

Naobi no Mitama *(way of the gods)*

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This treatise discusses the Way.

Japan is where the awesome Sun Goddess, the ancestor of all the Gods, appeared.

This is why Japan is superior to all other countries, since all countries receive her plentiful benevolence.

The Goddess held the heavenly symbols in her hands.

These are the three sacred treasures that have been transmitted by the court through the generations.

She decreed that Japan was to be the land where her descendants would reign forever.

Thus in the beginning the imperial throne was established here along with heaven and earth.

As far as the ends of the earth where the clouds trail from heaven, and as distant as the valley toads' journey into the wilds,<sup>23</sup> it was decided that this was to be the country where the descendants of the Sun Goddess would govern; there were no violent deities or disobedient subjects then.<sup>24</sup>

No matter how many generations pass, what lowly man would rebel against the Emperor? When by chance some despicable rebels rose up in revolt, the Emperors promptly destroyed them with their great power in accordance with the precedents of the Age of the Gods.

<sup>23</sup> The long poem by Yamanoie Okura III: 徳良 on the greatness of the emperor in *Man'yōshū*, 800, has these lines:

... as far as the ends of the earth / where the clouds trail from the heavens, / as far as the far side of the valley / for the leaping toad, / he reigns.

Ian Hideo Levy, tr., *The Ten Thousand Leaves*, Princeton U.P., 1981, I, p. 349.

The toad appears in *Kojiki* as a knowledgeable creature (Phillips, p. 115) and is mentioned in *norito* RJA prayers, because in Chinese classics it was believed to perform mysterious acts.

Takeda Yukiichi 武井 行 & Kurano Kenji 久野 健二, ed., *Kojiki Norito* 古事記祝詞, NKBT 1, Iwanami, 1958, pp. 412-23; *Kojikiden*, in *Zensha*, 10, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> This may seem a contradiction because Norinaga later attributes the evil of this world to the Gods of Magatsuhi, the 'violent deities', and cites (p. 34, below) Hōjō Yoshitoki, Hōjō Yasutoki, and Ashikaga Takauji as 'disobedient subjects'.

*Kojiki* describes first the creation of the Central Land of the Reed Plains (Japan), its subsequent unsettled state, and the pacification process, which results in Okuninushi's surrender (Phillips, p. 135). Only at this time of peace did Amaterasu Omikami entrust the land to Hiko Ho no Ninigi no Mikoto (I, 6, 13.3.7.4) (Phillips, p. 139). Thus in the beginning, the Central Land of the Reed Plains could be assumed to have 'no violent deities or disobedient subjects.'

Until the last of a million reigns, the Emperor is the descendant of the Sun Goddess. Each Emperor is the son of the Sun Goddess, and so he is called the Son of the Heavenly God or the Child of the Sun. He takes the will of the Heavenly Gods as his own.

The Emperor does not deal with matters according to his own will. He acts and governs according to the precedents of the Age of the Gods. When in doubt, he seeks the will of the Gods through sacred divinations.

He makes no distinction between the present time and the Age of the Gods.

Not only the Emperor but also his ministers, officials, and subjects have maintained their clans and ranks. Their descendants have continued to practice their family professions; they have followed the example of their ancestors, serving the Emperor in the manner of the Age of the Gods as though they all belonged to a single generation.

The Emperors have governed this divine and peaceful country in accordance with the Way of the Gods.

According to the book on Emperor Kotoku in *Nihon Shoki*, the term *kamunagara* means 'to follow the Way of the Gods', or 'to possess in oneself the Way of the Gods'.<sup>25</sup> We should think about this. To follow the Way of the Gods means that the Emperor rules in accordance with the manner in which matters have been conducted since the Age of the Gods and the subsequent eras, and not according to his personal inclinations. Thus when the Emperor governs graciously, the Way of the Gods spontaneously manifests itself and nothing more needs to be done; this is what 'to possess in oneself the way of the Gods' means. Therefore, to say that the Emperor rules Japan as Akitsukami, or Manifest God,<sup>26</sup> means that the rule of the Emperors is in turn the rule of the Gods. This is what we see in the songs of *Man'yōshū*, where the terms *kamunagara* and so on are used. We can well understand why the ancient Koreans called Japan 'the Land of the Gods'.<sup>27</sup>

In ancient times there was no discussion about the Way.

According to the records of antiquity, Japan, the Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains and the Fresh Rice-Ears, is the country of the Way of the Gods, where no wordy disputes take place.<sup>28</sup>

This is because at that time the term 'Way' meant merely a path that led to some place.

<sup>25</sup> Entry for 647, during the reign of Emperor Kotoku 孝德, *Nihon Shoki*, 25. W. G. Aston, tr., *Nihongi*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1956, 2, p. 226.

<sup>26</sup> *Akitsu Mikami* 明神天皇 appears in the motto prayer *Izumo no kuni no miyatsuko no kamu yogoito* 出雲の国の宮子孫の神の御言, referring to the emperor. See Norinaga's commentary in *Izumo no kuni no miyatsuko no kamu yogoito* 出雲の国の宮子孫の神の御言, in *Zenshū*, 7, Kashoku 11:1111, 217-218.

<sup>27</sup> *Nihon Shoki* records that in the face of

the attack launched by Empress Jingū, the king of Silla is said to have stated, 'I have heard that in the East there is a divine country called Nippon....' Aston, I, p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> See *Man'yōshū*, 3250 & 3253, in which Japan is defined as the country where people do not argue and dispute formally with words.

*Michi*, a 'way', is written in *Kojiki* as *umashi michi*, or 'good way';<sup>29</sup> it consists of *chi* 地, meaning 'road', with the honorific prefix *mi* 御. It appears in terms such as *yamaji*, 'mountain roads', or *noji*, 'field paths'. It meant merely a route that led to some place. Apart from this, there was no other 'way' in antiquity.

Using 'the way of so-and-so' to refer to an ideal state or teachings of various sorts, is the custom of a foreign country.

Foreign countries are not the countries of the Sun Goddess, so they have no predestined rulers. Deities thrive there like noisy summer flies and become violent, so people's hearts are corrupt, their customs vulgar. Even a lowly slave can take over the country and suddenly become the sovereign. So rulers are on their guard lest they be overthrown by the lowly, while the lowly watch the ruler for a chance to steal his realm. The ruler and the ruled hate each other and thus it has been difficult to maintain peace since ancient times.

In those countries there were some men who were clever and charismatic. They seized the country when it was being governed by somebody else and took measures to avoid being overthrown. They governed the country for a while and made their reigns a model era for later generations. Such men are called sages in China.

In times of turmoil battles became commonplace and this produced many great generals. Similarly, when conditions are bad and a country is unsettled, the rulers strive to govern better; in every generation they give thought to governing and thus they become skillful in this regard, and that is why sages emerge. It is a mistake to believe that these sages possess divine superiority and rare virtues.

What they created and established as laws are called the Way. It therefore follows that the Way in China is nothing but devices to seize someone else's country, and schemes to protect it from being seized. In order to steal a country, a man takes everything into consideration, strives hard, and performs all manner of good deeds, thereby winning the hearts of the people. This is why the sages appear to be supremely virtuous and their Way serene and perfect.

Yet they themselves went against this Way and destroyed the sovereign, taking over his country. This means that they are the most evil of men and everything they say is a lie. Is it perhaps because vile minds created their Way in order to deceive the people that followers revere and obey them only superficially? In truth no one observes the Way. Their Way never helped the country, only its name became widespread. Eventually the Way of the Sages fell into disuse and turned into a topic for useless babbling by the Confucians, who criticize everybody except themselves.

It is a grave mistake for Japanese Confucians to adopt the Six Classics<sup>30</sup> exclusively and assert that China is the country in which the correct Way is practiced. Such a Way was created to make things just, because the original state of affairs was not just. To consider this subtle is utterly stupid. If people of later times observed the Way, then such admiration would be in order. But isn't it obvious from their history that no such person has existed?

<sup>29</sup> See *Kojiki* regarding *umashi michi* 美事道 (the good way): 'Then there will be a very good tideway.' Phillips, p. 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Shangshu* 尚書, *Menashi* 孟子, *Zhouyi* 周易, *Liji* 禮記, *Yueji* 悅記, and *Chunqiu* 春秋.

What is their Way? They establish cumbersome precepts, such as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, humility, filial piety, brotherhood, loyalty, and trust, and in this manner they rule people forcefully and severely. The Confucians criticize the law of later years as contrary to the Way of the ancient kings. But wasn't the Way of the ancient kings also the law of ancient times? They created even *Yijing* divination, making it sound very profound, and believed that they had mastered the principles of the universe. This was again a deceptive measure of theirs to attract and rule the people.

The principles of heaven and earth are entirely the designs of the Gods and are themselves thoroughly divine and mysterious. Our limited intellect cannot understand them, so how could anyone be able to master them? It is foolish to regard the sayings of the sages as the ultimate truth, and believe and revere them.

The custom of later generations in China has been to speculate about everything with human understanding of things, just as these sages did. Students in Japan should be aware of this and never become infatuated. In China people consider every detail and argue thus and so. That is why people's minds became mediocre and superficially sophisticated, accordingly making things more complicated. And as a result their country became only more uncontrollable. Thus the Way of the sages becomes in turn the source of disorder even though it was originally created to govern the country. In all matters, what can be left unrestricted should be left that way.

This is why in ancient Japan, even though we never possessed such sophisticated teachings, no disorder prevailed. The land was ruled in peace and the succession of the Sun Goddess continued uninterrupted. So if I were to speak in the Chinese sense, this is the supreme, greatest Way; because there was the Way, no word for the Way existed. No one talked about the Way, but it was there. Think of the difference between pompously arguing and not arguing about it at all. 'Not arguing' means not to discuss matters pretentiously, and not to make assertions in the Chinese manner.

A comparison may be made: gifted people do not assert themselves—only the mediocre argue about minute details and take pride in doing so as though these matters were of importance. In China they discuss formally the details of their Way because their Way is so shallow. The Japanese Confucians do not realize this and make light of our country, saying that there is no Way here.<sup>31</sup> Their inability to understand arises because they regard everything of China as most off. Not comprehending, they envy China; they argue forcibly that the Chinese Way exists also in Japan and assert faisties, contending with those who deny them.<sup>32</sup> But this is just like monkeys laughing at humans for not having xody hair. Feeling ashamed, the humans reply, 'We do have hair,' and strive to find and display their sparse hair in order to compete. Isn't this the action of 'tools who do not realize that being hairless is superior'?

In due course, Chinese books were introduced into Japan and the pursuit of learning began. People studied the customs of China and gradually these came to be employed in all aspects of Japanese life. It was at this time that the ancient manners and customs of Japan came to be specifically called 'the Way of the Gods', lest our Way become confused with the Ways of China; borrowing their terms, ours came to be called the 'Way'.

I will discuss later why the term 'the Way of the Gods' was used.

As time went on, the uncritical mimicking of Chinese customs became increasingly prominent, and finally the government ended up being thoroughly Chinese.

At the time of Emperor Kotoku and Emperor Tenji, the Chinese system of administration was adopted. Since then the ancient style was preserved only in Shinto ceremonies. This is why the customs of ancient Japan persisted exclusively in Shinto ceremonies in later years.

Even the hearts of the Japanese people changed to Chinese ways.

Failure to identify one's own heart with the Emperor's and instead harbor personal desires means that the Chinese spirit has taken over.

That is why disorder began to arise in Japan, which was at peace until that time. Incidents similar to those in China started to occur in these later years.

Casting aside the superior Way of Japan, people copied and revered the superficially sophisticated and argumentative thought and behavior of the Chinese. Thus their minds and deeds, at one time so honest and pure, became contrived and filthy. In the end it became impossible to govern Japan without using the strict methods of China.

Seeing such a state of affairs in the later years, a person might conclude that a country cannot be governed without the Way of the sages. It is difficult for him to understand that the chaotic state originally resulted from the Way of the sages. Think how Japan was so well governed in antiquity without borrowing the Chinese Way.

Everything in Heaven and Earth is in complete accordance with the will of the Gods.

Everything in this world, such as the change of seasons, rain and wind, fortunes and misfortunes in the affairs of an individual or country, is in accordance with the designs of the Gods.

Among the Gods, there are good ones and bad ones. Their deeds conform to their natures, which cannot be comprehended by human principles.

But people in Japan, fools and wise men alike, are unable to see this, because they are bewitched by the theories of foreign countries. How is it that even the Japanese national scholars, who should know better by their reading of ancient texts, do not understand this?

In foreign countries, good and evil are considered to be the result of retribution in Buddhism and the Will of Heaven in Chinese thought, but all these

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Japanese Confucian scholars such as Ogyū Sorai, 1666-1728, who claimed sinophilic views in works such as *ido* 1730.

<sup>32</sup> A reference to the Shinto school of Yamazaki Anzai (山崎闇斎, 1618-1682, whose theories were constructed in the manner of Chuizi 4: 1 Confucianism.



concepts are wrong. Buddhist theories are well understood by the scholars, so I will not discuss them here.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese theory of the Will of Heaven has infatuated even clever people so no one has yet seen its falsity. I shall therefore discuss it here.

The Will of Heaven is a contrived concept that the ancient sages of China thought up in order to justify their crime of overthrowing their lord and stealing his land.

In truth, Heaven and Earth have no mind so there can be no predetermination. If mind and logical principles existed in Heaven so that a good man could possess and govern the land, then sages should have appeared at the end of the Zhou dynasty.<sup>34</sup> Why didn't this happen? I cannot accept the argument that since the Duke of Zhou and Confucius had already established the Way in their times, no more sages subsequently appeared. This might be credible if after Confucius's time the Way had been observed and the country well governed. But after Confucius, didn't the Way decline in the extreme, the teachings become empty, and the country fall into disorder? If Heaven viewed this state of affairs as satisfactory, producing no sages, disregarding the perils of the nation, and finally handing it over to such a brute as Emperor Shi of Qin, to the greatest despair of the people—what error of design on the part of Heaven was this? I am just baffled. The argument might be pressed that Emperor Shi did not last because his rule was not in accordance with the Will of Heaven. But what kind of principle is it to hand the country over to such a rogue even for a short while?

If the Will of Heaven applies to the lord who governs the country, then such signs, both good and bad, should apply to people of lower ranks. Logically the good should prosper for a long time, and the bad be swiftly crushed. But that is not the case. At the present time as well as in the past, a good person often falls into misfortune while a scoundrel prospers. Why should this be? If there were truly the Will of Heaven, such mishaps should not occur.

In later years people became more sophisticated and no longer believed that the seizure of a country was the result of the Will of Heaven. So the form of seizure was changed to a yielding of the throne<sup>35</sup> and this is also criticized.<sup>36</sup> But wasn't the behavior of the ancient sages just the same? People accept as true the Will of Heaven of the ancient people, but do not believe in it as regards the kings of later years. What kind of confused thinking is this? Did the Will of Heaven exist in antiquity but not in later times?

A certain person said that Shun took Yao's kingdom, and Yu took Shun's kingdom,<sup>36</sup> and this may indeed be so. In the cases of Wangmang and Caocao, it

<sup>33</sup> Norinaga praises Tomioka Nakamori (1713-1746), whose scholastic exposition on Buddhism is given in *Shutsu Kōgo* (1746): 'There are many points that awakened me. As he is not a Buddhist monk, this is a real accomplishment.' *Tamokatsuna* (1746), 1, p. 244.

<sup>34</sup> After the fall of the Zhou dynasty, a series of rebellions followed, resulting in the rise of the tyrant Emperor Shi of Qin.

<sup>35</sup> The ascension of Wangmang (1, 17) to the

throne in A.D. 9 by removing Emperor Ping (1, 17), and Cao Pi (1, 17), the son of Cao Cao (1, 17), seizing the throne in 220, mark such unscrupulous interchange of power in the form of *shunrang* (1, 17), or 'yielding the throne'.

<sup>36</sup> Numata Yoritoshi discredits this citation in his *Shinano no Kaze*, 1828: 'These must have been Motoori's own words. These are baseless wild assertions, so he must have falsified them.' Washio, 7, p. 364.

But as Okuni Takamasa hints in his *Naobi*

appeared to be a yielding and succession, but in fact they seized power. So Yu and Shun must have done the same. In ancient times people were unsophisticated and believed the story that the kingdom had been yielded. Everyone seems to have been deceived in this respect. At the time of Caocao and Wangmang, however, people had become sophisticated and were not fooled. That is how unjust deeds came to be exposed. Had it been in antiquity, those fellows would, alas, have been revered as sages.

To our sorrow, nothing can be done about the violent perturbations of the evil Gods of Magatsubi.<sup>37</sup>

Foulness and destruction exist in this world; it is not possible for everything to be in accord with just principles. Malice is also abundant, all of which can be attributed to these Gods. When they are extremely destructive, even the great power of the Sun Goddess and the God of Takami Musubi<sup>38</sup> cannot control them, so human efforts accomplish nothing. The good are visited with calamity and the wicked lead happy lives. This and many other things that violate logical principles are all the doing of these gods. In a certain foreign country, there are no orthodox records of the Age of the Gods so people there were unable to understand this. As a result they propose theories about the Will of Heaven and try fitting everything into their 'logical' principles. This is absurd.

But the Sun Goddess dwells on the High Heavenly Plain, and the rays emanating from her are never dimmed. Thus she sheds light on this world and the Heavenly Symbols are handed down intact. The world is governed by the descendants of her grandchild,<sup>39</sup> just as she decreed.

In a foreign country there was no ruler ordained at the beginning, so a commoner can abruptly become the sovereign and the sovereign can be reduced to a commoner, or even lose his life. This has been their custom since ancient times. Those who plot to seize a country but fail in the attempt are called rebels, and they are despised and hated. But those who succeed are called sages and are

no *Miama Hochu*, 1855, there is a passage from a variant bamboo book *Jinmei Zhushu*

漢書竹書 commentary that substantiates Norinaga's citation: 'Shun caught Yao in Peiyang, and seized his throne. The Qiyao-chang Castle still remains.' *Zhushu jianlin pu* (1, 17), 1:6. Entry for the 97th year. In *Zhushu jianlin pu* (1, 17), 1:6.

<sup>37</sup> After his escape from the Land of Yomi, Izanagi bathed and purified himself. In the process, the pollution of the Land of Yomi produced two evil gods, Yaso Magatsubi no kami (1, 17), and Omagatsubi no kami (1, 17).

<sup>38</sup> *Shinano no Kaze*, 1828: 'These must have been Motoori's own words. These are baseless wild assertions, so he must have falsified them.' Washio, 7, p. 364.

The term *maga* refers to anything unsound and warped. Nothing further is said about these gods in *Kojiki*, but according to a *morito* prayer, *Mikado Hokai* (1, 17), these gods

governed the realm of ill fate. Takekida, 17, 420-21.

<sup>38</sup> *Shinano no Kaze*, 1828: 'These must have been Motoori's own words. These are baseless wild assertions, so he must have falsified them.' Washio, 7, p. 364.

<sup>39</sup> All things in this world, beginning with heaven and earth, were created by the generative power of the two Gods of Misubi, and they thus commanded all major events of the creation myth either directly or through their offspring gods. *Kojikiden*, in *Zensha*, 9, pp. 129-30.

<sup>39</sup> Hiko Ho no Ninigi no Mikoto, the son of the heavenly Grandchild, is called the Heavenly Grandchild. Authorized by the Sun Goddess, he descended from heaven to rule Japan. Philip, 1, p. 137.



reverted. It follows then that the sages are merely rebels who were successful.<sup>40</sup> Our sacred Emperors cannot be likened to the kings of such lowly countries. The Emperors' lineage was bestowed by the Ancestor God who gave birth to Japan. Ours is the land that was preordained for them from the beginning of Heaven and Earth.

The decree of the Sun Goddess does not state that the Emperor should not be obeyed if he is evil, so no one should judge him as good or bad. As long as Heaven and Earth exist, as long as the Sun and the Moon emit their rays of light, the throne remains forever undisturbed. This is why the reigning Emperor was called a God in the ancient records. And because he is a God, disputes about his virtue or wrong-doings should be put aside, and we should revere and serve him unconditionally. This is the true Way.

But owing to unrest in society in mid-antiquity, some men opposed the Court and disturbed the Emperor, thus betraying the Way. Men such as Hojo Yoshitoki, Hojo Yasutoki, or Ashikaga Takauji<sup>41</sup> were nothing but bandits who ignored the great benevolence of the Sun Goddess. But the intentions of the evil Gods of Magatsubi are truly mysterious; people followed these bandits, allowing them and their descendants to prosper briefly.

People know that they should worship the Sun Goddess who illuminates this world, but there are some who do not understand that they must revere the Emperor. They are infatuated by Chinese bookish thought, and consider the Chinese disorderly customs to be awesome. They are unable to comprehend the correct Way of Japan. They cannot see that the Sun brightening this world is the Sun Goddess, and they forget that the Emperor is her descendant.

As regards the High Seat of the lineage of the Sun in Heaven,

The reason why the succession of Emperors is called the lineage of the Sun is because they continue the rule of the Sun Goddess, taking her heart as their own. The reason why the throne is called the *takamikura*, the High Seat, is not just because it is noble; it is also the seat of *hi no kami*, the Sun Goddess. As regards the term *hi* [sun], you should recall ancient terms such as *taka hikaru* [high-shining], *takahahi* [high sun], and *hiitaka* [sun on high].<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> An epigram from the West similarly sums up this situation: 'Treason doth never prosper—what's the reason? / For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.' Sir John Harrington, 1561–1612.

<sup>41</sup> Hojo Yoshitoki 北条時時, 1162–1224, and his son Yasutoki 北条時義, 1183–1242, led the Kamakura bakufu at the time of the Jōkyū War, 1221. Refted Emperor Go-Toba 後鳥羽 declared them rebels against the throne and ordered their destruction. The Hojo responded by leading forces to Kyoto, defeating the imperial army, and exiled Go-Toba and his sons. Ashikaga Takauji 足利三代, 1305–1358, first assisted Emperor Go-Daigo 後醍醐 to overthrow the Kamakura bakufu in 1333, but then turned against him to establish the Ashikaga

bakufu and supported the rival Northern Court.

Both incidents had been treated by historians in their political, social, economic, and ideological aspects, so that they were intelligible in terms of the long development of the warrior society and its generation of the bakufu as a legitimate form of government. Norinaga's reductionist method, describing the bakufu leaders in moral terms as bandits, and attributing their success to the Gods of Magatsubi, represents a decline from the sophisticated historiographical standards of his time. But precisely because of its simplicity and ethnocentrism, it won many followers in prewar ultranationalist Japan.

<sup>42</sup> High (*taka*) and sun (*hi*) often appeared

Because the Emperors succeed to the seat of the Sun Goddess, they are equivalent to the Sun Goddess. Who among the recipients of the great benevolence of the Sun Goddess would not serve the Emperor with reverence and respect?

The Lofly Seat is set in the midst of Heaven and Earth forever. This is proof that the Way is mysterious, just, precious, and superior to all other Ways of foreign countries.

Although the Chinese talk about the Way, they have no Way. Hence China, which was originally in disorder, became increasingly chaotic and was finally taken over by neighboring people. The Chinese spitefully called them barbarians and never even regarded them as humans, but these people were so forceful that they seized the country. At a loss, the Chinese recognized their leader as the Sun of Heaven and held him in esteem. Isn't this despicable?

Even so, the Confucian scholars seem to regard China as a superior nation. The lineage of their sovereigns is unclear, and the general distinction between high and low is not preserved. Up until the age of Zhou, such distinctions might have existed in accordance with some sort of 'feudal system', but when the line of the sovereign changed, everything down to the lowest people changed. In truth of the sovereigns no longer exist there, and society has been in further disorder ranks and lineages no longer exist there, and society has been in further disorder since the period of the Kingdom of Qin. If she wins the king's favor, the daughter of a lowly man can be swiftly raised to the queen's throne, while a king's daughter can be shamelessly married to an ill-bred fellow. A man who was a mountain hunter yesterday can unexpectedly become a senior government official today. In every respect the distinction between high and low has become blurred, just as in the world of birds and beasts.

What is the Way? It is not the Way that arises spontaneously in nature.

Be well aware of this, and do not confuse the Way with the Taoist views of Lao-zi, Zhuang-zi, and others of China.<sup>43</sup>

Neither is the Way man-made. It came about by the awesome spirit of the God Takami Musubi.

Everything in this world was formed by the spirit of this great God.

The Way was begun by the Ancestral Gods Izanagi and Izanami.<sup>44</sup>

In combination, *Take hikaru* 天照 is an epithet for *hi no miko* 日之女神, the descendant of the Sun Goddess (*Man'yōshū*, 1, 45); *takahahi* 高天 refers to heaven, and combined with the verb *shiraseru* 知らせ (govern), it means that the Emperor passes away to heaven (*Man'yōshū* 2, 202); *hiitaka* 日高 is the ancient name of a county in Kii province, as recorded in *Wamyō Ruijishō* 倭名群載, dated 930.

<sup>43</sup> Masamune Aisno 正安, *Wamyō Ruijishō*, Nihon Koten Zensha Kanokai, 1930, p. 24v.

<sup>44</sup> Laozi's "nature" is not true nature; he is more mistaken than the Confucians. If a per-

son truly values nature, he should leave the world as it is. That Confucianism flourishes and the ancient natural style declines is also nature. To consider Confucianism wrong and to force on others the ancient natural ways is in turn a forced behavior that goes against nature.

<sup>45</sup> *Suzunoye Tomonori* 蘇能夜知, in *Zen-shū*, 1, p. 527.

<sup>46</sup> The last two deities of the Seven Generations of the Age of the Gods to come into existence. They descended from heaven onto the island of Onokoro, married, and created the world beneath.

Everything in this world started with these two Gods. The Way was inherited and maintained by the Sun Goddess, who then transmitted it. This is why it is called the Way of the Gods.

The term 'the Way of the Gods' appears for the first time in the book of Emperor Yomei in *Nihon Shoki*,<sup>45</sup> but here it refers to the worship of the gods. It is said in the book of Emperor Kotoku: 'The phrase *kaminagara* means to follow the Way of the Gods,' or 'to possess in oneself the Way of the Gods.'<sup>46</sup> This is precisely the Way of Japan in the broad sense. The above definition does not mean that there is some specific behavior designated as the Way. Thus worship of the Gods refers ultimately to the same thing as the Way.

However, some take up the passage in the Chinese classic, 'The sage frames his doctrine according to the Way of the Gods,'<sup>47</sup> and say that this is the same concept. But this view arises from ignorance and confuses the issue. This is because interpretation of the term referring to God(s) was originally different in Japan and China. In China the term seems to refer to the immeasurable mystery of Heaven and Earth, *yin* and *yang*, but this is an abstract idea and contains no substance. The Gods of Japan are the ancestors of the present Emperor; they are not an empty concept. So the Way of the Gods in the Chinese classics means an immeasurably mysterious Way, while the Way of the Gods in Japan is the Way that the Ancestral God founded and perpetuated. The two meanings of the Way are entirely different.

The meaning of the Way can be known now by studying *Kojiki* and other ancient texts. But the minds of the scholars are curdled by the evil Gods of Magatsubi and are smitten by the Chinese classics. All they think and say is derived from Buddhist and Chinese thought; they are unable to discern the essence of the true Way.

In antiquity, there was no discussion about the Way, so in the ancient writings there were no set concepts or terms to express the Way. Prince Toneri and later scholars could not grasp the meaning of the Way.<sup>48</sup> Their minds were stained with the theories found in Chinese writings that propound their Way-like matters, so they considered these to be the natural principles of Heaven and Earth. Even though they did not intend to depend on them, they were unwittingly won over and tended in that direction. To regard the Way of another country as an aid to the true Way shows that their hearts have been taken hostage.

Beginning with *yin* and *yang*, and *qian* and *kun*,<sup>49</sup> the sages used their own

<sup>45</sup> 'The Emperor [Yomei III] believed in the Law of Buddhism and revered the Way of the Gods,' Aston, I, p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> See n. 25, above.

<sup>47</sup> Aston, 2, p. 106, quoting from *Yijing* 4, 13.

<sup>48</sup> 'They contemplate the sacred activities of heaven and note how seasons unfold each in its proper time. It is because the holy sage makes these matters the subject of his teaching that all the world accepts his dominion.'

('Sacred activities of heaven' is the translation of *shenao* 神代.)

J. Blofeld, ed., *The Book of Changes*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1965, p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> Prince Toneri (A compiled *Nihon Shoki*, 720, in the style of Chinese state histories, thereby making light of the Way of the Gods of Japan.

<sup>49</sup> *Yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 are the two opposing principles that permeate heaven (*qian* 乾) and earth (*kun* 坤).

reasoning to construct the theories of China. If you listen casually to these notions they sound profound, but when you distance yourself from their sphere of learning and look at them from the outside, they are nothing much and in fact are quite shallow. And yet now, as well as in the past, so many people have strayed into their field and are unable to free themselves. This infuriates me.

The teachings of Japan have remained unchanged since their transmission from the Age of the Gods. No human private reasoning has been added, and as a result they appear simple. In fact these teachings are unfathomable; they contain principles of profundity and beauty that are beyond human intellect. And if you are not aware of this, it means that you have been led astray by the Chinese books. Even if you study with all your might for a thousand years, it will do you no good unless you turn away from such books, for they will not help you to understand the Way.

But the ancient texts are all transcribed in Chinese, so you should be familiar with the basics of that culture. In order to learn about the various writing systems and so on, study the Chinese classics in your spare time. If your Japanese spirit is firm and unwavering, there is nothing wrong in doing this.

Detailed rituals became widespread and were regarded as the teaching of the Way of the Gods to be followed by individuals.<sup>50</sup> But these are private inventions of recent years and arose out of envy for the teaching styles of the Chinese.

In later years a custom of private initiation into arcane teachings arose, whereby knowledge is secretly transmitted to selected individuals.<sup>51</sup> This is artificial and false, for in this world all good things should be disseminated in every possible way. To hide knowledge and not allow everyone to have access to it, trying to make it one's private possession, is deplorable.

It is treasonous for the lowly to covet the awesome Way by which the Emperor governs this world and try to make it their private possession.

Subordinates should observe the Way by unconditionally obeying the will of their superiors. There may well be other deeds that should be done in accordance with the Way of the Gods, but if you learn, teach, and perform them on your own accord, doesn't this become a private enterprise unrelated to obedience toward superiors?

Thanks to the spirit of the God of Musubi, people are born with innate knowledge and have capacity to perform what they ought to perform in this world.

In accordance with their status in this world, all living things, even birds and insects, know and carry out what they should do in order to live, and this is thanks

<sup>50</sup> For a similar critical discussion of various schools of Shinto, as well as of Buddhism, Confucianism, and the Way, see

Tomimaga Nakamoto, *Okina no Fumi* 古今の土, Kato Shichi, 'Tomimaga Nakamoto, 1715-46: A Tokugawa iconoclast', in *MN* 22 (1967).

1-2, pp. 194-210.

<sup>51</sup> 'The tendency peculiar to Shintôism is secrecy, such as divine secrets or secret arts in private transmission, in other words, keeping things in secrecy,' Kato, p. 210.



to the spirit of the God of Miasubi. Of all living beings, humans are especially superior, and in accordance with our superior ability, we know and do what we should know and do. Why pursue the matter any further?

If we assume that humans cannot learn or behave without being taught, then doesn't it mean that we are inferior to birds and insects? Virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, humility, filial piety, brotherhood, loyalty, trust and so on are qualities that we all should possess and observe. We know them intuitively, without being taught.

The Way of the sages was invented in order to forcibly govern a country that was originally ungovernable. Their Way is beyond our powers, as it tries to teach us so oppressively. This is not in accordance with the true Way. Few observe these teachings sincerely, although there is a great deal of loud and formal talk about it. It is wrong to consider such teachings as the principles of Heaven.

Why do the Chinese detest what runs contrary to their Way, attributing it to human desire? Where does human desire come from and why does it arise? There must have been a logical cause for it to originate, so isn't human desire also a part of the heavenly principle? Take, for example, their prohibition of marriage within the clan even after a hundred generations. That was not so in ancient China: the strict prohibition began only during the period of Zhou. It came about because of the foul customs of that country, where illicit relations were common among parents, children, and siblings. Because they lacked discipline, it was difficult to govern the people without this prohibition. But isn't such strictness a national disgrace? In every respect, a large number of violators prompts strictness of the law.

The Chinese rules were established, but they were not the true Way. They were not in accordance with human nature, so only a few followed them. Needless to say, they were observed even less in later generations. As early as the Zhou period, even the lords broke this law, so we can guess what happened thereafter. There were even cases of fornication with sisters and so on.<sup>32</sup>

The Japanese Confucian scholars forget that people have not observed these Chinese rules since antiquity, and they hold their useless principles as important. In order to belittle Japan, they often point out how siblings here had intercourse in antiquity, condemning it as the behavior of birds and beasts. The learned men of Japan also feel dissatisfied, regarding it as a regrettable practice. They evade the issue by saying this and that, and never come up with anything that clearly addresses the point. This is because they are accustomed and cling to the logic of the shallow wisdom of the sages. If only they cast off such adulation, what would it matter if the Japanese were different from the Chinese?

In ancient Japan, only brothers and sisters born of the same mother were kept apart. Beginning with the imperial family, mating between a half-brother and a half-sister born of the same father was a common practice. This was not taboo even after the capital was moved to Kyoto. However, the distinction between nobles and commoners was serenely established and order was spontaneously

maintained within society. This was in accordance with the true Way instituted by our ancestral Gods.

But subsequently the Chinese style was introduced, and a half-brother and a half-sister were called brother and sister, and marriage between them became forbidden. To break this rule now is of course wrong, but in antiquity the practice was in keeping with the times. No one should dispute this by using standards set by codes of conduct of another country.

In antiquity all the people down to the lowest rank took the heart of the Emperor as their own.

They served the Emperor without any selfish intentions. People single-mindedly worshipped him, and under the benevolent shadow of his grace, they revered their ancestors.

The Emperor worships and reigns in the presence of his great ancestor God. Similarly, the ministers, officials, subjects, and indeed the entire populace worship their respective ancestor gods. The Emperor enshrines the Gods of Heaven and Earth for the court and society. In the same manner, the subjects pray to the good Gods to attain happiness and placate the evil Gods to avoid disasters. If they sin or become defiled, they cleanse themselves. All such things are the natural actions of the human heart and should be performed without fail.

There are some who insist that if a person's heart conforms with the true Way, it is not necessary to perform the above things.<sup>33</sup> That may be in accordance with the teachings of Buddhism or Confucianism, but it greatly violates the Way of the Gods.

In foreign countries, they place logic first even when it comes to revering the gods, discussing the matter back and forth. Sometimes they even brand worship as heretical and prohibit it. All this is but shallow human reasoning.

The Gods are different from such things as the Buddha. There are not only the good Gods but also the evil Gods, and their hearts and deeds are in accordance with their nature. That is why malicious people flourish and virtuous people meet misfortune in this world. The Gods are not to be reasoned with; merely revere their power and worship them with all your heart.

When you worship the Gods, you should please them with the things they are fond of. First cleanse everything so that all is spotless. Offer them much delicious food, koto and flute music, song and dance. People performed these delightful things in the Age of the Gods; these rituals were the ancient Way. To value only interior devotion and neglect offerings and performance is a misunderstanding derived from the Chinese spirit.

As regards the worship of the Gods, fire must be considered the most important and sacred item. We know this from the record that deals with the Land of

<sup>32</sup> As Stolle cites in his German translation of *Naobi no Mitama*, the phrase seems to have been taken from a legendary song attributed to Sugawara Michizane 藤原 実成, 845-903.

*Kokorodani / makoto no mitchi ni / kanae naba / inorizutemo / kami ya mamoru.*  
 'If in your heart / you conform / to the true

Way, / the Gods will protect you / even if you offer no formal prayers.'

Inoue Tetsujirō 井上 哲次郎, *Sugawara Michizane*, Hokkai, 1936, pp. 71-72. Also mentioned in Sakamoto Tarō 坂本 大六, *Sugawara Michizane*, Yoshikawa, 1962, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup> In his 71st year, he [Yao] commanded his two daughters to become wives to Shun.<sup>34</sup>  
 Chinese Classics, Hong Kong U.P., 1960, 3, p. 114.

James Legge, tr., *The Shu jing*, in *The*



the Dead in the book on the Age of the Gods.<sup>54</sup> This reverence for fire is not limited to the service of the Gods. You should always observe it and never be lax. If the fire is contaminated, the evil Gods will gain a hold and storm about, and this is how evil materializes in this world. Contamination of fire should be avoided for the sake of people and society as a whole.

This taboo is now hardly observed in services for the Gods or at their shrines. No one observes it because of the spread of half-cooked shallow Chinese logic that condemns the fire taboo as nonsense. This is why even the knowledgeable people of the past, who interpreted and taught the ancient records of the Gods, dealt with the principles in bothersome detail according to the Chinese way. How could they fail to discuss this fire taboo?

The important thing is to do what you are supposed to do in accordance with your position in society, and lead your life in peace and delight.

What else is there to be taught beyond this? In the Age of the Gods, teaching certainly existed: people taught children about the world, artisans taught their crafts, artists taught their various performing skills. The teachings of Buddha and Confucius appear to be no different from these, but if you think about it, they are not the same.

At this point, how could there be something called the Way, which should be specifically taught and consciously carried out?

Someone once asked me, 'Then is the Way of the Gods the same as what Laozi and Zhuangzi of China taught?' I answered, 'It is true that Laozi and Zhuangzi summed superficial Confucian logic and esteemed nature, and so there is some similarity. But they were born in an unfortunate country, and not in Japan, the land of the Gods. Further, these men were accustomed to hearing the arguments of the sages of successive generations. So what they considered "natural" is nature seen from the viewpoint of the sages. They did not even know that everything originated from the Gods, and that all the events in the world are their deeds. So they were fundamentally mistaken.'

If you insist on searching for the Way, first cleanse yourself of filthy Chinese learning, hold fast to the pure Japanese spirit, and study the ancient books thoroughly. Then it will become clear naturally that there is no Way that a person should learn and perform. To understand this is precisely to observe the Way of the Gods. Therefore, to discuss the matter even this far deviates from the essence of the Way. But in view of the woe of the spirit of the Gods Kamutsubi, I could not keep silent. With the aid of the spirit of the Gods Kamu Naobi and Onaobi,<sup>55</sup> I wanted to alleviate this misfortune.

<sup>54</sup> Izanami dies giving birth to the fire god; Izanagi goes to the Land of Yomi to invite her back, but she is unable to return.

In *Kojikiden*, Norinaga comments that this is 'because of the pollution encountered by eating at the hearth of Yomi.' Further, 'it is impossible to fathom why there is pure fire and polluted fire; but to deny that it is so, is to

disbelieve the Divine Words and to rely perversely on one's own mind.' Translation in Philippi, p. 401.

Norinaga continues: 'How awesome that all calamities are induced by polluted fire. Calamities are brought about by the Gods of Magatsubi, who came into existence from the filth of Yomi. When fire is impure, these Gods

What I have stated above is not my private thoughts; it can be confirmed by the ancient Classics. Astute people will not question this.

With deepest respect I close this treatise on the 9th Day, Tenth Month, Meiwa 8 [1771].

TAIRA no ASOMI NORINAGA  
The Emperor's subject  
Iitaka county, Ise province

gain force and become violent....' *Zenshu*, 9, p. 241.

<sup>55</sup> Subsequent to the birth of the evil Gods of Magatsubi, 'in order to rectify these evils' the Gods of Naobi came into existence. Philippi, p. 69.

Norinaga lists the *norito* prayers in which

they are further defined: 'not mingling with misfortunes caused by the Gods of Magatsubi—the Gods of Naobi correct in sigh and sound the faults and mistakes.' (Takeda, p. 421). 'All cases indicate that they are the Gods who correct' evil. *Kojikiden*, in *Zenshu*, 9, p. 274.