



Japan's Imperial Mythology

De/Sacralization in the Context of
Exegesis, Politics and Folklore

November 23 - 25, 2023
Tübingen Forum for Science and Humanities

FOR 2828 De/Sacralization of Texts
Project 1: Sacred Narrative: The Political Dimension of Japanese Mythology



Picture credits

Utagawa Hiroshige, 1847-52. *Shoshin sōgaku kōki o sasou* (A Musical Performance by the Deities Entices the Divine Radiance). Woodblock print held at the British Museum.

Japan's Imperial Mythology

De/Sacralization in the Context of
Exegesis, Politics and Folklore

Japan's Imperial Mythology:

De/Sacralization in the Context of Exegesis, Politics and Folklore

November 23 - 25, 2023

This symposium will be held in a hybrid format with limited on-site attendance. If you wish to participate virtually, please contact us via the following e-mail address:

louise.neubronner@uni-tuebingen.de

Venue:

Tübingen Forum for Science and Humanities

Doblerstr. 33

D-72074 Tübingen

Symposium Organizers:

Prof. Dr. Klaus Antoni (klaus.antoni@uni-tuebingen.de)

Julia Dolkovski, M.A. (julia.dolkovski@uni-tuebingen.de)

Louise Neubronner, M.A. (louise.neubronner@uni-tuebingen.de)

Student Assistants:

Elisabeth Fehrenz, Lasse Niederkrome, Maike Popp

Symposium Description:

Since their creation, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* have been subject to processes of sacralization and desacralization that affect their status in Japanese society even today. The aim of this symposium is to gain a deeper understanding of these processes by discussing and comparing a variety of case studies. We will take a closer look at the strategies that have been employed over the centuries to imbue Japanese (imperial) mythology or related texts with inviolable authority. Three areas will serve as the basis for this discussion: Exegesis through textual discourse, political legitimation of rule, and reception in folklore and contemporary culture.

◆ Contents

Conference Program	<u>1</u>
Abstracts	<u>5</u>
Speakers and Chairs	<u>21</u>
Acknowledgements	<u>28</u>

◆ Conference Program

Thursday, November 23, 2023

Introduction and Keynote

11:00 Klaus Antoni, Julia Dolkovski and Louise Neubronner
(University of Tübingen)
Welcome and introductory remarks

11:45 Kikuko Hirafuji
(Kokugakuin University)
Kojiki Myth and the Jōmon Period

12:30 **Lunch break**

Panel 1 | Chair: Julia Dolkovski

14:00 Kazuo Matsumura
(Wako University)
Reconsidering the Mythology of Goddesses: With
Special Reference to the Sun Goddess/Kingship-
protecting Goddess

14:45 Raji Steineck
(University of Zurich)
Zeami's *Kintōshō*: 'Work on Myth' in Medieval Japan

15:30 **Coffee break**

Panel 2 | Chair: Maral Andassova

16:00 Judit Árokay
(Heidelberg University)
The Search for the Original Language of the Myths:
The Question of the Spoken and the Written Word

16:45 Matthieu Felt
(University of Florida)
Rethinking Motoori Norinaga and *Nihon shoki*

Friday, November 24, 2023

Panel 3 | Chair: Klaus Antoni

9:30 Jun'ichi Isomae
(Nichibunken Institute)
Return from the Dead's Land: Post-colonial Mythology
of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

10:15 Daniel F. Schley
(Nichibunken Institute)
Nature in Miki Kiyoshi's and Maruyama Masao's
Theories on Myth

11:00 **Coffee break**

Panel 4 | Chair: Monika Schrimpf

11:30 David Weiss
(Kyushu University)
Myth and Ethnicity: The Role of Mythology in
Oka Masao's Theory of Japanese Ethnogenesis

12:15 **Lunch break**

Panel 5 | Chair: Tomoë I. M. Steineck

13:45 Maral Andassova
(Waseda University)
The Emperors in the *Kojiki*: In the Context of their
Relationships with the Local Deities

14:30 Sarah Schmid
(University of Zurich)
The Removed Empress: Jingū kōgō in Meiji Period Print
Media

15:15 **Coffee break**

Panel 6 | Chair: Louise Neubronner

15:45 Michael Wachutka
(TCJS)
Propagating Japan's Spiritual Culture: Editorial
Compilation and Exegetical Dissemination of Shinto's
"Sacred Scriptures"

16:30 Marcin Lisiecki
(Nicolaus Copernicus University)
Sacralization of Political Power in Japan: Mythological
Threads in *Kokutai no hongji*

Saturday, November 25, 2023

Panel 7 | Chair: Julia Swoboda

09:30 Louise Neubronner
(University of Tübingen)
Forged Sacredness: *Jindai moji* in the Eye of the West

10:15 Klaus Antoni
(University of Tübingen)
Sacred Calendar, Linear Chronology, and the Jinmu
Tennō Myth

11:00 **Coffee break**

Panel 8 | Chair: Klaus Antoni

11:15 Julia Dolkovski
(University of Tübingen)
Japan's Two *shinwa no furusato*: Regional Identity and
Tourism Based on Mythology in Shimane and Miyazaki

12:00 Closing discussion

◆ Abstracts

Andassova, Maral (Waseda University, Tokyo)

“The Emperors in the *Kojiki*: In the Context of their Relationships with the Local Deities”

The *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* manuscripts were compiled by the Imperial Court in the early eighth century and present a cycle of myths on how the descendants of Amaterasu became rulers of the Land. However, the way each of these manuscripts depicts the relationships between the emperors and local deities is different.

Firstly, in the *Kojiki*, the main deity of the Izumo region, Ōnamuchi, is described as the Great Master of the Land (Ōkuninushi), who was worshipped by the heavenly deities. Furthermore, Emperor Suinin sent his son, Homuchiwake, to Izumo to worship Ōnamuchi in order to remove a curse placed upon him. Conversely, the *Nihon shoki* describes Ōnamuchi as a deity submissive to Amaterasu and doesn't include the story of Homuchiwake's trip to Izumo.

These events make clear that the relationship between the emperor, his ancestors, and regional deities is described differently in these two manuscripts: In the *Kojiki* the emperors worshipped local deities and used their savage powers to protect themselves, but in the *Nihon shoki* the emperors simply subdued provincial deities demonstrating their absolute power.

This presentation will feature a discussion on the meaning of these differences, and the peculiarities of the emperor in the *Kojiki* will be assessed through the analysis of relationships with regional deities. These differences are closely related to the messages which each text conveys to the reader. The *Nihon shoki* clearly adheres to the philosophy of the Ritsuryō state and is based on the ideas of ancient Chinese statehood, wherein the emperor was considered a

divine entity from Heaven wielding absolute power. In contrast, the *Kojiki* describes “the local ruling families or clans (*gōzoku*)” as not absolutely submissive to the emperor but as having to provide mutual approval to the emperor’s decisions.

Antoni, Klaus (University of Tübingen)

“Sacred Calendar, Linear Chronology, and the Jinmu Tennō Myth”

Those who delve into the study of Japanese pre- and early history will soon discover the existence of several distinct and conflicting systems of linear chronology associated with this subject. On the one hand, we encounter the insights provided by the historical sciences, which offer a chronological framework for organizing human settlement on the Japanese islands. This framework is constructed through the examination of archaeological evidence and the analysis of early historical periods.

However, this scientific understanding of early history stands in stark contrast to another system that continues to exert influence, even in contemporary Japan, albeit in a more symbolic and religious sense. This alternative view of history does not rely on archaeological findings or historical artifacts; instead, it draws from written primary sources, namely the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which present mythical narratives tracing the origins of the world to the establishment of the Japanese state. These narratives place particular emphasis on ‘Emperor Jinmu,’ also known as Kamu Yamato Iwarehiko. This mythical perspective on history played a crucial role in establishing the historical legitimacy of the imperial system, especially during the modern era after 1868. According to this conceptualization of history, the mytho-historical starting point is determined by a specific founding year of the Empire, corresponding to 660 BCE in the Western calendar.

The process of selecting and sacralizing this date carries significant weight within the broader context of the political mythology surrounding 'Emperor Jinmu.' Thus, the purpose of my talk is to explore the origins of this date and delve into the underlying reasons for designating it as the exact starting point of the empire's history. Through a comparative textual analysis, we will uncover an unexpectedly international dimension associated with this foundational date.

Árokay, Judit (Heidelberg University)

“The Search for the Original Language of the Myths: The Question of the Spoken and the Written Word”

In the controversy over how to understand the ancient myths, the search for the “original” language was an important issue. Nativists in the eighteenth century tried to reconstruct not only the original meaning but also the original reading of the ancient Japanese myths and had a tendency to devalue (Chinese) writing and venerate the spoken language. In their search for the authentic language they believed to be behind the sacred myths, the ancient poetic language seemed to be a solution because it most faithfully preserved the spoken language. In my talk, I would like to present some of their arguments, focusing on the dichotomy between the spoken and the written.

Dolkovski, Julia (University of Tübingen)

“Japan’s Two *shinwa no furusato*: Regional Identity and Tourism Based on Mythology in Shimane and Miyazaki”

The two modern-day prefectures of Shimane and Miyazaki feature prominently in the myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, so much so that two of the three main traditions present in these texts are attributed to them: The Izumo myths and the Himuka myths. However, the focal points of both mythologies remain remote places. Takachihō in Miyazaki prefecture on the one hand is hidden deep in the mountains of Kyūshū and can only be reached by bus or car. Shimane on the other is often labeled as part of *ura nihon*, the backside of Japan.

In order to prove themselves as viable tourist destinations, both prefectures source from their supposed mythological origins and refer to themselves as *shinwa no kuni* or *shinwa no furusato*. Shrines feature prominently on the tourism websites of individual cities as well as of the regions at large. Well-known stories, too, are presented as arguments for the legitimacy or spiritual significance of certain sites.

Based on a research trip to both prefectures in September and October 2023, this paper will discuss how Shimane and Miyazaki construct their own regional identity based on several works of mythology and how this is in turn used to position the regions as places worth traveling to. It will be argued that this way of using selected texts as the basis for such a regional identity is part of the process of sacralization while opting to leave out or relativize other texts could be seen as a desacralization.

Felt, Matthieu (University of Florida, Gainesville)

“Rethinking Motoori Norinaga and *Nihon shoki*”

One oft-repeated refrain of early modern kokugaku scholarship is that kokugaku gave special status to ancient texts presumed to be written in vernacular Japanese, notably the *Kojiki* and the *Man'yōshū*, at the expense of texts presumed to be in literary Sinitic, such as the *Nihon shoki*. The *Kojiki* and *Man'yōshū* also happen to be the focal points of research by several of the most notable kokugaku scholars of early modern Japan, including Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga.

This presentation will argue not only that kokugaku in the eighteenth century was hardly limited to works purportedly written in the Japanese vernacular, but also that Norinaga himself had a much more complex relationship with the *Nihon shoki* than contemporary assessments of kokugaku permit. A close reading of Norinaga's commentary on the *Kojiki*, the *Kojiki-den*, reveals that explanations that Norinaga favored the *Kojiki* and rejected the *Nihon shoki* due to the Sinitic nature of the latter text are overly reductive. A thorough reading of the *Kojiki-den* and a more nuanced grasp of Norinaga's semiotic theory reveal that Norinaga was in fact a close and avid reader of the *Nihon shoki*, that the text was indispensable to his exegetical work on the *Kojiki*, and that his critique of the so-called “Chinese mind” (*kara gokoro*) was directed at an acquired interpretive framework and ontological orientation associated with the Suika sect of Shinto. Accurately assessing Norinaga's evaluation of the *Nihon shoki* is critical for both understanding the true nature of early modern kokugaku and for properly historicizing the Meiji period canonization of both the *Kojiki* and Norinaga.

Hirafuji, Kikuko (Kokugakuin University, Tokyo)

“Kojiki Myth and the Jōmon Period”

The Jōmon period is one of the historical divisions in Japan. It was a hunter-gatherer era that lasted from around 14,000 BCE to the 4th century BCE. During this period, many clay figurines and pottery were created, which are now considered the origins of Japanese art. The categorization of this period as the Jōmon period is a relatively new development in Japan, adopted after World War II. Prior to that, history in Japan was narrated based on the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, and the ancient times were referred to as the “Age of the Gods” or “*kamiyo*.” Therefore, it was challenging to discuss periods older than the Kofun period, which occurred around the 5th century.

After World War II, as research on the Jōmon period gained momentum, interesting theories emerged regarding Jōmon clay figurines. One such theory compared the fragmented clay figurines found in archaeological excavations with the myths of Ōgetsuhime in the *Kojiki* and Ukemochi in the *Nihon shoki*, suggesting the existence of deities in Jōmon that could be traced back to the mythology in these texts. It would serve to emphasize the ancientness of Japanese deities.

Philosopher Umehara Takeshi, who was active in the 1980s, began to develop the theory of Jōmon culture. This theory argued that Jōmon culture is the foundational culture of Japan. Umehara referred to Jōmon culture as the “oldest culture in the world” and stated that during the Jōmon period, there undoubtedly existed a “religiously advanced culture.” This ideology aimed to promote Japan’s strengths by praising Jōmon culture. The theory linking Jōmon clay figurines with goddesses in Japanese mythology became intertwined with such discourse.

This paper examines the comparison between Jōmon clay figurines and the myths in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, exploring the relationship between post-war Japanese nationalism, the Jōmon period, and mythology.

Isomae, Jun'ichi (Nichibunken Institute, Kyoto)

“Return from the Dead’s Land: Post-colonial Mythology of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster”

The Northeast Japan Disaster resulted in a significant number of casualties, approximately 18,000 deaths. The explosion at Fukushima Nuclear Plant No. 1 led to a massive influx of refugees, with over 30,000 individuals still displaced (limited to outside Fukushima prefecture). Consequently, they have lost their families, properties, and homeland, enduring ongoing suffering.

Drawing on various ancient myths, such as Orpheus in Greek Mythology and Izanaki/Izanami in ancient Japanese mythology (*Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*), the theme of “return from the dead’s land” has captivated the living across different places and periods. This fascination stems, in part, from the need to establish a boundary between the living and the deceased. The living are drawn to the realm of the dead due to their deep emotional connection to their departed loved ones—family members, intimate partners, and close friends. The central narrative found in such mythologies involves the living’s journey to the land of the dead and their attempts to bring back their loved ones, only to ultimately fail as the dead cannot return to the world of the living. Consequently, a tremendously ambivalent emotional state arises, encompassing both love and anger, between the realms of the living and the dead.

Returning to the case of Fukushima, its people grapple with the challenge of reconciling with their lost family members and homeland. It appears inevitable for them to delineate the boundary between the living and the deceased or the homeland that cannot be reclaimed. However, the main issue lies in how to establish or redefine this boundary, akin to ancient mythology. Currently, there is no prevailing narrative on this theme among the people of Fukushima. Instead, prominent symptoms, such as rumors and writings, emerge as attempts to decode and formalize their experiences, which can be shared with those outside of Fukushima, and indeed Japan.

Exploring this issue prompts us to reevaluate the invisible postcolonial structure entrenched within contemporary Japanese society, stemming from the internal colonialism of the pre-war Japanese empire. The question of how to console the dead, how to draw the line between the two realms, seems intimately intertwined, at least from my perspective, with the challenge of objectively examining the postcolonial history of modern Japanese society.

Lisiecki, Marcin (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun)

“Sacralization of Political Power in Japan: Mythological Threads in *Kokutai no hongī*”

The main purpose of the presentation is to describe the process of sacralization in Japanese politics during the 20th century. This topic is relevant for the following reasons. First of all, the most important political myths, such as the origin of political power, the meaning of the emperor, and the goals of his deeds, were related to the idea of *kokutai* (“national essence,” “national polity” or “national character”). Secondly, this idea played a significant role in legitimizing political power and consolidating national identity. Lastly, the idea of *kokutai* was officially incorporated into Japanese politics by issuing a Japanese government document in 1937 titled *Kokutai no hongī*. In order to analyze the process of sacralization in Japanese politics in the 20th century, the content of the talk will be divided into the following parts:

Firstly, I will present the sources for the idea of *kokutai*, especially the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, as well as the *Jinnō shōtōki* by Kitabatake Chikafusa. Secondly, this will be followed by a discussion of the importance of *kokutai* as a political myth as well as of the content and main assumptions of the *Kokutai no hongī*. Lastly, I will illustrate the importance of the *Kokutai no hongī* in the process of the sacralization of political power in Japan.

Matsumura, Kazuo (Wako University, Tokyo)

“Reconsidering the Mythology of Goddesses: With Special Reference to the Sun Goddess/Kingship-protecting Goddess”

Two themes are treated in this paper: The first is that we could perhaps obtain better insights by analyzing more intensively visual symbols in the myths and religions of areas and ages where and when there were no or scarce written records. The other consists of actual analyses of the myths and religions of goddesses of such areas and ages. I argue that there is a possibility that a type of sun goddess/kingship-protecting goddess existed in the Eastern Mediterranean area of the Neolithic and Bronze ages and also in Japan during the Bronze/Iron age (i.e., from the Yayoi era to the Tumulus era).

Neubronner, Louise (University of Tübingen)

“Forged Sacredness: *Jindai moji* in the Eye of the West”

Theories on the existence of *jindai moji*, characters from the Age of the Gods, are still supported today, although there is no authentic historical evidence for such a script. In the earlier days of the long-standing discourse on the subject, *jindai moji* even received support from Western intellectuals, as was the case with Peter Kempermann (1845–1900), a German diplomat and founding member of the OAG (Ostasiatische Gesellschaft). In his essay from 1876, Kempermann arrives at this conclusion after a detailed analysis of texts that deal with the ‘divine’ characters directly or indirectly – even their absence from the preface to the *Kojiki* does not deter him. Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), who published his essay on *jindai moji* shortly after Kempermann, looks at a very similar selection of texts but comes to the opposite conclusion: There is no question that *jindai moji* are forgeries produced by overzealous patriots. Chamberlain

also clearly points out that the oldest authentic literary sources on Japanese antiquity are the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

In my paper, I want to take a closer look at the two essays by Kempermann and Chamberlain. The discussion will focus on the central question of how the assumed veracity of *jindai moji* on the one hand and their proven forgery on the other relate to the status of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* as ancient, authoritative texts. By connecting Kempermann's and Chamberlain's arguments to present-day phenomena and examples from other cultural contexts, I will also explore the hypothesis that inspiring apocryphal texts and outright forgeries can be understood as a characteristic of sacralized texts.

Schley, Daniel F. (Nichibunken Institute, Kyoto)

“Nature in Miki Kiyoshi’s and Maruyama Masao’s Theories on Myth”

Miki Kiyoshi and Maruyama Masao addressed the issue of myth in different ways. Miki analyzes myths as products of the “power of imagination” that connects individuals to their society through rational as well as sensual elements. He acknowledges them as a socially relevant form of symbolic knowledge that continues to be active in the present and notably appears in times of accelerated change and social tensions. While Miki discussed myth in general terms as a concept, Maruyama dealt with Japanese myths in particular. In the cosmogony of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* he found the paradigmatic pattern of historical consciousness in Japan. Namely, he identified the three basic categories of becoming (*nari*), succession (*tsugi tsugi*) and energy (*ikioi*).

Miki and Maruyama both had a background in Marxist theories, and both appreciated myth as an important element in analyzing social and cultural phenomena. Both differ in their approach and

conception, but they nevertheless share some important points. Among them is a subtly hidden and hitherto less considered concept of nature, which is in fact an important component in their theories on myth. Miki explores the effect of nature more explicitly through the concept of pathos and its relation to logos. For Miki, myth is one of the different historical forms in which logos and pathos come to a specific dialectical unity. In contrast, Maruyama carries unconsciously a certain understanding of nature into his interpretation of Japanese myths. He does so especially when he characterizes the historical consciousness in Japan as an optimism of the absolute present in which the past and the future are continuously realigned and relativized for an open-ended succession of singular nows. Both, however, pay no attention to the in-fact complex layering of pre-modern meanings from different cultural backgrounds in the modern concept of nature.

In my presentation, I explore this obscured nature in Miki's and Maruyama's approaches to myth and examine the tensions that result from their neglect respectively. I examine how their rational analyses in a sense resacralize nature 'through the backdoor.'

Schmid, Sarah Rebecca (University of Zurich)

“The Removed Empress: Jingū kōgō in Meiji Period Print Media”

Jingū kōgō (trad. 169? - 269 CE) is a rather unusual case in Japanese historiography. She was (reportedly) the first woman in the Japanese imperial line to assume the rule of the Yamato polity due to the untimely death of her husband Chūai tennō (trad. 149? - 200 CE). However, her status, both in the imperial line and as a historical figure, has long been under debate. In fact, even the earliest surviving sources in which she appears, the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720), seem to have different opinions on precisely how to evaluate her. While the *Kojiki* included her reign into that of her

husband, the *Nihon shoki* devoted a separate section to her reign, essentially treating her as a sovereign ruler. Furthermore, although her posthumous title is generally given as Jingū kōgō, she was often referred to as Jingū tennō or as the 15th ruler in the imperial line until the Meiji period (1868 - 1912). In the Edo period (1603 - 1868), the *Dai nihon shi*, compiled by the Mito school, strongly argued against her inclusion in the imperial line of succession. This argument eventually bore fruit; since the Meiji period, she has been removed from the imperial line, and her son Ōjin tennō (trad. 201 - 310 CE) has become the 15th ruler of the Yamato polity, instead.

Remarkably, this removal from the imperial line and effective devaluation of her status was not synonymous with a descent into obscurity. On the contrary, Jingū kōgō easily belongs to one of the most frequently mentioned and depicted Japanese rulers in the Meiji period and is often the first ruler after Jinmu tennō (and Yamato Takeru) to receive greater attention. Her portrait was used by the government to adorn bank notes, government bonds, and postage stamps. Jingū kōgō was also an important cultural and religious figure, appearing frequently in books, prints, *gunka* (war songs), as well as many other areas of culture. This paper aims to show how Jingū kōgō was represented in different kinds of Meiji period media, and what function her figure had in society and culture. It further seeks to discuss whether her removal from the imperial line may have been one of the factors that made her figure so accessible, or what other factors may have been involved in her success as a culturally dominant figure.

Steineck, Raji (University of Zurich)

“Zeami Kintōshō: ‘Work on Myth’ in Medieval Japan”

In his late work *Kintōshō*, and perhaps through it, Zeami, at the time banished to the remote island of Sado, comes to terms with his banishment to the island of Sado. The text includes a Nō play called *Kitayama*, in which Zeami portrays his place of exile as a mythical place of origin, thus elevating it to a position of central importance. He does so via a version of the ancient imperial mythology’s story about the “beginning of heaven and earth,” which connects that story to the mandalas of esoteric Buddhism. Zeami’s work is therefore exemplary of the ‘work on myth’ in medieval Japan. During that period, various social classes, regions, and institutions enhanced their status through connections with and retellings of imperial mythology. Since the early modern era, scholars started to view these variations as distortions of the original, “true” myth, but they significantly contributed to the dissemination of imperial mythology and paved the way for its reimagining as a national mythology in the modern era.

Wachutka, Michael (Tübingen University Center for Japanese Studies (TCJS), Kyoto)

“Propagating Japan’s Spiritual Culture: Editorial Compilation and Exegetical Dissemination of Shinto’s ‘Sacred Scriptures’”

The industrialist and educator Ōkura Kunihiko (1882 - 1971) in a 1929 interview drew a bleak picture of Japan’s contemporary society, seeing it in a state of confusion of ideas where “devotional life that was the foundation of the national life since the establishment of the nation” has eroded. In his eyes, the spiritual and religious realms control the root of thoughts, yet their present conditions were defective and the people needed to be “spiritually awakened.” He thus

founded the Ōkura Institute for Research of Spiritual Culture (*Ōkura seishinbunka kenkyūjo*), which, according to his opening speech in 1932, should “explore the essential values of spiritual culture and establish a truly faith-based attitude towards the state.”

The Institute’s first endeavor was the compilation and editing of several ancient texts into a novel work titled *Shinten* (1936), Shinto’s “Sacred Scriptures.” With its deliberate appearance in leather binding, lightweight paper, and gilt edging, *Shinten* was conceived as “Bible for Japan” equivalent to sacralized canonical writings of other religious traditions. Accompanied by explanatory lecture series and exegetical commentary works, from the beginning it was disseminated as a reference to timeless cultural memory and a source of national polity (*kokutai*) for the whole population.

By spotlighting *Shinten*’s editorial history, this paper will trace the relatively small circle of protagonists and the complex ideological background leading to its genesis. Elucidating exegetical elaborations of the contained texts and the concept of “*shinten*” itself furthermore epitomizes how the mythico-religious narrative found in these “sacred scriptures” has been used to support and legitimize contemporary political agenda throughout Japan’s modernization process and beyond.

Weiss, David (Kyushu University, Fukuoka)

“Myth and Ethnicity: The Role of Mythology in Oka Masao’s Theory of Japanese Ethnogenesis”

Oka Masao (1898 - 1982) is commonly considered one of the founding fathers of Japanese ethnology. He spent most of the 1930s in Vienna, where he wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Japan’s ethnogenesis and later served as founding professor at the Institute of Japanese Studies. In the early 1940s, he returned to Japan, where he became an influential figure in wartime and postwar ethnology. This talk will

analyze the model of cultural strata Oka first presented in his 1933 Ph.D. thesis and elaborated in the postwar era, focusing especially on the function of ancient myths within this model. According to Oka, Japan saw succeeding waves of immigration from the south (Indonesia, Micronesia) and the north (Manchuria, Korea) during prehistoric times. Each of these groups of immigrants, he argued, brought their own culture with them, which over centuries amalgamated and brought forth Japanese culture. Based on the culture-historical approach of the Vienna School of Ethnology, Oka attempted to reconstruct these different cultural strata, assigning specific myths, religious ideas, modes of subsistence, and kinship systems to each stratum.

Within this theoretical framework, Oka proposed a new interpretation of Japanese mythology that differed substantially from contemporary scholarship in Japan, for instance, by assigning a relatively late date to the origins of the imperial family and by identifying different conceptions of deities such as *kami* descending from heaven and *marebito* arriving from beyond the ocean in the myths of *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon shoki* (720). This approach challenged the idea of an unchanging Japanese national essence (*kokutai*) and opened the way for comparative analyses of Japanese mythology in the postwar era.

This paper is especially interested in Oka's linking of certain mythological motifs with specific ethnic groups. It attempts to trace the impact both of the Vienna School and contemporary Japanese ethnologists and folklorists on Oka's theory of Japanese ethnogenesis.

◆ Speakers and Chairs

Speakers

Andassova, Maral

Maral Andassova, Ph.D, received her doctorate in Literature from Bukkyo University (Kyoto) in 2013. She works as an Assistant Professor at the Waseda Institute of Advanced Studies. Her recent book, *Metamorphoses of Yamato*, was published by Seidosha (Tokyo) in 2020. Her current research is focused on Izumo myths that appear in 8th century manuscripts, such as *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, *Izumo Fudoki*, and rituals performed by Izumo priests, as well as the relationships between the Yamato court as the central authority and local deities.

Antoni, Klaus

Klaus Antoni is Senior Professor for Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen. His research focuses on the intellectual and religious history of Japan, in particular the question of Japan's political mythology, and the relationship between religion (Shinto) and ideology. Other focal points are the earliest sacred scriptures of Japan, comparative mythology, and Japanese narrative studies (legends, tales). Antoni's main publications include *Kojiki – Aufzeichnung alter Begebenheiten* (annotated translation of the *Kojiki*), 2012, and *Kokutai - Political Shintō from Early-Modern to Contemporary Japan*, 2016. Currently, he is researching the Jinmu tennō legend.

Árokay, Judit

Judit Árokay is Professor for Japanese Studies at Heidelberg University. Her research focuses on pre-modern Japanese literature, with a focus on waka poetry and poetic theory (*karon, kagaku*), theoretical approaches to language in Early Modern Japan and the evolution of waka rhetoric. Recently she has been engaged in the construction of an interactive digital map of poetic places (*utamakura/meisho*) in Japan (<https://literarymaps.nijl.ac.jp/#!/>). She is editor of the online journal *Bunron* (www.bunron.org).

Dolkovski, Julia

Julia Dolkovski is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tübingen and a member of the research project *De/Sacralization of Texts*. She received her M.A. from the University of Tübingen with a thesis on *The Depiction of Amaterasu in the Videogame Ōkami* in 2020. In her dissertation, she continues her research on Japanese mythology by comparing contemporary retellings and adaptations of the myths found mainly in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* and investigating how they reflect strategies of reading and interpreting these source texts.

Felt, Matthieu

Matthieu Felt is Assistant Professor of Japanese at the University of Florida. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 2017. Recent publications include *Meanings of Antiquity: Myth Interpretation in Early Japan* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2023) and “Nihongi Banquet Poetry: Rewriting Japanese Myth in Verse” (*Monumenta Nipponica* 76/2, 2021).

Hirafuji, Kikuko

Kikuko Hirafuji is a Professor at the Department of Shinto Studies at Kokugakuin University in Tokyo. She specializes in mythology, particularly focusing on how mythology has been interpreted and treated in modern and contemporary Japan. She is interested in exploring how people have used mythology to express various ideas and concepts. Specifically, she is researching the following subjects: The history of the study of mythology in modern Japan, the study of mythology and colonialism, and mythology in contemporary society (in art and pop culture).

Isomae, Jun'ichi

Jun'ichi Isomae is a distinguished scholar and Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. His main areas of research are Japanese religions and mythology, and his most important publications include: *Hermeneutics on Scripture* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009), *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: Religion, State and Shinto* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) and *Voices of the Dead in Northeast Japan Disaster* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2024 (forthcoming)).

Lisiecki, Marcin

Marcin Lisiecki is Professor at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. His scientific interests focus on Japanese and Polish nationalist discourse, Japanese film, research on the *Kojiki* and the Japanese myths, mythology and popular culture. He is the author and co-editor of many books and scientific articles, e.g.: *Kokutai-no hongu in Japanese nationalist discourse* (2010), *Studio Ghibli: The Place of Animated Film in Japanese Culture* (2012, as co-editor), "Myth and

Mythologization in Ideology and Politics: The Mythologization of Japanese Identity in the Meiji Period” (2015), *Power and Speech: Mythology of the Society and the Sacred* (2016, as co-editor), *Intercultural Communication in Politics: Relations between the United States and Japan in 1932-1952* (2019), “Pōrando ni okreū shūkyō to seiji: Pōrando seifu no kyōsan shugi seisaku ni okeru kirisutokyō de kan'nen to shōchō” (2019), “Maps of Japan and the Reproduction of Japanese National Identity in Popular Culture” (2021).

Matsumura, Kazuo

Kazuo Matsumura is Professor of Comparative Mythology and History of Religions at the Department of Transcultural Studies, Wako University, Tokyo. He is the author of *Mythical Thinkings: What Can We Learn from Comparative Mythology* (Countershock Press, 2014); “Nelly Naumann’s Contribution to the Study of Japanese Religion and Myth,” *Religious Studies Review* 32, 2006, 163-169; “Heroic Sword God,” *Cosmos* 31, 2015, 27-49; “The Voyage of Yoshitsune to the Island of Yezo: A Japanese Odyssey?” in *Power and Speech*, Torun, 2016, 205-215.

Neubronner, Louise

Louise Neubronner received her master’s degree in Japanese Studies with a thesis on Ueda Akinari’s *Ugetsu monogatari* and his koku-gaku thought. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tübingen and a member of the interdisciplinary research project *De/Sacralization of Texts*. In her dissertation, she focuses on texts by Tō Teikan, Yamagata Bantō and Ueda Akinari, and the way in which these scholars threaten Motoori Norinaga’s concept of the sacrality of the *Kojiki*. Connected to this is another area of interest: Norinaga’s clear denial of the *jindai moji* phenomenon, and the question of what the existence of such a script would mean for the *Kojiki*.

Schley, Daniel F.

Daniel F. Schley is Assistant Professor at the University of Bonn and currently, from April 2023 until March 2024, visiting research scholar at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichi-bunken) in Kyoto. In his research, he explores the history of political and religious ideas, historiography and historical thought as well as power and kingship. He has published among others on the topics of “Sacred Kingship” (2014), *Japan’s Modern Monarchy* (2022), time perceptions at the 11th century court (2021) and Watsuji Tetsurō’s cultural theory (2015, 2021). He is preparing a monograph on Miki Kiyoshi’s philosophy of history.

Schmid, Sarah

Sarah Rebecca Schmid is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies of the University of Zurich and the lead curator of the project “Japanese Buddhist Art in European Collections” (JBAE). She received her doctorate in 2022 at the University of Zurich. Her thesis focused on the relationship between mythological narratives and imperialism in early Meiji Japan.

Steineck, Raji

Raji C. Steineck is Professor of Japanology at the University of Zurich (UZH), visiting professor at Yamaguchi University's Research Institute for Time Studies, and principal investigator of the European Research Council's Advanced Grant project “Time in Medieval Japan” (TIMEJ). His research interests combine the history of ideas in Japan, the theory of symbolic forms, and the philosophy of time. He has published a monograph on ancient Japanese mythology as part of his *Critique of Symbolic Forms* (in German, 2 vols. 2014, 2017, further volumes in preparation).

Wachutka, Michael

Michael Wachutka is Associate Professor at the University of Tübingen and Director of the Tübingen Center for Japanese Studies (TCJS) in Kyoto. His research focuses on the intellectual and religious history of Japan, especially on questions of national identity, variously defined “spiritual culture”, and popular folk beliefs; the evolution, personalities, and self-identity of kokugaku; the mythology and canonization of classical Shinto scriptures; and historical aspects of the Tennō system. His most recent books are: *Kokugaku in Meiji-period Japan: The Transformation of ‘National Learning’ and the Formation of Scholarly Societies* (2013); *Staatsverständnis in Japan: Ideen und Wirklichkeiten des japanischen Staates in der Moderne* (co-ed., 2016); *Religion, Politik und Ideologie: Beiträge zu einer kritischen Kulturwissenschaft* (co-ed., 2018); and *Heilige Orte und sakraler Raum in den Religionen Japans* (forthcoming, 2024).

Weiss, David

David Weiss is an Assistant Professor of Japanese literature and intellectual history at Kyushu University. His research focuses on the history of ideas, especially the mythology of ancient Japan and its function in Japan’s cultural memory, including its utilization in modern nation-building and in justifying colonial rule. More broadly, he is interested in the intercultural transfer of ideas and questions of identity formation. Currently, he is working on a project that traces German and Austrian influences on early theories of Japanese ethnogenesis through a case study of Oka Masao (1898 - 1982).

Chairs

In addition to Maral Andassova, Klaus Antoni, Julia Dolkovski and Louise Neubronner, we welcome the following colleagues as chairs:

Steineck, Tomoë I. M.

Tomoë I. M. Steineck is an Affiliated Researcher at the Department of Japanese Studies of the University of Zurich, Nichibunken, and Hōsei University Tokyo. She is also currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen. She has been the chief curator of several exhibitions, such as “Daigo-ji - The Secret Buddhism in Japan” (2008) and “Tokens of the Path - Japanese Devotional and Pilgrimage Images” (2014).

Swoboda, Julia

Julia Swoboda is a research fellow at the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen, currently finishing her dissertation on women in contemporary shrine and imperial house Shinto. Having completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Passau, she went on to acquire a master's degree in Japanese Studies in Tübingen. In 2019 and 2020, she was the recipient of Kokugakuin University's Visiting Researcher Program, conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Japan.

Schrimpf, Monika

Monika Schrimpf is professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Tübingen since 2014. She earned her Ph.D. in Japanese Studies at Bonn University and finished her habilitation thesis in the Study of Religion at Bayreuth University. Her research is in the field of Religious Studies and Gender Studies, with a particular focus on women in contemporary Japanese Buddhism and modern entanglements of medicine and religion.

◆ Acknowledgements

We want to express our sincere gratitude to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the support that made this symposium possible.

We also want to thank the members of the DFG sponsored research unit *De/Sacralization of Texts*. The fruitful discussions in meetings and at past workshops and conferences provided extremely valuable inspiration for this symposium.

We further wish to extend many thanks to the Tübingen Forum for Science and Humanities and especially Michael Herrmann, head of the Forum, for providing such a wonderful location for our symposium and for the unwavering support during the planning process.

Finally, we want to thank the speakers and chairs of the respective sessions for their invaluable contributions to this symposium.

Klaus Antoni, Julia Dolkovski and Louise Neubronner

 Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft



TÜBINGER FORUM
FÜR
WISSENSCHAFTSKULTUREN