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The Kojiki

Ancient Japanese Chronicles



EASTERN  TREASURES

The Kojiki of
Ō NO YASUMARO

(d. 723)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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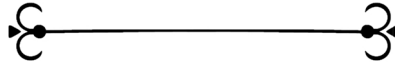
THE KOJIKI



By Delphi Classics, 2026

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The Kojiki - Ancient Japanese Chronicles



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The Translation



Heijo Palace First Daigokuden, Nara, Japan — in 710 Empress Genmei established her official residence here in Nara. The following year the Empress charged Ō no Yasumaro with the duty of writing 'The Kojiki'.

The Kojiki - Ancient Japanese Chronicles



Translated by Basil Hall Chamberlain, 1882

Compiled from oral tradition in the early eighth century, *The Kojiki* ('Records of Ancient Matters') represents the first written record in Japan and is considered a sacred text of the Shinto religion. The Japanese nobleman and bureaucrat Ō no Yasumaro (died 723) is traditionally ascribed to be the compiler and editor of *The Kojiki*. Empress Genmei (r. 707-721) charged Yasumaro with the duty of writing the chronicle in 711, utilising the differing clan chronicles and native myths. It was finished the following year and presented to Empress Genmei in three volumes.

An important source book for ceremonies, customs, divination and magical practices of ancient Japan, *The Kojiki* includes myths, legends and historical accounts of the imperial court from the earliest days of its creation to the reign of Empress Suiko in 628. Much of Shinto thought is based on interpretations of the mythology contained in the book. It was written using Chinese characters to represent Japanese sounds, since no means of recording Japan's developing spoken language had yet been devised. The religious and ethical values of the text were rediscovered and re-evaluated many years later in the mid-eighteenth century.

A polytheistic and animistic religion, Shinto revolves around supernatural entities called the kami, who are believed to inhabit all things, including forces of nature and prominent landscape locations. The kami are worshipped at kamidana household shrines, family shrines and jinja public shrines. The latter are staffed by priests, known as kannushi, who oversee offerings of food and drink to the specific kami enshrined at that location, ensuring harmony between humans and kami and to solicit the latter's blessing. The religion has no single creator or specific doctrine, and instead exists in a diverse range of local and regional forms. The earliest written tradition regarding kami worship was recorded in *The Kojiki*

The extant text is a collation of different traditions woven into a single "official" mythology, with the objective of justifying the rule of the imperial Yamato polity and at the same time to subsume different interest groups, giving them a place and an interest in the national genealogy-mythology. Possible factors for *The Kojiki*'s compilation include furthering the imperial agenda, an increased interest in the nation's origins in reaction to the influx of foreign culture and the need for an authoritative genealogical account by which to consider the claims of noble families into a new system of ranks and titles.

The narrative establishes the Yamato line's right to rule via myth and legend, portraying it as the progeny of heavenly deities and the rightful heir to the land of Japan. A large part of the latter portion of the text is spent recounting various genealogies with the aim of giving the imperial family an air of antiquity, which may not necessarily reflect historical accuracy. Regardless of the work's original intent, it finalised and possibly even formulated the framework by which Japanese history was examined in terms of the reign of emperors.

In contrast to the *Nihon Shoki* (compiled 720), the first of six histories commissioned by the imperial court, which was modelled on Chinese dynastic histories and was intended to be a national chronicle that could be shown with pride to foreign envoys, *The Kojiki* is inward looking, concerned mainly with the ruling family and prominent clans, and so apparently intended for internal consumption only.

Whereas the *Nihon Shoki* uses a variety of source documents including Chinese texts, *The Kojiki* is based on sources handed down within the court.

It received its most serious study in the hands of the scholar Motoori Norinaga, who obtained a copy of the Kan'ei printed edition in 1754. Norinaga devoted over thirty years to produce a 44-volume study of the text called *Kojiki-den* (1764-1798). Following this endeavour, *The Kojiki* assumed an importance equal to the *Nihon Shoki*; in fact, in Norinaga's view it was a more trustworthy source for ancient Japanese traditions, since it was free of "Chinese mentality". He viewed *The Kojiki* as a true account of actual events that, when read correctly, could reveal Japan in its pristine, ideal state as a community where the kami, the emperor and the people lived in harmony. Norinaga's work was carried on in different directions by his disciple Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) and his rivals Fujitani Mitsue (1768-1823) and Tachibana Moribe (1781-1849), who each produced commentaries and treatises on the text.

The Kojiki is divided into three parts: the *Kamitsumaki* (upper volume), the *Nakatsumaki* (middle volume) and the *Shimotsumaki* (lower volume). The first volume is also known as the "Volume of the Age of the Gods" and includes a preface. Primarily, this volume is focused on the deities of creation and the births of various deities of the kamiyo period. It also outlines myths concerning the foundation of Japan, describing how Ninigi-no-Mikoto, grandson of Amaterasu and great-grandfather of Emperor Jimmu, descended from heaven to Takachihonome in Kyūshū and became the progenitor of the Japanese Imperial line.

The middle volume opens with the conquests of Jimmu, the legendary first Emperor of Japan, and ends with the 15th Emperor, Ōjin. The second through ninth Emperors' reigns are recorded in minimum detail, with only their names, the names of their various descendants and the locations of their palaces and tombs listed, with no mention of their achievements. Many of the stories in this volume are mythological; the allegedly historical information is doubted by many.

The *Shimotsumaki*, or lower volume, covers the 16th to 33rd Emperors and, unlike the previous volumes, has very limited references to interactions with deities, while the information pertaining to the 24th to 33rd Emperors is scant.



Portrait of Ō no Yasumaro by Kikuchi Yōsai, c. 1860

而隱也則其故余同其大國主神令汝子事代主神如此言
可白子平於是忽白之忽我子有建御者方神除此者無也如此
間其建御者方神引石敷子未而朱言誰未我國而忽如此
物言然欲為力竟故我先欲取其御子故令取其御子者即取成
立水只取成劍刃故令懼而退者今欲取其建御者方神之手
而取者如取石等極批而後離者即此去故退往而通到科野國所
羽海將政時建御者方神自怒莫敢我除地者不行他處也
我大國主神之命不建代主神之言此善原中國有隱天

A page from the Shinpukuji manuscript of 'The Kojiki', c. 1371



The principal character of the middle volume: Emperor Jimmu with his emblematic self bow, the kinshikyū by Adachi Ginkō, 1891 — Jimmu was the legendary first emperor of Japan according to 'The Kojiki'. He is believed to have been born in c. 711 BC.

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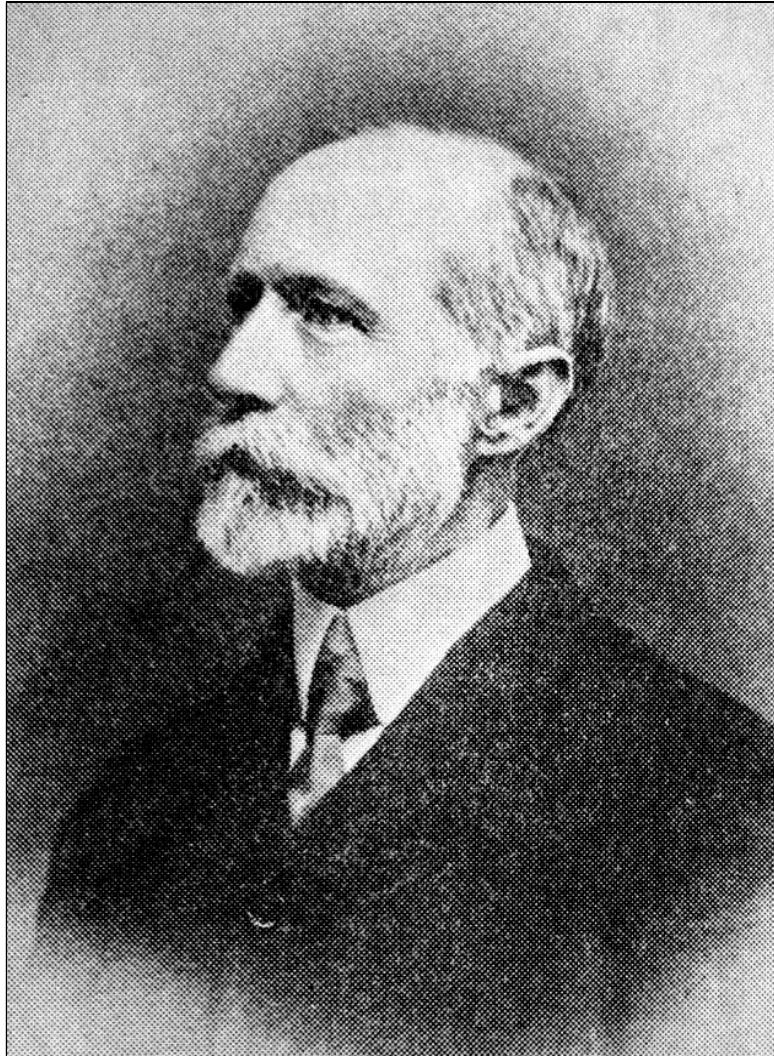
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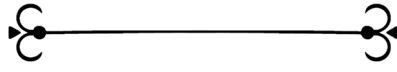


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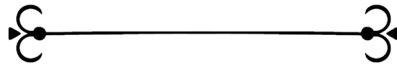


The translator, Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935) was a British academic and Japanologist. He was a professor of the Japanese language at Tokyo Imperial University and one of the foremost British Japanologists active in Japan during the late nineteenth century.

VOLUME I.¹



PREFACE.²



I³ Yasumaro⁴ say:⁵

Now when chaos had begun to condense, but force and form were not yet manifest, and there was nought named, nought done, who could know its shape?⁶ Nevertheless Heaven and Earth first parted, and the Three Deities performed the commencement of creation; the Passive and Active Essences then developed, and the Two Spirits became the ancestors of all things.⁷ Therefore⁸ did he enter obscurity and emerge into light, and the Sun and Moon were revealed by the washing of his eyes; he floated on and plunged into the sea-water, and Heavenly and Earthly Deities appeared through the ablutions of his person?⁹ So in the dimness of the great commencement, we, by relying on the original teaching, learn the time of the conception of the earth and of the birth of islands; in the remoteness of the original beginning, we, by trusting the former sages, perceive the era of the genesis of Deities and of the establishment of men.¹⁰ Truly do we know that a mirror was hung up, that jewels were spat out, and that then an Hundred Kings succeeded each other; that a blade was bitten, and a serpent cut in pieces, so that a Myriad Deities did flourish.¹¹ By deliberations in the Tranquil River the Empire was pacified; by discussions on the Little Shore the land was purified.¹² Wherefore His Augustness Ho-no-ni-ni-gi¹³ first descended to the Peak of Takachi,¹⁴ and the Heavenly Sovereign Kamu-Yamato¹⁵ did traverse the Island of the Dragon-Fly.¹⁶ A weird bear put forth its claws, and a heavenly sabre was obtained at Takakura.¹⁷ They with tails obstructed the path, and a great crow guided him to Yeshinu.¹⁸ Dancing in rows they destroyed the brigands, and listening to a song they vanquished the foemen.¹⁹ Being instructed in a dream, he was reverent to the Heavenly and Earthly Deities, and was therefore styled the Wise Monarch,²⁰ having gazed on the smoke, he was benevolent to the black-haired people, and is therefore remembered as the Emperor-Sage.²¹ Determining the frontiers and civilizing the country, he issued laws from the Nearer Afumi;²² reforming the surnames and selecting the gentile names, he held sway at the Further Asuka.²³ Though each differed in caution and in ardour, though all were unlike in accomplishments and in intrinsic worth, yet was there none who did not by contemplating antiquity correct manners that had fallen to ruin, and by illumining modern times repair laws that were approaching dissolution.²⁴

In the august reign of the Heavenly Sovereign who governed the Eight Great Islands from the Great Palace of Kiyomihara at Asuka,²⁵ the Hidden Dragon put on perfection, the Reiterated Thunder came at the appointed moment. Having heard a song in a dream, he felt that he should continue the succession; having reached the water at night, he knew that he should receive the inheritance. Nevertheless Heaven's time was not yet, and he escaped like the cicada to the Southern Mountains; both men and matters were favourable, and he marched like the tiger to the Eastern Land. Suddenly riding in the Imperial Palanquin, he forced his way across mountains and rivers: the Six Divisions rolled like thunder, the Three Hosts sped like lightning. The erect spears lifted up their might, and the bold warriors arose like smoke: the crimson flags glistened among the weapons, and the ill-omened crew were shattered like tiles. Or ere a day had elapsed, the evil influences were purified: forthwith were the cattle let loose and the horses given repose, as with shouts of victory they returned to the Flowery Summer; the flags were rolled up and the javelins put away, as with dances

and chants they came to rest in the capital city. The year was that of the Cock, and it was in the Second Moon.²⁶ At the Great Palace of Kiyomihara did he ascend to the Heavenly seat: in morality he outstripped Ken-Kō, in virtue he surpassed Shiū-Ō. Having grasped the celestial seals, he was paramount over the Six Cardinal Points; having obtained the heavenly supremacy, he annexed the Eight Wildernesses. He held the mean between the Two Essences,²⁷ and regulated the order of the Five Elements. He established divine reason wherewith to advance good customs; he disseminated brilliant usages wherewith to make the land great. Moreover the ocean of his wisdom, in its vastness, profoundly investigated the highest antiquity; the mirror of his heart, in its fervour, clearly observed former ages.

Hereupon the Heavenly Sovereign commanded, saying: “I hear that the chronicles of the emperors and likewise the original words in the possession of the various families deviate from exact truth, and are mostly amplified by empty falsehoods. If at the present time these imperfections be not amended, ere many years shall have elapsed, the purport of this, the great basis²⁸ of the country, the grand foundation of the monarchy, will be destroyed. So now I desire to have the chronicles of the emperors selected and recorded, and the old words examined and ascertained, falsehoods being erased and the truth determined, in order to transmit [the latter] to after ages.”²⁹ At that time there was a retainer whose surname was Hiyeda and his personal name Are. He was twenty-eight years old, and of so intelligent a disposition that he could repeat with his mouth whatever met his eyes, and record in his heart whatever struck his ears.³⁰ Forthwith Are was commanded to learn by heart the genealogies of the emperors, and likewise the words of former ages. Nevertheless time elapsed and the age changed, and the thing was not yet carried out.³¹

Prostrate I consider how Her Majesty the Empress, having obtained Unity, illumines the empire, — being versed in the Triad, nourishes the people.³² Ruling from the Purple Palace, Her virtue reaches to the utmost limits of the horses’ hoof-marks: dwelling amid the Sombre Retinue, Her influence illumines the furthest distance attained to by vessels’ prows. The sun rises, and the brightness is increased; the clouds disperse, neither is there smoke. Never cease the historiographers from recording the good omens of connected stalks and double rice-ears; never for a single moon is the treasury without the tribute of continuous beacon-fires and repeated interpretations. In fame She must be pronounced superior to Bum-Mei, in virtue more eminent than Ten-Itsu.³³ Hereupon,³⁴ regretting the errors in the old words, and wishing to correct the misstatements in the former chronicles, She, on the eighteenth day of the ninth moon of the fourth year of Wa-dō,³⁵ commanded me Yasumaro to select and record the old words learnt by heart by Hiyeda no Are according to the Imperial Decree, and dutifully to lift them up to Her.³⁶

In reverent obedience to the contents of the Decree, I have made a careful choice. But in high antiquity both speech and thought were so simple, that it would be difficult to arrange phrases and compose periods in the characters.³⁷ To relate everything in an ideographic transcription would entail an inadequate expression of the meaning; to write altogether according to the phonetic method would make the story of events unduly lengthy.³⁸ For this reason have I sometimes in the same sentence used the phonetic and ideographic systems conjointly, and have sometimes in one matter used the ideographic record exclusively. Moreover where the drift of the words was obscure, I have by comments elucidated their signification; but need it be said that I have nowhere commented on what was easy?³⁹ Again, in such cases as calling the surname 日下 *Kusaka*, and the personal name written with the character 帶 *Tarashi*, I have followed usage without alteration.⁴⁰ Altogether the things recorded

commence with the separation of Heaven and Earth, and conclude with the august reign at Woharida.⁴¹ So from the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of-Heaven down to His Augustness Prince-Wave-Limit-Brave-Cormorant-Thatch-Meeting-Incompletely makes the First Volume; from the Heavenly Sovereign Kamu-Yamato-Ihare-Biko down to the august reign of Homuda makes the Second Volume; from the Emperor Oho-Sazaki down to the great palace of Woharida makes the Third Volume.⁴² Altogether I have written Three Volumes, which I reverently and respectfully present.⁴³ I Yasumaro, with true trembling and true fear, bow my head, bow my head.

Reverently presented by the Court Noble Futo no Yasumaro, an Officer of the Upper Division of the First Class of the Fifth Rank and of the Fifth Order of Merit, on the 28th day of the first moon of the fifth year of Wa-dō.⁴⁴

ENDNOTES.

¹ Literally “Upper Volume,” there being three in all, and it being the common Japanese practice (borrowed from the Chinese) to use the words Upper, Middle, and Lower to denote the First, Second and Third Volumes of a work respectively.

² The peculiar nature of this Preface, which is but a *tour de force* meant to show that the writer could compose in the Chinese style if he chose to do so, has been already hinted at in the Introduction. It is indeed a laboured little composition, and, but for the facts stated in its latter portion, has no value except perhaps as a specimen of the manner in which the legends of one country may be made to change aspect by being presented through the medium of the philosophical terminology and set phrases of another. It may be divided into five parts. In the first the writer, in a succession of brief allusions antithetically balanced, summarizes the most striking of the legends that are detailed in the pages of his “Records,” and in a few words paints the exploits of some of the early emperors. In the second the troubles that ushered in the reign of the Emperor Tem-mu and his triumph over Prince Ohotomo are related at greater length in high-flown allusive phrases borrowed from the Chinese historians. The third division gives us the Emperor Tem-mu’s decree ordering the compilation of the “Records,” and the fourth tells how the execution of that decree was delayed till the reign of the Empress Gem-miyō (A. D. 708–715), on whom likewise a panegyric is pronounced. In the fifth and last the compiler enters into some details concerning the style and method which he has adopted.

³ The First Personal Pronoun is here represented by the humble character 臣, “vassal,” used in China by a subject when addressing his sovereign in writing.

⁴ This is the compiler’s personal name. His full name and titles, as given at the end of this preface, were 正五位上勳五等太朝臣安萬侶, *i.e.* the Court Noble Futo no Yasumaro, an Officer of the Upper Division of the First Class of the Fifth Rank and of the Fifth Order of Merit. The family of Futo claimed to descend from His Augustness Kamu-yawi-mimi, second son of the Emperor Jim-mu. Yasumaro’s death is recorded in the “Chronicles of Japan Continued,” under date of 30th August, A. D. 723.

⁵ *I.e.* I report as follows to Her Majesty the Empress.

⁶ *I.e.* in the primeval void which preceded all phenomena there was neither form nor movement, and it was therefore unnamed and unknowable.

⁷ This sentence summarizes the first eight Sections of the text of the “Records.” The “three Deities” are the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of-Heaven, the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity, and the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity (see Sect. I. Notes 4, 5, and 6). The two Spirits representing the “Passive and Active Elements” are the creatrix and creator Izanami and Izanagi (the “Female-Who-Invites” and the “Male-Who-Invites,” — see Sect. II, Note 8), the procreation by whom of the islands of the Japanese archipelago and of a large number of gods and goddesses forms the subject of Sections III.–VII.

⁸ The word “therefore” is not appropriate in this place, and Motowori accordingly warns the reader to lay no stress upon it.

⁹ This sentence alludes to Izanagi’s visit to Hades, and to the purification of his person on his return to the Upper World (see Sects. IX. and X). It also refers to the birth of the Sun-Goddess and of the Moon-God from his left and from his right eye respectively, and to that of a large number of lesser gods and goddesses, who were produced from every article of his wearing apparel and from every part of his person on the occasion of his performing those ablutions (see Sect. X).

¹⁰ The “original teaching” here mentioned means the original traditions of Japanese antiquity. The “former sages,” — a term which in China fitly designates such philosophers as Confucius and Mencius, but which it is difficult to invest with any particular sense here in Japan where no sages have ever arisen, — may be best taken to mean those unknown persons who transmitted the legends of the gods and early emperors. The “establishment of men” probably alludes to the investiture of the sovereignty of Japan in the human descendants of the Sun-Goddess. The expression is however obscure, and Motowori himself has nothing satisfactory to tell us about it.

¹¹ The mirror here mentioned is that by means of which the Sun-Goddess was allured out of the cave (see Sect. XVI); the jewels are those which Susa-no-Wo (the “Impetuous Male Deity”) begged of his sister the Sun-Goddess, and crunched into fragments (see Sect. XIII); the blade that was bitten to pieces by the Sun-Goddess figures in the same legend; the serpent is that slain by Susa-no-Wo after his banishment from Heaven (see Sect. XVIII); the “Myriad Deities” are supposed by Motowori to be this same god’s numerous descendants (see Sect. XX), who ruled in Idzumo. There remains the phrase “an Hundred Kings,” which is lacking in clearness. The only rational interpretation of it is as designating the Japanese imperial line, and yet the reference seems to have no special appropriateness in this context.

¹² For the Tranquil River of Heaven, in whose stony bed the gods were wont to meet in council, see Sect. XIII, Note 12. The divine deliberations here referred to are those which resulted in the investiture of the sovereignty of Japan in the grandson of the Sun-Goddess (see Sects. XXX–XXXIII). The “discussions on the Little Shore” allude to the parleys on the beach of Inasa in Idzumo which preceded the abdication of the Deity who had held sway over that part of the country prior to the descent of the Sun-Goddess’s grandson (see Sect. XXXII).

¹³ The abbreviated form of the name of the Sun-Goddess’s grandson (see Sect. XXXIII, Notes 5 and 10).

¹⁴ *I.e.* Mount Takachiho (see Sect. XXXIV, Note 5). The final syllable is here apocopated, in order to preserve the rhythmical balance of the sentence by using only three Chinese characters to write this name, the “Island of the Dragon-Fly” being likewise written with three characters.

¹⁵ *I.e.* the first “human emperor” Jim-mu, whose full native Japanese name is Kamu-Yamato-Ihare-Biko. For the account of his reign see Sects. XLIV–LII.

¹⁶ *I.e.* Japan. For the traditional origin of this poetical synonym of Japan see Sect. V, Note 26 and also the legend in Sect. CLVI. The word “traverse” in this sentence alludes to the Emperor Jim-mu’s victorious progress from Western Japan to Yamato in the centre of the country, which he is said to have subdued, and where it is related that he established his capital (see Sects. XLIV–L).

¹⁷ For the mention of the bear, whose appearance caused the Emperor Jim-mu and his army to faint away, see commencement of Sect. XLV. Motowori thinks that the character 爪, “claws,” is a copyist’s error for 山, “mountain” or 穴, “hole,” (*Conf.* Sect. XLV, Note 2). For the curious legend of the sabre see the same Section, and for the name of Takakura see more especially Note 3 to that Section.

¹⁸ For the gods with tails who met and conversed with the Emperor Jim-mu in Yamato, see the latter part of Sect. XLVI, a perusal of which will however show that the phrase “obstructed the path,” which is here used of them, is not exactly applicable. The miraculous crow, which was sent down from Heaven to assist Jim-mu in his conquests, is mentioned at the commencement of the same Section and again at the commencement of Sect. XLVII. For Yeshinu (modern Yoshino) see Sect. XLVI, Note 3.

¹⁹ The word “dancing” in this sentence must not be too closely pressed, as it is used simply to balance the word “song” in the parallel clause, — which clause itself does but echo the sense of that which precedes it. The reference is to the song which Jim-mu sang as a signal to his followers to destroy the “earth-spiders” (see Sect. XLVIII), and perhaps also to the songs in Sect. XLIX.

²⁰ “The Emperor Sū-jin” must be mentally supplied as the logical subject of this clause. For the story of his dream see Sect. LXIV, and for the origin of the laudatory designation here mentioned see the end of Sect. LXVII, which is however obscure.

²¹ “The Emperor Nin-toku” must be supplied as the logical subject of this clause. The allusion to the smoke and the laudatory designation here mentioned will be understood by reference to Sect. CXXI. The “black-haired people” is a common Chinese phrase for the peasantry or the people in general.

²² “The Emperor Sei-mu” must be supplied as the logical subject of this clause. His labours are briefly recapitulated in Sect. XCIV. For the province called Nearer Afumi (*Chika-tsu-Afumi*), see Sect. XXIX Note. 20 Its name is here rhythmically balanced against “Further Asuka” in the following clause.

²³ “The Emperor In-giyō” must be supplied as the logical subject of this sentence. This Sovereign’s rectification of the names forms the subject of Sect. CXXXIX. For Further Asuka (*Toho-tsu-Asuka*) see Sect. CXXXIII, Notes 13 and 11.

²⁴ *I.e.* though unlike in character, some of the ancient emperors excelling in caution and others in ardour, some being remarkable for their attainments and others for their native worth, yet was there not one without a claim to greatness, not one who did not regard antiquity as the standard by which modern times should be judged, and repair the deviations from antique perfection that successively arose during the lapse of ages. — How marvellously inapplicable is this rodomontade to the early monarchs of Japan the student of Japanese history need scarcely be told, and Motowori himself allows that “it is not completely appropriate.” Here the first part of the Preface terminates.

²⁵ *Viz.* the Emperor Tem-mu, whose struggle for the crown in the latter part of the seventh century of our era against the contending claims of Prince Ohotomo is related at great length in the pages of the “Chronicles,” though naturally beyond the scope of these “Records,” which close in A. D. 628. The “Eight Great Islands” is one of the synonyms of Japan (see Sect. V, Note 27). The reason for the specially laudatory mention in this place of the Emperor Tem-mu is the fact that it was with him that the idea of compiling these Records originated, as is indeed stated a little further on. He is here alluded to by the expressions Hidden Dragon and Reiterated Thunder, metaphorical names borrowed from the “*Yi Ching*” and denoting the heir apparent, Tem-mu not having ascended the throne till some time after his predecessor’s death, as Prince Ohotomo disputed by force of arms his right to the succession. The phrases “put on perfection” and “came at the appointed moment” are attempts at representing the original 體元 and 應期. The meaning is that the Emperor Tem-mu was the man for the age, and that he took his proper and exalted place in it. In the following sentences we have a flowery *résumé* of the story of the successful war by which he obtained the crown. The reference to the “song in a dream” is indeed obscure; but the “water at night” is the River Yoko, which we read of in the “Chronicles” as having been crossed by him. The characters somewhat freely rendered by the English words “succession” and “inheritance” are 業 and 基, which approximate to that sense in this context. The “Southern Mountains” are the Mountains of Yoshino, whither he escaped for a season as a cicada escapes from its cast-off shell; the “Eastern Land” denotes the eastern provinces of Japan where he organized his army. The “Six Divisions” and the “Three Hosts” are Chinese designations of the Imperial troops, while the “ill-omened crew” of course refers to Tem-mu’s enemies, — Prince Ohotomo and his followers. In the ensuing sentence we see peace restored: Tem-mu has returned to the capital (for which the words “Flowery Summer” are a Chinese periphrasis), he has taken in his hands the insignia of office, and reigns supreme over the Six Cardinal Points (North, South, East, West, Above, and Below) and over the “Eight Wildernesses” (*i.e.* the barbarous regions on all sides). The writer concludes this division of his Preface by a glowing panegyric of the Monarch, who was, he says, superior to Hsüan Hou (軒后 Jap. Ken-Kō), and Chou Wang (周王 Jap. Shiū-Ō), famous Chinese sovereigns of the legendary period. So intelligent were his efforts, so perfect was his conformity with the ways of Heaven as displayed in the workings of the Active and Passive Essences, that the Five Elements (Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth) all interacted with due regularity, and laudable usages alone prevailed throughout the laud. Up to this point the preface may be said to be purely ornamental.

²⁶ *I.e.* March (20th as the “Chronicles” tell us), A. D. 673. The original, to denote the year and the month mentioned, uses the periphrases 歲次大梁 and 月踵夾鍾, but doubtless without any reference to the original proper meaning of those terms.

²⁷ The text literally reads thus: “He rode in the exactness of the Two Essences.” But the author’s intention is to tell us that Tem-mu acted according to the golden mean, keeping the balance even, and not inclining unduly either to the Active or the Passive side.

²⁸ Literally “warp and woof,” *i.e.* canon, standard, mainspring, first necessity.

²⁹ This is the imperial decree ordering the compilation of the “Records of Ancient Matters.” The expressions “original words” (本辭) and “old words” (舊辭) are curious, and Motowori is probably right in arguing from the emphatic manner in which they are repeated that the Emperor Tem-mu attached special importance to the actual archaic phraseology in which some at least of the early documents or traditions had been handed down.

³⁰ *I.e.* he could repeat the contents of any document that he had once seen and remember all that he had ever heard.

³¹ *I.e.* the Emperor Tem-mu died before the plan of the compilation of these “Records” had been carried into execution, viz. it may be presumed, before a selection from the various original documents committed to memory by Are had been reduced to writing.

³² 得一光宅通三亭育. For the phrase “obtaining Unity,” which is borrowed from Lao Tzū, the student should consult Stanislas Julien’s “Livre de la Voie et de la Vertu,” pp. 144–149. The “Triad” is the threefold intelligence of Heaven, Earth, and Man. The general meaning of the sentence is that the Empress’s perfect virtue, which is in complete accord with the heavenly ordinances, is spread abroad throughout the empire, and that with her all-penetrating insight she nourishes and sustains her people.

³³ In the above four sentences the compiler expresses his respectful admiration of the Empress Gem-miyō, who was on the throne at the time when he wrote, and tells us how wide was her rule and how prosperous her reign. The “Purple Palace” is one of the ornamental names borrowed from the Chinese to denote the imperial residence. The “Sombre Retinue” (if such indeed is the correct rendering of the original expression 玄扈) is a phrase on which no authority consulted by the translator throws any light. The “utmost limits of the horses’ hoofmarks” and the “furthest distance attained to by vessels’ prows” are favourite phrases in the old literature of Japan to express extreme distance (see, for instance, Mr. Satow’s translation of the Ritual of the Praying for Harvest,” Vol. VII, Pt. II, p. 111 of these “Transactions,” and the present writer’s “Classical Poetry of the Japanese,” p. 111). Such unusual phenomena as connected stalks, *i.e.* trunks springing from the same root and uniting again higher up, and “joint rice-ears,” *i.e.* two rice-ears growing on a single stem, are considered lucky omens by the Chinese, and their appearance is duly chronicled in those Japanese histories that are composed after the Chinese model. The “continuous beacon-fires” and the “repeated interpretations” are phrases alluding to the foreign lands (*i.e.* the various small Korean states) speaking strange languages, whence tribute was sent to Japan. The text, as it stands, gives the impression that the arrival of the tribute-ships was announced by beacon-fires being lighted. Motowori however wishes us to understand the author’s meaning to be that foreign states which, in the natural course of events, would be inimical, and the approach of whose ships would be signaled by the lighting of beacon-fires, now peacefully sent gifts to the Japanese monarch. It may be added that the whole sentence is borrowed scarcely without alteration from the “*Wê Hsüan*” (文選). Bum-mei is the Japanese pronunciation of the characters 文命, the original name of Yü (禹), a celebrated legendary emperor of China. Ten-Itsu is the Japanese pronunciation of the characters 天乙, the original name of the ancient emperor T’ang (湯), who is said to have founded the Shang dynasty in the eighteenth century B. C.

³⁴ This word is here used as an initial particle without special significance.

³⁵ *I.e.* 3rd November, A.D. 711. Wa-dō (和銅) is the name of a Japanese “year-period” which lasted from A.D. 708 to 714.

³⁶ *I.e.* present them to her. With this sentence ends the fourth division of the preface.

³⁷ *I.e.* the simplicity of speech and thought in early Japan renders it too hard a task to rearrange the old documents committed to memory by Are in such a manner as to make them conform to the rules of Chinese style.

³⁸ *I.e.* if I adopted in its entirety the Chinese ideographic method of writing, I should often fail of giving a true impression of the nature of the original documents (*conf.* the preceding Note). If, on the other hand, I consistently used the Chinese characters, syllable by syllable, as phonetic symbols for Japanese sounds, this work would attain to inordinate proportions, on account of the great length of the polysyllabic Japanese as compared with the monosyllabic Chinese. The author's meaning may be illustrated by referring to the first clause of the "Records," 天地初發之時 ("when Heaven and Earth began"), which is thus written ideographically with six Chinese characters, whereas it would require no less than eleven to write it phonetically so as to represent the sound of the Japanese words *ame tsuchi no hazhime no toki*, viz. 阿米都知能波士賣能登伎. It should be noticed that in this passage the author employs the technical expressions *on* and *kun* (音 and 訓) and in a manner which is the precise reverse of that sanctioned by modern usage, *on* being with him the phonetic, and *kun* the ideographic, acceptance of the Chinese characters.

³⁹ It will be seen by perusing the following translation that the author can scarcely be said to have vouchsafed as much exegetical matter as this statement would lead us to expect. Indeed his "comments" are mostly confined to information concerning the pronunciation of certain characters. See however Motowori's remarks on this sentence in Vol. II. pp. 19–20 of his Commentary.

⁴⁰ The author here refers to a certain class of Japanese words which offer peculiar difficulties because written neither ideographically nor phonetically, but in a completely arbitrary manner, the result of a freak of usage. His manner of expressing himself is, however, ambiguous. What he meant to say is, as Motowori points out: "Again in such cases as writing the surname *Kusaka* with the characters 日下, and the personal name *Tarashi* with the character 帶, I have followed usage without alteration." It is his imperfect mastery over the Chinese construction that makes him fall into such errors, — errors easily rectifiable, however, by the more widely read modern Japanese *literati*.

⁴¹ *I.e.* commence with the creation, and end with the death of the Empress Sui-ko (A. D. 628), who resided at Woharida.

⁴² For the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of Heaven see Sect. I, Note 4, and for Prince-Wave-Limit, etc. see Sect. XLII, Note 15. Kamu-Yamato-Ihare-Biko is the proper native Japanese name of the emperor commonly known by the Chinese "canonical name" of Jim-mu. Homuda is part of the native Japanese name of the Emperor Ō-jin (see Sects. XCIV. to CXYIII). Oho-Sazaki is the native Japanese name of the Emperor Nin-toku (see Sects. CXIX to CXXX).

⁴³ *Q.d.* to the Empress.

⁴⁴ *I.e.* 10th March, A. D. 712.

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