikatsu (a child of Izanagi-no-mikoto, who was also called Shioetsuchi-no-okina) came forward and said: "The cape of Nagasa where I dwell in Aka would be excellent for you." Accordingly, Ninigi took up residence there.

There was in the region a mountain deity named Ō-Yamatsumi, who had two daughters. The older daughter was Iwanagahime (a rock deity) and the younger was Konohana-no-Sakuyahime (a deity of flowers and trees). Ninigi summoned both daughters. But since the older was ugly in appearance, he sent her back and kept the younger. Enraged, the older sister—Iwanagahime—cursed Ninigi and said: "If he had selected me, the lives of people in the world would have been long, like the rocks. But because he has instead picked my sister, children born in the world will wither and die like blossoms on the trees." This is why people have such short lives.

Having been selected by Ninigi, the younger sister—Konohana-no-Sakuyahime—conceived on the first night. When Ninigi expressed amazement at this, Konohana became angry. Erecting a doorless abode (*muro*), she shut herself up and set fire to the structure. Three children were then born: Honosuseri-no-mikoto, who was produced when the fire began; Hoakari-no-mikoto, who appeared as it reached its highest intensity; and Hihohodemi-no-mikoto, born later as the fire dwindled. Since one of the children was burned by the fire and their mother also was uninjured, Ninigi was greatly pleased.

They say that Ninigi ruled the country for 308,533 years. But it is difficult to calculate the duration of time in the affairs of the gods prior to Ninigi's descent, since there are no records to indicate how many years had passed after the separation of heaven and earth.

According to the Indian tradition, the age of human beings was originally unlimited; but when it reached 84,000, it was thereafter reduced one year with the passage of each hundred-year period. Finally, when the average age of humans was down to 120 (100), Shakyā Buddha appeared in the world. Since Shakyā's appearance coincided in time with the end of the age of Ōgaya-Aezu-no-mikoto in our country (and since the first year of Emperor Jimmu's reign, *kanoto-tori*, was 290 years after the death of Shakyā), we can calculate backward by adding one year for each hundred years to determine that the beginning of Ninigi's reign was in the same age as the appearance in the world of Shakyā Buddha. Kāśyapa came when the average age of humans was 20,000 years.

88. Shinto.

89. Sarada-biko presumably went to the Isuzu River to prepare for the later construction there of the Imperial Shrine to Amaterasu.

provinces. Since this was still the age of the gods, the facts of these reigns are not known. After Ugayafuki-Aezu ruled for more than 830,000 years, he was succeeded by his son, Iwarebiko-no-mikoto, and the generations of human sovereigns abruptly began. Some people may have doubts about how the life spans of sovereigns suddenly became so much shorter with the advent of this new age, but the principles of Shinto are beyond human comprehension. Perhaps, just as the lives of all people were greatly shortened by the curse of Iwanaga-hime, those of the gods were also reduced and soon there came about the age of human sovereigns. In any case, there is nothing to lend credence to the Indian theory of a gradual decline in life spans.<sup>97</sup>

We also have the theory of "one hundred kings,"<sup>98</sup> but this should not be taken literally to mean one hundred—that is, ten by ten. Rather, the character for hundred implies without limit, as can be seen in such usages as *hyakkan* and *hyakushō*.<sup>99</sup> In earliest time, when the imperial ancestress, Amaterasu Ō-mikami, presented her mandate to the imperial grandson, Ninigi, she said: "May your line prosper eternally, like heaven and earth." Neither heaven nor earth has changed since then; nor has there been any variation in the shining of the sun and the moon. So long as the three imperial regalia exist in the world, succession to the imperial line in our country will continue without end. We must look with reverence and awe upon the sovereigns who receive this succession.

## 67 Emperor Jimmu

*First reign of human sovereigns  
Known as Kami-Yamato-Iwarebiko-no-Sumera-  
mikoto; later called Jimmu*

97. See above.

98. The interpretation of *hyaku* as precisely one hundred kings was advanced from about the mid-Kamakura period and became a concomitant to the *mappō* idea of historical decline.

99. *Hyakkan*—all the officials at court; *hyakushō*—peasants (literally, "hundred names" or "myriad names").

*Fourth son of the earth deity, Ugayafuki-Aezu-no-mikoto*

*Mother: Tamayori-hime, second daughter of the sea god, Watsumi*

Emperor Jimmu was descended in the sixth generation from Izagi and in the fifth generation from Amaterasu. The name Kami-Yamato-Iwarebiko is a Japanese designation from the age of the gods, whereas Jimmu is a name derived from Chinese usage and dated upon in the middle age (*chūko*).<sup>100</sup> Because the imperial place was changed with each reign from Jimmu's time on, it became the custom to call the sovereign by the location of his particular palace. Thus, Jimmu was also known by the name of Kashira-no-miya.

Ever since the age of the gods, the most highly revered *per-ages* had been called *mikoto* 尊, and those people deserving the next degree of respect were designated *mikoto* 命. With the advent of the age of man, however, sovereigns were given the title *sumera-mikoto* 101 and ministers became known by such designations as *ason*, *sukune*, and *omi*. These usages were all started during Jimmu's time. Both *mikoto* designations continued to be used during the ancient age (*jōko*), but with the passage of the generations, sovereigns ceased to be called *mikoto* and ministers were no longer referred to by the other *mikoto* title. This was probably because the ancient language sounded peculiar to the ears of people in later ages.

Emperor Jimmu became crown prince at age fifteen and, when he was fifty-one, assumed the emperorship from his godly father. His accession to the throne was in the year *kanoto-tori* (660)<sup>102</sup>

According to Chikafusa's periodization, the transition from the ancient to the middle age occurred at the time of Emperor Kōkō's Nima era (885–888). Chikafusa thus mistaken here, because Chinese-style names, such as Jimmu, for the ancient and early historical sovereigns were in fact first devised during the Nara period with the same characters as *tennō*.

This is the famous mythical date for the founding of the Japanese empire. The year is the fifty-eighth year of a sexagenary cycle and is regarded, along with the year of a cycle (*kinō-ne*), as particularly auspicious.

She decided on Jomei because he was a grandson of Bidatsu and a great-grandson of Kimmē, two former emperors who were both in the direct line of imperial descent. Moreover, when Prince Shōtoku lay ill and the empress sent Jomei, who was then a prince, as emissary to inquire about his health, Shōtoku had instructed Jomei in the business of the country.

Emperor Jomei acceded to the throne in 629<sup>26</sup> and made his residence at the Okamoto Palace in the Takechi District of Yamato Province. His accession was in the third year of Chen-kuan (629), in the early part of the reign of Emperor T'ai Tsung of the Tang dynasty in China.

Emperor Jomei reigned for thirteen years and died at the age of forty-nine.

### Empress Kōgyoku

#### Thirty-sixth reign

*Daughter of Chinu-no-ō; granddaughter of Oshisaka-Ōe; and great-granddaughter of Emperor Bidatsu  
Mother: Queen Kibi-hime*

Kōgyoku was the first consort of Emperor Jomei and the mother of the future emperors Tenji and Temmu. When Jomei died his sons were still youths, and Kōgyoku acceded to the throne. She became empress in 642 and resided in the Kawara Palace at Asuka in Yamato.

At this time Ō-omi Soga no Emishi (the son of Ō-omi Umako) and his son Iruka held total power at court and looked with contempt upon the imperial family. They spoke of their residences as palaces and their children as princes and princesses,<sup>27</sup> and they transferred all the ancient national records and treasures into their own keeping. Of the two Soga leaders, Iruka possessed a particularly rebellious spirit. It was he, for example, who murdered Prince Shōtoku's children, even though they had committed

26. The correct sexagenary designation for 629 is *tsukuhino-ushi*.

27. See *Nihon Shoki*, 644:11.

no wrong. In reaction to this kind of behavior, Prince Naka-no-Ōe, the son of Emperor Jomei and Empress Kōgyoku, consulted with Muraji Nakatomi no Kamatari and killed Iruka. Iruka's father, Emishi, set fire to his residence and also perished, taking with him all the national records<sup>28</sup> and treasures.

Although they had long monopolized power, the Soga were thus destroyed, no doubt because of their many accumulated evils. Only Soga no Yamada-no-Ishikawamaro, who had allied himself to Prince Naka, was spared.

Great Minister Kamatari was descended in the twenty-first generation from Ame-no-Koyane-no-mikoto.<sup>29</sup> At the time of Ninigi's descent from heaven long ago, Ame-no-Koyane was the leader of the *kami* accompanying him and was singled out in a mandate by Amaterasu to be the heavenly grandson's aide. It is said that the name Nakatomi derived from the function of mediating between the two great *kami*, Amaterasu and Ninigi, and providing them with tranquillity of mind. During the reign of Emperor Jimmu, Ame-no-Koyane's grandson, Ame-no-Taneko, was charged with the administration of rituals (*matsurigoto*) at court. In the ancient age, when sovereigns were also *kami*, such administration had been tantamount to conducting government (*matsurigoto*) itself. (We can discern this fact from the *kun* reading of the character for "government.")

At the time Amaterasu was first enshrined at Ise, a descendant of Ame-no-Taneko, Ō-Kashima-no-mikoto, became the minister in charge of rituals. From his day until the age of Kamatari's father, Mikeko (*shōtokuken*),<sup>30</sup> members of the Nakatomi family successively held this ministerial post. Kamatari himself accomplished especially great things; it is to his undying renown that, as a result of the admiration in which he was universally

28. Included among the national records were a chronicle of sovereigns (*tennō-ki*) and an account of the country (*koiki*) purportedly compiled by Prince Shōtoku and Soga no Umako during the reign of Empress Suiko.

29. *Shinsen Shōjiroku* lists Kamatari in the twenty-third generation from Ame-no-Koyane. In Hanawa, *Gunsō Ruijū*, 25:150.

30. There is no evidence that Kamatari's father ever held the rank of *shōtokuken*. This parenthetical note seems to have been added to later texts of *Jinnō Shōtōki*.



held, the deeds and achievements of his ancestors were even more highly extolled than before.

Since the Nakatomi had participated in *matsurigoto* from the age of the gods, it was only natural that Kamatari should in this era play an important role at court. He was later appointed minister of the center and eventually great minister with the rank of *taishokukan* (the equivalent of the senior first rank). In addition, Kamatari's family name was changed from Nakatomi to Fujiwara. (The appointment of Kamatari to minister of the center did not happen during this reign.<sup>31</sup> I am writing things in the order in which they occurred.)

Empress Kōgyoku reigned for three years, then abdicated in favor of Karu-no-ō, her younger brother by the same mother. She was given the honorary designation of Sumemioya-no-mikoto.

98

An uragaki says:

Another name for Kamatari was Kamako. He was appointed minister of the center at the age of thirty-one in the first year of Taika, 645. In the tenth month of the eighth year of Tenji's reign, 669, the emperor bestowed upon him the senior first rank, made him a great minister, and changed his *kabane* to Fujiwara. Kamatari died in the same month and year at age fifty-six, having held court office for twenty-five years. He was visited on his deathbed by the emperor, who greatly lamented and wept over his passing.

### Emperor Kōtoku

Thirty-seventh reign

Younger brother of Empress Kōgyoku by the same

mother

Acceded to the throne in 645 and made his palace at

Nagara-no-Toyosaki in the province of Tsu (Settsu)

During Emperor Kōtoku's reign the office of great minister (*daijin*) was divided into ministries of the left and right. The first

31. For example, Kamatari was appointed minister of the center in the sixth month of 645, immediately after the accession of Kōtoku.

person to have been appointed great minister, a designation originally known as *ō-omi*, was Takeuchi-no-Sukune in Emperor Seimu's age. Later, in Chūai's time, the position of *ō-muraji* was also established. From then on, the *ō-omi* and *ō-muraji* together conducted court administration until, during this reign of Emperor Kōtoku, the *ō-muraji* position was abolished and the *ō-omi* (or *daijin*) office was divided into the posts of minister of the left and minister of the right. The system of *hasshō hyakkan* (eight ministries and a hundred offices) was also founded under Kōtoku, and Nakatomi no Kamatari was appointed minister of the center. Emperor Kōtoku ruled for ten years and died at the age of fifty.<sup>32</sup>

### Empress Saimi

Thirty-eighth reign

Formerly ruled as Empress Kōgyoku

This was the first instance in our country of reaccession to the throne. In China, Ta Chia of the Shang dynasty, a king lacking virtue, was removed to the Tung Palace<sup>33</sup> by I Yin, who administered the court for three years. But Ta Chia had apparently not actually abdicated the throne; and, after reflecting upon his errors and cultivating virtue, he became king once again.

During the time of the Chin dynasty, Huan Hsüan seized the throne from Emperor An. But after eighty days Huan Hsüan was killed by loyalist soldiers and An resumed the emperorship.

In the Tang period, when Empress Wu was causing disorder in the world, she deposed Chung Tsung, even though he was her own son, and designated him prince of Lu-ling. Empress Wu then enthroned another of her sons, the prince of Yü, as emperor, but afterward deposed him as well and acceded to the throne herself. Later, Chung Tsung once again became emperor, thus preventing

32. Tsuji: Kōtoku died at the age of fifty-nine.

33. Located in Shansi Province.



## Emperor Seiwa

## Fifty-sixth reign

Personal name: Korehito (known also as Mizunoo no Mikado)

## Fourth son of Montoku

Mother: Empress Dowager Fujiwara no Akirakeiko (also called the Samedono empress), daughter of the regent and great minister of the council of state, Yoshifusa

It has been rare in our country for minors to assume the imperial rank, but this emperor was only nine at the time of his accession in 858. He changed the era name in 859.

At the time Seiwa assumed the emperorship, his maternal grandfather, Great Minister Yoshifusa, became the first commoner to be appointed imperial regent (*sesshō*). In inquiring into the origins of this office we must go back to the time of Yao in China, when Shun was elevated to a similar position, called *shencheng* in Chinese, and was entrusted with the business of government. Thirty years later, Shun was formally invested with the title of emperor.

During the Shang period, a wise minister named I Yin assisted both T'ang and Ta Chia. He was designated *puo-heng* (or *o-heng*), but his function was the same as that of an imperial regent. There was also a minister of great wisdom in the Chou period—the duke of Chou, who was the son of King Wen, the younger brother of King Wu, and the uncle of King Ch'eng. The Duke of Chou ranked as one of the three excellencies (*san-kung*) during Wu's reign. When Ch'eng became king at a young age, he assumed actual rulership<sup>116</sup> of the country and administered the government as imperial regent. (It is said that he "faced south" like a king while bearing Ch'eng on his back.)

Emperor Chao of the Han also became sovereign at a youthful age. In accordance with an edict from Emperor Wu, Ho Kuang—the marquis of Po-lu—was appointed commander-in-chief (*ta-*

116. The term is *nammen* or to face south: that is, sovereigns face south and subjects face north.

*ssu-ma*) and generalissimo and functioned as an imperial regent. Among these cases of regencies in Chinese history, those of the Duke of Chou and Ho Kuang appear to have been true forerunners of the Japanese position of *sesshō*.

Turning to our country, we find that Jingū Kōgō, after giving birth to Ōjin, assumed the imperial position during Ōjin's infancy. Jingū, however, has traditionally been regarded not as a sovereign but as a regent. Even so, her case was clearly different from Yoshifusa's during this reign of Emperor Seiwa. In Empress Suiko's time, Crown Prince Shōtoku served as *sesshō*; that is, while Suiko occupied the throne, administration of the country was entirely in his hands. And during the reign of Empress Saimei, her son Crown Prince Naka-no-Ōe also was *sesshō*. Finally, toward the end of Empress Gemmei's reign, Princess Kiyotarashihime-no-mikoto (the future Empress Genshō) served briefly as regent. But with the appointment of Great Minister Yoshifusa as *sesshō* under Emperor Seiwa, a subject for the first time assumed the regency.

As I have already noted several times, the Fujiwara family had from the age of the gods been mandated to assist the sovereign in rule. Yet for three generations after Fubito—that is, during the time of Imperial Adviser and General of the Middle Imperial Guards Fusasaki, Major Counselor Marate, and Minister of the Right Uchinamaro—the family failed to prosper as it had in the two preceding generations of Kamatari and Fubito. Uchinamaro's son, Great Minister Fuyutsugu (Fuyutsugu was called the Kan'in minister of the left; he later was posthumously appointed great minister of the council of state), much lamented the Fujiwara decline. After consulting with Kōbō Daishi, he had the Nan'endō Pavilion built at Kōfukuji and offered prayers to the gods for the revitalization of his family. Kasuga no Myōjin appeared among the workers at the Nan'endō site at this time and proffered the following poem: 117

Building a pavilion  
On the southern shore  
Of Mount Potalaka;

117. The poem is included in volume nineteen of *Shinkokinshū*.

How it swells now,  
The wave of the northern wisteria!<sup>118</sup>

Some people say that a great many Genji died around this time, but that is quite untrue.<sup>119</sup> The historical process whereby princes and other members of the imperial family received the Genji surname and rose to high ranks and offices had not even begun, so how could there have been a mass "dying off" of Genji? At any rate, the revival and prospering of the Fujiwara family occurred seemingly in direct response to the prayers offered up to the gods.

Great Minister Fuyutsugu, having reflected deeply and wishing to advance the learning of his family and its descendants, founded the Kangakuin.<sup>120</sup> The Sōji, a school divided into eastern and western parts and administered by the Sugawara and Ōe families,<sup>121</sup> to provide general education at court, was situated in the bureau of education; since the Kangakuin was built to the south of the bureau, it became known as the southern Sōji (Nansō). Management of the Kangakuin fell chiefly to the head (*yji no chōja*) of the Fujiwara family, who also oversaw the affairs of Kōfukuji and the clan's ancestral shrine at Kasuga. Ever since Yoshifusa's time as imperial regent, these duties have been passed uninterruptedly through the generations to his descendants as successive Fujiwara family heads.

Although the office of *sesshō* had heretofore been associated only with times of minor sovereigns, the permanent system of the joint offices of *sesshō* and *kampaku* (regent for an adult emperor) was established. And even when, in the course of events, there

118. Mount Potaka is a legendary mountain in the ocean to the south of India that is supposed to be the home of the deity Kannon. "Southern shore" means the southern part of the Kōfukuji grounds.

119. This is a reference to a passage in *Ōkagami* on the occasion of the building of the Nan'endo at Kōfukuji: "On the day of dedication . . . many High Court Noblemen of other families died within the day. . . ." See Joseph K. Yamaguchi, *et al.*, *The Ōkagami*, p. 204.

120. Founded in 821.

121. The Sugawara and Ōe were the two families principally concerned with the teaching of Chinese literature at court.

happened to be no *sesshō* or *kampaku*, a minister from the Fujiwara family with the designation of *naikan* (imperial examiner) was appointed to handle court administration in the same manner.

When Emperor Seiwa reached his majority, Yoshifusa relinquished the office of regent and, becoming great minister of the council of state, retired to Shirakawa. Since the emperor was Yoshifusa's own grandson, it is unlikely that anyone would have objected if the Fujiwara chieftain had continued to hold power at court. But Yoshifusa, who possessed an exceedingly modest temperament, preferred to withdraw from politics and live quietly, as a rule not even attending the court.

There was at the time a person, Major Counselor Tomo no Yoshio, who was much favored by the emperor and who aspired to become a great minister. Since none of the three great ministerial offices was then vacant (they were occupied by Great Minister of the Council of State Yoshifusa, Minister of the Left Makoto, and Minister of the Right Yoshitsuke), Yoshio conceived the idea that, if he could do away with Makoto, he (Yoshio) would become minister of the left. Accordingly, Yoshio set fire to the Ōren Gate of the palace and slanderously reported to the emperor that the minister of the left himself was plotting rebellion. Alarmed, and without even conducting an investigation, Emperor Seiwa summoned Minister of the Right Yoshitsuke and ordered him to destroy Makoto. Yoshifusa, upon learning of these developments, was much astonished and distressed. Without taking the time to dress properly and while still garbed in court hat (*eboshi*) and robe (*haori*), he set out on horseback in broad daylight for the court. Arriving there, Yoshifusa was able to calm and restrain the emperor. Tomo no Yoshio's plot was subsequently revealed and he was sent into exile. Yoshifusa's loyalty and devotion to duty in this crisis were truly exemplary.

Emperor Seiwa, who devoted himself to Buddhism and constantly yearned to relinquish the throne, received the commandments from Jikaku Daishi and was given the Buddhist name of Soshin. It was most unusual for a reigning sovereign to undergo such initiation. In earlier times in China Emperor Yang of the Sui, when he was still known as the prince of Chin, was initiated into Buddhism by the T'ien-t'ai priest Chih-che and took the name of

great ministerships, none was perpetuated for two generations. It was even rare for Genji to hold the office of counselor (*nagon*) for more than one generation. An exception was the descendants of the great minister Masanobu, who regularly rose to become counselors. Another was the descendants of the great minister Takakira, four generations of whom served as major counselors. But shortly thereafter Takakira's line died out. We can only wonder why, among all the Genji, only Tomohira's descendants have survived as a ministerial line.

Subjects stemming from the imperial family are apt to rely solely upon their birth for advancement at court and, although lacking any particular ability, to behave with arrogance toward others and to feel self-satisfied in all matters. They are likely, moreover, to violate the proprieties expected of subjects. References to this kind of behavior can be found in Emperor's Uda's *Chronicle of Kammyō*, where they were no doubt included to encourage such imperially descended subjects to reflect on the consequences of their acts.

The imperial family certainly stands apart from other families, yet in our country there has been a mandate since the age of the gods stating that while the sovereign, as a descendant of Amaterasu Ōmikami, rules over the land, those subjects in the line of Ame-no-Koyane are also mandated to assist the sovereign in his administration of affairs. The Genji are subjects who have recently branched off from the imperial family. Should they, without virtue or merit, rise to high offices and lord it over people, they will surely be visited with punishment by the two great deities, Amaterasu and Ame-no-Koyane.

In the ancient age many princes and other royal descendants were given official positions in the provinces and were even appointed as generalissimos. The first to assign such generalissimos was Emperor Sujin who, in the tenth year of his reign, appointed four, all of whom were members of the imperial family, and sent them to the four circuits. Emperor Keikō, in the fifty-first year of his reign, inaugurated the practice of designating a chief among his ministers (*tōryō no shin*). The person he selected was Takeuchi no-Sukune. In the third year of Emperor Seimu's reign, Takeuchi was further advanced to the position of *ō-omi*. (This marked the

beginning of the office of *ō-omi* or *daijin* in our country.) A great-grandson of Emperor Kōgen, Takeuchi served as an administrator of government during six reigns.<sup>158</sup>

Things changed, however, when Fujiwara no Kamatari revitalized his clan and Yoshifusa ultimately established an imperial regency. For this marked a return to the arrangement decided upon in the age of the gods whereby the descendants of Ame-no-Koyane were to serve as assistants to the throne. Fuyutsugu also contributed much to this reassertion of the divinely mandated rights of the Fujiwara. Lamenting the decline of his clan, Fuyutsugu not only engaged ceaselessly in good works and accumulated great merit, but also prayed to the gods and devoted himself to Buddhism.

Prince Tomohira was indeed a man of great ability and virtue. His son Morofusa, who received the Genji surname and joined the ranks of subjects, also possessed talent in no way inferior to the noted officials of ancient times and achieved fame that spread throughout the land. Morofusa was appointed counselor at the age of seventeen. Devoting himself over a period of decades to the study of ancient court precedent and ceremonial, he rose to the positions of great minister and general of the inner palace guards and served the court until the age of seventy.

Prince Tomohira's daughter, Princess Kishi, became the consort of the regent Fujiwara no Yoritomi. As a result, her brother Morofusa was treated like the regent's son and was thought to be exactly like a Fujiwara. It is said that Morofusa even paid homage at the Kasuga Shrine, home of the Fujiwara tutelary deity. And, before long, Morofusa married a daughter of Fujiwara no Michinaga, thus making his own progeny the maternal descendants of Michinaga. These are the reasons why Morofusa's ministerial line has always regarded Michinaga and Yoritomi as its "founding fathers."

From Morofusa's time, the Murakami Genji have devoted themselves to both Chinese and Japanese learning and have been dedicated with total sincerity to loyal service to the country. Perhaps it is because of this that only the Morofusa line of Genji min-

<sup>158</sup> The reigns of Keikō, Seimu, Chūai, Jingū, Ōjin, and Nintoku.

isters has continued to thrive over many generations. Although within the line there have been some ministers of doubtful achievement and questionable virtue, their branch families have inevitably declined and died out. Genji in the future should carefully reflect upon the fate of such families as these.

Even though the intent of this book is mainly to record the affairs of sovereigns, I have also spoken several times about the origins of the Fujiwara clan. Moreover, in view of the longevity of the Murakami Genji line, I have wished to record something of the direct succession of ministers to which they are the inheritors. Emperor Murakami's line of sovereigns has continued through seventeen generations,<sup>159</sup> and we note with great admiration and reverence that, thanks to Murakami's enduring virtue, the subject line of Murakami Genji, which he spawned, has continued to serve at court throughout this same sequence of reigns.

136 *Emperor Reizei 160*

*Sixty-third reign*

*Personal name: Norihira*

*Second son of Emperor Murakami*

*Mother: Empress Yasuko, the daughter of the minister of the right Fujiwara no Morosuke*

*Acceded to the throne in 967 and changed the era name in 968*

Emperor Reizei was mentally unstable; at the time of his enthronement ceremony, he was unable to proceed to the Daigokuden. The ceremony, therefore, was held instead in the Shishinden. Reizei reigned just two years before abdicating, but lived until the age of sixty-three.<sup>161</sup>

159. The text mistakenly says seventeen reigns (*dai*); Chikafusa obviously meant to indicate the number of generations (*sei*) between the reigns of Murakami and Gomurakami, who occupied the throne when he wrote *Jinnō Shōtōki*.

160. The text specifies the pronunciation "Reizen," but I have adopted the more commonly used "Reizei."

161. Tsuji: Reizei lived until sixty-two.

From Emperor Reizei's time on, use of the title *tennō* was discontinued.<sup>162</sup> Bestowal of the posthumous name (*okurina*) upon retired emperors had already been suspended during Uda's reign.<sup>163</sup>

It is one thing for an emperor to specify in his will that the anniversary day of his death (*kokuki*) shall not be celebrated and that no mausoleum shall be built for him; these are acts of wisdom on his part as a sovereign and a father. But to discontinue the use of traditional honorary titles goes against the duties of the subject and the child. The imperial *okurina* for sovereigns from Jimmu through Temmu were all selected in a later age. Beginning with Jitō and Gemmei, *okurina* were given to each sovereign after he or she retired from the throne or entered holy orders. In both periods—that is, before and after Jitō-Gemmei—sovereigns were known exclusively as *tennō*. The decision to abandon the *tennō* designation was made by the wise men of the middle age, but I still cannot approve of it.

*Emperor En'yū*

*Sixty-fourth reign; thirty-fifth generation*

*Personal name: Norihira*

*Fifth son of Emperor Murakami and younger brother of Reizei by the same mother*

*Acceded to the throne in 969 and changed the era name in 970.*

Emperor En'yū reigned for fifteen years, abdicated, and received the honorary title of retired emperor in the usual manner.

Within a year or so after his abdication, En'yū took the tonname.<sup>162</sup> The term *in* was used instead of *tennō* to identify sovereigns. *In* originally denoted the residence of a retired sovereign, but later became a designation also for the retired sovereign himself. From Reizei's time on, all emperors were called *in* whether or not they actually abdicated and became retired sovereigns.

163. Chikafusa means Chinese-style posthumous names. In the place of such names, emperors became known by the location of residences they occupied (for example, the location of their main residences as retired sovereigns). The first emperor to receive this different kind of posthumous name was not Uda but Saga.